
25.06.2025



NATUREFIRST

From Information to Understanding: Rethinking Conservation Communication

Workshop agenda

Slides
1-3

Welcome & Introduction

Slides
4-21

Presentation by Stefania Volani

Slides
22-31

Presentation by Iva Toncheva-Boesten

Interactive Poll Results

Group Exercise: Communication Strategy Scenarios

Group Reflections

Close

Hosts, presenters, speakers



Iva Toncheva-Boesten

*Journalist / PR & Communication
Expert*

Expert in media relations, social media,
and communication in complex
contexts



Simona Capelli

*Research Fellow, University of Trento
(Italy)*

Focus: Nature perceptions and
community engagement in Trentino



Stefania Volani

*Research Fellow, University of Trento
(Italy)*

Ecologist and GIS specialist working on
the TransWILD project on
human-wildlife interactions



Kyle Luca Jewell

*PhD Candidate, University of Inland
Norway / Research Fellow, University
of Trento (Italy)*

Specialist in socio-ecological
systems and landscape change

25-06-2025



NATUREFIRST

TransWILD project, human perceptions and stakeholder involvement
- Case study: brown bear reintroduction in Italy -

Workshop overview

TransWILD project presentation

Human-wildlife interaction case studies

- Italian case study, human perceptions and stakeholder involvement
- Media involvement and Bulgarian case studies

Practical activity based on case studies

SPEAKERS



Stefania Volani



Iva Tontcheva

TransWILD project



Transformative wildlife management to enhance biodiversity protection and ecosystem services provision in shared and protected multi-use landscapes across Europe

Who we are and why we are here



Stefania Volani



Simona Capelli

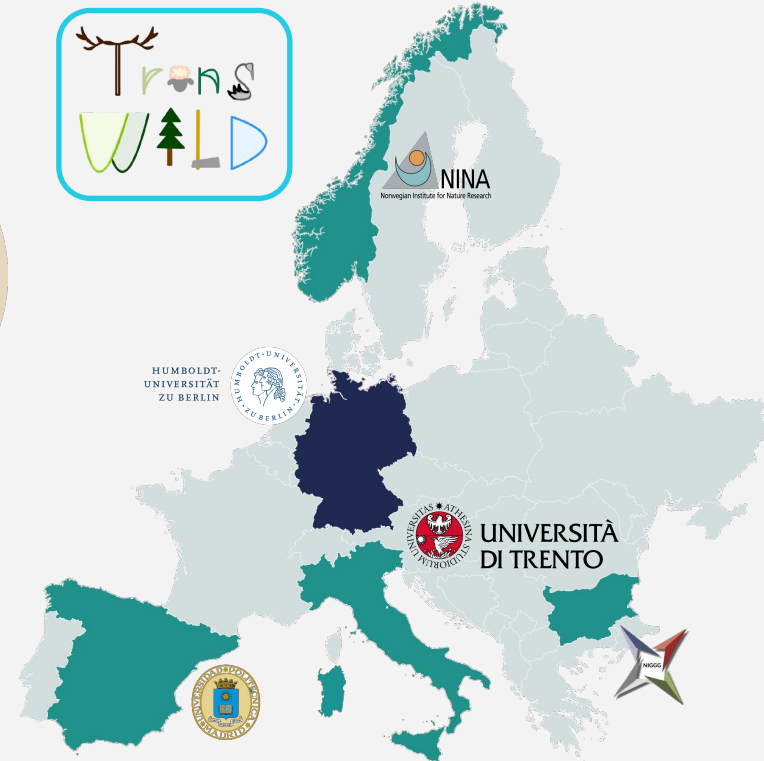


Kyle Luca Jewell



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TransWILD project



Transformative wildlife management to enhance biodiversity protection and ecosystem services provision in shared and protected multi-use landscapes across Europe

