

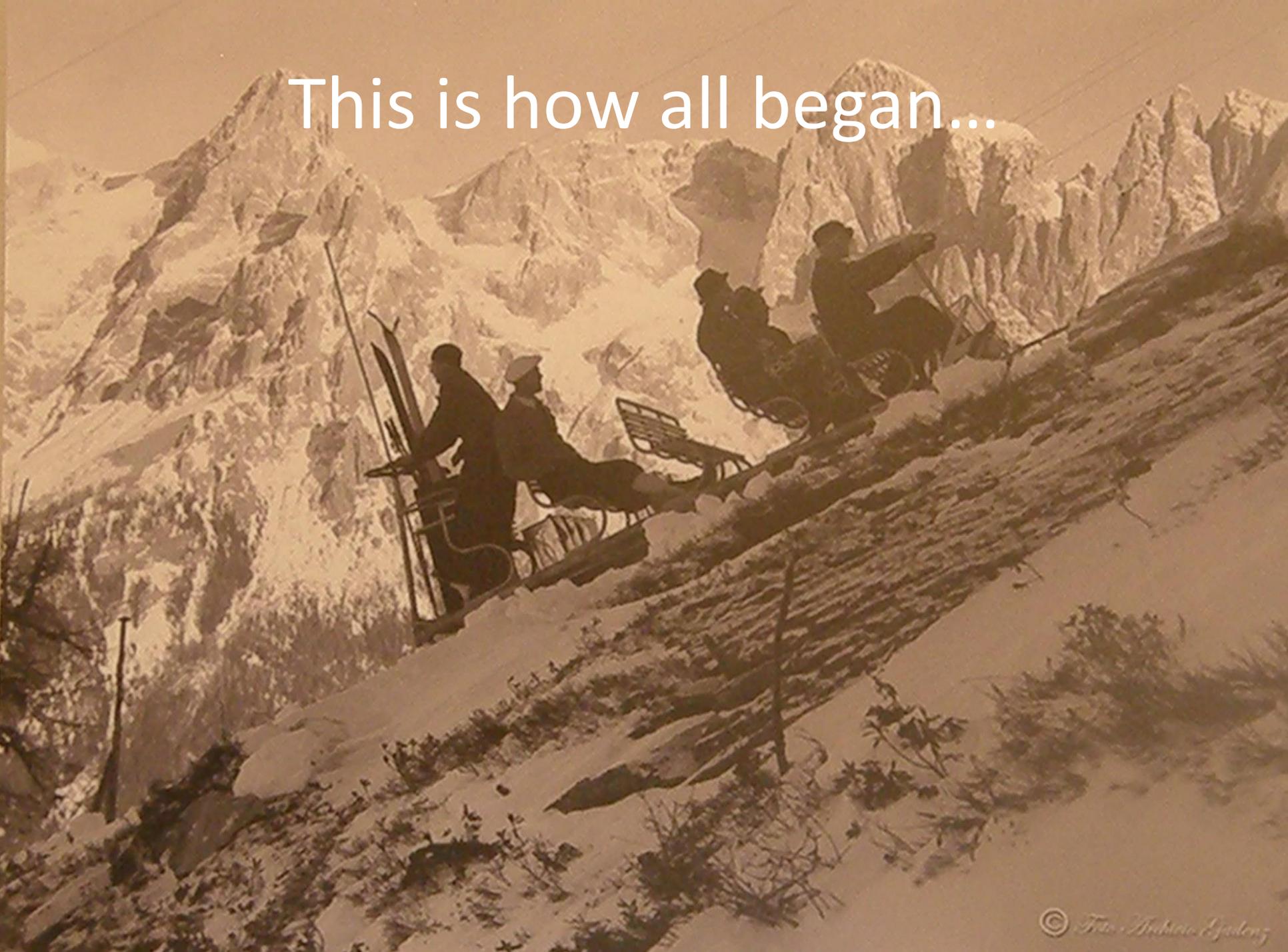
Wildlife and Sport Activities: Is the Coexistence Possible in the Italian Alps?



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Massif des Bauges Regional Nature Park, 3. /4. March 2016

This is how all began...



