



# The Balance Wheel

**Newsletter of the Association of Conservation Information**

**Summer, 2004**

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*Part one in a two-part series – Fall '04 issue to highlight successful recovery stories among ACI member states*

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## **NATIONAL NEWS**

*This is part one of a two-part series on the effects of the ESA (endangered Species Act). This article brings attention to new species that are being recommended for listing. In the next issue of TBW (Fall 2004), we will highlight endangered species success stories from our own ACI member states. These stories will bring attention to state's efforts made possible under the ESA and how species have been recovered and now thrive.*

### **SCIENTISTS PETITION TO LIST 225 PLANTS AND ANIMALS AS ENDANGERED**

*By: Arthur H. Rotstein, Associated Press*

Scientists, including acclaimed wildlife biologist Jane Goodall, have joined environmental groups in petitioning the government to add 225 plants and animals to the U.S. endangered species list.

The species are not new to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; four-fifths have been on the agency's waiting list for a decade. Some have been waiting since 1975. The average wait is 17 years.

Goodall, known for her pioneering research on chimpanzees, signed the petitions, joined by other prominent scientists including biologists E.O. Wilson of Harvard University and Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University.

"Wildlife is facing serious threats almost everywhere," Goodall said in a statement. She accused the Bush administration of seeking to undermine the Endangered Species Act.

Robert Hass, former poet laureate of the United States, said it's not too late to save the 225 plants and animals "languishing on the federal candidate list. It's time to open the doors of the ark and let them in."

Eleven individuals and three environmental organizations filed the petitions, said Brian Nowicki, a conservation biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity, which organized the effort.

A spokesman for the Interior Department accused the Tucson-based group of misrepresenting the realities of the endangered species program. Hugh Vickery attributed a decline in listing new species to "a flood of lawsuits" filed by the center and other plaintiffs since 1997.

The 225 species listed in the petitions are from 39 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Mariana and Northern Mariana islands, and American Samoa. Nearly half are from Hawaii.

More than 1,200 species have been placed on the endangered list since the Endangered Species Act became law in 1973, Nowicki said.



## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

### **USING TRAGEDIES AS TEACHABLE MOMENTS**

*We have all had it happen in our agencies, suddenly and without warning our agency staff is asked to respond to an emergency which inadvertently turns to tragedy and we – the public affairs staff – are left holding the proverbial bag. The Balance Wheel thought it would a useful effort to highlight some of these “tragedies turned to teachable moments” in our newsletter. Following are four stories from our own members in Texas, Oregon, Utah and North Carolina who were kind enough to share their experience and how they turned it into an educational experience for the entire agency.*

#### **Alligator Episode Shows How Media Shape Attitudes**

*By: Tom Harvey and Nancy Herron, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

In spring 2003, millions of people around the world who had never heard of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department suddenly developed strong opinions about our agency. They saw us as people who mistreat animals. It was an incorrect perception, but in the world of mass media, perception is reality.

It all started April 24, when one of our game wardens responded to a nuisance alligator complaint near Houston. He arrived to find a nine-foot gator in the middle of a suburban street. A crowd had gathered, including children who were not keeping a safe distance. The alligator had been injured, making it potentially more unpredictable. Kids were waiting for the school bus, which would soon stop right next to the alligator.

The game warden determined it was urgent to get the animal out of the area for the safety of the people. He first tried to rope the alligator and pull it by hand, but it behaved aggressively. He then tied it to his truck and towed it away from the crowd at 2-to-3 mph to an area where he could use his firearm safely to kill it.

The parents and children who had gathered thought our warden had come to “save” the alligator. When he began removing it, they reacted with shock and anger. They grabbed home video cameras and began taping.

Home video of the live alligator flopping and rolling as it was dragged down the street, coupled with tearful interviews from residents, eventually aired on local newscasts in more than 30 U.S. cities. The media frenzy peaked when Katie Courick interviewed our Law Enforcement Director Col. Jim Stinebaugh live on the NBC Today Show.

TPWD worked quickly to try to manage the situation. Among other things, we taped our own news interview with Stinebaugh and gave it to the TV media, trying to make sure we got our points across. But after one look at that home video, most viewers didn't care about the mitigating facts. They wanted our warden fired or charged with a crime.

Within a few days, thousands of emails and phone calls came pouring into headquarters. Letters arrived from Scotland, from Denmark, from the Virgin Islands.