Who we are and why we are here



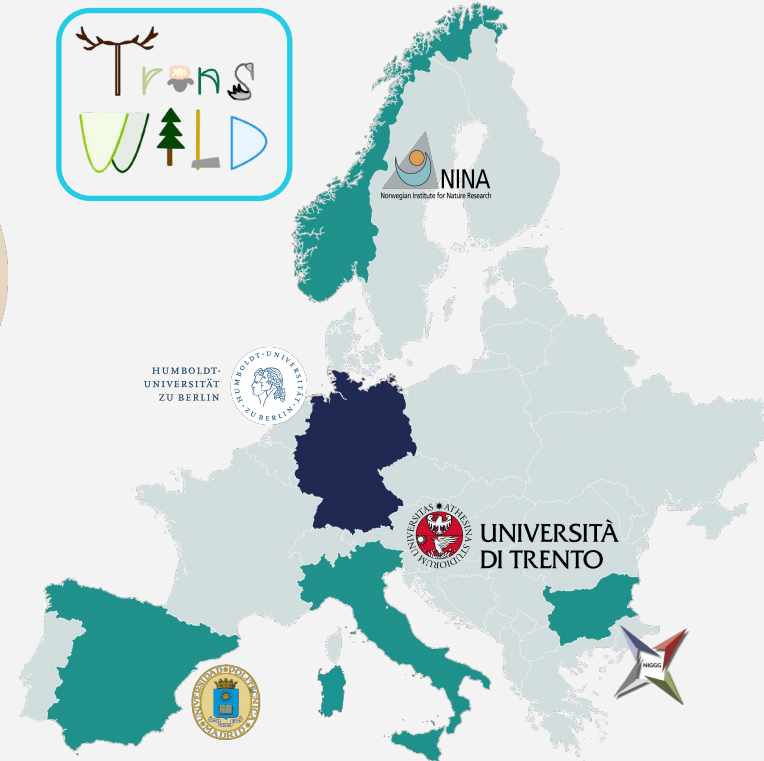
Stefania Volani



Simona Capelli



Kyle Luca Jewell



TransWILD project



Transformative wildlife management to enhance biodiversity protection and ecosystem services provision in shared and protected multi-use landscapes across Europe

Goals and target species



Identifying the role of landscape structure and land use diversity on wildlife benefits and costs



Disentangling the complex human-dynamics in wildlife management



Transdisciplinary integration of academic and stakeholder knowledge as well as its generalisation and upscaling



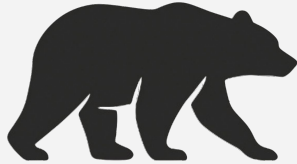
TransWILD project and the Italian case study



Context



100% mountain area
Average altitude 2011 m a.s.l.

