

IMPROVING WILDLIFE COMMUNICATIONS

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THE PROBLEM OF WILDLIFE COMMUNICATIONS

"Much effort is required for a man to learn the truth--but it is twice as difficult for him to learn how to make it known to his fellow men."

-PLATO

A survey conducted in 1969 by the Gallup Organization, Inc., for the National Wildlife Federation, questioned citizens as to what action should be taken to preserve wildlife. The two most frequent answers were (1) provide stricter law enforcement and (2) reduce hunting.

In a 1973 survey of attitudes of college students toward hunting by Dr. Dale Shaw, 76 percent of the students expressed some degree of anti-hunting sentiment. Of the reasons given for being against hunting, the largest response was in the category "Sport Hunting Endangers Some Species." Fifty-five percent of the males and 77 percent of the females believed this statement. Among respondents that hunted, 39 percent of the males and 71 percent of the females endorsed this statement.

These surveys indicate that the "facts of life" about wildlife have not reached our "ecologically aware" public. As such, many uninformed and misinformed citizens oppose consumptive wildlife management programs believing that such programs would be detrimental to wildlife. Dr. William Longhurst (1957) stated the problem well when he said, "In the United States...public opposition to big-game management still ranks as the foremost problem which stands in the way of progress. Most opposition stems from uninformed but highly opinionated sportsmen's groups."

The need for public education is obvious, yet priorities within the wildlife profession continue to remain with research. While professional wildlife biologists continue to learn more about consumptive wildlife management programs, the general public is understanding less and the trend is

away from traditional consumptive views toward non-consumptive views.

The first step toward solving the wildlife communications problem is for professional wildlifera to face the reality that they are communicating poorly. Most wildlifera talk only to themselves. And when they do face the public, they do not get the message across. It is up to every professional wildlife biologist to improve the quantity and quality of his communication efforts.

The purpose of this paper is to present ideas that will help improve the quality of visual presentations. These ideas will help the communicator increase the effectiveness of his visual presentations. But, it is still up to the individual to take the initiative to make the communication effort in the first place.

THE CASE FOR VISUAL PRESENTATIONS

Psychologists say that we learn 83 percent through sight, 10 percent through hearing, 4 percent through smell, 2 percent through touch, and 1 percent through taste. Thus, sight is overwhelmingly our most important sense for learning. However, seeing does not always result in learning. All of us have stared starry eyed at television (or technical presentations), seeing all but learning nothing. Seeing must be accompanied by retention before learning can take place.

Psychologists say that we remember 10 percent of what we read, 20 percent of what we hear, 30 percent of what we see, and 50 percent of what we hear and see. Thus, the most effective method of communicating is to present information that is simultaneously heard and seen. In other words, use visual presentations.

Visual aids will enhance any presentation. However, the extent to which visual aids will help depends on your skill in planning and presenting the material. Remember, the most important part of any presentation is the speaker.

Why Slides?

Many types of visual aids are available, including slides, film strips, movies, overhead projectors, and chalk boards. Each is suited to certain situations, depending on audience size and character, complexity of information, budgets, and so on. The visual aid most commonly used by wildlifera is the color slide or transparency. This paper will concentrate on the use of slides in visual presentations.

The advantages of slides include:

- 1) Capture and hold the audience's attention -- Slides give the presentation a professional appearance and allow the sharing of experiences with others
- 2) Flexibility -- Slides can be adapted to different audiences
- 3) Ease of use -- Slides are easy to distribute, duplicate, store, and retrieve; portable projectors are commonly available; slides help set a pace in a talk and keep the speaker "on the track"
- 4) Economical -- Cost of slides and equipment is reasonable.

PLANNING THE SLIDE TALK

The effectiveness of a slide talk depends on the planning preceding the talk. Certain steps should be followed to assure a smooth and effective presentation.