Unable to provide custom responses to each contact, we instead focused on creating response email templates and, especially, Web materials that addressed common concerns. We immediately created a set of Frequently Asked Questions that gave the full story and directed all email to the FAQ web link. This included Stinebaugh expressing sincere regret that the episode was upsetting to citizens, plus a promise that we would take steps to provide new equipment and training to make sure our nuisance gator methods were humane yet effective.

Within the week of the incident we also created a mini-Web site on alligators by working with biologists in East Texas and then fashioning it to respond to the questions people were asking about alligators. This included what to do if you see one (adapted with permission from our ACI member friends in Florida), highlights from TPWD alligator research to show our biological interest and efforts we take (we don't just haul 'em away), more info on alligator hunting and farming (they aren't endangered), some enhanced fact sheets on basic alligator biology and life history, etc.

"This is a great reminder of the influence of the media on the public," Stinebaugh said at the time. "But I'm beginning to feel better about it. People became more understanding as they learned more about it. It's an example of the intense interest people have in wildlife. In this case, some people were mad at us, but if there is a positive thing there it's that people care so much about wildlife."

Houston media kept pounding away on the story, interviewing zoo curators and alligator trappers. After the initial furor died down, local game wardens and wildlife biologists started doing interviews. We had distributed a set of Talking Points internally to all our employees to help them prep for media contacts. Stories eventually became more thoughtful and constructive, examining the problem of people moving into wildlife habitat, emphasizing safety tips for living near alligators.

"Employees need to be made fully aware that they are under public scrutiny at all times," said Law Enforcement Regional Commander Ted Tolle, who was so new in the job he was trying to move his belongings to Houston when the story broke.

"I guess what bothers me most about it is that the focus was on the alligator rather than on the safety issues," Tolle said. "We had a game warden dragged to death a couple of years back and the public interest then was not near what it was for that animal. But the news media finally turned around and began doing a lot of educational stories."

A year later, we are back at it in Southeast Texas, this time with a planned media communication effort aimed at helping people learn to tell a true "nuisance" gator that has lost its fear of people from a wild gator that is just doing its thing and needs to be left alone. It's a challenge.

Starting in April, the beginning of the season when gators begin moving to mate and nest and people begin noticing them more often, we began pumping out materials. We created a new web page on what to do "If You See An Alligator" and drove public traffic toward it with news releases, PSAs, staff appearances on TV morning shows and other tactics. We posted scripts and interview soundbites online so radio stations had everything to put together their own three part series. Perhaps most important, we made the time to phone news contacts, including small rural weeklies, radio stations and suburban papers in "gator country" to make sure they knew about the story.

In the midst of this effort, a five-foot alligator was found hurt on a jogging trail in a city park in Houston one Saturday, and the story made the front page of the Houston Chronicle metro section. The next day, papers across the state in landlocked towns like Del Rio and Dallas, hundreds of miles from gator country, all ran a story about how the jogging trail gator had to be euthanized. We fire all our guns and get some good local stories, but one oddball story about an inner city gator gets more statewide attention in a single day than anything we could achieve. Que sera, sera.

At the end of the day, however, I believe two main factors can make a real difference in these situations: (1) steady determination over the long haul in pounding out a positive message through all your distribution channels and (2) good internal communication to first agree on and write down the agency gospel and then make sure all employees have it (realizing that they are the front line of communication). It obviously also helps to react quickly when something big breaks and try to minimize the damage, but that's not always easy with big, lumbering organizations like some of ours in ACI. Regardless, if we do those first two things well, we can still win over time.

### **Public Education in a Time of Crisis**

*By: Randy Henry, Oregon State Marine Board*

On June 14, 2003, a commercial charter boat called the Taki Tooo was headed out of Tillamook Bay for a day of bottom fishing on the Pacific Ocean. The 35-foot fiberglass boat was at capacity with 19 people aboard. The captain had made the trip hundreds of times – he was well liked and well respected. He had a good safety record despite the Tillamook bar being one of the more temperamental on the Oregon coast.

The decisions the captain made that blustery morning are still being debated. Despite small craft advisories, a 10-foot bar and a warning from a boat that crossed earlier, the Taki Tooo gunned the motor about 7 a.m. and headed across the bar.