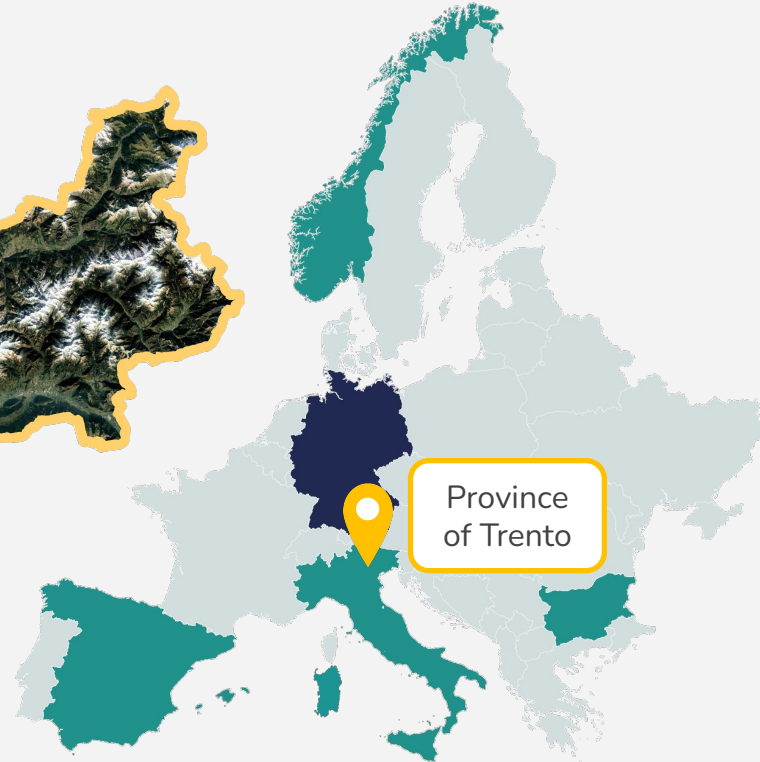
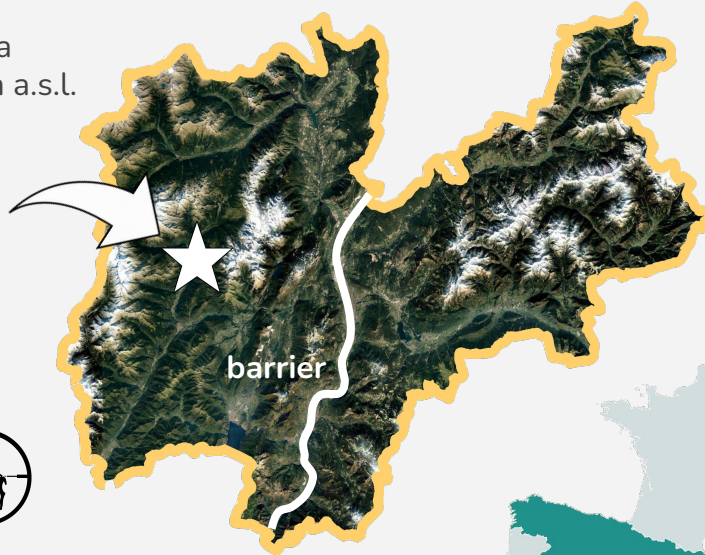


Eurasian brown bear
Ursus arctos arctos



Economic and
recreation activities

CONFLICTS



COMMUNICATION IS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE!

