

Canis lupus italicus Altobello, 1921

Wolf

Family: Canidae

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(Photo Rafal Kochanowski, Fotolia)

Wolves have a reddish-grey coat in a range of tones, with black shading along the lower limbs and lighter belly and muzzle.

In comparison to dogs, they have a wider cranium, stronger teeth and longer legs.

Wolves have a **very clear social structure**: they form packs with a rigid hierarchy, usually with one **dominant male** and female, known as "Alphas". The whole pack

collaborates in hunting, controlling the territory and bringing up the pups.

Their preferred prey is wild ungulates which are hunted in a group, in order to overcome even large sized animals.

Attacks on domestic animals take place due to their abundance and accessibility, and can become frequent if other prey is scarce. Mass killings also sometimes take place, when several individuals are attacked but only one is eaten. Despite the problems associated with wolves interacting with agricultural activities, the predator plays a fundamental role in the ecology.

Wolves became extinct in the Alps at the beginning of the 20th century due to human persecution.

The **first sightings in the Aosta Valley date back to 2004**, in the Mont Fallère area, and since then tracks and sightings have continued to be reported, especially in the Gran Paradiso National Park and the surrounding valleys. Genetic analyses conducted on biological samples found have confirmed **the return of the Apennine wolf to the Aosta Valley**.

Bio-Montagne - Réseau d'éducation sur la biodiversité dans les zones alpines - Programma di cooperazione transfrontaliera Italia-Svizzera 2007-2013