A series of unexpectedly large waves caught the vessel hard. The boat may have grounded in the wave trough, or the captain may have turned sideways to outrun a breaker. Whatever happened, the vessel went sideways and rolled several times. None on board were wearing life jackets, but people in the cabin were able to get to them. Eleven lives were lost in the accident. All survivors had access to a flotation device except one, and she was an experienced surfer and surf swimmer.

A witness on the beach who was watching the accident unfold called me at home, and I began calling key agency staff. Charter boats are under the purview of the Coast Guard, but I knew the media wouldn't make that distinction. I called my supervisor and we discussed a strategy for responding appropriately to media inquiries.

Coincidentally, we had begun distributing safety flyers at Tillamook Bay the weekend before and had posted material on line as part of our Coastal Boating Safety Initiative. In black and white, with a lot of red, we strongly advised recreational boaters to avoid crossing the bar on an ebb tide, always wear their life jacket and other safety information. The media found the documents immediately. They quickly knew what questions to ask. The Coast Guard was busy with the rescue, so my cell phone started ringing – a lot.

I knew that I couldn't comment on the accident itself, or the local conditions or the investigation. But we had one of the larger ocean salmon fishing seasons in years opening in a week, and a lot of boaters were going to be heading across any of Oregon's 11 bars. After talking with my supervisor, we decided to frame our issue as a needed discussion on bar safety, with life jackets as the primary issue, local knowledge as the secondary issue, and properly equipped, appropriately sized boats and other details a close third.

It was one of those events where one call was from the local weekly paper, and the next was from Time or Newsweek. We were sympathetic to the tragic loss, but used all available data and the intense media focus to report our key issues. We also tried to keep the messages positive: "If you follow these basic precautions, you can do this safely." Ultimately, I suppose our message was education.

We provided a great deal of background information on charter fishing, ocean fishing, recreational boating, coastal bars, and all the safety issues related to boating in coastal waters. We posted links to key information up front on our website.

Often the interviews focused on very specific information, then broadened out to peripheral issues. I took every opportunity, in a very direct manner, to tell reporters that what this charter boat faced is the same scenario and the same hazard that thousands of recreational boaters will face every time they cross the bar during the summer and fall. We repeated the information a hundred times.

The media coverage was interesting. Our data and information was frequently cited, but because we don't directly manage charter boats, we were rarely quoted. Our website was a heavily used resource, with graphs and charts showing up on TV several times. As the story played out, the secondary stories began to come out, and many of those were seeds we'd planted in the initial interviews. More interviews followed. We were able to keep our message going out in different formats for well over a month.

About one month after the accident, we did a review of coastal boating fatalities over the last decade and released it to the media, re-emphasizing the key messages. It was also picked up and used by the media, resulting in more coverage.

After the accident, we found the media to be highly sensitized to life jacket use and to boating accidents in general. Each major fishery received intense scrutiny. There was some very creative television coverage throughout the summer.

The accident and the resulting coverage had good and bad consequences. On the bad side was the chilling effect it had on the north coast charter fishing industry and ports. There was a great deal of industry anger directed at the captain of the Taki Too and the media for painting with an overly broad brush.

But there were some huge benefits - you couldn't have bought a life jacket campaign like that for a million dollars. Many coastal fishing guides began putting inflatable life jackets on their customers. Life jacket use, as reported by marine officers and others, was noticeably higher. Despite a very active ocean fishing season, there was only one recreational fatality on the north coast after the Taki Too. People were very conservative and, generally, safer.

As we near the one-year anniversary, media is revisiting the story. We have a new life jacket campaign being put in place, new signs at ocean access points and support from a major retailer to distribute our flyers statewide.

We were lucky in some ways. Because we had so much information already "out there," and because the basic safety issues have such a broad multi-agency understanding, our message was readily picked up and greatly amplified. I can't claim we bridled the media to do our will, but we provided a great deal of information and leads to related stories, all of which focused on a few major objectives.

We had a story to tell, and people were ready to listen. It was an effort well worthwhile.

### **PR In Times Of Mishaps.**

*By: Randy Brudnicki, Utah*

Sometimes I wonder if all the PR work we do is really appreciated. Every year we send out news releases, brochures, and radio or TV PSAs to warn the public that interacting in wildlife territory can be risky. Most often, the mainstream media ignores our information — until something bad happens to someone.