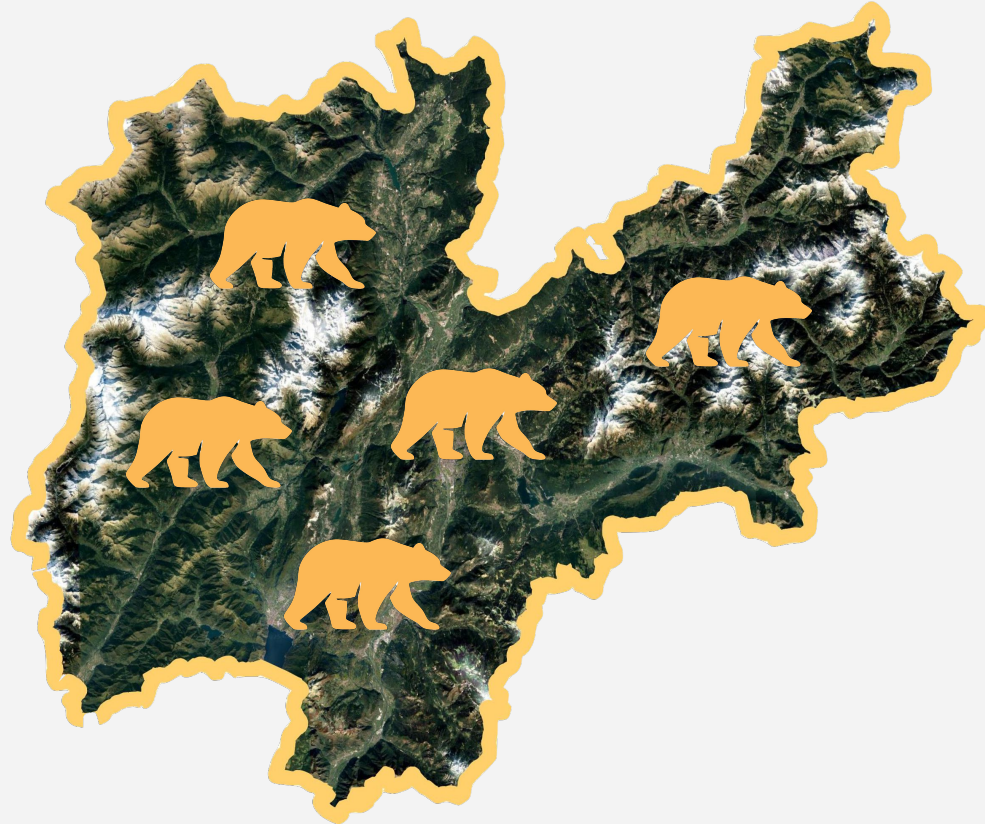
Italian case study on brown bear - PAST

17th century

- Brown bears abundant and widespread throughout the Alps

18th century

- Progressive deforestation and agricultural transformation of mountainous areas
- Direct human persecution
- Brown bear graduate decline

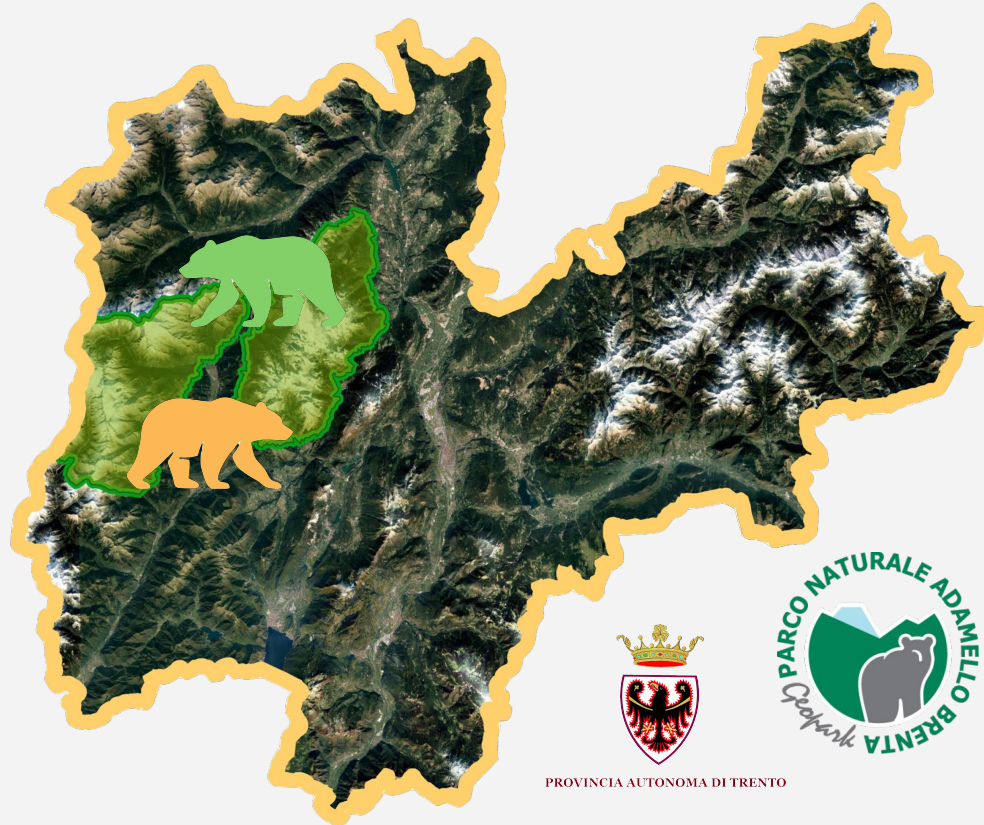


Italian case study on brown bear - PAST

Mid-20th century

- Brown bears nearly extinct across the Alps
- Only a small remnant population of brown bears in Western Trentino
- Brown bears continued to decline
- In the late 1990's the population was declared functionally extinct with only 3-5 bears estimated

