

Big aims in bear conservation and the pitfalls of local management

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Brown bears in Austria

Distribution of Bear signs 2001-2007 (Kärnten 2001-2003)
(Observations, damages, tracks, scats, hair ...)

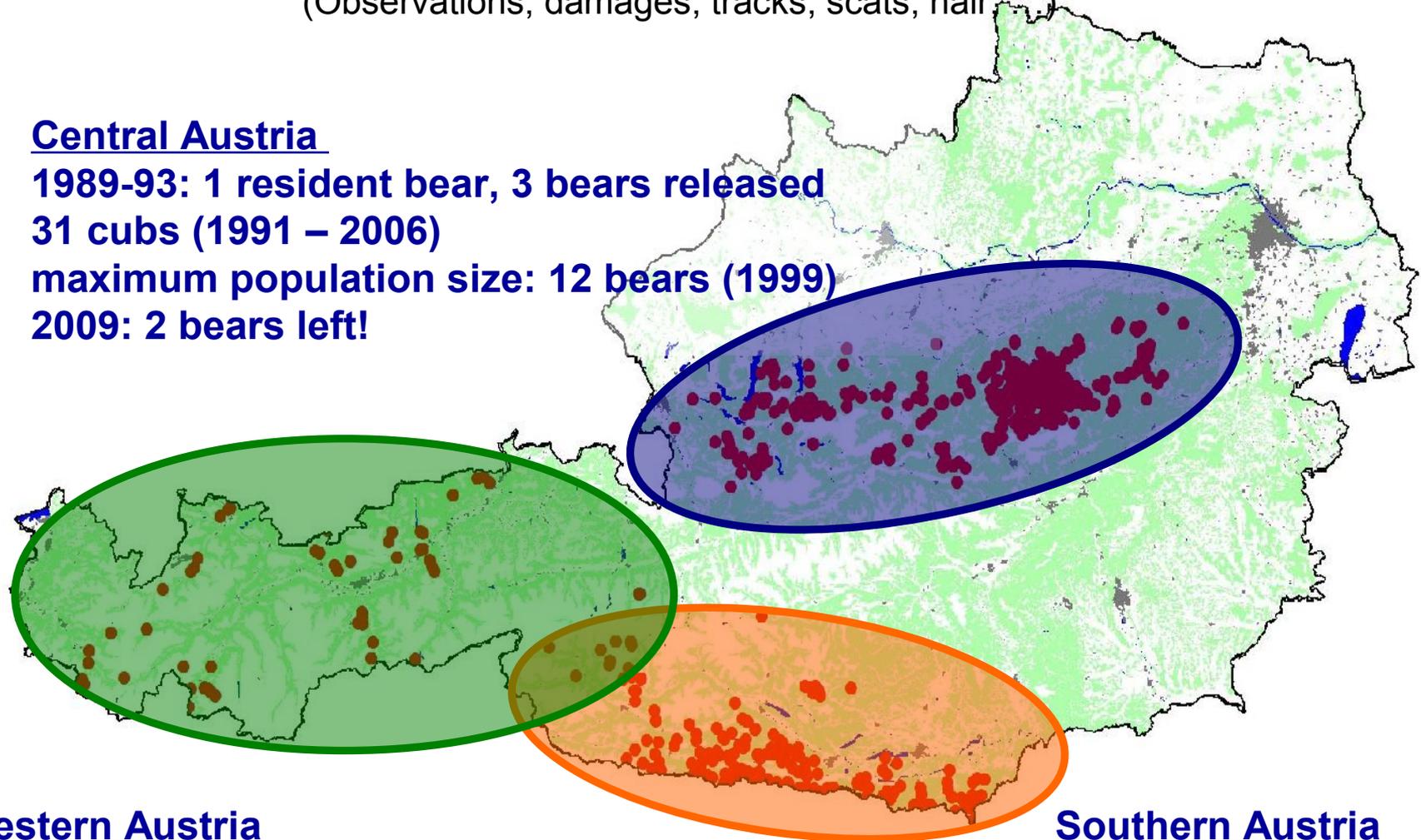
Central Austria

1989-93: 1 resident bear, 3 bears released

31 cubs (1991 – 2006)

maximum population size: 12 bears (1999)

2009: 2 bears left!