It is unfortunate that people suffer injuries, but it sure helps get the word out. This last winter, a hiker was attacked and trampled by a young bull moose in the Park City, Utah area. We don't know why the moose attacked, but we think it was starving and was just protecting its territory along the trail. The hiker spent several days in the hospital. Fortunately, the hiker carried a shovel in his backpack to use in case anyone in his party was buried in an avalanche. (Utah loses several skiers and outdoor recreation users every winter to avalanches.) The shovel probably saved his life because although the moose kept jumping on him, the shovel took most of the blows.

However, several weeks prior to this incident, we relocated several moose from the Salt Lake City/Park City areas because we were afraid someone would get hurt or a moose would cross the road and get hit. Of course, our biggest fear was that someone in a car would be killed if they hit a moose.

We received quite a bit of bad publicity over our relocation efforts because some of the transplanted moose died several days after they were relocated. We don't know if they were already weak from the extremely deep snow and colder-than-normal temperatures or if they had a bad reaction to the tranquilizer drug. One TV station did an "expose" of our relocation efforts and interviewed citizens who implied we should leave the animal alone. Our side of the story never was told. Then this moose attack occurred and we were able to tell our story about being aware of wildlife in crowded areas and why we attempt to relocate animals for public safety.

Public sentiment changed and we didn't receive any more "ugly" correspondence from the public. The young moose must have been very weak because it died within a week of the attack, despite the efforts of our officers and biologist who carried food into the area and fed the moose every day. Of course, because medical personnel had to attend to the injured hiker, our officers kept the moose sedated longer than normal so it wouldn't attack the rescuers. The extra length of sedation could have led to its death.

Apparently, however, we didn't move enough moose this winter because in April a motorist did hit a moose in the Park City area and the motorist died when his car caught fire and exploded. (As a side note, prior to the 2002

Olympics we moved more than 30 moose from this same area because we feared that with so many tourists coming to the area, we could have a fatality. Unfortunately, we did have 3 fatalities. One was our employee and the others were the contractor/helicopter pilot and his son who were hired to move the moose. The helicopter tail rotor accidentally snagged a power line. Then the helicopter crashed into an iced-over reservoir and all aboard died instantly when the craft went through the ice and into the water.)

The mountains around Park City have become so crowded with homes in the big game winter range that having a hunting season in the area is nearly impossible. The most feasible way to remove excess moose is through transplanting. But, it is a method that carries an element of risk.

Moose incidents are rare, but black bear attacks have become a bigger problem in Utah the last two years. We have been doing bear awareness campaigns for many years, but we have had three bear attacks in the last year. The attacks occurred within five miles of each other in a remote backcountry canyon popular with commercial river runners. After the last attack, we were finally able to capture and euthanize the bear we believe was responsible for the attacks. Since then, several TV stations have run our bear safety PSAs and have done extensive stories on how to camp and hike in bear country.

Now we have to start a new rattlesnake awareness campaign because we just had our second rattlesnake bite in the last year in the Salt Lake/Ogden metropolitan area. Snakebites are very rare in our state so we were unprepared for this story.

### **Shooting accident was preventable**

*Unsupervised outing with shotgun ends in death of North Carolina teenager*

*By: Greg Jenkins, North Carolina*

School was out for Veterans Day on Tuesday, Nov. 11, last year when Daniel Sheets, his two cousins and a friend walked into the woods. The teenagers carried at least one 12 gauge shotgun with them. Some of them wore camouflage clothing. None of them wore blaze orange.

Three boys left the woods near the small town of Broadway, N.C., that autumn day, leaving Sheets and the shotgun behind. None of them told anyone what had happened. Sheets had been shot in the head. He lay dead on the forest floor on a carpet of leaves, his life ended at 14.

When Daniel didn't come home that evening, his parents called the sheriff's office, which searched through the night for Sheets. Finally, one of his cousins admitted that something had gone badly wrong in the woods the day before. He showed the authorities where Sheets lay, explaining that the group got separated and he mistook his cousin for a deer, firing the weapon towards a noise he heard.

The truth was that they had not gotten separated. The teens were all together and began horsing around with the gun. In the struggle, the shotgun discharged and Sheets was killed instantly.

As the kids' web of untruths unraveled, television and print media in the Piedmont region of North Carolina followed the story. The teenagers first said they were in the woods hunting, so Sheets' death was reported as a hunting accident. The only thing that tied this incident to hunting in any way was that it was deer season in the Piedmont. However, it was muzzleloader season; the regular gun season did not begin until Nov. 15, the day before Daniel Sheets' funeral.