1996 - 2004 LIFE URSUS
REINTRODUCTION PROGRAM

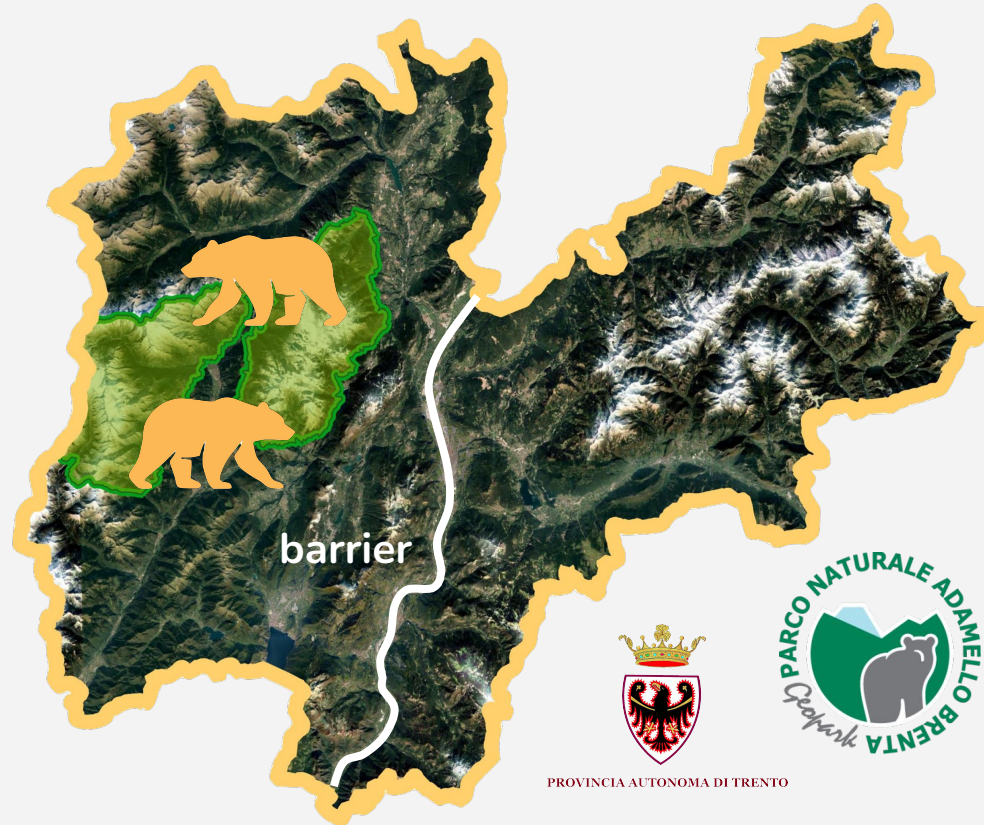


PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI TRENTO

Italian case study on brown bear - PAST

LIFE URSUS

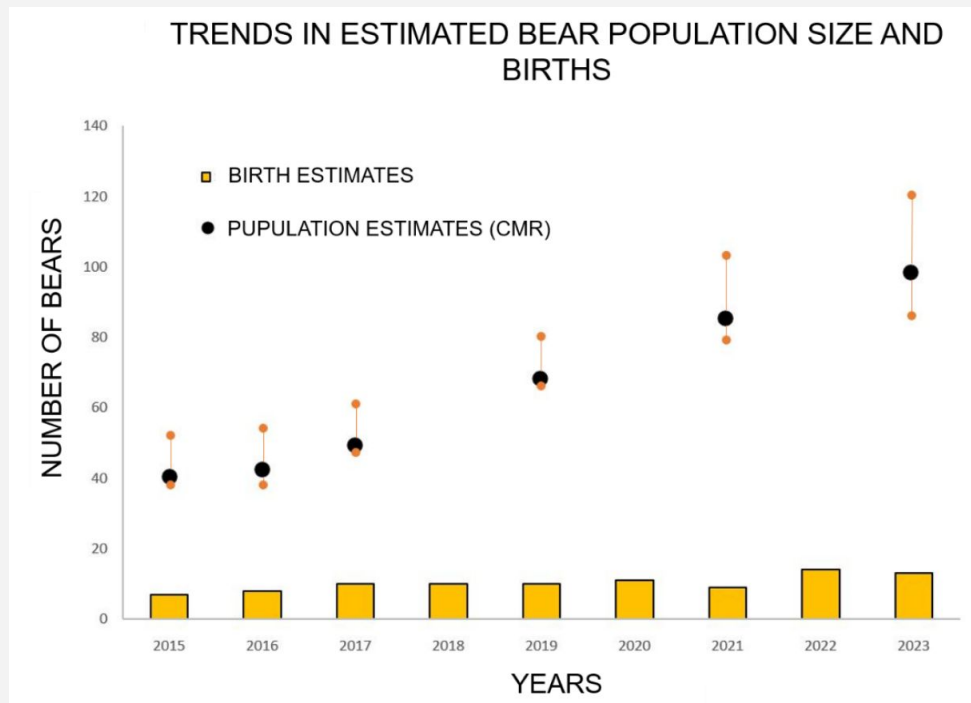
- Evaluation of the ecological and socio-economic viability of reintroducing bears to the area
- Assessment of the environmental suitability of the region
- Identification of an area capable of supporting a minimum viable population (MVP) of 40-60 individuals that should have been reached in 18-41 years



Italian case study on brown bear - PAST

Resident population surveys

- **1997 - control**
bear acceptance 76%
- **2003 - bear presence**
bear acceptance 72%
- **2011 - bear presence and damages**
bear acceptance 36%
- **2024 - bear presence, damages and attacks on humans**
bear acceptance 23%



Trend of population size of young and adult bears (excluding cubs of the year) estimated using genetic capture-mark-recapture (CMR) models, (bars with dots representing the confidence intervals in orange) and trend for estimates of births (histogram with orange bars). Figure from Groff et al. (2024)

