



# Talking about wolves

The role of exhibitions on wolves  
in natural history museums

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***Il ritorno del lupo, 30.9.2021***

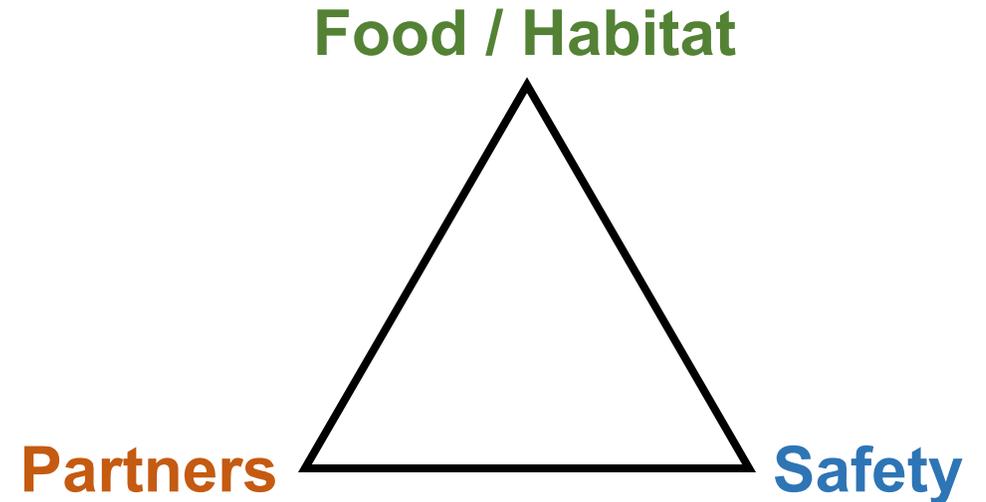
*Conferenza scientifica  
italo-svizzera*

<sup>\*)</sup> presenting author

# Prerequisite: it's as simple as that ...



All living beings require three basic things:

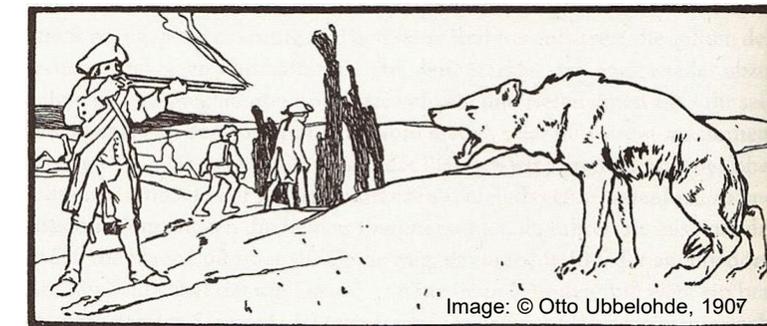
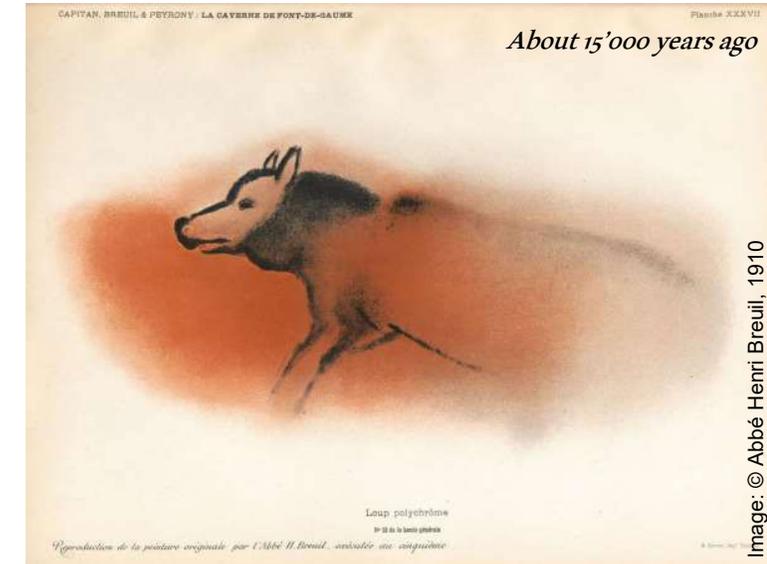