Four teenage boys walked into the woods one nice fall day with a gun. Perhaps they were going to shoot at some animals, or maybe they were just going to fire the shotgun a few times. Whatever the case, they were not legally hunting: their weapon was illegal for the season and borrowed without parents' permission, they were all underage, none of them were licensed hunters, and none was dressed properly. They were just four kids out messing around in the woods with a gun, and one of them ended up dead.

The cousin who shot Sheets was charged with involuntary manslaughter and tried in juvenile court in January. Since juvenile records are sealed, there was no further information available in the case. Assuming he stays out of further trouble, the cousin's record will be wiped clean when he turns 18 in three or four years. The best-case scenario is that he will become a hunter safety volunteer in area high schools and teach kids to avoid playing with guns.

Pierce Sheets, Daniel's father, said he feels no ill will toward the shooter, who he has known all his life. The father's hope is that other parents will teach safety to their children. "It's so sad anybody has to go through this," he told Raleigh, N.C., television station WRAL. "But if someone can learn from it, I think that's a positive."

Before the true story of Daniel Sheets' death was revealed, WRAL aired a story in which they interviewed a gun shop owner near Broadway about hunter safety. However, once the incident was discovered to be tragic horseplay instead of an actual hunting death, neither the TV news nor the area newspapers had much to say about it. *The Sanford Herald* ran a story explaining that the county sheriff's office had clarified an earlier determination and ruled it an accidental death rather than a hunting accident. Aside from that, there was little or no mention of the incident in area media until the cousin went to juvenile court. And of course, no reporting of those proceedings was allowed.

How can we use Daniel Sheets' death as a teaching tool? Right-minded media can write or broadcast stories about how unsupervised playing with guns too often results in tragedy. Hunter safety instructors, especially in schools, can make the same point. Public relations people and educators with state and federal wildlife agencies can keep the subject at the forefront of people's minds. But ultimately, as Pierce Sheets said, it is up to parents to teach their children not to play with weapons. Simple things like trigger locks or keeping hunting weapons and ammunition locked in cabinets are helpful. Education is the only way to avoid senseless occurrences like this one. That education begins where weapons are kept—at home.

## **HUNTING AND FISHING PARTICIPATION AMONG THE NATION'S YOUTH**

*By: Responsive Management*

*For more information contact Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director, Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801 or by email: [mark@responsivemanagement.com](mailto:mark@responsivemanagement.com)*

*Responsive Management is an internationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Mark Duda, the Executive Director, has consistently contributed relevant articles to *The Balance Wheel* in order to help our members in their professional efforts. Below is a synopsis of his most recent survey work and information on how to access the results.*

The future of hunting and fishing in the United States ultimately depends upon the commitment of future generations to these traditional fish and wildlife activities. The key to active participation in and commitment to hunting and fishing by future generations is fostering this commitment and participation among today's youth.

Responsive Management recently completed a major study to better understand the factors related to hunting and fishing initiation, participation, retention, and desertion among today's youth 8-18 years old. There were two major objectives of this study. The first objective was to identify the factors involved in the recruitment and retention of the nation's youth in hunting and fishing. The second objective was to recommend to the fish and wildlife management community programs and strategies to increase participation in hunting and fishing among the nation's youth and improve the retention of these participants. Although there has been a proliferation of studies on hunting and fishing participation and retention, almost all of this work has focused on adults. This project focuses on where hunting and fishing recruitment and retention begin: with the nation's youth.

There were five phases to this project. Phase I consisted of a literature review of not only what is known about youth and hunting and fishing participation, but also what is known about youth participation in other activities, demographic trends affecting youth, and children's cognitive development and stages of learning. Phase II consisted of a series of focus groups of youth of various ages. Phase III consisted of a nationwide telephone survey of youth from all 50 states regarding their participation in and opinions on hunting and fishing and other outdoor activities as well as their attitudes toward wildlife. Phase IV of the project included extensive cross-tabulations of the telephone survey data. Phase V of the project is the final report, which includes a synthesis of the findings from the literature review, focus groups, and telephone survey and analyses, as well as the implications of the findings. It also includes recommendations and strategies to increase participation in hunting and fishing among the nation's youth and improve the retention of these participants.