Italian case study on brown bear - PRESENT



INTERACTIONS and
CONFLICTS

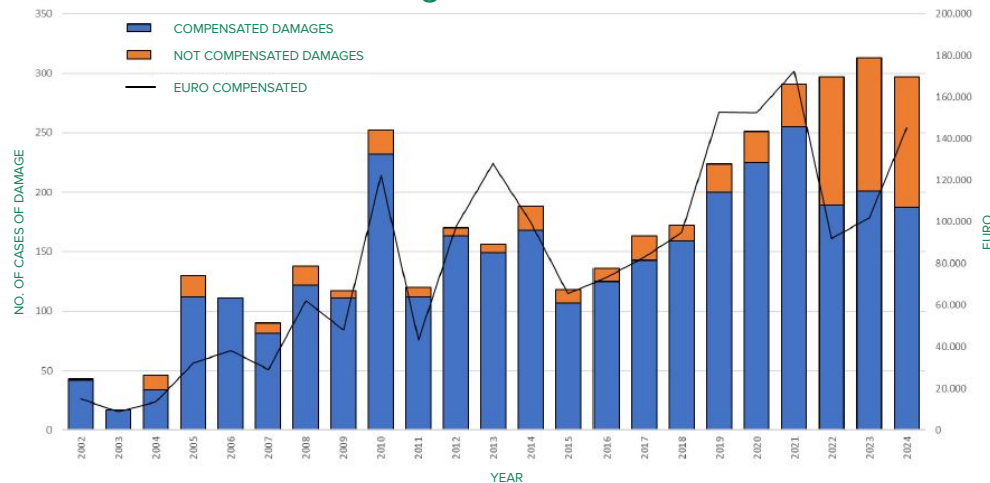
2023

Runner Killed By Bear in Northern Italy

The 26-year-old was running his usual route in the Val di
Sole valley

BY KELLS MCPHILLIPS PUBLISHED: APR 06, 2023 12:21 PM EDT

Bear damages from 2002 to 2024



Number of cases of damage caused by bear from 2002 to 2024 in the Province of Trento. Figure from
«Rapporto Grandi Carnivori 2024» Autonomous Province of Trento (2024)



Italian case study on brown bear - PRESENT

What happened in terms of communication?

- **Public consultations in local valleys**
“Do you consider the presence of large carnivores such as bears and wolves in densely populated areas to be a serious danger to public safety and a detriment to the economy and the preservation of local customs and traditions?”
- **Animal rights activist groups**
Promoting campaigns for bears freedom

VS



Italian case study on brown bear - PRESENT

- Polarized communication - people feeling of not being heard
- Decreasing participation of the Provincial government (delay in actions e.g. bear-resistant trash containers installation, bear signs in areas with bear presence)
- Promotion/economic value for the territory

1 January 2017

Advertising value of the brown bear in the Italian Alps

Clara Tattoni, Gianluca Grilli, Marco Ciolli

[Author Affiliations +](#)

Ursus, 27(2):110-121 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.2192/URSU-D-16-00011.1>

ARTICLE

FIGURES &
TABLES

SUPPLEMENTAL
CONTENT

REFERENCES

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HWIs and stakeholder perceptions - PRESENT

- The TransWILD project is based on stakeholder active involvement

HOW?



Consider all the stakeholders in your territory

If they do not want to be engaged they will tell you, if they are happy to be involved they will spread the word - “snowball effect”



Build trust

Start talking with local stakeholders you know, if you do not know any, start searching representative stakeholders (e.g. national park coordinator, president of farmer association) and illustrate your project and objectives, if they like it they will provide other contacts

HWIs and stakeholder perceptions - PRESENT

- The TransWILD project is based on stakeholder active involvement



- We assessed stakeholder perceptions of 12 wildlife species in five sites
- We contrasted expert and stakeholder perceptions of interest, influence, and impact
- Stakeholder perceptions varied widely across and within groups, sites, and species
- Experts often underestimated stakeholder interest and diversity
- Perceived powerlessness in interactions with carnivores and eagles was common

HOW DO WE BUILD AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

References

- Groff, C., Angeli, F., Baggia, M., Bragalanti, N., Zanghellini, P., Zeni, M. (2024). *Rapporto Grandi carnivori 2023 - Servizio Faunistico della Provincia Autonoma di Trento*
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



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25 June 2025

Nature FIRST Conference

IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNICATION



NATUREFIRST



Iva Tontcheva



WHY DO YOU NEED MEDIA?

- to be **support** for your work.
- to **reach the local communities** and larger audience.
- to **influence** the decision makers.
- to gather **new followers** and **mobilize communities**.
- the 2 main assets: **PUBLICITY & VISIBILITY**

Work to make the media on your side

📌 The role of the socialmedia



Examples



Bulgarian stories

- *Koniks*: Tarpan's Days
- *Wolves*: the importance for the ecosystem
- *Bisons*: second life of the abandoned areas

Get the media all the time: - from the beginning
- preferably with (good) results
- in good times/in bad times



Media: friend or / an enemy?

News for media:

- Applies to large group of people
- Something new
- Good vs bad news

News for you:

- ✓ Wolf is back
- ✓ Black Vulture is back

News for the news writers :

- New process
- Changes you can see & measure
- Numbers

Where / when you meet with them?



