Bears from the Buco dell’Orso Cave (Laglio-Como, Lombardy – Northern Italy).
I: Morphometric Study of the Cranial and Mandibular Fossil Remains

Gli Ursidi della Grotta del Buco dell’Orso (Laglio-Como, Lombardia-Italia settentrionale).
I: Studio morfometrico di resti craniali e mandibolari

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1. Introduction

The Pleistocene–Holocene bears have always played a very important role in the examination of faunal assemblages found in caves, and the great quantity of accumulated fossil remains has allowed us to study these bears even more closely. There are many studies on their habitat and lifestyle, which have been made both locally, regionally and extra-regionally. This study considers the cranial and mandibular remains which have been found in the Buco dell’Orso Cave near Laglio (Como) (Fig. 1): these fossils are now in the Museum of the classical secondary school “A. Volta” in Como and in the Natural Sciences Museum of the University of Pavia. After a systematic anatomical examination that recognised for the first time in the Buco dell’Orso Cave a probable fragment of U. arctos, we have detailed the osteometrics, which are useful for a comparison with remains from Italy and other areas.

2. Previous Work

References to Pleistocene bears in Italy are very numerous and diverse, in particular the fossils of U. spelaeus and U. arctos. Cornalia (1858–71) mentioned them in reference to the deposit at Laglio. Later Airaghi (1927) made further studies on all Quaternary fossils from Lombardy which were known up to that date. Naturally he considered those from Laglio too. The remains from this site were again reconsidered by Rossi Ronchetti (1958).

Even if we do not have so many works dealing with the Laglio Cave, the specific literature on the genus Ursus is more important. In the first half of the eighteenth century Piccoli found osteological remains in Italian units. In Lombardy the cave called “Buco del Piombo” (Como) has always been considered very interesting because of the large quantity of fossil remains of Ursus that has been found here. Cornalia (1850), Corti (1894) and Mariani (1896) produced studies on its faunistic assemblage.

The numerous findings posed from the beginning the...