

Christian Tomczyk

David Beyea

Public Relations Tactics 2

Comm 204, 2pm

4/10/2020

## **Social Media Advocacy for Wildlife Conservation**

### **“Scholarly Source Bibliography”**

- Di Minin, E., Tenkanen, H., & Toivonen, T. (2015). Prospects and challenges for social media data in conservation science. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 3, 63.
- Wu, Y., Xie, L., Huang, S. L., Li, P., Yuan, Z., & Liu, W. (2018). Using social media to strengthen public awareness of wildlife conservation. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 153, 76-83.
- Guo, C., & Saxton, G. D. (2014). Tweeting social change: How social media are changing nonprofit advocacy. *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, 43(1), 57-79.
- Levin, N., Kark, S., & Crandall, D. (2015). Where have all the people gone? Enhancing global conservation using night lights and social media. *Ecological Applications*, 25(8), 2153-2167.
- Brown, W. J. (2010). Steve Irwin's influence on wildlife conservation. *Journal of Communication*, 60(1), 73-93.
- Özdemir, B. P. (2012). Social media as a tool for online advocacy campaigns: Greenpeace Mediterranean's anti genetically engineered food campaign in Turkey. *Global Media Journal*, 5(2), 23.
- Frink, L., & Dalton, M. J. (1989, February). Establishing a wildlife response after the Ashland oil spill. In *International Oil Spill Conference* (Vol. 1989, No. 1, pp. 77-80). American Petroleum Institute.
- Kennedy, P. F., & McGarvey, M. G. (2008). Animal-companion depictions in women's magazine advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(5), 424-430.

With all of the major global crisis' going on in this day and age, I thought it would be fitting to do my paper on how social media and public relations advocacy help gain awareness for causes such as wildlife conservation. This paper looks into eight different articles, as well as provide examples on how each article relates to a global crisis or advocacy group today. This essay covers how wildlife conservation was done in the past, how we can advocate and save wildlife in the present, along with the importance of conservation advocacy for our future. By not taking care of this planet along with the plants and animals that inhabit it with us, we could be potentially hurting ourselves in the long run and could ultimately lead to our own death. The power that social media and public relations can provide for an organization or cause is large. Throughout this paper, different social tactics articles and real-life examples will help provide background for these important awareness mediums.

The first article that I looked at "Prospects and challenges for social media data in conservation science. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*," talks about the past, present, and future of social media's connections with conservation science. Even though there are few examples of social media use in conservation sciences, this article talks about what used to be done along with how social media could have been useful. It explains what platforms are currently being used along with new data, and it also reviews what conservationists can do with social media in the future that would not only improve awareness, but also research.

After reading this article I thought of two good examples that conveyed what the scholarly article referenced "about what used to be done along with how social media could have been useful." My first example is with Dr. Jane Goodall and how she went into the forest to study the remarkable lives of chimpanzees—and she came out of the forest to save them. Her website and public relations efforts surrounding her research are more of the traditional in nature

like speaking engagements and online articles. Whereas, another trailblazer in the gorilla conservation effort is Ellen DeGeneres. She is an example of having a similar passion, the ellenfund.org stated, “The Ellen Fund supports global conservation efforts for endangered species. Founded in 2018 by Portia de Rossi as a gift for Ellen DeGeneres, our immediate focus is to secure a future for wild gorillas by building a permanent home for The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.” In order to get the word out to share her passion for this fund, she uses the power of her social media followers as well as mentions and celebrity backing on her show. Both of these women highlight different public relations and social tactics past, present and future, that can help bring awareness as to how others can get involved in the cause.

This next, “Using social media to strengthen public awareness of wildlife conservation. Ocean & Coastal Management” article talks about the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, one of china’s flagship species, to collect data on how effective the media really is in strengthening public awareness. They found that posts that were traditional, governmental, or private were the ones that were most read. These findings suggest that we need to pay more attention to what’s happening in the world around us to help wildlife conservationists.

