National Wildlife

A GUIDE FOR WRITERS

National Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1583, Merrifield VA 22116-1583

National Wildlife® magazine is published by the National Wildlife Federation, the largest private conservation group in the United States. A benefit of membership in the Federation, this award-winning, quarterly magazine has an average circulation of more than 300,000 per issue. Articles focus on wildlife and environmental issues, primarily within North America. Nearly all articles are written by freelance writers. We seek a diversity of voices and perspectives, and we welcome story ideas from all potential contributors.

Audience: Our readers include people concerned about the environment who appreciate the value of wildlife, both plant and animal. Among them are wildlife activists and gardeners, environmental-justice advocates and nature photographers, wildlife professionals and educators, armchair travelers, hunters, anglers, outdoor adventurers, birdwatchers and a host of others who care about wildlife, the health of the planet and connecting people to nature.

Subject Matter: We publish articles on a wide range of subjects, yet all have the same goal: We want to entertain, educate and inspire our readers to act on behalf of wildlife and the environment. Topic areas include wildlife science and conservation, environmental justice, climate change, biodiversity issues, endangered species, wildlife gardening, public lands, wildlife photography, wildlife behavior and profiles of interesting people or programs making a difference in their communities. Many of our articles include practical how-to tips for individuals to put into practice at home or in their communities. We occasionally publish personal essays and guest editorials. And we hope to increase coverage of how the arts—including poetry, music, murals, theater and dance—help advance the cause of conservation.

Style: We seek engaging works that grab readers with vivid writing, memorable characters, thorough reporting and relevance. While there is no formula for the articles we run, we do appreciate the following:

> **Vivid ledes.** Whether a lede is anecdotal or newsy, a single word or several paragraphs, it needs to grip readers and entice them to read on.
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> **Lean copy.** Make every word count. Cut extraneous material. Avoid convoluted sentences. Shoot for clarity, brevity and bite.

Tight structure. Every piece needs a structural backbone, with logical transitions from one paragraph or section to the next, showing readers where the story is going and why it matters.

Thorough reporting. We expect writers to use primary sources and interview experts in the course of their reporting rather than relying solely on websites, Google searches or previously published materials. Include colorful quotes that add interest. Support general statements with specific details that illustrate the point ("show don't tell"). Cite recent science and include data that bolsters a point. Check your facts to ensure accuracy. Provide annotations. Approach individuals and communities with respect and an eye on equity.

Understandable language. Avoid the sometimes arcane lingo of scientists. Assume your readers are well-educated but may not be familiar with the subject you're writing about, so be sure to lay out the issues clearly and define terms where necessary.

Anecdotes. Include vivid, real-life experiences from your subjects or your own experience that can help bring stories to life.

Punchy endings. The end of your article should be as memorable as the beginning. Avoid cliché "time will tell" endings. Instead, make your final words moving, provocative or surprising.

Length: Our articles range in length from one page to eight pages, sometimes more. Because we illustrate articles with world-class photography to create a memorable experience for the reader, word counts vary greatly depending on the layout and illustrations. In general:

- One-page articles average about 360 words.
- Two pages: 850-900 words
- Four pages: 1,000 to 1,200 words
- Six pages: 1,200 to 1,500 words
- Eight pages: 1,700 to 1,950 words

Payment: We pay $1.50 a word. The magazine buys all rights to text, plus reprint and promotion rights for the National Wildlife Federation. Pictures and text submitted together may be purchased as a package or licensed separately. Payment is on acceptance.

Submissions: If you'd like to pitch a story idea, please send a brief summary outlining what you'd like to cover and how you'd organize the material. This should be a tightly written, specific "selling" letter designed to make the story compelling to the editors. Include a brief note about your background and samples of your magazine writing. You can also include sample photographs if you have them. Queries can be emailed to NWeditor@nwf.org.

Assignments: If our editors agree to make an assignment, they will send the writer a "Work for Hire" contract that includes a brief description of the assignment, approximate word count, text

due date, fee and the likely publication date (occasionally subject to change). This contract will also spell out rights. Writers need to sign and return the contract upon receipt.

Editing process: The editor assigned to the article will work closely with the writer to discuss the approach, brainstorm ideas, make suggestions for sources and offer other guidance. Once the writer submits the text, the editor will review it, make edits and send questions, comments or suggestions as necessary. The writer may need to do additional reporting at this stage, then submit a revised text. Once the writer and editor are happy with the article, the editor will fit it to the layout, which may require further edits or trims. The writer will see every iteration of the article as it goes through the editing, proofing and fact-checking process prior to release. Though the magazine staff does some basic fact-checking, authors are responsible for the accuracy of their articles and should be prepared to provide annotations.

Note to Writer-Photographers: We welcome pitches from writer-photographers who have shot original stories and would like to write the text to accompany their images. Pitches should include a selection of compelling photographs that tell the story visually. Collaborating with the photographer, the magazine's designer, photo editor and text editor will make photo selections for the layout and determine whether the text should be running text or text blocks and captions. Rights for text and photos may be purchased as a package or licensed separately.