# However, ...

- what if these needs overlap, interact or compete with each other?
- In relation to the wolf, we are stuck in the middle of this struggle today. «Both sides» have long left the ground of constructive discussion.
- The rapid development of the wolf population requires constant adjustments when assessing the situation, evaluating management choices and taking decisions
- What can – should – an exhibition on wolves tell us and achieve in this context?

# Talking about wolves – why and how?

- Wolves fascinate, wolves frighten ...  
wolves polarize
- Wolves provoke the blending of myths and facts
- Wolves have returned from the edge of extinction to become a successfully spreading species in Central Europe
- Wolves and mankind have a long common history, they will share their future – whether they like it or not
- What does that imply?
- Can expositions on wolves make a difference?
- And how can expositions succeed?



# Whether it's about



or



## Natural history museums tell the stories of life ...

- to all people, regardless of age, gender, profession, social status
- comprehensively, attractively, scientifically sound
- beyond personal or ideological views

## Natural history museums provide the science-based platform ...

- to explore phenomena of nature and their impact on society
- to form opinions, based on facts
- to exchange ideas, to debate and to derive fields of action

**... and thus, they are the extended arm of science into society**

# In relation to the wolf, this means (I)

## What is the current situation in the area(s) of interest ?

- Identification of the involved stakeholders, their needs and concerns
- Distribution of the wolf, population size, structure and dynamics
- Habitat conditions and distribution of its natural prey
- Land use conditions and practices, types and distribution of livestock

## What kind of animal is it?

- Explain the biology and behavior of the wolf
- Explore if the «new wolf generations» behave differently: is their behavioral plasticity greater than what we assume or know so far?

# **In relation to the wolf, this means (II)**

## **Explain the history of its return**

- what are the reasons for its successful return
- Land use history
- Implications for today's land use patterns

## **How to go on, how to co-exist with large carnivores?**

- How do we as society want to react to the return of the large carnivores?
- Where and how much space do we want to give to the wolf, to large carnivores in general?
- Do wolves require a different approach, compared to other large carnivores? If yes, why and how?

# Recent wolf exhibitions in Switzerland:

## 3 expositions – 3 facets, Lucerne 30.6.2018 – 28.4.2019

**museum**  
FRIBOURG  
FRIBOURG

Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg  
Naturhistorisches Museum Freiburg  
17.09.2016 - 20.08.2017  
Ch. du Musée 6 1700 Fribourg 026 305 89 00 www.mnhf.ch  
Tous les jours / Täglich: 14.00-18.00 Entrée libre / Eintritt frei

**LOUP WOLF**  
DE RETOUR PARMİ NOUS WIEDER UNTER UNS

**BIWAK#19: DER WOLF IST DA**  
**EINE MENSCHENAUSSTELLUNG**  
**ALPINES MUSEUM DER SCHWEIZ**  
13. MAI BIS 1. OKTOBER 2017

alpines & museum  
alpine museum  
museo alpino  
museum alpin

Patrick Meier

**Zum Verhalten des Wolfs**

Eine Bilddokumentation zur Verhaltensforschung über 70 Jahre

20. November 2018 bis 28. April 2019

www.naturmuseum.ch  
**NATUR-MUSEUM LUZERN**

# 3 expositions – 3 facets: Lucerne 30.6.2018 – 28.4.2019

## providing a holistic approach

### **Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg (Peter Wandeler)**

#### **«Wolf. Back again among us»**

##### Concept – main messages:

- Co-existence of wolf & men
- Extinction and successful return
- Who is the wolf? Facts on biology and behaviour
- Management options
- Perception and acceptance: how much space are we willing to give to the wolf, to large carnivores in general?