- 1) Request General Information: Date, time, location, length of talk, subject matter, size and description of audience
- 2) Identify and Analyze Audience:
 - a) Size
 - b) Composition -- Are they professionals or laymen, men or women, young or old?
 - c) Background -- Is the audience familiar with the material? Have other speakers talked to them on similar topics? Are they biased or open-minded regarding your topic?
- 3) Select Additional Media: Should handouts, actual objects, charts, models, and so on accompany the slides?
- 4) Plan Facilities:
 - a) Determine room size -- People become restless and unattentive in crowded rooms. If too much space is provided, there is a feeling of emptiness, and voices bounce off the walls. Generally, 6 square feet per person is adequate (including aisle room). Only 50 percent of most rooms is usable for viewing. Rule of Thumb: number of people x 6 square feet per person x 2 = overall room size needed.
 - b) Select screen type and size -- Screen type and size are usually determined by availability. Screens differ according to their viewing angles (Fig. 1). If the audience is seated within the viewing angle of the screen, then the image reflected from the screen will appear equally bright to everyone. Beyond the viewing angle, the brightness of the reflected image declines sharply.

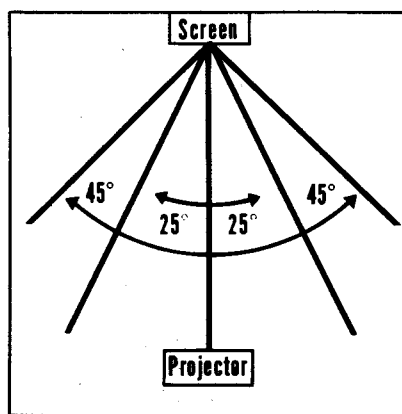


Fig. 1. Viewing angles of screens

- There are three basic types of screens. Beaded screens (the most common type) have limited viewing angles (25 degrees) but can be viewed from long distances. With matte screens, the image appears equally bright from almost any angle but the audience cannot be seated too far from the screen. Lenticular screens are the most versatile screens, allowing both wide viewing angles (45 degrees) and fairly long viewing distances.
- c) Select seating arrangement -- Choose a seating arrangement such that (1) all chairs are within the viewing angle of the screen and (2) chairs are at the proper distance from the screen. Rule of Thumb: follow the 2W/6W Formula -- the first row of chairs should be no closer than two times (2W) the width (W) of the screen and the last row no farther than six times (6W) the width of the screen (Fig. 2). Check the seating arrangement for proper viewing angle and distance by sitting in chairs along the outside aisle and in the back row to see if the screen's image appears bright.

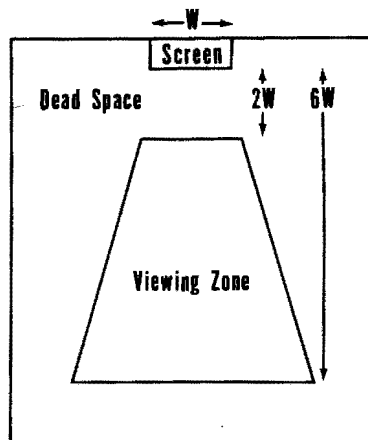


Fig. 2. The $2W/6W$ formula for determining the viewing zone

- d) Determine projector to screen distance -- The projected image should fill the screen without causing vertical slides to spill off the screen. Zoom lenses on projectors make filling the screen easier.
- e) Determine screen height -- If the screen is too low, part of the projected image will not be visible to people in the last rows. If the screen is too high, the projected image may be narrower at the bottom than the top.
- f) Check lighting -- Learn the location and function of all light switches. Never have the room completely darkened. Maintain a light at the podium for the speaker. However, other areas surrounding the screen should be darkened and no stray lights should spill onto the screen.
- g) Check acoustics -- Check for distracting noises. Do not put seats too close to the projector (the projector fan makes considerable noise). If the listener cannot hear well, he closes his mind.
- h) Check ventilation -- Hot, stale air causes discomfort and drowsiness. Likewise, cold rooms are uncomfortable.
- i) Check electrical outlets, equipment, and cords -- Ever try a three-prong plug in a two-prong outlet? Set up equipment long before audience arrives. Have replacement bulbs ready. Tape down extension cords so no one trips over them.

