



DANGEROUSLY CLOSE

A documentary by ANDREAS PICHLER

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Following the tragic death of 26-year-old jogger Andrea Papi, rangers, including Claudio and Roberto, have urgently begun the hunt for the bear JJ4. As fear of bears increases, the conflict between animal rights activists and bear opponents intensifies, raising sensitive questions. Should JJ4 be killed? And who truly owns nature and the forest?

LONG SYNOPSIS

Nowhere else in the world do bears and humans live in such proximity as they do in Trentino, near Lake Garda. However, as the bear population grows, dangerous encounters between humans and animals are also on the rise. The 20-member team of rangers and veterinarians responsible for protecting both people and animals faces an especially important task.

When 26-year-old Andrea Papi is found dead in the forest during Easter 2023, a grim suspicion quickly emerges: Papi was killed by the bear JJ4. This incident marks the first death caused by a wild animal in Central Europe in recent history. As the foresters attempt to capture JJ4, the conflict between animal rights activists and bear opponents reaches a critical point, raising urgent questions: Should JJ4 be killed? How should we handle the return of large predators to our forests? When do bears become "problem bears"? And who truly owns nature and the forest?



CONTENT

On April 5, 2023, the battered body of 26-year-old Andrea Papi was discovered, confirming the worst fears of bear rangers Valter, Alberto, and veterinarian Roberto: Papi had been attacked and killed by a bear. This marked the first bear-related fatality in recent history in the Alpine region.

The news spread worldwide, and fear of bears finally gripped Germany as well. Bears had been extinct in Germany for almost 200 years. However, in recent years, young male bears have repeatedly migrated into Bavaria from one of Europe's largest rewilding projects in Trentino, near Lake Garda. Unfortunately, the bear project had spiralled out of control in recent years, with over 100 bears now inhabiting the relatively densely populated area.

The bear rangers play a key role: bears are Europe's largest predators, and nowhere else in the world do bears and humans live in such proximity as in Trentino. However, as the number of bears grows, so do the problems, and dealing with the predators increasingly divides the population: city versus countryside, mostly female animal rights activists versus mostly male hunters, humans versus nature.

Bears are increasingly encroaching into inhabited areas, breaking into mountain huts, or crossing borders into Austria or Germany. In 2006, Bruno became the first bear to enter German territory in 170 years. However, when he killed sheep and cattle, ranger Alberto was called in to assist the local authorities. Although Alberto loves the animals, he knows that it may be necessary to remove individual problem bears. Bruno was eventually shot amid public outcries.

Over the years, the influence of animal rights activists in Italy has grown, and bear management has become increasingly complicated for the rangers. In 2020, bear JJ4 injured two hunters and was deemed dangerous. However, when Maurizio Fugatti, the president of the region, issued a shooting permit, it was blocked by the administrative court after furious protests from animal rights activists. This proved to be a fatal mistake: JJ4 remained at large, and the locals were outraged. Even the bear rangers feared the worst.

Easter 2023: After Andrea Papi's death, the local population's anger erupted. The rangers received death threats. Twelve days after the tragedy, JJ4 was captured by the rangers, sparking a controversial debate about the future of the animal. Many wanted JJ4 to be killed. Animal rights activists saw Papi's death as a tragic accident, arguing that nature is dangerous, and people must learn to respect it anew. As the high-end documentary concludes, one question becomes increasingly pressing: Should JJ4 be killed? And who owns the forest and nature?



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I live near Trentino and frequently spend time in the mountains. I was involved with the bears and the situation in Trentino before Andrea Papi's death, and was already in contact with many of the key players when it happened. Given the emotional and contentious nature of this issue, it is crucial for me to listen to the diverse perspectives of the various individuals and groups involved, navigating between conflicting viewpoints with an open mind. The film features people who are at the heart of the story, which was very important to me. The goal of the film is to convey the intense emotions of those involved and create a cinematic space that provokes thoughtful reflection. It aims to illustrate that the answers are not simple and that finding a solution to the relationship between humans and bears in Central Europe is complex.

For me, the focus of the film was and continues to be the rangers, who were passionately involved in the reintroduction of the bears with noble goals. They work with great professionalism and now tragically find themselves caught in the middle of all sides. They are the unsung heroes of this story, a story that ultimately has no heroes.