Reports can be accessed at Responsive Management's brand new website at [www.responsivemanagement.com](http://www.responsivemanagement.com). The final report can be accessed from the home page by scrolling down to the link "Factors Related to Hunting and Fishing Participation Among the Nation's Youth" and then clicking on the "Click here" link. Phase I, II, and III are also available for download from Responsive Management's website. Click on the link in the left toolbar "Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Research"; twenty-three different topic areas will appear. Click on either the hunting or fishing subpages and then on "Click for a list of reports."

This project was funded under a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Aid, Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration.



## **SKILL BUILDING**

### **FREELANCERS: KEEPING A HAPPY ALLIANCE**

*By Jim Dean, 30 year veteran as magazine editor and freelancer, North Carolina*

Most of us in ACI work with freelance writers and photographers on a regular basis. That's especially true for those of us on the staff of agency magazines. Unfortunately, our relations with freelancers do not always go smoothly, and it's largely because we don't always fully understand our co-dependent roles.

During the nearly 30 years I worked for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission—18 years as editor of *Wildlife in North Carolina* magazine—I was also an independent freelancer, and thus had the opportunity to play simultaneously on both sides of the street. When I became editor I already knew what a freelancer needed, but I quickly came to a better—indeed, very sympathetic—understanding of an editor's needs. I think this dual experience helped me establish procedures that seldom resulted in any problems.

One characteristic appreciated by both editors and freelancers is professionalism. This is a business, and keeping that foremost in mind can alleviate many pitfalls. Alas, it doesn't entirely solve the problems of what has historically been an adversarial relationship. Many freelancers consider editors supremely arrogant, and accuse them of editing viciously without reviewing changes or facts with the writer. They complain that editors never answer queries or return phone calls, nor do they pay promptly or return submissions in a timely fashion.

Such mutual affections are returned. To editors, many freelancers are undisciplined, semi-literate hobbyists who have no regard for deadlines and never write to fit the required word length. Indeed, the worst writers are the ones most likely to object to any editing, arguing that "they don't hardly never make no mistakes."

Unfortunately, some editors and freelancers stand guilty on all counts. To make matters worse, those of us in ACI bear an additional burden. Our status as public employees can generate its own venom—we're lazy, ignorant slugs who can't get a real job.

Even so, most relationships between editors and freelancers are excellent and often quite friendly. After all, we need each other, and most of us know it. It's fairly obvious that mutual courtesy, respect, common sense and professionalism can eliminate many problems before they occur, and quickly solve most of the rest. Perhaps the most beneficial step you can take is to prepare a detailed set of written guidelines outlining editor-writer expectations.

#### **Guidelines for Editors**

No freelancer worth his or her salt believes in "art for art's sake." It is in the editor's best interest to assume that all freelancers write for money, and nearly all serious problems arise from misunderstandings on this point. Here are some thoughts that may prove helpful in preparing guidelines tailored to your situation:

- A written list of editorial and photographic guidelines should be prepared, stating the editor's policies and requirements regarding queries and submissions. This should include desired word count and any style preferences. With computers, many articles and digital photos are now submitted electronically, but hard copy and film sent by mail may also be acceptable. Include the terms and amounts of payment, when paid (acceptance or publication), and when photos and other material will be returned. You should also include information regarding your copyright, as well as your policy for paying for damaged materials, especially photographs. These guidelines—we kept them on computer for easy update—can be sent to freelancers who inquire about

submissions. If you're unsure what to include, ask other ACI affiliates to share their guidelines, or write major magazines and request theirs.

- Queries should be promptly answered by phone, letter or e-mail with a yes or no within two weeks, a month at most. If there is likely to be a longer delay -- awaiting a magazine planning meeting, for example -- inform the freelancer. Computers have made this easy so there is no excuse to avoid these responsibilities.
- On any assignment, the freelancer needs, at the very least, to know the deadline, word count and what you're paying. This is also the time to discuss the proposed article and come to a mutual agreement on how the subject will be handled.
- Editors edit; they can't help it. And, in truth, many of the freelancers who write for our publications are not highly skilled. They often need our help, but that doesn't mean we should totally rewrite a piece. If copy is submitted that needs more than minimal editing, it is always a good idea to contact the freelancer and explain your intentions. If you meet resistance, it may be wise to simply return the piece. Editors are not required to clear edits with writers before publication—short publication schedules may prohibit this anyway. Having said this, a good editor is more interested in getting a good, accurate article than exercising editorial rights; thus, it is wise to set deadlines early enough to provide extra time in case you decide to check facts or review major edits with a writer.
- Pay the agreed fee promptly, and return any photos or other material immediately after publication. This is where many editors fail, and it's the biggest concern for most freelancers. Once burned, they may refuse to work for you again. The editor should establish a monthly review of all payments due, and request checks. A bigger job is handling the return of photos and materials, and we found that this was best handled as a monthly priority assignment by an editorial assistant. Each submission was logged in and checked out, and any pre-existing damage to film or slides was noted.

