

THE CAPERCAILLIE AS AN AMBASSADOR FOR SUSTAINABILITY

OC LENZERHEIDE SWITZERLAND



ABSTRACT

OC Lenzerheide used Lenzi, the mascot of the Biathlon World Championships 2025, to turn sustainability communication into an engaging, long-term education campaign. Lenzi is a capercaillie, a native bird species that is endangered in Switzerland, and was created to connect the excitement of elite sport with awareness of biodiversity protection. The initiative used comics, trading cards, buttons, promotional videos, live appearances, and the immersive concept of welcoming spectators into “Lenzi’s living room” – the natural habitat that needs protection. School children were directly involved by painting start numbers for the European Championships, becoming co-creators of the event and ambassadors for environmental awareness. The project helped turn earlier concerns around sport development and nature protection into dialogue with environmental organisations and will continue beyond the World Championships as a regional conservation and sustainability ambassador.

WHAT WAS THE GOAL?

The Organising Committee of Lenzerheide wanted to use the 2025 Biathlon World Championships to raise awareness of the relationship between elite sport and nature protection. The mascot Lenzi was created as a capercaillie, a native and endangered bird species in the region, to make biodiversity and habitat protection easier to understand for fans, children and the local community.

The aim was to show that sport and nature can exist in harmony, while also creating a long-term sustainability message that could continue beyond one event. The project also helped the OC respond positively to concerns from environmental organisations by putting local species protection at the centre of the event story.

HOW WAS THE GOAL ACHIEVED?

Lenzi was used as both a mascot and a sustainability ambassador. The campaign ran from the 2023 Biathlon European Championships through to the 2025 World Championships, giving the message repeated visibility over several seasons.

The OC communicated Lenzi’s story through several channels, including comics, trading cards, buttons, merchandise, live appearances and promotional videos for the region. This made environmental topics more accessible, especially for younger audiences.



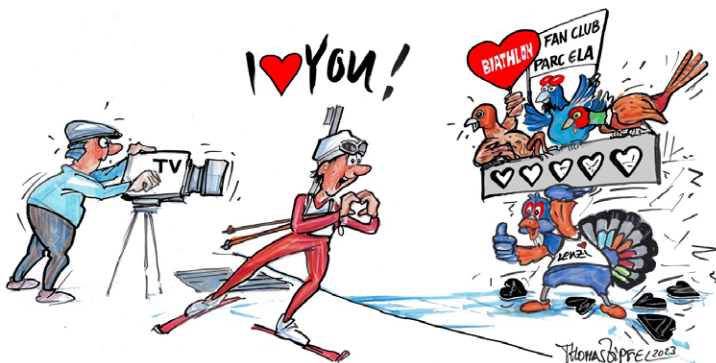
A key part of the project was the involvement of school children. Children helped paint start numbers for the European Championships, turning them from spectators into active participants and ambassadors for environmental awareness.

The campaign also used the idea of “Lenzi’s living room”. Spectators were encouraged to see the event venue as part of the capercaillie’s habitat, and themselves as guests in a natural environment that needs to be respected and protected.



WHICH IBU SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES DOES IT ADDRESS?

- **Inadequate sustainability communication** – Lenzi translated complex sustainability themes into a simple, emotional and recognisable story.
- **Lacking sustainability awareness among biathlon stakeholders** – The campaign reached fans, families, school children, volunteers, tourists and the wider event audience through repeated communication and live interaction.
- **Decreasing biodiversity at outdoor venues** – By choosing the capercaillie, the OC created a direct link between the event and local habitat protection.
- **Lacking consideration of sustainability and landscape in construction of (new) facilities** – The project helped frame sport infrastructure and event development in relation to the surrounding natural landscape and the species that depend on it.



For further information on the sustainability work of the IBU, please visit:

<https://www.biathlonworld.com/inside-ibu/sustainability>

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES FACED?

One of the main challenges was that some development projects in the region had previously faced resistance from environmental organisations. The OC therefore chose to engage with these concerns rather than avoid them. Lenzi helped create a shared and positive symbol around which sport, tourism and nature protection could be discussed.

OC Lenzerheide also explored collaboration with Parc Ela, a nature park in Graubünden, but the park organisation did not have sufficient staff capacity to promote the ideas during the IBU Biathlon World Championships 2025. Nevertheless, the project benefited from cooperation and input from several environmental organisations, including Pro Natura Graubünden, WWF Graubünden and BirdLife.

Another challenge was to make sustainability communication engaging without being too technical. By using a mascot, storytelling and children's participation, the OC was able to make the topic more approachable.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Lenzi continues after the 2025 World Championships as the mascot of the newly founded Lenzerheide Event Organization. The aim is for Lenzi to remain a visible ambassador for sustainability, biodiversity and respect for nature at future events in the region.

Beyond the World Championships, the Roland Arena will continue to operate as an international training and competition centre. The cooperation established with Parc Ela, Pro Natura Graubünden, WWF Graubünden and BirdLife provides a foundation for future environmental and sustainability projects in the region.

Possible future developments include educational activities for schools, further use of Lenzi in event communication, and continued collaboration with local stakeholders on nature protection.

Lenzerheide has shown how a locally meaningful mascot can make sustainability communication more accessible, using biodiversity protection to build dialogue between sport, children, fans and environmental partners.