SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL WRITING WORKSHOP - FROM FIELD WORK TO FINAL DRAFT

January 31-February 1, 2012

Description: TWS- West has frequently been asked to offer a report writing workshop; it turns out one of our members has prepared such a workshop and has offered to present it! Learn career-assisting techniques for technical writing in an interactive workshop format immediately before the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society. Well-organized, clearly written reports will more effectively communicate your findings and enhance your organization’s credibility — and your own. You’ll leave with practical techniques for organizing your field work to facilitate writing reports that are clear, concise and easy to understand. Don’t miss your chance to learn how to make every technical document more effective from now on!

Maximum Registration: 24. Early registration is encouraged because the workshop may be cancelled if there are fewer than 12 registrants by the cut-off date of January 15th. We will maintain a waiting list if there are more than 24 registrants. A maximum of three students (or early professionals within six months after completion of a degree) can register at the discounted rate. Pre-Registration preferred because “walk-up” registration may be limited.

Schedule: 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2012 (registration open at 8:30); conclude by 12:15 p.m. on Wednesday, February 1 (refer to the detailed schedule on the next page).

Location: Radisson Hotel, Sacramento. Discounted lodging rates at the official conference hotel are available starting Monday night (see website for reservations).

Instructor: Jack Barclay, co-founder of Albion Environmental, who has published peer-reviewed papers, contributed chapters to books on raptor biology, conservation, and management, and served as journal article referee and proceedings editor.

Pre-Register: Use the secure online form at joomla.wildlife.org/Western. Instructions for check payments are provided on the registration link. Registration cost includes some refreshments, coffee/tea, and copies of workshop materials.

Registration payable by check or credit card/received or postmarked:

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<tr>
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<th>On/Prior to Jan. 7, 2012</th>
<th>On/After Jan. 8, 2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member, TWS Western Section</td>
<td>$145</td>
<td>$165</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Member</td>
<td>$175</td>
<td>$195</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student/New Professional*</td>
<td>$85</td>
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(maximum 3 registrants at this level, early registration rates only. *May be asked to show proof of current registration at an accredited university, or graduation within 6 months of workshop date).

Coordinator/Contact: Direct questions to Rhys Evans, sirsnave “at” verizon “dot” net
Subject Matter:
Report Organization
This workshop is highly interactive (as opposed to a lecture). As a group, participants will be asked to read writing examples and comment on their understanding to illustrate elements of effective writing style. We will start by identifying tasks and activities to conduct a field investigation and organize them to inform the report writing process. We will illustrate free-form (tree-like) versus linear (vertical or horizontal) organization techniques to transform tasks into elements of a report.
Effective writing is based on two principles - subjects of sentences clearly name characters and verbs describe the actions they perform, and four rules - be simple and concise, make sure of the meaning of all words, use nouns and verbs, and break up noun clusters and strings of modifiers. The emphasis will be on clear, direct, concise writing that addresses the five W’s – who, what, why, where, when. We will examine sample reports for organizational consistency and numerous writing examples for how well they communicate. Much of the information in the workshop is taken from material prepared by the Council of Biological Editors, guidelines for preparing journal articles, and text books about writing. We will not delve into details of English construction, but rather discuss practical techniques to communicate clearly and succinctly. Other information includes tips to make your point, signaling topics and themes, managing the flow of information, overcoming writer’s block, and revising and polishing drafts. One of the goals is for participants to learn how to become critical readers so they can objectively evaluate and improve their own writing.

Style and Expression
Readers can more easily follow reports if they are written using direct, purposeful construction and clear expression. Elements of style we will illustrate with examples include:
- Cohesion – local (sentence) clarity + context
- Context – presenting topics in sentences and paragraphs in parallel
- Emphasis – where to place important information
- Coherence – paragraph organization using issues and discussion
- Concision – recognizing sources of wordiness
- Usage – word choice, definitions, abbreviations, acronyms, punctuation, other conventions of scientific writing
- Presentation – how the Introduction, Study Area, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections of a report should be written to be clear and direct.

Tables and Figures
We will discuss preparing tables and figures and how to decide when to prepare a table or a figure. We will discuss how to write complete titles and table and figure content and layout with several examples to illustrate how tables and figures should be prepared.

Please note: Participants should recognize that it is not reasonable to expect to be transformed into an expert writer simply by attending this 1.5 day workshop! Effective writing takes practice; however, this workshop will provide a sound foundation and practical guidance about how to write effectively. One participant commented: “I wish I had taken a course like this when I was in college.”
Proposed Schedule:

Day 1
8:30 – 9:00 a.m.       Registration (limited walk-up registration)
9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Introduction and Workshop Part 1 (with a break or two)
12:15 – 1:30 p.m.     Lunch (on your own)
1:30 – 5:30 p.m.       Workshop Part 2 (with two breaks)
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.       Dinner (on your own)
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.       Optional session to review/discuss source information and opportunity for participants to request discussion of specific topics to be addressed during Day 2. Participants are welcomed to attend a reception and poster exhibition (but don’t critique their writing style!) for the concurrent “West Coast Fisher Symposium.”

Day 2
8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Final session (with two breaks)
12:00 – 12:15 p.m.     Wrap up and Evaluation