The Italian Alps as a winter sport area today

Region	No. of Ski Resorts	No. of Ski Slopes	Km of Ski Slopes	No. of Ski Facilities	Km of Cross-Country Ski Tracks
Liguria	1	8	9	3	D.n.a.
Piedmont	36	657	1126	276	D.n.a.
Aosta Valley	20	355	612	167	400
Lombardy	26	419	838	244	590
Trentino	29	468	669	275	480
South-Tirol	28	676	1212	393	1800
Veneto	17	458	627	239	1000
Friuli	6	93	90	54	118
Italian Alps	163	3134	5183	1651	4388

The exploitation of mountain areas for alpine skiing is still continuing today



The result has been the habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation for many animal species



The cables of ski facilities and electric lines are an important cause of mortality among tetraonids



Tourist activities practiced in the Alps in different periods

Traditional tourist activities practiced in the Alps until the end of the 60's, beginning of the 70's

- Alpinism
- Hiking
- Alpine skiing
- Cross-country skiing

New disciplines appeared later on, from the 70's

- Free-climbing, bouldering, ice-climbing
- Orienteering
- Hang-gliding
- Snowshoeing
- Mountain-biking (downhill, fat bike)
- Paragliding
- Mushroom and berry gathering
- Ski mountaineering
- Freeride and ski out of bounds
- Water sports: rafting, canyoning

Sport activities can be divided into two broad categories

- Those at high environmental impact, which need infrastructures to be practiced. Their construction has negative repercussions on the environment. The most important sport activity of this type is the alpine skiing (ski slopes, ski-lifts, snowmaking systems, hotels and restaurants, etc.);
- Those at low environmental impact, which don't need any infrastructure to be practiced (mountaineering skiing, snowshoeing, paragliding, etc.).

With the increase of the number of participants, even the so called low environmental impact activities are not so anymore

- As these activities can be practiced everywhere, their negative repercussions can be spread on large areas inside the natural habitats where they take place.



Moreover many outdoor activities that were originally practiced just for fun have become sport competitions

Mass Events



Photo Cai Pallanza

Sport Competitions



Photo R. Faggiana

After having lost wide areas due to the construction of ski resorts, now the spread of low environmental impact sport activities has caused the loss of the last habitats left undisturbed for the wildlife



People are always more often in in the same habitats where wildlife lives



This means that the interactions between people and wildlife are always more frequent



What are the major problems in the spread of the low environmental impact sport activities?

- Wildlife gets not used to disturbances that are not in some way predictable;
- People who spent their time in the nature are not aware that the wildlife lives in the same habitats.



The motto of the alpine wildlife in winter is to reduce the activity to the lowest level possible



Val Venegia, Dolomites, Trentino, 8.1.2016

Tetraonids can successfully face the rigours of winter through different adaptations

Black grouse digestive tract

- Morphological adaptations
- Anatomy-physiological adaptations
- Behavioural adaptations