TARGET AUDIENCE

After the tragic death of Andrea Papi in April 2023, the story of bears in Trentino made headlines not only in Italy but across Europe, becoming widely known and relevant to the general public. The area is also a well-known tourist destination throughout Europe.

In addition to this general audience, we have identified three main target groups for the film:

- **Animal and Nature Lovers and Mountain Leisure Users:** This group will find the film appealing due to its informative and aesthetically rich portrayal of nature, mountains, and wild animals. The film promises a first-hand, immersive experience through its well-accentuated elements of the natural world.
- **Individuals Who Fear Bears and Oppose Large Carnivore Reintroduction:** Especially in rural areas, a significant portion of the population is opposed to coexisting with bears and other wild animals. Hikers and residents critical of bear reintroduction will find the film particularly relevant as it addresses their concerns and perspectives.
- **Animal Rights Activists:** This growing movement, which advocates for peaceful coexistence with wild animals, will be especially interested in the film. It focuses on the multifaceted conflict between humans and animals, making it highly relevant to those engaged in animal rights activism.

The film's artistic potential for selection at festivals is based on its careful and intentional cinematographic work, combined with a deeply emotional, noir-like narrative. We plan to showcase the film at major festivals, particularly those with environmental themes (e.g., Green Screen Festival, Nature Film Festival). Overall, we anticipate a festival tour that includes at least 30 festivals.

In addition to festival distribution, we have secured confirmation from the worldwide distributor AUTLOOK, which projects selling the film in at least 10 international countries. AUTLOOK is confident in the film's international potential.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims:

1. **Raise Awareness:** The primary aim of the film is to raise awareness about the complex relationship between humans and bears, particularly in regions like Trentino where their proximity is unprecedented. It seeks to highlight the challenges of this coexistence. This is a local story that brings forward a bigger issue: how do we want to live with nature in the future?
2. **Inform:** The film aims to provide detailed information about the current situation, including the history of bear rewilding projects, the increasing bear population, and the resulting conflicts and dangers. It aims to educate the public on the ecological and social impacts of reintroducing large predators into populated areas.
3. **Engage Public Discussion:** By presenting multiple perspectives—those of rangers, local residents, animal rights activists, farmers, and hunters—the film aims to foster a balanced and informed public discussion about wildlife management, conservation, and human safety.
4. **Highlight Conflicts:** The film aims to illustrate the conflicts between different groups (urban vs. rural, animal rights activists vs. farmers, humans vs. nature) and explore how these conflicts are impacting wildlife management policies and practices.
5. **Question Management Strategies:** The film aims to critically examine current bear management strategies and their effectiveness, raising important questions about how to deal with problematic wildlife and the ethical implications of these decisions.

Objectives:

1. **To Create a Neutral Occasion for Dialogue:** To allow all the sides to step back and reflect on the complexity of the issue leaving behind simple and sometimes ideologically motivated answers to the problem.
2. **To Document the Case of JJ4:** Provide a comprehensive account of the incidents involving bear JJ4, including the attack on Andrea Papi, the subsequent hunt, and the public outcry. This includes the perspectives of various stakeholders affected by or involved in the situation.
3. **To Educate on Bear Behavior and Ecology:** Explain the natural behavior of bears, their habitat needs, and the reasons behind their increasing interactions with humans. This involves discussing the ecological role of bears and the challenges posed by their growing population in human-inhabited areas.
4. **To Explore the Human Impact:** Showcase the emotional, social, and economic impacts on local communities living in close proximity to bears.

This includes examining the fear, anger, and differing attitudes towards wildlife conservation and safety.

5. **To Stimulate Ethical Reflection:** Encourage viewers to think critically about the ethical dilemmas involved in wildlife management, such as the decision to euthanize problematic animals versus protecting human lives and property.
6. **To Propose Solutions:** Discuss potential solutions and strategies for better managing human-bear interactions, including preventive measures, changes in policy, and community education programs.
7. **To Advocate for Cautious Coexistence:** Promote a message of coexistence, emphasizing the need for humans to respect wildlife and adapt to living alongside large predators in a way that minimizes conflict and ensures the safety of both humans and animals.

By achieving these aims and objectives, the film seeks not only to inform and engage its audience but also to inspire thoughtful dialogue and action regarding the future of human-wildlife coexistence.



[Trailer EN SUB](#)