



25th MEETING OF THE
**ALPINE IBEX EUROPEAN
SPECIALIST GROUP**
GSE – AIESG

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ABSTRACT BOOK

"BLUE-ORANGE"
GRAN PARADISO

Fly or freeze? Movement and space use response of Alpine ibex to hunting pressure

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The combination of successful reintroduction projects and its protected status has brought back the Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*) from the brink of extinction. Its protected status prevents the ibex from being hunted. However, exceptions can be found such as in the northeastern corner of Italy, in South Tyrol, where selective hunting is allowed, and on the northern side of the Alps, particularly in Switzerland and Austria with which South Tyrol shares a border. The hunting season generally lasts from August to early December, with hunting pressure varying throughout the season and Countries. In this transboundary area, two ibex colonies (Sesvenna and Palla Bianca/Weißkugel) are exposed to different hunting regimes and pressures during the hunting season, whilst being exposed to similar biotic and abiotic conditions. Some individuals in these two colonies have been GPS-tracked in recent years (2018 – 2023), allowing the investigation of the effect of lethal pressure on their movement patterns and habitat selection. We expect to find differences in the movement patterns of ibex between hunting and non-hunting seasons. During the hunting season, ibex, especially males, may increase their step length and prefer refuge areas such as banning areas, steeper slopes and rugged terrain, or may cross the border where hunting pressure is lower or absent in order to escape such lethal pressure. Investigating the movement ecology of ibex under different hunting regimes can help us to better understand the impact of such lethal pressure on the spatial behaviour of this iconic high-mountain ungulate.