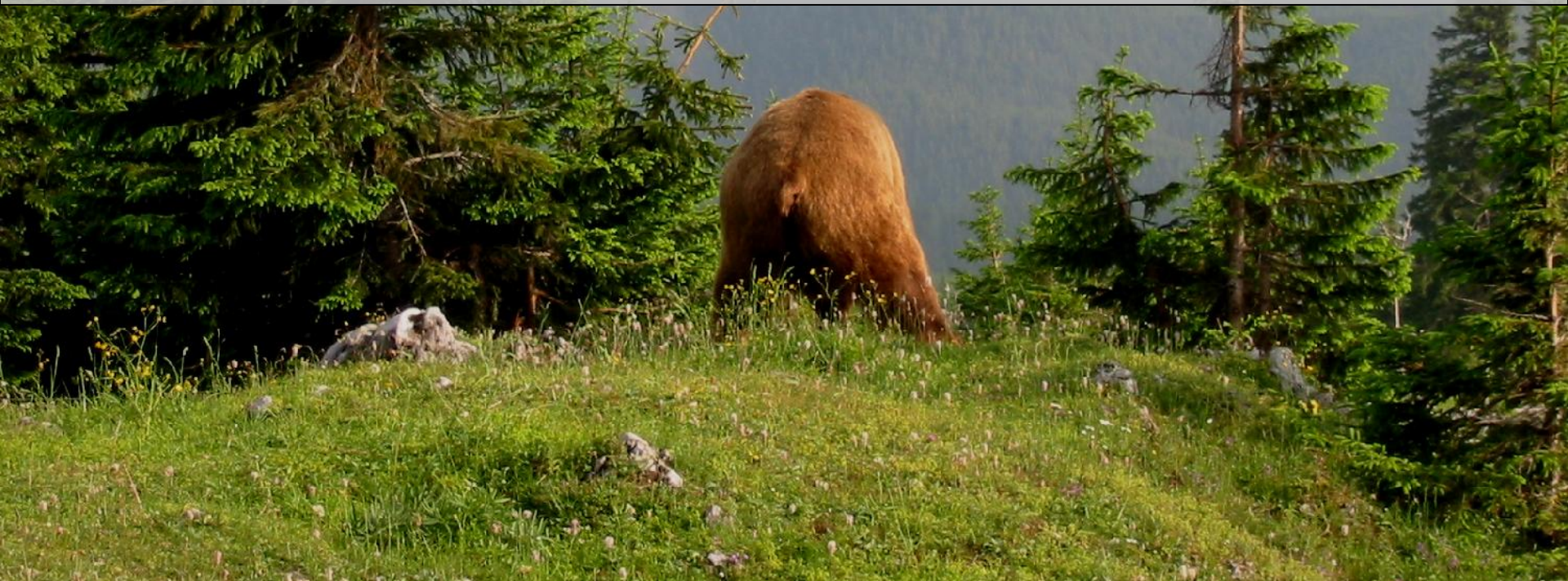


# Big aims in bear conservation and the pitfalls of local management

Georg Rauer

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# Brown bears in Austria

