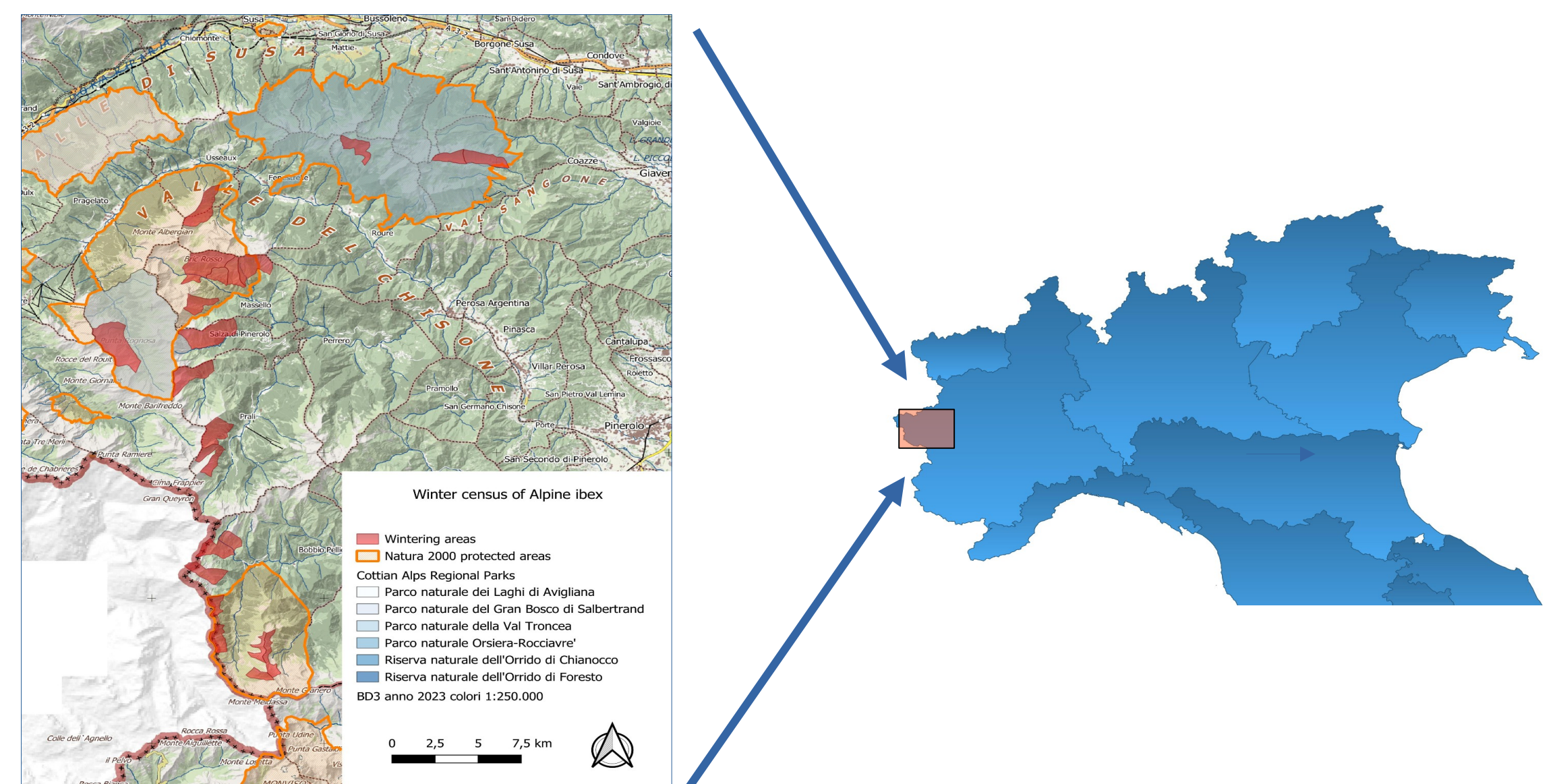


Winter census of Alpine ibex in the Cottian Alps

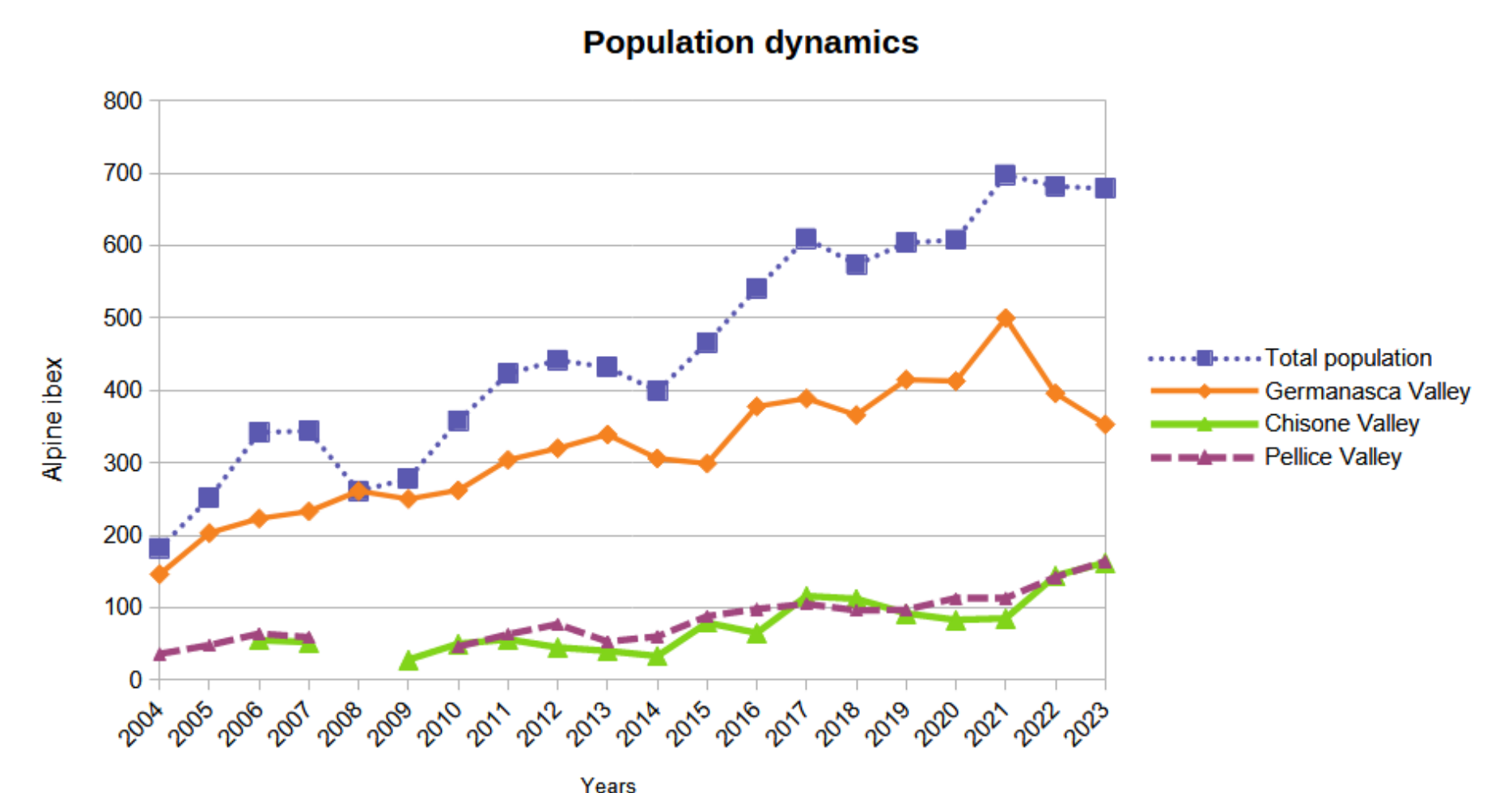
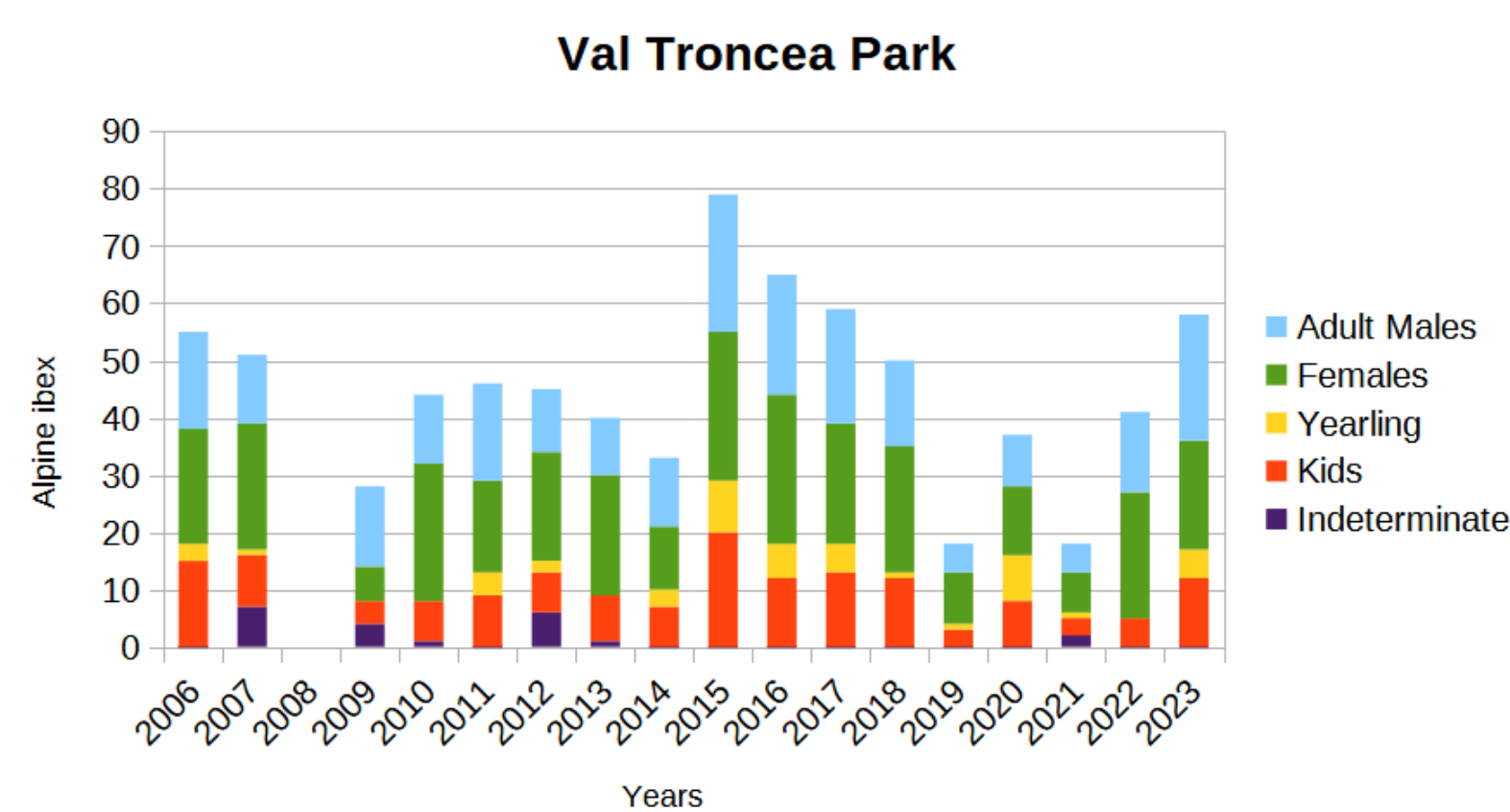
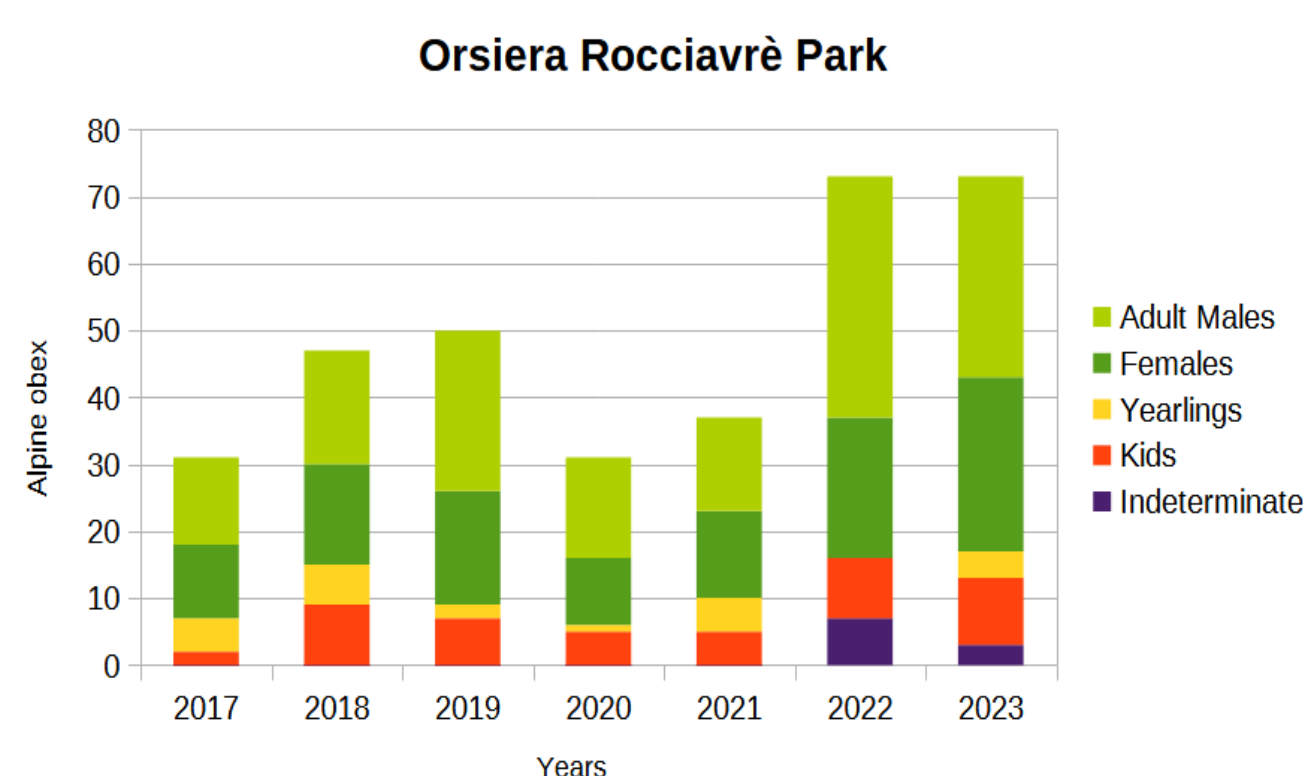
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A series of reintroductions carried out between 1978 and 1995 in the Pellice and Chisone Valleys and the neighbouring French region of Queyras have allowed the return of the Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex* L. 1758) in the Pinerolo Valleys, a sector of the Cottian Alps. This species is currently protected and is widely distributed in an area that includes Hunting Districts, Game Reserves, Regional Parks and