A current example of using social media to strengthen public awareness of wildlife conservation is the organization 4ocean . 4ocean’s Facebook page describes the model by saying, “Inspired by successful lifestyle brands that were able to build passionate followings, they decided to implement a business model that would allow them to grow quickly so they could pay workers, fund cleanups, and spread the word about the ocean plastic crisis. So, they created the 4ocean bracelet and pledged to pull a pound of trash from the ocean for each one purchased, using the profits to scale cleanup operations, make donations to ocean-related nonprofits, and build an organizational infrastructure to support future growth.” On the 4ocean website, data

tracking on the trash collection is not only important to the organization, but sharing this impact with others. They engage others to get involved by sharing a live tally showing that they have collected 8,645,833 lbs since 2017 of ocean plastic and other harmful marine debris as well as highlighting the number of workers working the operation, where they are hosting the cleanups and more data insights.

The “Tweeting social change: How social media are changing nonprofit advocacy” article talks about multiple strategies that deal with advocacy groups and the way they use social media. Not only does it tell you the data on specific social media platforms that have been collected from previous advocacy groups, but also tells you the reasoning behind why those groups said/made specific posts and what the results from that data are.

The new Netflix phenomenon “Tiger King” is a great example similar to this article in how there can be multiple strategies that deal with advocacy groups and the way they use social media. Between the three or four main characters in this series, they all were advocating for the same thing – rescuing big cats; however, all used very different approaches how to engage audiences and share their messages. For example, Joe Exotic used extreme topics through his website commentary, blogs, live TV shows, on-site demonstrations and his social media channels. Carol Baskin was a big fan of her social media channel, using her “Cats & Kitten” followers to jump on board with her views. Finally, Doc even shared his tactics in the documentary by showing a behind the scenes photo shoot for the animals to build up his social following as well as creating exclusive access experiences on social to create the fear of missing out. All of the characters in the documentary had the same goal of preserving wildlife and their animal sanctuary, but went about it in very different ways using vastly different public relations and social media stunts.

This next article, “Where have all the people gone? Enhancing global conservation using night lights and social media” talks about how population and technology are rapidly increasing worldwide and how things like GPS, Smartphones, Web 2.0, and Social Media provide new sources for “Big Data”. Though social media has limitations, it does provide new opportunities to collect information that was impossible to get in the past.

The recent fires in Australia had a huge koala population that was affected by the tragedy. Technology played a big role in locating the koalas in the wildfires, where to send them and the relief efforts post fires. Social media funds and awareness grew with live photos and cameras of locations where these habitats are now ash. Scientiamag.org states, “Several reports have been released which contain accounts of the firefighters who shared the dreadful scenes they witnessed during their battle with the fires. These images and videos have generated a worldwide response of sympathy and horror that have garnered millions of views on the online platforms. A positive outcome from all of this was a boost in the donation campaigns targeted towards their rescue.” Many were not able to be on the front lines of these rescues and capturing the data, but social media provided new opportunities to collect information.

“Steve Irwin's influence on wildlife conservation” article talks about the audience involvement with popular television personality Steve Irwin, who died tragically at the peak of his career. A survey of 1,800 media consumers revealed that Irwin was perceived to be a hero and role model for wildlife conservation. News of his death spread quickly and globally, promoting lots of internet searching, while those more highly involved with Irwin had more in-depth conversations about his death with more people, and were more likely to increase their support of wildlife conservation. The effects of involvement with Irwin spanned age groups, educational levels, ethnic groups, and gender.

Both of the Irwin kids continue to carry on their dad's legacy. Public relations and social media efforts surrounding their passion for wildlife knowledge and conservation continue.

"Steve would have been so excited," said his wife Terri in a Today article. "He loved everything about filming and getting that mainstream message to people. Even if you're not into conservation, to try and enlighten people to love wildlife." His kids are often seen on daily TV shows and social media sharing similar messages to his dad. Robert Clarence Irwin, Steven's son, hosts Robert's Real Life Adventures, a program on his family's zoo's internal TV network, co-hosted the Discovery Kids Channel TV series Wild But True and co-created the book series Robert Irwin: Dinosaur Hunter, and currently stars on the Animal Planet series Crikey!. All are mediums that help share the important message his dad shared to audiences through his public relations efforts as well.