Western Austria

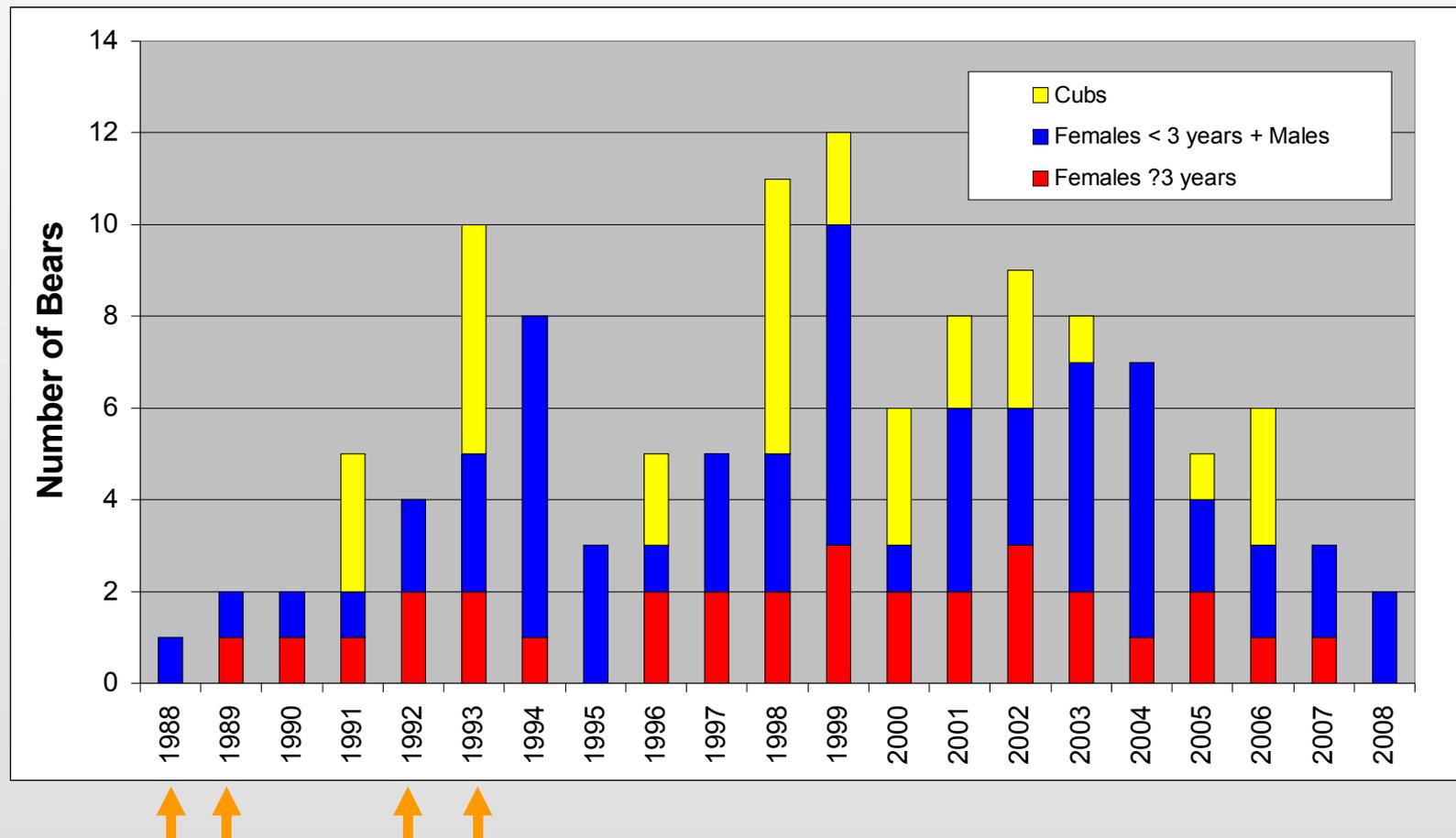
Short term visits of migrants
of the Trentino population