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

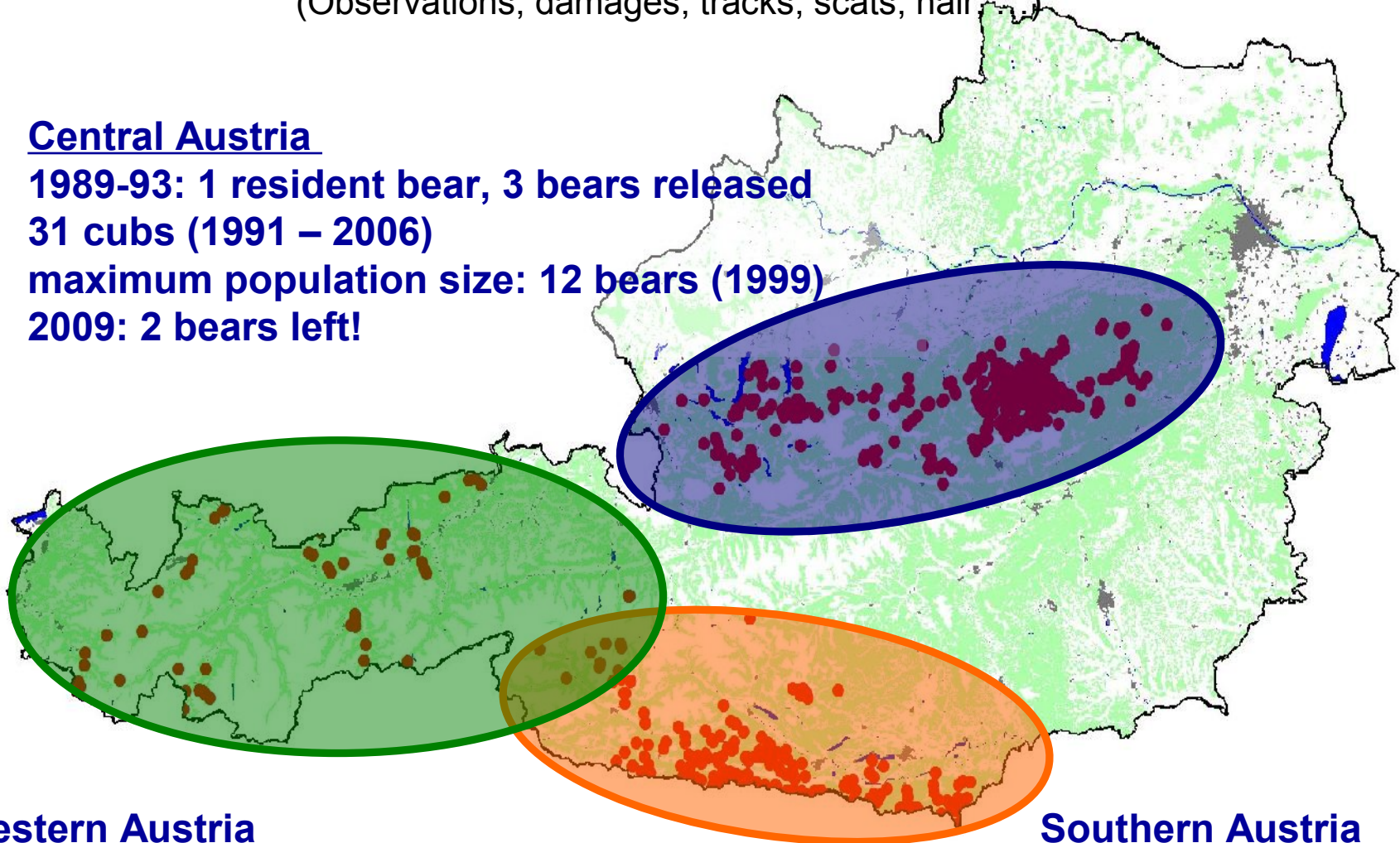
## Central Austria

1989-93: 1 resident bear, 3 bears released

31 cubs (1991 – 2006)

maximum population size: 12 bears (1999)

2009: 2 bears left!



