

OTTER (*LUTRA LUTRA*) PRESENCE IN LATTARI MOUNTAINS (CAMPANIA REGION, SOUTHERN ITALY)

ROBERTO FASANO & GUGLIELMO MAGLIO

*Dipartimento di Zoologia, Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II", via Mezzocannone, 8
80134 Napoli*

ABSTRACT – A new area of presence of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) was found in Campania region (Southern Italy). It included the "Valle delle Ferriere" and "Vkcite" canyons close to Amalfi town (Salerno province). A total of 24 sprainting sites was recorded.

Key words: *Lutra lutra*, Distribution, Food, Southern Italy.

RIASSUNTO – *Presenza della lontra (Lutra lutra) nei monti Lattari (Campania)*– Si descrive un'area di presenza della lontra (*Lutra lutra*) in Campania mai segnalata prima, comprendente la "Valle delle Ferriere" attraversata dal torrente Ceraso e la valle denominata "Vkcite" (Amalfi, Provincia di Salerno). In totale sono stati trovati 24 siti di marcamento.

Parole chiave: *Lutra lutra*, Distribuzione, Alimentazione, Italia meridionale.

In Italy the survival of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) depends on the conservation of the populations living in the South (Cassola, 1986; Prigioni & Fumagalli, 1992). Several rivers hosting otters are in the Salerno province (Campania region) where this research was undertaken. In particular the present paper reports on the results of a field study carried out in Lattari mountains.

Lattari mountains extend from the Apennines sloping down westward to the Tyrrhenian sea. They represent the backbone of the Sorrento-Amalfi peninsula and separate the gulf of Naples from that of Salerno (Fig. 1). The study area is characterized by streams that run in canyons and have a flow heavily influenced by precipitations.

One of these canyons is "Valle delle Ferriere", a Natural Oriented Reserve set up by a Ministerial Decree in 1972. This valley is formed by Ceraso stream (about 6 km in length) that flows into the sea near Amalfi.

The survey was carried out from May to August 1993 along the main watercourses, looking for otter signs (spraints, anal secretions and footprints). The distance of marking sites from the water was estimated. Spraints were collected and food remains were identified following Webb (1975) and using personal collections. With regard to insects, exclusively beetles of large size were considered as directly preyed on by otters. Each prey item was quantified as percent of relative frequency (Fr%) on the total number of prey items (Prigioni, 1991).

Eighteen marking sites and 26 spraints were recorded in "Valle delle Ferriere" (Fig. 1, A). Sites were mainly located at a distance of 15-20 m from the water, along both banksides of the entire course of Ceraso stream. They were mainly found on paths created by man. In one case a drain-pipe, probably used as den, was marked with 4 spraints. Four sprainting sites were found in "Vècite" canyon, nearby Maiori village (Fig. 1, B). Their distance from the water varied from 1 to 20 m.

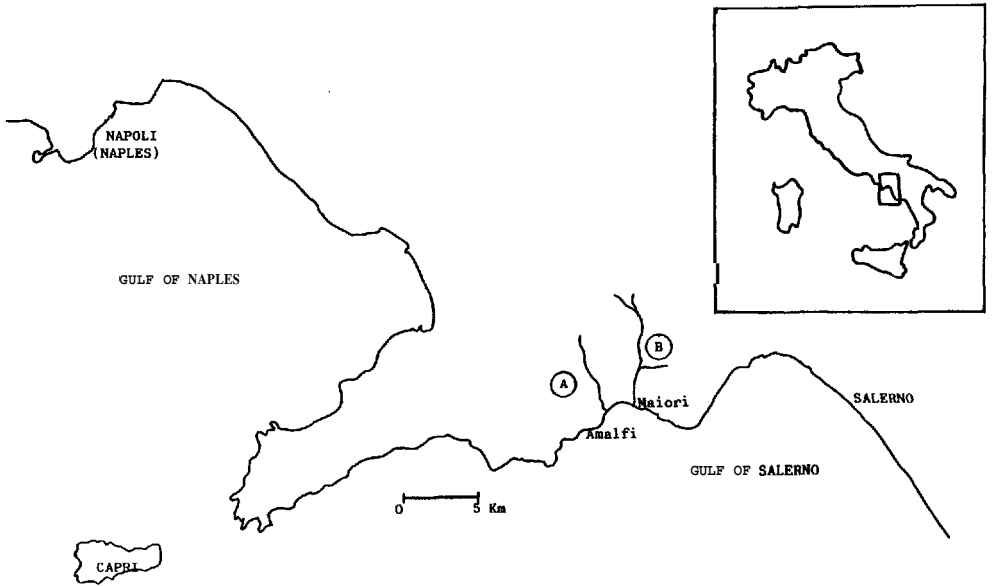


Fig. 1 – Study area (A = "Valle delle Ferriere"; B = "Vècite").

The diet included all classes of vertebrates with a prevalence of fish (Tab. 1).

In Lattari mountain the otter's presence was recorded by interview survey since 1955 (Cagnolaro et al., 1975). Our data seem to indicate a presence of few otters that are probably isolated from the main population of the Southern Italy. In the study area the stable presence of the otter mostly depends on the availability of food, mainly fish. This resource is scarce because of the heavy use of water for agricultural purposes.

Tab. 1 – Percent of relative frequency (Fr%) of each prey item used by otters (number of examined spraints = 26; total number of prey items = 44).

	N	Fr%
Coleoptera	6	13.6
<i>Salmo</i> sp.	14	31.8
<i>Rana</i> sp.	6	13.6
<i>Natrix</i> sp.	6	13.6
Undetermined Reptiles	1	2.3
Undetermined Birds	9	20.4
<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	1	2.3
Undetermined Mammals	1	2.3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS — We thank the Corpo Forestale dello Stato for the opportunity to carry out this **work**.

REFERENCES

- CASSOLA, F. (ed.). 1986. La lontra in Italia. Censimento, distribuzione e problemi di conservazione di una specie minacciata. WWF - Italia, Serie Atti e Studi 5: 1-135.
- CAGNOLARO, L., ROSSO, D., SPAGNESI, M. & B. VENTURI. 1975. La distribuzione della Lontra (*Lutra lutra* L.) in Italia e nei Cantoni Ticino e Grigioni (Svizzera) 1971 - 1973. Laboratorio di Zoologia applicata alla caccia. Biologia della Selvaggina, 63: 1-120
- PRIGIONI C. 1991. Lo studio della dieta della Volpe *Vulpes vulpes*. In Prigioni C. (ed.). Atti I Simp. Ital. Carnivori. Hystrix (n.s.) 3: 51-62.
- PRIGIONI C. & R. FUMAGALLI. 1992. La Lontra: status e conservazione in Italia. In "La Lontra: specie minacciata in Italia. Le ricerche in natura ed in cattività finalizzate alla sua conservazione". Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste. Collana Verde 89: 1-27.
- WEBB, J. 1975. Food of the otter (*Lutra lutra*) on the Somerset Levels. J. Zool. Lond., 177: 486 - 491