### **Guidelines for Freelancers**

Believe it or not, every writer needs a good editor, without exception. It is doubtful we would ever have heard of Ernest Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald had it not been for Maxwell Perkins.

- Don't miss deadlines. Write precisely to required word counts. Deliver your copy in the manner requested. If you are submitting photos -- film or digital -- be certain to include your name and address on each, and key each photo to caption information. If you find your assigned subject is unexpectedly shifting, alert the editor before you proceed.
- Be careful of copyright. Most magazines still accept first North American Serial Rights (which are best for you). Beware of those who wish to purchase all rights or work-for-hire because your product will no longer be yours. Negotiate any electronic rights to your benefit if possible. Submit only original, unpublished copy to one publisher at the time. If it is returned, you can then pursue another publisher.
- Don't be a horse's patoot when it comes to editing. Don't insist on seeing edited copy before publication. Trust your editor until he or she proves untrustworthy. All freelancers must learn to accept the fact that they will not like all editing changes; however, if serious editing problems continue, arrange a conference with your editor by phone or in person. Alas, a few editors are functionally illiterate, and usually arrogant about it. If problems persist, haul your business elsewhere.
- Thou shalt not pester thy editor. Don't show up unannounced to discuss queries. Limit phone calls and e-mails. Editors appreciate freelancers who recognize that they are busy, and who treat them with consideration. Even so, if payment seems overdue or materials are not promptly returned, you are wise to make increasingly persistent inquiries.

### **WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN ACI AWARDS WINNER?**

*The following article continues our series on "What does it take to be an ACI awards winner?" This issue's award focus is "4-color magazines"*

#### **South Carolina Wildlife Magazine Takes Home ACI Award and Tells How**

*By: Linda Renshaw, South Carolina*

Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey: eat your hearts out. *South Carolina Wildlife* does a tightrope act that you can't match!

It may not be performed in sequins, or even with a long pole – but it's a balancing act nonetheless, one carried out by every other conservation-agency magazine as well: walking the fine line between publishing "program" pieces (those that support the goals of your agency, often articles that lean toward the not-very-gripping) and fun, fascinating features that keep our diverse set of readers coming back for more. The challenge is twofold: editorial and graphic.

Over its 51-year publishing history, *SCW* has earned a reputation for visual excellence, thanks in great part to having staff photographers and not having to rely on free-lance photography. An understated design has always emphasized the quality of the images, as editors and art directors aimed more for elegance than glitz. But here surfaces the difficulty: how to maintain this level of illustration appeal when treating topics such as fisheries management or coon hunting?

Well, we often say, thank goodness for habitat. When we discuss turkey stocking, we may show a gobbler in full strut at the edge of a field sprinkled with wildflowers, iridescent bronze feathers contrasting with the pastels and greens. Youth deer hunts? We might look for a big-racked whitetail buck in a palmetto thicket, or at the edge of a reflecting woodland pond. Waterfowling features allow us to run some of the duck-blind-in-a-misty-impoundment shots we have, or species portraits of our "summer duck," the woodie, in a Carolina bay. The aforementioned fisheries management offers the chance to depict some of our glorious sunsets or sunrises over one of the state's reservoirs, from mountains to midlands, and the coon hunting (especially hard to illustrate because it takes place at night) may call for an array of hounds set up at the edge of the woods. Informative cutlines tie the article to the photos, and the casual reader who wants to just look at the pictures gets the message. More intrigued readers go for the whole story.

The second, and perhaps more challenging, problem is editorial. How do we treat the same subjects season after season and keep readers from getting bored? Our answer to this has been to constantly seek new writers, men and women, with different experiences and fresh perspectives. The ability to purchase free-lance articles has been a godsend, especially since downsizing has forced staff writers to wear more hats – writing for the magazine has taken a back burner. We don't pay top dollar, but we make free-lance writers look good and add to their portfolios.

