

Food habits of Wild Goat, *Capra aegagrus aegagrus*, in the Khorramdasht area, Kelardasht, Iran

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Abstract. The food habits of the Wild Goat (*Capra aegagrus aegagrus*) were studied by direct observations in Kelardasht, Mazandaran, Iran, between September 1999 and February 2001. Out of a total of 88 species of plant recorded in the area, we found 38 in the diet of the Wild Goat. Gramineae were the main diet. There was a sexual difference in the food preference: some plant species such as *Melica ciliata* and *Leonurus cardiaca* were used only by females, and some others such as *Cousinia pterocaulos* and *Dianthus mazanderanicus* were eaten only by males.

Kurzfassung. In Kelardasht, Mazandaran, Iran, wurde zwischen September 1999 und Februar 2001 das Nahrungsverhalten der Bezoarziege (*Capra aegagrus aegagrus*) durch direkte Feldbeobachtungen untersucht. Von den insgesamt 88 Pflanzenarten, die im Untersuchungsgebiet nachgewiesen wurden, wurden 38 in der Nahrung der Bezoarziege wiedergefunden. Gramineae stellten die Hauptnahrung dar. Zwischen den Geschlechtern bestand ein Unterschied in der Nahrungspräferenz: einige Arten, wie z.B. *Melica ciliata* und *Leonurus cardiaca*, fanden sich nur bei Weibchen, während andere, wie z.B. *Cousinia pterocaulos* und *Dianthus mazanderanicus*, nur von Männchen gefressen wurden.

Key words. Habitat, food habit, diet, high mountains, Khorramdasht, Kelardasht, Middle East.

Introduction

The Wild Goat, *Capra aegagrus aegagrus*, is found in Iran in almost all rocky areas, from the Central Mountain Range to the Alborz and Zagros heights, and to the mountains dominating the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea (SHACKLETON 1997, ZIAEI 1996). There is no reliable information about the population size, but according to statistics from the year 1991, 2,500 individuals were then living in Golestan National Park and 4,000 individuals in the Central Alborz area. Areas with a good population of Wild Goats in Iran include Takht Soleyman Mountain, Alam Kooch, and Khorramdasht (Kelardasht area).

The only study on the diet and feeding habits of the Wild Goat in Iran was made by KIABI (1975) in Golestan National Park during the summer of 1975, and he found that this species prefers to browse on trees and shrubs rather than on herbal plants. In the course of this study, the food regime and seasonal changes in the selection of the diet of the Wild Goat were studied in Khorramdasht.