### **Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern (Beat Haechler)**

#### **«The wolf is here. An exposition on humans»**

##### Concept – main messages:

- The wolf is back – that's a fact! Hence, the wolf symbolises:
  - trespassing boundaries
  - the debate on ecological, economical, political values
  - humanisation: glorification vs. diabolization
  - monitoring & science

### **Natur-Museum Luzern (Klaus Robin & Britta Allgöwer)**

#### **«On the behavior of wolves. A picture documentary on behavioral research covering 70 years»**

##### **+ Book:**

#### **«Wolf. Eine Annäherung»**

##### Concept – main messages:

- From evildoer to the object of behavioral research
- Depiction of the wolf over time: from Renaissance to modern recording methods of spatio-temporal patterns

# Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg



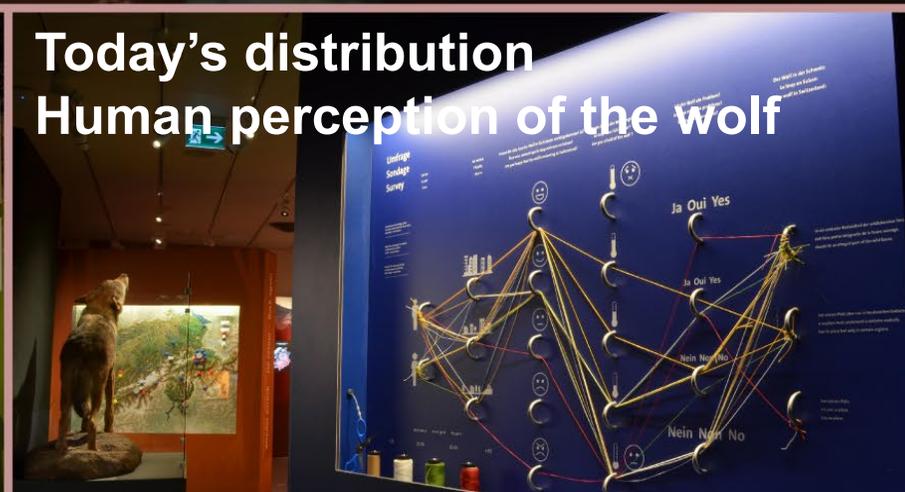
Habitat development  
Return of the wild ungulates  
Return of the wolf



Mankind & wolves  
Cohabitation & domestication  
Extinction history



Biology and behaviour of the wolf

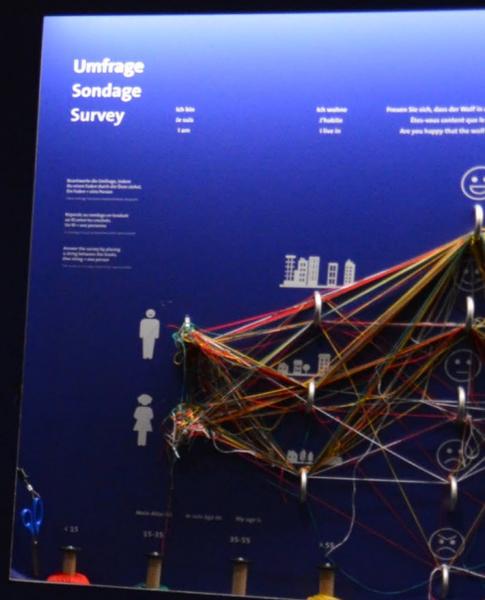


Today's distribution  
Human perception of the wolf



Relevant objects  
Interactive elements

Exhibition section Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg:  
→ taxidermy specimens and biology are attractive for all ages



Impressions exhibition section Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg:  
→ descendants of the wolf, management measures, current distribution



Visitors are fascinated by «real world objects»: taxidermy of a young male that was shot in 2017 in the canton of Uri by the game warden as it killed more than 25 sheep within a time span of 3 weeks. This is also a good example to explain over-predation.

