
Chamois exploitation in central Italy during the Pleistocene and early Holocene.

Ivana Fiore^{*1}, Alhaique Francesca^{†1}, De Angelis Giuseppe², Antonio Tagliacozzo¹, and Leonardo Salari³

¹Museo delle Civiltà - Sezione di Bioarcheologia, Roma – Italy

²Sapienza University [Rome] – Italy

³Università di Roma "Tor Vergata" – Italy

Abstract

The chamois is an agile animal that prefers harsh and impervious terrains and this may have contributed to make it a difficult prey to capture. The aim of this study is to investigate the importance of chamois in human subsistence in central Italy, also in relation to the exploitation of other ungulates.

There are currently two species of chamois in Italy: the Alpine chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) and the Pyrenean chamois (*Rupicapra pyrenaica*). This situation is already evident in the Late Pleistocene and early Holocene, and, on the basis of palaeobiogeography, all the remains found in the Alps and the northern Apennines can be attributed to the first *taxon*, while those from the central and southern Apennines may be referred to the second one.

The Pyrenean chamois is often found in Epigravettian sites in central Italy, but only in rare cases it is the most frequently hunted animal. It is prevalent among ungulates with percentages of over 40% at many sites of the Fucino area: Grotta Maritza, Grotta di Pozzo-upper levels, Grotta La Punta, Grotta di Ortucchio. It is well represented with frequencies around 20% at Riparo-Grotticella di Santa Maria, Riparo Piastricoli and Grotta Mora Cavorso. The data on seasonality indicate that hunting took place preferably between summer and autumn and the traces of butchery, when indicated, show intense exploitation of carcasses. In all the mentioned sites, chamois is always associated to ibex and red deer, which are always present with relatively high percentages, reflecting the different environments exploited and the high degree of mobility, especially the vertical one, of Palaeolithic/Mesolithic hunter-gatherer groups.

Keywords: Zooarchaeology, Taphonomy, Subsistence strategies, Chamois

*Corresponding author: iva.fiore@gmail.com

†Speaker