Reality and Sensation



Always **the truth**

Be the **first**: especially about the bad news

Not just the news/story, but the **context and background**.

Talk like people don't anything about

Give **proven facts**.

Touch **emotions**

Human interest: what is here for me?

What is **sensation in the nature conservation**? If you have one, it can be a **media sensation**. But do you want it?





In the spotlight of media

Contact media **at the beginning** of the project

Once spotted, **you will be watched.**

Local vs national; international; **general** & specialized.

Keep them **in the loop**, but don't flood them with info

Make **close relations** with journalists. NB: no friends there 😊

Exclusivity

How to work with journalists?

Media Fan Club

Inform & educate

- Keep **their interest** (look at the photo)
- Always **invite** to events, make a **press point**
- Press releases
- News on the **website/s**
- **Social media:** organizational/private profiles



More tricks and tips



Have media faces



Train your staff



Seminar for
journalists



Media trips



Combine work with
pleasure

Social media: to end where we started

Do we still need the media ?



Have a communication / PR expert

Journalist

Video people

Design experts

Podcast experts

Copy writers

AI

Crisis management expert



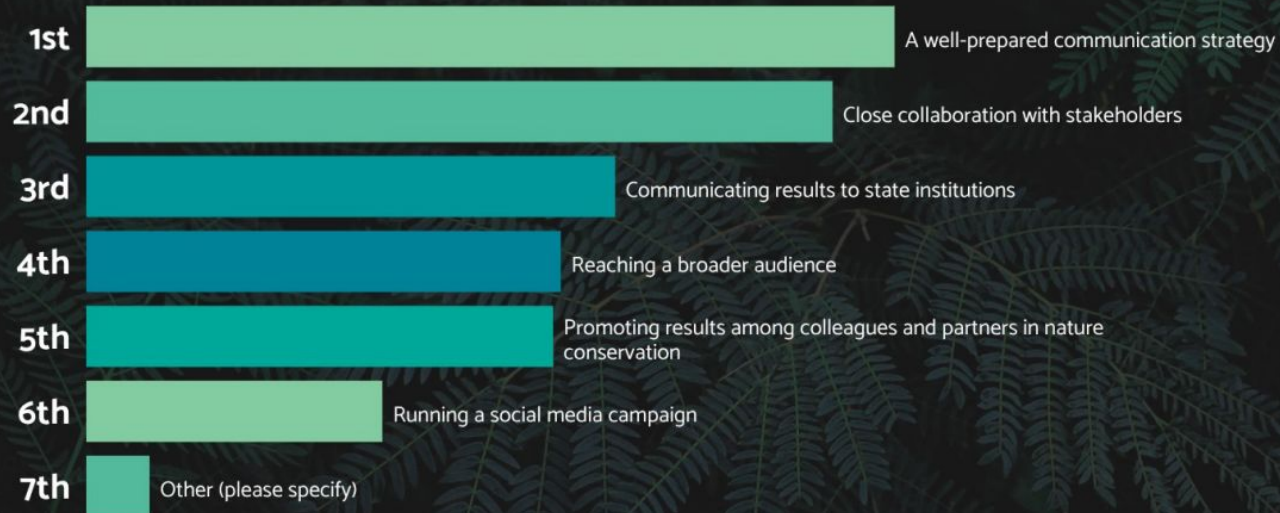
Interactive poll results

Which type of organisation are you representing?



- 3 Nature conservation NGO
- 2 Governmental organisation
- 2 Scientific institute
- 5 University
- 5 Consultancy company
- 2 Other

What kind of communication do you think is important for the successful implementation of a nature conservation project?



Group activity: Anchor–Wind–Lighthouse Method

Concept	Meaning
Anchor	What hinders the objective
Wind	What supports it
Lighthouse	The communication objective

Group discussion



Thank you!