Exhibition sections Musée d'histoire naturelle Fribourg

Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern



Wolf & Mankind share their history ...



... their present and future

# Exhibition setup Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern

Wolf & Society:  
migration, politics, humanisation, science

What do visitors  
think of the wolf?

Visitors can listen to 8 stakeholders:  
game warden, taxidermist, livestock protection dog breeder,  
geneticist, shepherd, environmental pedagogue,  
sheep farmer, conservationist

«the bad & the good»  
symbolize the ambiguity  
we face the wolf with

Impressions Alpines Museum der Schweiz Bern: while listening intently, wolves can be observed



«THE GOOD»  
neutral  
presentation



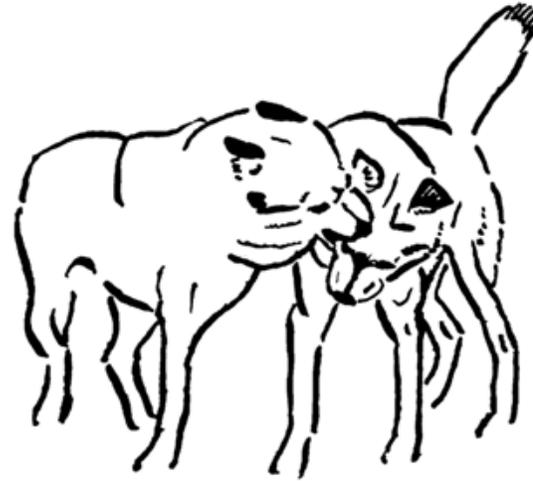
«THE BAD»  
scary  
presentation



# Impressions Natur-Museum Luzern: depiction of the wolf over time ...



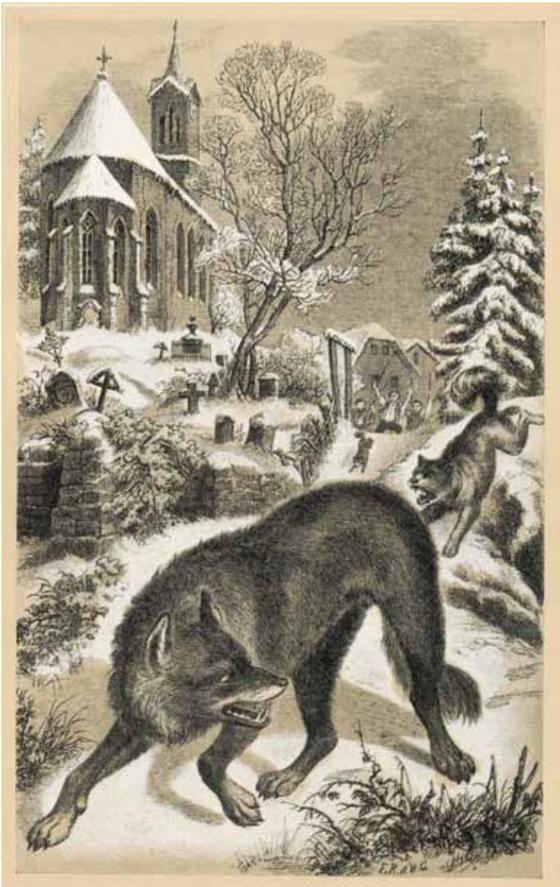
Drawing:  
Conrad Gessner  
1563



Sketches: © Rudolf Schenkel  
1947, 1967



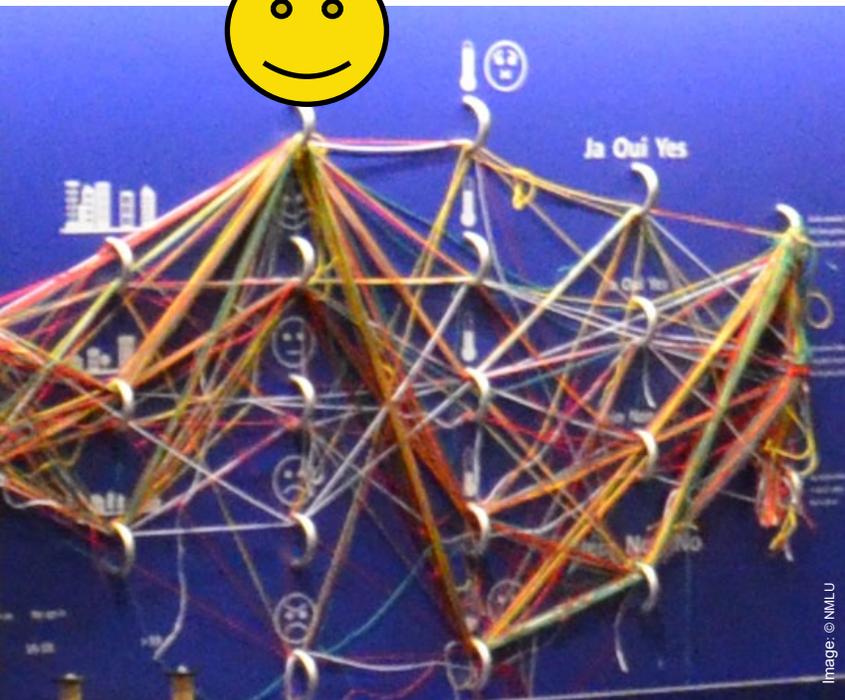
Drawing:  
Anonymous in F. v. Tschudi  
1890 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.), 1944 (last ed.)



Images: © Klaus Robin 2018

And sometimes it helps to deliver the message  
with a twinkle in the eye ...





# Can exhibitions on wolves make a difference?

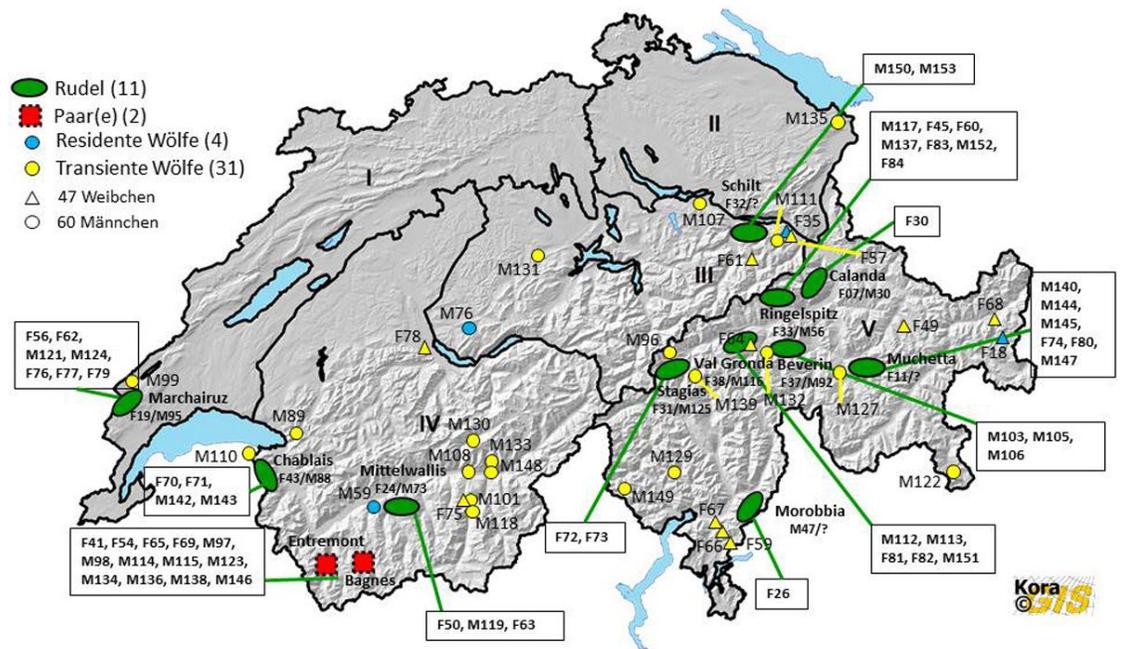
## Not easy to quantify, however:

