



## Press Release

### International Wildlife Film Festival Under New Leadership

### TV Host Dirk Steffens To Become New Green Screen Festival Director

Eckernfoerde/Kiel, 4 November 2016

**Hamburg based science journalist and TV host Dirk Steffens to become the new director of Green Screen International Wildlife Film Festival. Steffens (48) is widely known to German TV audiences through the ZDF documentary series “Terra X”. He takes over from Kiel based filmmaker and writer Gerald Grote, founder of the festival who has shaped the festival for more than ten years.**

Founded in 2007, Green Screen International Wildlife Film Festival has established itself as a yearly event pulling audiences of 30,000 visitors thus and grown into the biggest festival of its kind in Europe. Each September Green Screen welcomes approximately 18,000 wildlife film fans in Eckernfoerde. Throughout the year another 12,000 visitors attend screenings organized by Green Screen in Northern Germany and Denmark.

The festival has become the most important venue for the German speaking wildlife film industry. Each year around 150 filmmakers, producers and representatives of worldwide broadcasters present their latest productions, participate in discussions with audiences and attend seminars and workshops.

Green Screen does not only show aesthetically pleasing high quality wildlife documentaries. Its focus points include the protection of species, conservation of nature and worldwide environmental hazards. Green Screen school projects reach around 8,000 pupils yearly with screening and panel discussions. Youngsters participate in Green Screen film camps producing wildlife films from scripting to filming and editing. Supported by filmmakers and teachers they thus develop an intimate relationship with their environment and its protection.

At the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> festival season in September Gerald Grote (61) has stepped down as festival director. Back in 2004 the filmmaker from Kiel had conceived the idea of a wildlife film festival on the Baltic shores. With his connections within the film industry and a lot of creative energy Grote was able to forge the character of the festival and to lay the basis for its success. Under his leadership the idea of the Green Screen promenade featuring flagstones for each

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prize winner was conceived and implemented as well as the Eckernfoerde talks, a series of yearly open-air screenings – one of them on the beach -, major events in Bad Segeberg and Kiel, the week of wildlife school screening and a regional film tour. That frame work of events was instrumental for creating a wide awareness of the festival within cultural, educational and environmental institutions.

“Getting the festival off the ground has been a lot of fun” says Grote. “It was wonderful to be the architect of the intellectual framework of the festival. As a structural engineer it was vital to test the stability of the idea eventually laying the foundation for its success and to furnish the rooms in the following years. Not overlooking one of the most important rooms that enables development and change: the foyer. That is where the festival is at this point in time.”

For Dirk Steffens “it is a very special task” to become director of Europe’s most popular wildlife festival. “I have been producing wildlife and science films for 25 years. At the Green Screen Festival I meet many people who have been colleagues for half of my life” Steffens said during a press interview in Kiel. “I take on a flourishing festival and hope to give it additional ideas and stimuli thus making it better known throughout Germany and internationally and to find additional partners and supporters. I have another very personal reason: my wife and I have a second home close to Eckernfoerde. My work for the festival is a wonderful excuse for disappearing from Hamburg occasionally” explains Steffens.

Dirk Steffens was an intern at Cologne’s journalism school and studied politics and history. Following his studies he was political editor at the Deutschlandfunk news desk in Cologne. He later worked as host, author and documentary filmmaker for various public and private radio and TV stations focusing on wildlife and science documentations and visiting more than 120 countries in the process.

In 2008 he joined ZDF broadcaster as host for documentations and reportages, amongst them “Terra X”, “Projekt Hühnerhof”, “Die Supertiere”, “Faszination Erde” or “Die Macht de Elemente”. He volunteers as WWF ambassador and for the Jane Goodall Institute and is Honorary Consul for Palau. He became a member of the advisory board of the Senckenberg Gesellschaft. In September 2016 German environmental minister Barbara Hendricks appointed him to be “UN decade ambassador for biological diversity”.

Dirk Steffens received many awards for his work, amongst them the Golden Camera, the Walter Scheel Award, the Silver Compass, Herbert Quandt Media Award, Görlitz Meridian Wildlife Film Award and the Hans Carl von Carlowitz Sustainability Award.