

A wolf walking around Malpensa Airport

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Coming from north-west, it was alone and some centuries ago it lived near Somma Lombardo too, as the documents report. The animal was hit during the night of 12 -13 November, it was a male animal and about two years old, had a weight of 36 kg, and was healthy. The car, which hit the animal, was driving near the International Airport of Malpensa. Tomorrow, in Varese there will be a press conference organized by the Province and it will clarify the doubts about this interesting and naturalistic event. The dead body of the animal has been biologically analyzed to prove the kind of species, it has been possible thanks to the department of the civil protection, that is responsible for the animals.

From the genetic fingerprinting carried out by the Laboratorio di Genetica dell'Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA), has come to light that the animal was Italian.

Why was there a wolf close to Malpensa?

Probably, it was following the Ticino River and it came from north, where it appeared about twenty years ago, especially in the western part of the Alps, in Piedmont. Contrary to what people believe, these animals, that are about eighty, today live in the Alps between Piedmont and France but they come from south, the Apennines.

A one-year-old note realized by the Associazione Teriologica Italiana explains the return of these mammals "the wolf comes back on the Alps," as explained by the association named like the science which studies mammals, **Theriology**, "started almost 20 years ago, through Liguria and western Italian-French Alpine Arch: the first individuals appeared in the Alps region, just on the French frontier, in 1987; the first packs had been found on the Maritime Alps, since 1992 and then the species spontaneously moved to the East, appearing again in France, Switzerland and Lombardy from where it had been absent for a century. Genetic analysis carried on exemplars found dead and on organic models collected in 20 years have documented the passage between the northern Apennine and the Alps of almost 8-16 founder individuals. The route of recolonization of the south-western Alps Arch was also recently proved also by the use of radio-emitting collars set on some individuals for researching purposes. Reduced to a remaining core of 100 survived exemplars on the Centre-southern Apennine at the beginning of 60s, the wolf has been able to increase its own pack thanks to its adapting ability and, in particular, to the progressing environmental transformation in mountains territories. The result of this mixture of characteristics of the species and changes concerning the use of territory by the man led to the recolonization of most of the Apennine, toward the South (Calabria) and the North (Liguria)."

How many are these Alpine wolves? Researchers give us the updated answer, according to research done a few years ago: "As for the Italian alpine areas with stable presence of wolves, in Piedmont (in the Alps) in the area around the border with France, the latest available data confirm the presence of 18 packs (14 packs in Piedmont and 4 in the area between Italy and

France). Considering that the average pack in the "Piedmont Alps area", in the winter of 2010-2011, was made of about 4 wolves, the most recent estimate shows that the number of wolves present in the Piedmont Alps is equal to 70 animals (5 of them are solitary wolves) at the beginning of the winter and 61 at winter's end (5 of them are solitary wolves)."

Therefore, this appearance in the province of Varese does not prove the presence of packs, and it has to be considered as an opportunity rather than a danger: "Besides environmental aspects, wolves are an important part of human culture and a symbol of the Italian nature, which has always aroused people's interest," says the A.T.It. Today, its "extraordinary" presence, which can thrill and call the public's attention towards the whole ecosystem, is an opportunity to ease the implementation of more environmentally-oriented territory management plans."

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