

Slow Italian, Fast Learning

Ep.423: Colombians divided over the fate of hippos linked to Pablo Escobar

Italian	English
<p>Negli anni '80, Pablo Escobar si è guadagnato la fama di spietato signore della droga in Colombia.</p> <p>È stato infine ucciso nel 1993.</p> <p>NEWS REPORT: "A drug king who was for years one of the world's most wanted men was gunned down today by Colombian police in the Colombian city of Medellin."</p> <p>Ancora oggi la Colombia è alle prese con la sua eredità.</p> <p>E non solo in termini di violenza politica, ma anche dal punto di vista ambientale.</p> <p>Escobar era tristemente famoso per aver importato quattro ippopotami in Colombia all'apice del suo potere e per aver allestito uno zoo privato in una delle sue proprietà.</p> <p>Il veterinario tropicale colombiano Carlos Valderama ha dichiarato alla BBC che da allora la popolazione è cresciuta in modo pressoché incontrollato e sta causando gravi problemi ambientali.</p> <p>"They are increasing the sediment on the lakes and lagoons that they are located in. So basically, they are affecting the whole range of ecosystems and the animals in the waters are getting affected because of this situation."</p> <p>La Colombia ha avviato mesi fa dei colloqui con otto governi – tra cui India, Messico, Filippine, Ecuador, Perù e Sudafrica – per valutare la possibilità di trasferire alcuni animali in zoo o riserve naturali di quei paesi. Tuttavia, le autorizzazioni necessarie non sono ancora state ottenute e alcune istituzioni hanno perso interesse poiché la</p>	<p>In the 1980s, Pablo Escobar established a reputation in Colombia as a ruthless drug lord.</p> <p>He was ultimately killed in 1993.</p> <p>NEWS REPORT: "A drug king who was for years one of the world's most wanted men was gunned down today by Colombian police in the Colombian city of Medellin."</p> <p>Even today, Colombia is grappling with his legacy.</p> <p>And it's not only in terms of political violence - but the environment.</p> <p>Escobar was infamous for importing four hippopotamuses into Colombia at the height of his power, and establishing a private zoo at one of his properties.</p> <p>Colombian tropical veterinarian Carlos Valderama has told the BBC that the population has grown largely unchecked ever since - and are causing significant environmental problems.</p> <p>"They are increasing the sediment on the lakes and lagoons that they are located in. So basically, they are affecting the whole range of ecosystems and the animals in the waters are getting affected because of this situation."</p> <p>Colombia began talks months ago with eight governments - including India, Mexico, Philippines, Ecuador, Peru and South Africa - to possibly transfer some animals to zoos or sanctuaries in those countries.</p> <p>But the necessary authorisations have not yet been obtained, and some institutions have</p>

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consanguineità ha causato difetti genetici negli ippopotami colombiani.

Non sorprende quindi che la ministra dell'Ambiente Irene Vélez affermi che il governo è intenzionato ad adottare misure estreme.

SPANISH THEN ENGLISH VO: "We are issuing a euthanasia protocol so that the environmental authorities, which are directly responsible for carrying out these actions, can implement them with the support of institutes that also back, from a scientific perspective, that this is a necessary action to reduce the population. Without that action, it is impossible to control the population and, as we saw in the estimates, by 2030 we would have at least 500 hippos affecting our ecosystems and harming our native species, such as manatees and river turtles."

La decisione di sopprimere gli animali ha diviso il Paese e ha ispirato alcune offerte insolite.

Da quando è stata resa nota la notizia, il figlio di un miliardario indiano si è offerto di trasferire fino a 80 ippopotami dalla Colombia alla sua tenuta privata nel Gujarat, in India.

Anant Ambani – figlio dell'uomo più ricco d'Asia, Mukesh Ambani – afferma di essere disposto ad accogliere e prendersi cura degli animali nel suo zoo privato per salvarli.

In Colombia, la senatrice Andrea Padilla si oppone all'abbattimento.

SPANISH THEN ENGLISH VO: "This is a legacy left to us by a drug trafficker, hitman, and murderer, so how can it be that we're going to close this chapter in the same way by shooting the hippos?"

lost interest because inbreeding has caused genetic defects in the Colombia hippos.

Not surprisingly, Environment Minister Irene Velez says the government is keen to take extreme action.

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The decision to euthanise the animals has divided the country and attracted some unusual offers.

Since the announcement, the son of an Indian billionaire has offered to ship up to 80 hippopotamuses from Colombia to his private estate in Gujarat in India.

Anant Ambani - the son of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani - says he is willing to receive and care for the animals at his private zoo to save them.

Back in Colombia, Senator Andrea Padilla is opposed to the cull.

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<p>Ma agli occhi del governo colombiano, che da anni lotta per contenere i danni, non esistono soluzioni facili.</p> <p>E per i colombiani comuni, è una questione di sopravvivenza economica.</p> <p>Alcuni sostengono che la presenza degli ippopotami abbia ostacolato i loro sforzi per guadagnarsi da vivere, anche se alcuni hanno cercato di trarne vantaggio.</p> <p>Diversi pomeriggi alla settimana, barche piene di turisti colombiani e stranieri arrivano per scrutare la costa, in attesa di segnali nelle acque torbide - ma anche queste uscite possono occasionalmente finire in urla mentre gli animali si avvicinano con velocità terrificante.</p> <p>Questo perché gli ippopotami sono animali semi-acquatici capaci di caricare a velocità fino a 8 chilometri all'ora in acqua e 30 chilometri a terra.</p> <p>Per Wilinton Sánchez, pescatore del fiume Magdalena, non vale la pena correre il rischio.</p> <p>SPANISH THEN ENGLISH VO: "Seeing those hippos is really tough because we were out there on Saturday and the hippo stood up and swung its jaws wide—if it grabs you, it'll tear you apart. So, you understand that animal is very dangerous. We stopped fishing because we saw it."</p>	<p>But in the eyes of the Colombian government, who has struggled for years to contain the damage, there are no easy answers.</p> <p>And for ordinary Colombians, it's a matter of economic survival.</p> <p>Some say the presence of the hippos has been interfering in their efforts to earn a living, though a few have tried to use it to their advantage.</p> <p>Several afternoons a week, boats filled with Colombian and foreign tourists arrive to scan the shoreline, waiting for signs in the murky water - but even these outings can occasionally end in screams as the animals close the distance with terrifying speed.</p> <p>That's because hippos are semi-aquatic animals capable of charging at speeds of up to 8 kilometres per hour in water and 30 kilometres on land.</p> <p>For Magdalena River fisherman Wilinton Sánchez, it's not worth the risk.</p> <p>SPANISH THEN ENGLISH VO: "Seeing those hippos is really tough because we were out there on Saturday and the hippo stood up and swung its jaws wide—if it grabs you, it'll tear you apart. So, you understand that animal is very dangerous. We stopped fishing because we saw it."</p>
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Report by Deborah Groarke for SBS News.

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