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HUMAN INFLUENCE ON FAUNAL TURNOVER DURING EARLY HOLOCENE IN SICILY

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The faunistic analysis at the Late Pleistocene-Holocene transition in Sicily allows to understand the ecologic and/or human role in the faunal turn over of the island. Following the work of Petruso et al. (in press) we assessed that at the Pleniglacial-Late Glacial interval, in supposed absence of human occurrence, were already extinct the last endemites (the middle sized elephant, the endemic sicilian subspecies of red deer, auroch and bison) and the large predators (the spotted hyena and the cave bear) surviving in Sicily from the late Middle Pleistocene. Otherwise some other taxa already arrived during the Interpleniglacial still occur, such as the steppe ass and some small mammals (the common field mouse while the shrew and the *Terricola vole* arrived slightly before), and others belonging to the long resident taxa (such as the red fox, the wolf, the wild boar and the hedgehog) of the early Middle Pleistocene. The newly arrived fauna accompanied by humans is composed by an heterogeneous group of mammals such as the lynx, the auroch, the roe and red deer, the marten, the weasel, the hare and the wild cat. All these cohort of taxa seem not to be influenced by consistent human presence with the exception of the wild ass and of the linx that become extinct at the transition with Holocene. We conclude that the faunal turn over in Sicily have been driven mostly by climatic fluctuations and geodynamic events (that modulated the connection or isolation phases of Sicily with the mainland) while the ecologic role of humans seems to have been very low until the recent Holocene. During the course of Holocene human have influenced faunal composition with massive hunting but mostly with the active and passive introduction of alien species.

Petruso D., Sarà M., Surdi G., Masini F., in press. Le faune a mammiferi della Sicilia tra il Tardoglaciale e L'Olocene. In: *La Biogeografia della Sicilia*. Biogeographia, 30.