Southern Austria

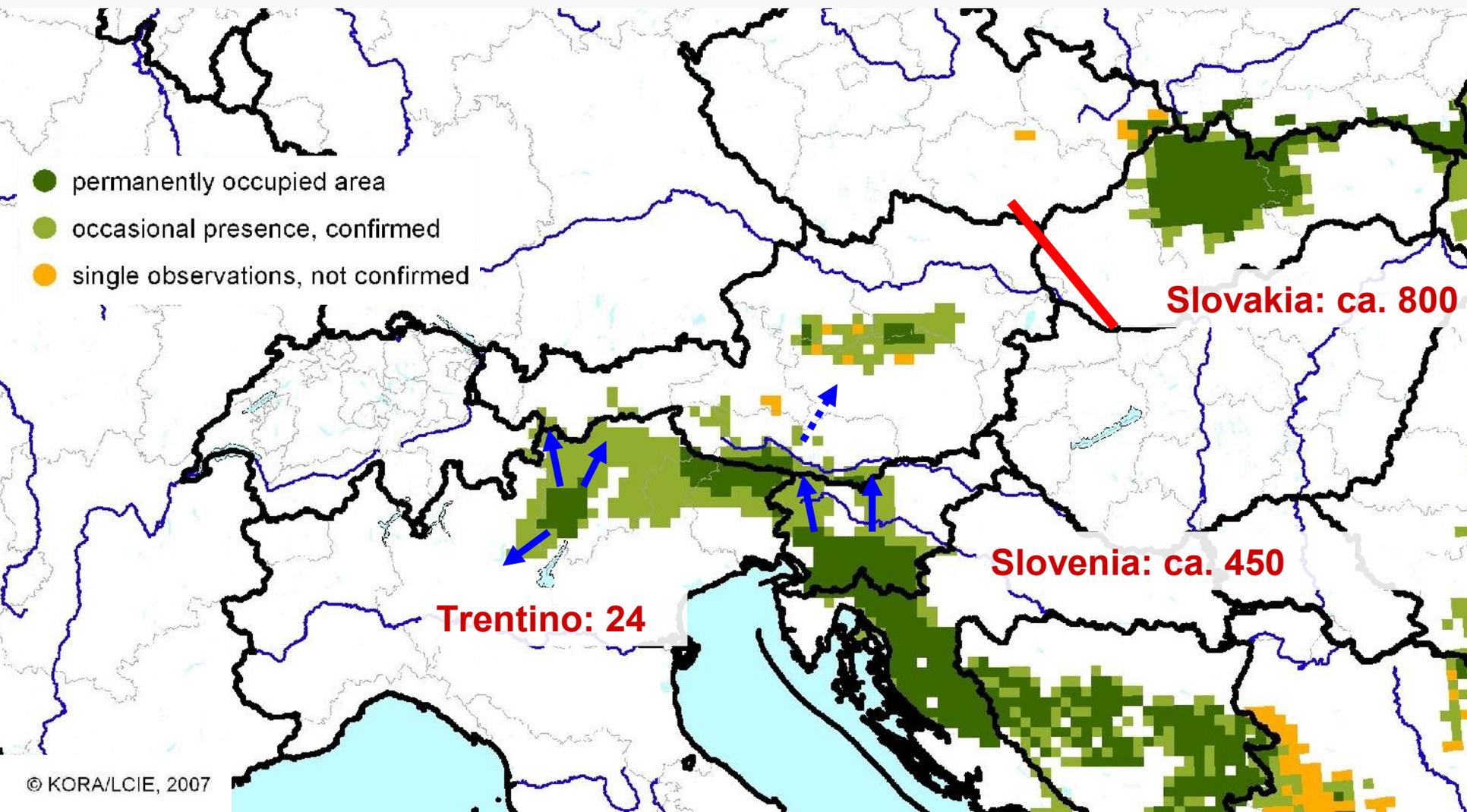
Migrants of the Slovenian population
 5 ± 3 bears; no reproduction

Development of bear population in central Austria

Reasons for failure: only 4 founder individuals + illegal killing



Possible sources for the development of an Austrian bear population



The „big aim“

- Conservation of brown bears in Austria
- EU Habitat Directive: „.... to maintain or restore, at **favourable conservation status**, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest.”



Actors in Austrian bear conservation

- Ministry of Environment
- Provincial hunting and nature conservation authorities
- Stakeholders like provincial hunters' organizations and provincial farmers' boards
- NGOs, mainly WWF
- Great public, local people, media

Actors in Austrian bear conservation

Ministry of Environment

- No management power
- „Allowed“ to support actions by giving money

Actors in Austrian bear conservation

Provincial authorities

- Legally responsible
- No active wildlife management (no Wildlife Service)
- decide on request (e.g. capture of problem bear)
- Management plan is only accepted as a guideline (no legal basis; the MP was written by NGOs)
- Do not feel responsible for damage compensation and prevention
- Not interested in defining a population goal

Actors in Austrian bear conservation

Provincial hunters' organizations and farmers' boards

- Proponents of landownership (the right to hunt is tied to landownership)
- Any management action (e.g. monitoring, capture) is seen as cutting the landowners' rights



Actors in Austrian bear conservation

WWF

- Only organization actively pushing bear conservation
- Restocking project 1989-1993
- Disliked by stakeholders
- For many people Bear = WWF



Special conflicts

Example of Dachstein area / Styria

With local deer management practice

- Red deer winter enclosures

With local sheep management practice

- Free ranging sheep in *Pinus mugo* areas





Bear damage to red deer winter enclosure

- 12 deer killed within 6 weeks
- 6 of the kills were stags of trophy value
- Tremendous damage potential to the forest by deer that has escaped from the enclosure
- Hunter pays now a lot of money for a hunting ground and has no trophies to shoot
- Hunter is liable for the damages to the forest caused by deer. This means a substantial financial risk.
- For hunters this is a clear argument against bears, for nature conservationists it is an argument against the way of deer management



What's missing most?

The clear political will

- to build up a bear population in Austria
- to actively search solutions for the problems that arise





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