Feathers have a long downy aftershaft that increases insulation

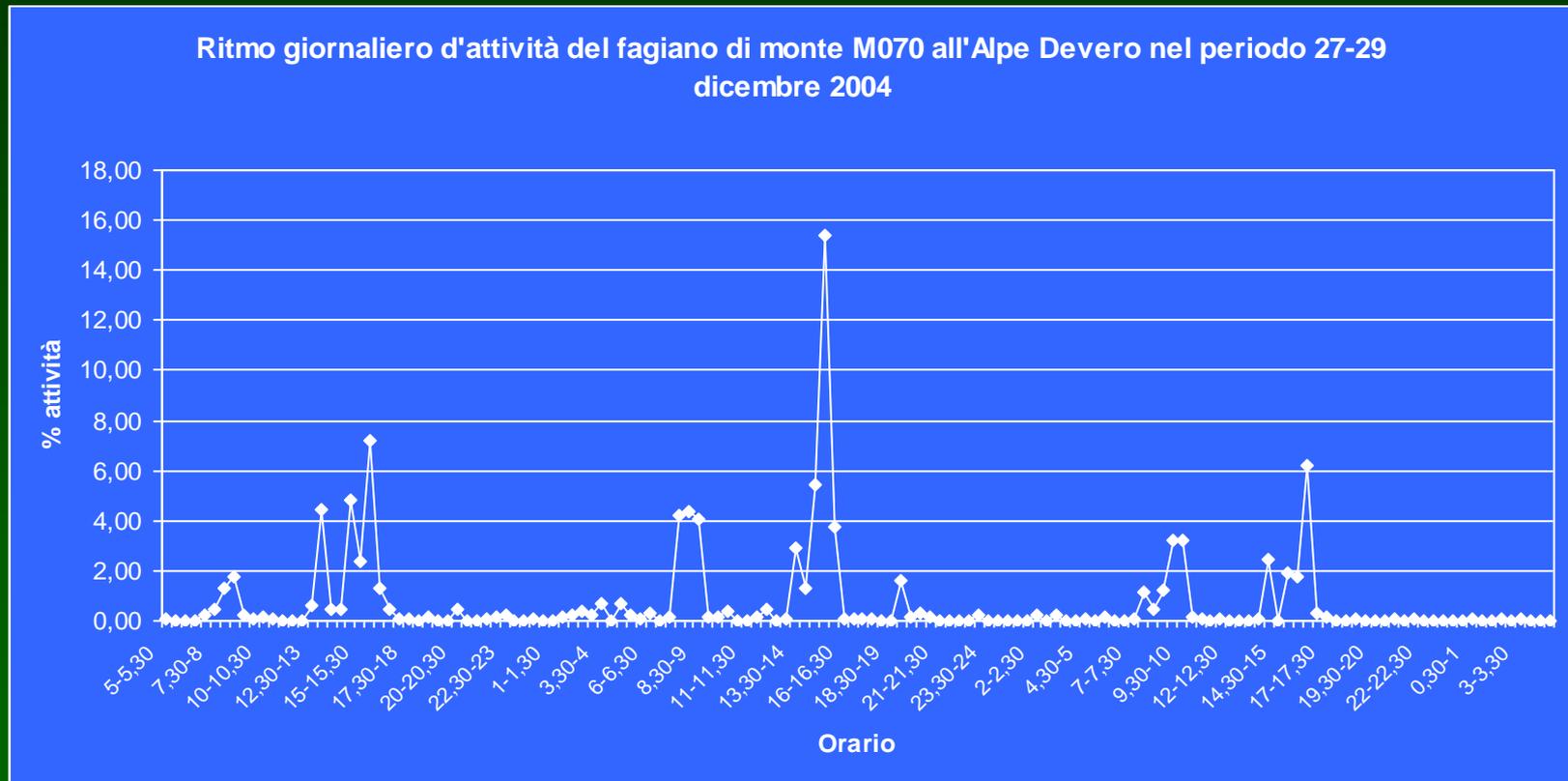


Toes are feathered



The digestive tract in tetraonids is very long, especially the ceca

Activity pattern of a radiotagged black grouse male during three days in the Veglia-Devero Nature Park (27.-29. December 2004)



If the wildlife is disturbed, the adaptations developed in thousands of years are not more effective



Chamois fleeing for the arrival of ski mountaineers, Winter 1994-95
Schwarzwassertal, Voralrberg, Austria

In the Italian Alps there are no areas where sport activities are someway regulated or prohibited

Just some timid try has been done on some hot spots, but no information campaign was ever promoted



Sometimes nesting area can be closed to tourist access
(e.g. raptors and capercaillie)



Photo A. Martina



Paneveggio, Dolomites, Trentino, 19.5.2012

Photo G. Pelucchi

The guide-books regarding ski mountaineering and snowshoeing tours could be an important tool of divulgation, but...

- 39 guide-books, published between 2007 and 2014 were reviewed;
- Only in three guide-books the topic “Wildgame and human disturbance” was treated in a proper way (2 guides published in 2012 and 1 in 2013, all about tours in South-Tirol);
- In 7 guide-books the topic was handled in a superficial way, not sufficient to understand the problems;
- No word in 29 guides.

What should be done to reduce the conflicts? A better knowledge for a better understanding

- Information campaign

Information should be addressed to the different groups of interest that are involved in the topic (tourists, Italian Alpine Club, alpine guides, ski teachers, ski resorts, foresters, schools etc.). It should be distinguished between a deeper information done through conferences, workshops, courses held for the different mountain disciplines, articles in the ski magazines, guide-books, leaflets and that done in the field through information boards and signs. These campaigns should make clear, why, where and when the wildlife should be protected from human disturbances.