Natura 2000 Sites. In order to monitor the distribution and abundance of the Alpine ibex in the area between Val Pellice and Val Chisone from 2005 the hunting district “Comprendorio Alpino TO1” with the collaboration of the “Albergian” and “Valloncrò” Game Reserves, carried out standardized counts on wintering areas. This census method was also applied in the Protected Areas of the Cottian Alps, first in the Val Troncea Regional Park (2006) and subsequently in the Orsiera Rocciavère Regional Park (2017). In December, the Alpine ibex concentration and the reduced mobility of the animals allows to a reduced number of operators to define the population size (MNA minimum number alive) and structure, and to estimate the related demographic parameters.



At the moment, 20 wintering areas are monitored, (n =3 in Chisone Valley, n= 9 in Germanasca Valley, n= 7 in Pellice Valley = 7, n= 1 in Sangone Valley) extended over a surface of 4.174,7 ha (range: 74.2 - 485 ha, mean = 208.74 ha) that seems to include the main wintering areas located in the mountains around Pinerolo city (NO 336587 - 4984244, SE 348030 – 4954167, UTM 32 N, WGS 84).



The overall data show a strong increase in the population, growth from 182 heads (2004) to 679 in 2024, with some differences in different areas. The district with the largest number of ibexes corresponds to Val Germanasca (n= 353 in 2023), where however the population appears to be decreasing from 2021, perhaps due to a greater dispersion of the animals favoured by the absence of snow cover in the first part of the winter. In Val Chisone and Val Pellice the population presents similar growth characteristics and seems to be constantly increasing (VP n= 36 in 2004, n= 164 in 2023; VCH n= 55 in 2006, n= 162 in 2024). Results show a substantial population stability in Val Troncea Regional Park (n= 55 in 2006, n= 58 in 2023), while the increasing in Orsiera Rocciavère Regional Park (n= 31 in 2017, N= 73 in 2023) it could be due in part to more effective monitoring of wintering areas.

Acknowledgements

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