## Western Austria

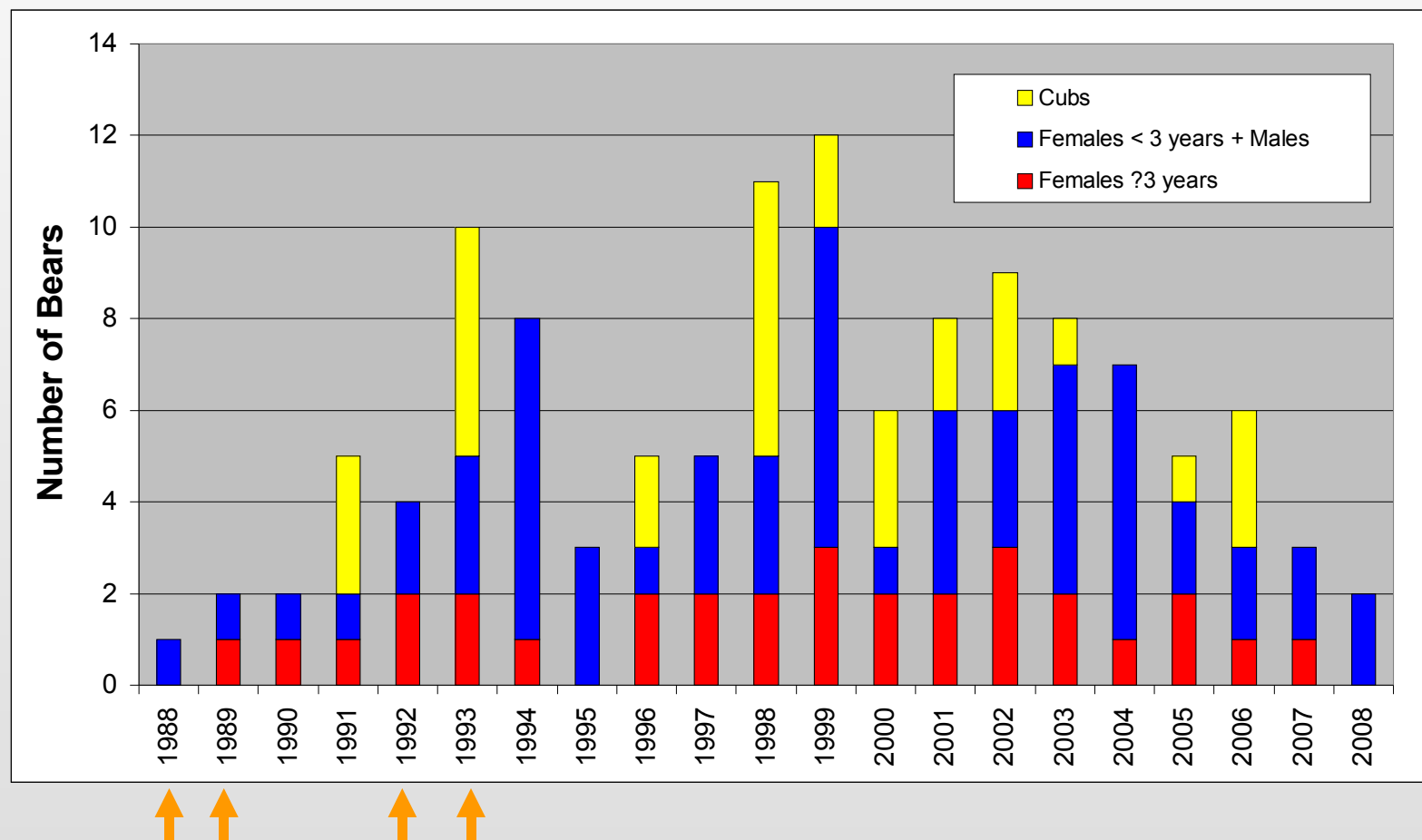
Short term visits of migrants  
of the Trentino population

