Becoming a Media Ambassador  
NWRA Symposium March 2019

As wildlife rehabilitators and educators, we have great stories to share – wildlife is an appealing subject. Plus, growing technology allows reporters to deliver more stories in faster and more creative ways these days. That means that, at some point, a reporter will likely want to interview you and talk about your work. Or, maybe your own colleagues want to film you for an in-house video project!

Possibilities include:

- Media interviews (e.g., a reporter wants to talk about current wildlife “issue”, seasonal observations of wildlife, a well-known animal you are caring for, an upcoming event, etc.)
  - In-person: reporters come to your facility for the interview
  - Online: Reporters from farther away may want to have a Skype interview with you
- “In-house” videos (e.g. your colleagues want to film their own video featuring your work, either to share with supporters and the general public, to create internal video training for new staff and volunteers)

While the thought of a media interview may be terrifying, it’s also our duty to “encourage community support and involvement through … public education” [Wildlife Rehabilitators Code of Ethics]. Your time on camera can be very valuable – you’re representing your organization and/or profession, and you’re sharing important wildlife information with the public.

No matter who is on the other end of the camera, it’s important to get the most out of your interview – for yourself, for the reporter, and for wildlife.

Before the interview: the news crew is coming!

Don’t panic -- prepare!

- Refresh yourself on the subject. Remember, you know this! But go ahead and re-read your patient record or species information sheet, or whatever sparked the story idea for the reporter in the first place.
- Pick three points that you definitely want to cover in your interview – the main things you want the public to take away from your message.
- A quick chat with a colleague can also be reassuring – ask them what two or three points they think are most important.

Appearance – it counts!

- It’s important to present yourself professionally – it gives you more credibility. Wear an organization shirt – or at least a clean one that’s not very busy.
- Run a brush through your hair; clean the formula off your face. 😊

The crew is here. Now what?

- Offer to give them a quick tour – this is a good chance to give a brief overview of what you do. Remember, they might not fully understand what wildlife rehabilitation is.
• Figure out where you’ll shoot the interview. Outside by a sign for your org? In your clinic/rehab room? Ask the reporter, but limit their options – and steer them where you want them.

• **Remember your permit conditions!** And know your internal media policy. Reporters will undoubtedly want to see the animal about which they are reporting.
  o It’s inappropriate to show a recovering rehabilitation patient unnecessarily. Could they come during a scheduled procedure and film without speaking?
  o Take your own b-roll and share! Take a few short (20-30 seconds) horizontal video clips and have on file to share.
  o Be firm!
  o It may be helpful to set expectations ahead of time.

Reporters want to put together an excellent story – with good information and good footage. But remember, this is a two-way street – you also want to help put together an excellent story that shares the message you want out there, without compromising the health of your animals. Don’t be afraid to be an advocate.

**It’s happening! [I’m not sure what to do with my hands]**

Take a minute to pump yourself up if you need it – remember, you know more than the interviewer does. Otherwise, they wouldn’t be interviewing you!

**Mind your manner(isms).**

• We all have mannerisms – just know what yours are, and know what works on camera. Act natural, but think about your body language and subdue a lot of overt gesturing.

• Keep it conversational, but remember that the camera is not a human – don’t nod excessively, or use non-verbal cues that won’t translate on camera.

**Concentrate on content.* [additional handout with examples]**

• Remember those three points you want to hit on – and think in sound bites. To create a cohesive story, producers are going to break up your interview. Don’t run on in long awkward sentences – pause and give them room to clip and repackage. An average sound bite is 5-10 seconds, so use your time wisely!

• A seasoned reporter will ask you leading questions to get you to answer the question well, but not all reporters are created equal. No one really wants you to answer a “yes or no” question with a single word – make sure you package your answer with a portion of the question.

• You can use bold, action words or emotional words – but be cautious not to overdo it.

• Avoid “off the record”. If you say something, expect that it’ll end up in the story in some capacity – reporters may use your off-cam words to help shape the story. If you don’t want it repeated, don’t say it.

• Don’t use jargon. Take a minute to re-think what you’re saying. We have a tendency to use our own internal language in terms of species, techniques, and locations, which doesn’t make sense to outsiders.

• Tell the truth, but be ready to “pivot” if you need to. If you don’t like the question, reframe it slightly and give the sound bite you’d like to be in the story. Credibility is crucial, but keep the interview on track.
• “Anything else?” Reporters will ask this at the end of the interview – have something ready! Even if it’s just “for more information, visit [website]”

**After the interview: Breathe!**

• Ask when story will air – watch it! See what you could do better for next time. Also share and interact with it on social media, particularly as your organization.
• Unless the reporter was particularly not great, give them an idea of what other stories you might have – and how they can get ideas for stories (social media, website, press releases, etc).
• Get ready for next time!

Pro tip: When your neighbor or checker at the grocery store tells you they saw your news story, ask them what it was about and what they got out of it. It will give you some insight into how your message was perceived (i.e. what you thought you conveyed v. what you actually conveyed).

**Your Role in B-roll: additional tips for when you’re not the #1 focus**

B-roll is important – just as much as interviews on camera. B-roll is known as the supplemental footage that helps add depth and context to the main interview footage. For you, b-roll may be when your colleague is being interviewed on camera, and you’re working in the background … or when the news crew wants to get some footage of you working … or even when your own colleagues are creating a video and you’re in the background.

Some tips to make everyone’s lives easier:

• **Visual:**
  - Just act normal. Go about your business and pretend that the camera isn’t there!
  - Don’t break “the fourth wall” – don’t look into the camera.
  - Ladies: wear a belt or a longer shirt. Low-rise pants are not doing us favors.

• **Audio:**
  - Audio *typically* isn’t being used in b-roll. That being said, try to curb your extraneous discussions about your latest Netflix obsession or what you’re eating for lunch. You never know!
  - Don’t ask your colleague if they are filming. They probably are.
  - If you see your colleague with a camera, avoid yelling inappropriately, swearing, poking them, walking weirdly, or otherwise just being a pain.

While most people may not exactly enjoy being on camera, it can be a wonderful opportunity to share our message and mission with the general public. You do wonderful work with and for wildlife, and people should know about it!

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