

## **Framing the wolf: notes on representation of a returning predator**

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The return of the wolf to the European cultural landscape creates tension between farmers, hunters and environmentalists and is a major subject of public debate. This paper investigates human-wolf-conflicts and attitudes towards these predators in the Swiss cantons of Grisons and St. Gallen using the concept of framing. A total of 193 press articles and official statements of 15 interest groups between 2012 and 2017 were collected and analyzed. The results show that reporting on wolves is highly selective. News media predominantly connects wolves with negative frames such as “shooting/control”, “watching them close to human settlements”, “problem or problematic behavior” and “loss of shyness towards humans”. Interest groups with negative attitudes towards wolves argue with “legal change” in order to manage the predator, “missing space or wilderness” and “risk and anxiety”, whereas advocates represent the animal as “unproblematic” and as a “key species” with positive effects on woods and wildlife. The latter are less dominant in the discourse and their negations like “unproblematic behavior”, “unnecessary culling” or “not risky” amplify the opponents’ frames. Both news frames and strategic frames affect the audience and public policy, depending on factors such as repetition, continuity and emotion (anxiety or anger). In conclusion, this paper draws out the implications of wolf framing for society, public administration and political decisions and takes a critical approach to current understanding of wildlife.