- So far approximately 300'000 visitors; 9 different locations in Switzerland (FR, BE, LU, VS, TG, GR 2x, ZH 2x)
- One more to come: JU
- Perception: Most visitors reacted positively, both to the exhibitions as well as to the presence of the wolf (but mainly urbanized visitor segment)

**That was then in 2019 ...**

# Today, in September 2021 ...

We have a very different situation:



- Rapidly growing wolf population in CH: September 2021 → 15 packs
- Mai 2021: very narrow rejection of the revised Federal Hunting Law by popular vote. Its acceptance would have allowed the cantons to intervene sooner and independent from federal authorities
- Urban-rural gap is widening, especially between mountain farmers and city residents as well authorities.

Source: © KORA GIS – data aggregation over 24 months (2019-2020) [www.kora.ch](http://www.kora.ch)

# How can future large carnivore expositions succeed?

## → What must be their main message?



### **There is only one way:**

- Find a way to deal with the wolf and large carnivores in general
- In particular: build bridges between polarized groups
- Reach out to those who have not made up their minds yet
- No «wildlife romance», but respect for the animals and the human stakeholders
- Avoid pouring oil to the fire!

# When planning and building an exhibition ...



## Points to consider:

- Who are the addressees?
- Permanent or travelling exposition?
- How much space is needed or available?
- Who provides the content: inhouse and/or extern?
- Available staff: scientists, pedagogues, technicians?
- Available exhibition objects?
- How many languages?
- Scenography: inhouse or by external specialists?
- Available budget for the development and the operation of the exhibition?
- Duration of exhibition?
- Advertising, dissemination, rental rates?
- Support for the exhibition's borrowers?

# When planning and building an exhibition ...

(the «small print» - la «piccola stampa»)



**Production costs FR, BE, LU  
(cash, rounded):**

- FR: CHF 125'000.–
- BE: CHF 50'000.--
- LU: CHF 56'000.--
- Total: CHF 231'000.–

**In-kind contributions  
(+/- equals the amount of cash):**

- All museums: ~ CHF 200'000.--

**Total exhibition surface: 200 m<sup>2</sup>**

➤ **Approximately CHF 2'300.-- / m<sup>2</sup>**

# The Scenographers: important partners for successful exhibitions

Musée d'histoire naturelle FR  
«Wolf. Back again among us»



**Corrado Luvisotto**

Art director, graphic artist

**Grafix** <https://grafix.ch>

Communication visuelle, Fribourg

[info@grafix.ch](mailto:info@grafix.ch)

Alpines Museum der CH Bern  
«The wolf is here»



**Philipp Clemenz**

Graphic artist, scenographer, teacher,

**Atelier Philipp Clemenz, Lucerne**

[atelier@philippclemenz.ch](mailto:atelier@philippclemenz.ch)

Natur-Museum Luzern  
«On the behavior of wolves»,  
Book: «Wolf. Eine Annäherung»



**Martina Pelosi, Julia Reichle**

Graphic artists

**cyan** Atelier für Gestaltung, [www.cyan.ch](http://www.cyan.ch)

[martina.pelosi@cyan.ch](mailto:martina.pelosi@cyan.ch)

[Julia.reichle@cyan.ch](mailto:Julia.reichle@cyan.ch)

**Don't hesitate to contact us: exhibition data are still available in G, F, and E**



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