## Southern Austria

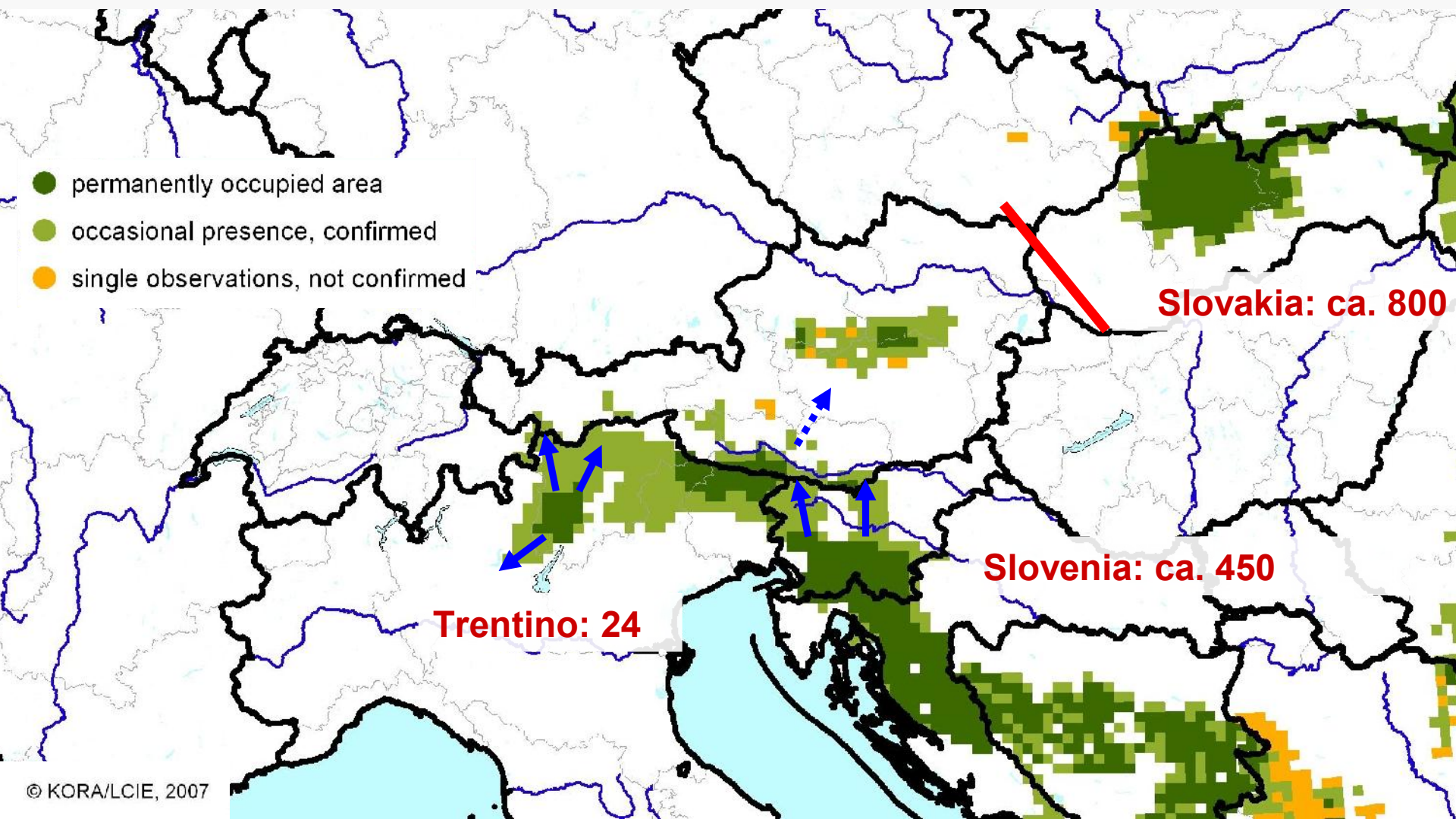
Migrants of the Slovenian population  
 $5 \pm 3$  bears; no reproduction

# 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

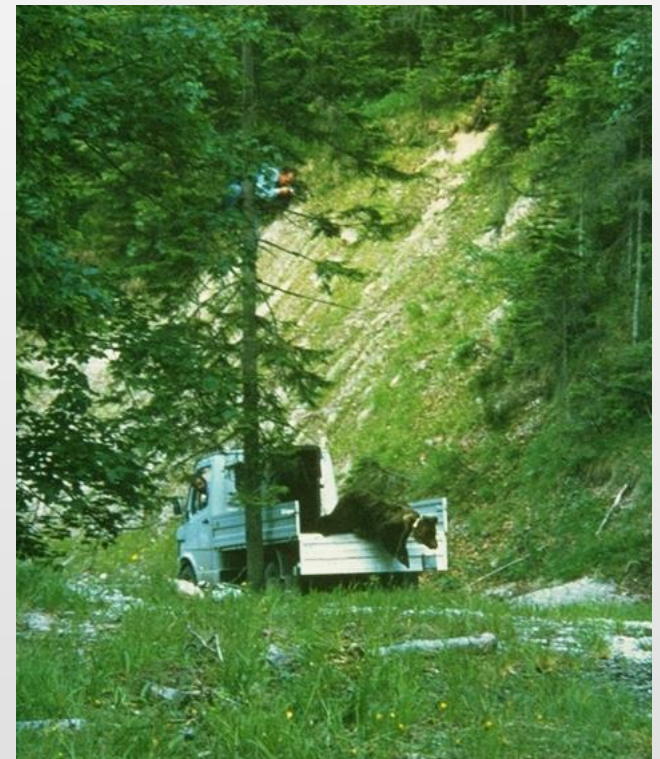
- Proponents of landownership (the right to hunt is tied to landownership)
- Any management action (e.g. monitoring, capture) is seen as cutting the landowners' rights



# 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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