**Forest mammals**

Brown bears

Brown bears (Ursus arctos) prefer forest environments, even if they adapt to a wide variety of habitats. In Italy, they only live on mountains which are largely covered with woods and have a steep morphology, since they keep away from those areas which are excessively disturbed by men. They tend to live in woods mainly in the spring and autumn, while in the summer bears tend to stay in shrubby and grassy areas, at higher altitudes. During the winter, they prefer steep rocky areas, where they can find caves or at least gorges to dig out dens for hibernation. Brown bears live mainly, but not only, at night. They are territorial and solitary, and their social relations are limited to the mating season.

Badgers

Badgers (Meles meles) live in forests, plains and mountains up to 2,000 m asl. They prefer broad-leaved or mixed woods, even if small, alternated with open, shrubby, stony and uncultivated areas; in northern regions, they mainly live in coniferous forests. In any case, they are ecologically very adaptable, and this is why they can live even in farming areas and thick bushes, coasts included. They dig dens or use those of other animals (porcupines, foxes) with which they sometime cohabit. In northern Europe, badgers form social groups sharing the same den and territory, while in Italy they seem to prefer a more solitary lifestyle.
Other animals try to survive the winter with the little food they can find, also using the fat they have stored: deer and wild boars rummage amidst the vegetation and feed on bark and twigs; some birds feed on the shoots and berries that remain on trees, while insectivore birds root amidst the leaves in search of lethargic insects and earthworms, while tits look for them on branches.

Deer

Deer (Cervus elaphus) are generally associated with open woods, interspersed with expanses of open grassland in flat regions; only later were they pushed towards thick forests and mountains by man’s pressure. At present, they live in a wide variety of habitats, from Scottish moors to mesophilic forests (consisting of plants that like wet areas) in central Europe, to the Mediterranean scrub of the southernmost part of its distributional area. On the mountains, during the summer they venture well beyond the upper limit of arboreal vegetation, in the open grasslands of the alpine horizon. In Italy, they prefer to live in broad-leaved or mixed woods alternated with large clearings and pastures, but can also be found in coniferous forests, in the riparian scrubs (i.e. located near river and lake banks) of water streams and, in Sardinia, in the typical Mediterranean scrub. Deer form large herds, generally headed by one older doe. In the mating season, stags have a deeply ritual behaviour, for instance fights, cries (powerful bells), marking of the territory. At the end of the mating season, stags go back to their solitary lives, while does remain in groups, headed by one adult doe. Deer live mainly at night and at dusk, they are very suspicious and keep away from everyone. They are a herbivore and browsing species (pastures, shrubs, ericaceous plants, conifers).