PREPARING THE SLIDE TALK

Prepare Slides

USE CLEAN, HIGH-QUALITY SLIDES. Do not use slides that are too dark, too light, or blurry. Make sure the main objects in slides are discernible (the object being photographed should fill about one-half of the slide).

DO NOT USE TOO MANY SLIDES. It is better to use a few good slides than many poor slides. If a slide must be shown twice, use duplicates.

PROTECT SLIDES DURING STORAGE AND TRANSPORTATION. Slides should be stored to minimize dust accumulation. If you use rubber bands to hold slides together, place a piece of paper or cardboard between the slides and the rubber band. Chemicals in rubber bands can leave permanent marks on slides.

LABEL SLIDES PROPERLY. Slides should be labeled soon after they return from processing. Information such as names and locations is difficult to remember at a later date. It is helpful to place a colored mark in the lower left-hand corner of each slide mount (on the shiny side of the slide when right-side up). When the slides are correctly placed in slide trays, these marks will be visible.

Prepare Illustrations

It is best to use professional help in preparing illustrations. But this is usually not practical. Attractive illustrations can be easily prepared by yourself then transformed into slides. However, certain guidelines must be followed to assure that homemade illustrations are not (1) too complex, (2) illegible, and (3) too dull or bright.

KEEP SLIDES SIMPLE. Limit each slide to one main idea. Use a minimum number of words in titles and captions (standard abbreviations are acceptable). Whenever possible, present data by graphs and charts instead of tables. Do not make tables, graphs, and charts too complex. It is better to use several simple slides than one complex slide. Tables should not include more than six columns and eight lines. Graphs should be limited to three curves. Do not use road maps. Instead, use outline maps that are less cluttered. Illustrations from publications usually are not suitable since they are too detailed.

SLIDES SHOULD BE LEGIBLE. Think of the people farthest from the screen. Make sure you do not have to tell your audience, "You probably cannot read this...." If you can read slides without a magnifier from about a foot away, people in the rear seats can probably read them on the screen.

Follow these rules to assure legibility:

- 1) Use block lettering and all capitals. Use only horizontal lettering.
- 2) The proportions of a good letter are 5 units high and 3 units wide. The thickness of letters should be 1 unit wide.
- 3) The space between words and lines should be no less than 3/4 the height of the letter.

An easy method of lettering is to use dry transfer lettering. The letters come on sheets of wax-coated paper and are rubbed onto the surface of illustrations with a blunt instrument (such as a pencil). The letter remains on the illustration when the wax paper is removed. Dry transfer letters are available in many colors, styles, and sizes from stationery stores.

Rapidograph pens and lettering guides are excellent tools for lettering. Lettering can also be done with typewriters, although other methods are preferable. Confine the typing to a 4 x 6 inch area.

For homemade illustrations, use a template as a guide (Fig. 3). Use the template as a target for setting up your camera to photograph the illustration. Illustrations made using this template should be satisfactory with any size audience.

ILLUSTRATIONS SHOULD BE COLORFUL. Proper use of color makes illustrations more attractive and easier to understand. Use light, bright colored paper for backgrounds. Dark blue, brown, green or red colors do not let enough light through to the screen. However, lighter shades of these colors are effective. Colored tapes and felt-tip pens can be used to add color. Colored tapes should have matte surfaces to eliminate reflections.

Rehearse

REHEARSE YOUR SLIDE PRESENTATION. Practice your talk several times to become familiar with the text and slides. Use a tape recorder to eliminate distracting mannerisms, such as "This slide shows...", "This is a...", "As you can see in this slide...", or "Uh...."