- Advertising

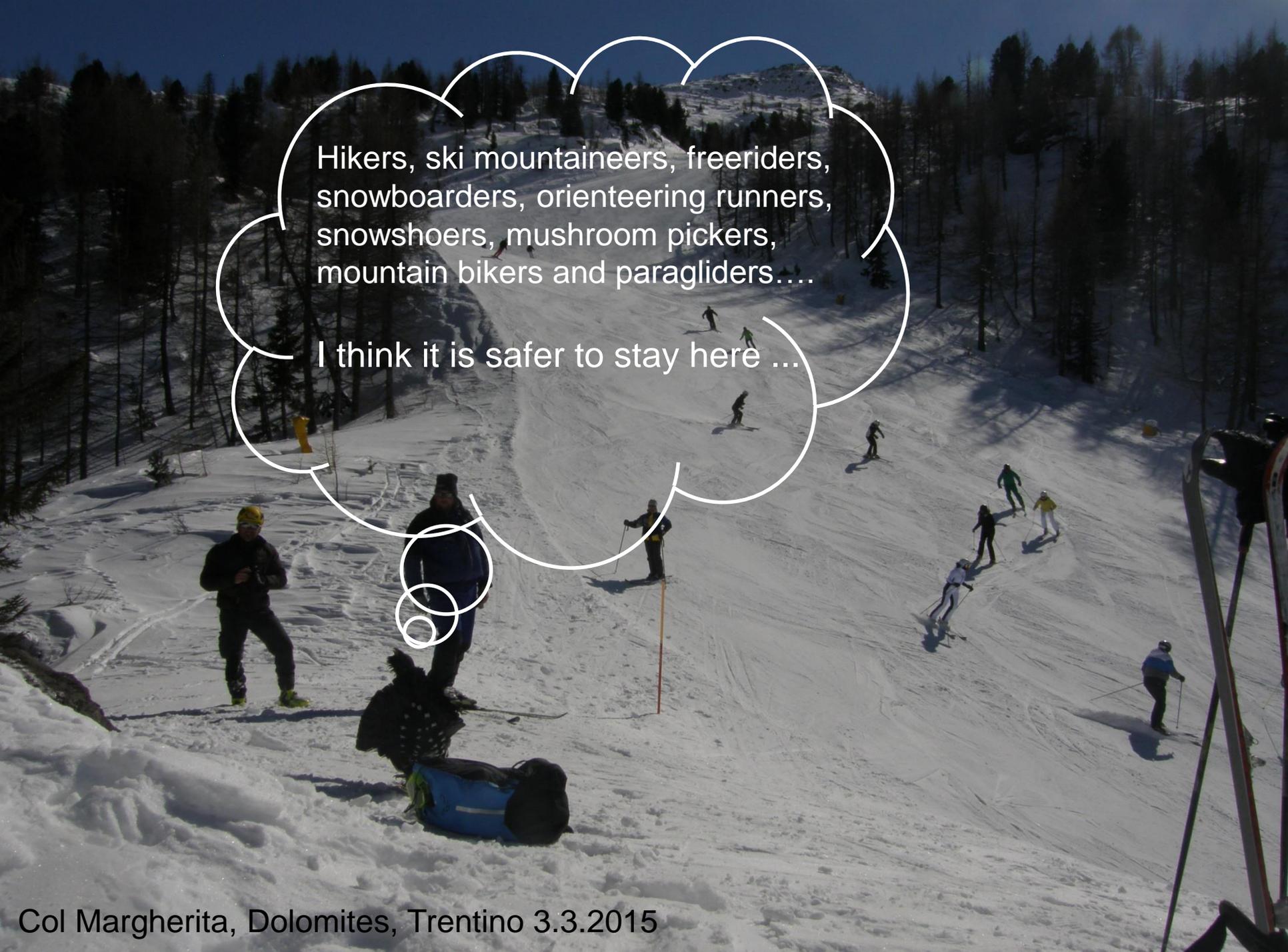
The contents of the information campaign should be spread as much as possible over a broader public through the media (Internet, newspapers, TVs, radios, etc.);

- Marking of protected areas

Areas of high interest for the wildlife (wintering areas) should be marked with signs and information boards. Moreover they should be reported in maps and guide-books.

It is time to act

- In the Italian Alps the ski mountaineering and snowshoeing tours are by now some thousands. It is no more possible that they can be carried out without any kind of regulations. It is time that ski mountaineers and snowshoers are kept along signed tours, with the aim to leave undisturbed the wintering areas important for the wildlife.



Hikers, ski mountaineers, freeriders,
snowboarders, orienteering runners,
snowshoers, mushroom pickers,
mountain bikers and paragliders....

I think it is safer to stay here ...