Add our commitment to planning at least a year ahead to this right-to-buy luxury, and the editorial conundrum becomes more manageable. We editors meet bimonthly with representatives of our agency's divisions to learn about their projects and priorities. By carefully evaluating queries and unsolicited manuscripts, and by knowing well the abilities and interests of the writers with whom we do business, we're able to match contributors, topics and treatments to accomplish the variety we need. This up-front planning pays off by giving writers a clear understanding of what we expect and avoids last-minute surprises. It brings a photography bonus, too, permitting timely shooting. Long lead times also allow creativity to blossom, among both writers and photographers.

We walk a thin, fine line, balancing support of our agency's mission and our dedication to informing and entertaining our readers. This is the theory behind our tightrope act, and generally it works in practice. It better, because there's no net.



## UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

### **International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies to Meet in New Jersey for 2004 Meeting**

*September 26 - Oct 2, 2004*

Being held in Atlantic City at the Trump Marina, the 2004 meeting of the IAFWA promises to be informative and fun. The hotel and casino is not in downtown Atlantic City, but is on the bay on the bayside of the barrier island. It is an open and relaxed setting with grand views of the bay and salt marsh. It is only a five minute drive to the downtown area.

The Trump Marina is a perfect setting for some of the evening events and the planned field trips which will depart from the marina area including guided salt marsh kayak tour and saltwater charter fishing trip. Other trips include a tour and shopping excursion in Victorian Cape May and a guided birding tour through the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. For those that want to strike out on their own Atlantic City is only about one half hour away from the Cape May peninsula which hosts a world famous fall bird migration that is underway when the meeting takes place.

Pre - conference meetings begin on Sunday, September 26 and regular meetings on Monday September 27. There will be a general session on the afternoon of September 27. An agenda and registration information can be found at: [http://www.iafwa.org/2004%20Annual%20Meeting/2004\\_annual\\_meeting.htm](http://www.iafwa.org/2004%20Annual%20Meeting/2004_annual_meeting.htm)

### **IAFWA Conservation Education Summit to be held in December**

IAFWA is planning a Conservation Education Summit where state directors, chiefs of education and education program staff from around the country will discuss current education trends and best management practices and hear from experts on the future of education. During the summit a strategic course for state conservation education programs will be determined for the next decade. The summit will be held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, W.Va. Dec. 7-9. For more information, contact Don MacLauchlan at donmac@sso.org.



## **MEMBER NEWS**

### **Florida Fish & Wildlife Reorganizes**

*By: Scott Ball*

For the past two years, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has undergone a strategic planning process, part of which includes changing its organizational structure. The need for reorganization stems from a constitutional amendment that brought all or parts of three conservation-related agencies into a single agency. That process reached a milestone when a bill to authorize the reorganization passed the Legislature in May.

The FWC is now structured according to function. Most drastic among the changes are a single division focused solely on research (rather than research sections in Fisheries, Wildlife, etc.) and a division focused on habitat and species issues (moving staff formerly housed in Fisheries, Wildlife, etc). The concept places a strong emphasis on teamwork involving staff in different divisions working together to address certain issues. The reorganization also decentralizes the agency's I&E functions. Each division will conduct its own media relations, marketing and education activities – using staff mostly from what used to be called the Office of Informational Services. The new Office of Community Relations will guide and coordinate these functions. After 11 years of “assistant” this and “interim” that, I will be director of that office.

Even though the reorganization took effect July 1, much work remains to complete the process. We've relied heavily on outside consultants and employee planning teams to help us through the steps and change our way of thinking and doing things. There's plenty of literature on the subject, most of which tells you that such changes in the corporate world take at least five years to complete.

The bill authorizing the reorganization also included an amendment that re-establishes Florida Wildlife Magazine. The previous year's legislature eliminated it. So, after 12 months of shutting it down, laying off staff, responding to angry phone calls and e-mails, chasing down subscribers to refund their money, giving up office space, computers and furniture, we get to crank it back up again. The bill includes a few new wrinkles, including a mandated stronger emphasis on hunting and fishing, quarterly rather than bi-monthly publication and a seven-member citizen-advisory council representing specific outdoor-recreation interests to provide “guidance.”

Buy me a cold one in the hospitality suite, and I'll tell you more.

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