MAKE SURE YOUR SLIDES ARE IN ORDER AND NOT BACKWARDS OR UPSIDE DOWN. Number each slide in proper sequence in case they become disarranged. Put your slides in the slide tray and run through them once to assure that they are in properly. The emulsion or dull side of the slide always goes toward the screen. Make sure there are no blank spots (missing slides) in the projection tray.

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE REMOTE CONTROL OPERATION OF THE PROJECTOR. By controlling the projector yourself, you can set the best pace for your presentation and eliminate distractions such as, "Next slide please...."

Final Preparations on the Day of the Presentation

GUARD YOUR SLIDES. Keep your slides with you. Never check them through with luggage. Make sure only you and the projector controller have access to your slides. A bystander may look at your slides and mistakingly put them back wrong. Make sure the catch is engaged on the slide tray so slides cannot fall out.

ARRIVE EARLY. Check physical facilities such as ventilation, seating, public address system, lights, noise, and so on.

SET UP EQUIPMENT. Make sure all equipment is functioning properly. Position the podium so you can easily see the screen. Tape down all electrical cords so no one will trip over them. Focus and position the first slide on the screen, then turn the projector off.

MEET WITH YOUR HOST. Give him a short biographical sketch to use when introducing you. Appoint people to turn the projector and room lights on and off. Discuss cues for turning projector and lights on and off. Decide who will focus the slides. It is best to have the person at the projector focus the slides because he is in a better position than you to see the screen.

THE PRESENTATION

Introduction

The host should introduce you to the audience (using the biographical sketch). Do not jump immediately into the slides. Try to relate to the audience. A good technique is to put yourself at the same level as the audience. For example, if the audience is a sportsman's group, tell them that you are also a sportsman (if you really are). Also, give a brief description of what you will be covering in your talk and why it is important to them.

Slide Show

When you are ready to show slides, your first slide should be projecting on the screen before turning off room lights. Never have a white screen (no slide in the projector) with a dark room, since it is hard on the audience's eyes. Likewise, never have a completely darkened room.

During your slide talk, maintain eye contact with the entire audience. Do not talk to the screen. Talk loud enough so everyone can hear you. Do not read your paper.

SLIDE SHOW ILLUSTRATIONS TEMPLATE

THIS PAGE IS THE SAME PROPORTION AS A 35MM SLIDE. A SLIDE TAKEN OF THIS PAGE WITH LETTERING AND ART WORK WILL PRODUCE SUITABLE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR SLIDE SHOWS.

WHEN USING THIS TEMPLATE, FOLLOW THESE RULES:

- A) KEEP ALL ITEMS INSIDE THE BORDER LINES.
- B) USE LIGHT, BRIGHT COLORED PAPER FOR BACKGROUND WITH BLACK LETTERS.
- C) ALL LETTERING MUST BE AT LEAST 3/16-INCH HIGH.

Fig. 3. Slide show illustrations template

Set a pace in your talk. Do not whisk through slides or leave slides on the screen too long. Stay within your allotted time. When you exceed your time, you cheat other speakers of their time and disrupt the time of the entire meeting. Also remember, the mind can absorb what the rear can endure!

Define terms (especially technical terms) that might be unclear. One word can have many meanings. You quickly lose an audience when your terminology is unclear.

Use pointers sparingly. When pointers are overused, they become distracting. Lighted (flashlight) pointers should be held against a solid object to minimize shaking.

When you are through showing slides, turn room lights on before turning off the projector (this minimizes the eye shock of changing from a darkened room to a lighted room). Let your audience know that the lights will be coming on.

Conclusion

All slide talks should end with a closing statement (with the lights on). This is the time to summarize the major points of your talk. Do not end your talk by saying, "Well, this is the last slide."

EVALUATING THE SLIDE TALK

Evaluate your performance. Be honest with yourself. If possible, have others evaluate your presentation. Remember, there is room for improvement in every talk. Through evaluation you learn how to improve your presentation and become an effective communicator.

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