Influencing freerider behavior with role models

The new snow glistens untouched in the sunlight. Three, maybe four curves beyond the piste and one daring leap over the crest of a hill, four freeriders are already gliding towards a wildlife reserve. Here, a board depicting two furry toy animals reminds them not to disturb the wild animals.

The board is part of the ‘Respect Wildlife’ campaign, commissioned by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), the Swiss Alpine Club and various other associations, and has been designed specifically with freeriders in mind. The core of the campaign consists of short videos featuring the two toy animals, Toni and Geri, and showing well-known freeriders in action. Role models on the freerider scene, who had been convinced to support the cause of wildlife protection, have been sharing the videos on social media.

**Evaluations show that the campaign works**

WSL evaluated the campaign in the winters of 2013/14 and 2015/16 through surveys in two ski areas. The results were positive: in Laax, where the campaign has been active, awareness of the campaign has risen significantly, as has the willingness of survey participants to respect wildlife reserves. The positive effects of the campaign were also evident at Flumserberg, which had neither videos nor boards, thanks to the spread of the video online.

Earlier investigations by WSL showed that snowshoe and ski tourers are more likely to support wildlife protection than freeriders, and that the usual forms of information are enough to persuade them to respect wild animals. For freeriders, though, new approaches are required: “The decision to design and carry out this campaign with a target audience in mind, and in collaboration with role models from that target group, was what led to its success,” explains Marcel Hunziker, who led the evaluation of the ‘Respect Wildlife’ campaign. (lbo)

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