The next article "Social media as a tool for online advocacy campaigns" talks about how a website utilized photographs as powerful tools to convey orangutan campaigns and potentially persuade people to take action. A content analysis was employed to analyze World Wild Fund Malaysia (WWFM) website as it is the only environmental NGOs that advocate "Save Orangutan" online campaigns in Malaysia. The results indicated that WWFM utilized the photographs well for conveying "Save Orangutan" campaigns on its website. With its mission "paving the way towards a future where humans live in harmony with nature", it also focuses on wild life issues. The photographs have enticed individuals and organizations to form a strong alliance in order to instill awareness among Malaysians in the preservation of Malaysian resources. This study is beneficial for environmental organizations in planning strategies for a more persuasive campaign.

Looking at the current World Wildlife Fund website, its primary focus of wildlife conservation is evident. “Our mission is to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.” WorldWildlifeFund.org. No matter the current topic, the site clearly conveys the matter or issue at hand with vivid pictures and clear call to actions. It makes the reader want to get involved. In seeing a picture of an animal in need or baby animals, it makes the experience real in how the reader can make a difference. Human emotion is played upon to make the patron want to take action or learn more. These human emotions are utilized to then help build that personal experience when someone donates or “adopt” an animal.

This article, “Establishing a wildlife response after the Ashland oil spill” talks about what happened on January 2, 1988. On that day, Ashland Oil Company storage tank in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, ruptured, spilling about 750,000 gallons of No. 2 diesel fuel into the Monongahela River. This spill, the largest documented inland oil spill in history and occurred in an area that was unprepared for this kind of environmental disaster. Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, Inc., was requested by state and federal authorities to establish a wildlife response plan, set up a treatment center, and train professionals and volunteers to treat contaminated wildlife. Using previously developed training packets and supplies lists, Tri-State personnel established task forces, trained volunteers in tested medical protocols, equipped a center, and began treating birds within 12 hours of their arrival at the scene. This paper focuses on the need for rapid response, adherence to protocols, interagency communication, and hands-on experience in establishing a successful response to wildlife contaminated by oil.

During the 2010 Gulf oil spill, the soap manufacturer Dawn created public awareness for their product and how they can help make a difference for those animals affected. They too had to develop a plan how to best communicate these efforts and how others can get involved to

make an impact. According to Causemarketing.com, “To help save wildlife affected by oil spills, rescue workers have opened up a lot of Dawn. They rely on it, because it’s tough on grease yet gentle. But even they’ll tell you: Dawn helps open something even bigger. This year, Dawn is also donating \$1 million to rescue efforts. Go to [Facebook.com/DawnSavesWildlife](https://www.facebook.com/DawnSavesWildlife) to find out how the little things you do can make a big difference. [#SaveWildlife]” This campaign from Dawn was a good test for creating protocols and establishing their brand in the market when tragedy may strike.

The final article, “Animal-companion depictions in women's magazine advertising,” talks about a content analysis of 1,398 advertisements that include both people and pets and that appeared in women's magazines over a period of four decades, this study examines the changing roles played by companion animals and the changes in themes used in these advertisements. Considering both the pictures and text, the study codes advertisements for themes, pet roles, whether or not the pet appears on a leash, and the physical location of the pet. These data show the movement of companion animals from outdoor protectors and companions to loved family members sharing all areas of the home with their human family. The study provides a method for transforming qualitative data so that they can be rigorously tested using a quantitative approach. The findings support prior survey research and provide direction for positioning and marketing-communications strategies to allow for societal trends that influence consumers' self-identities.

This study is prevalent in current day as well. Mental health and loneliness are huge in our country and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. More and more we are seeing data support the positive influence these animals can help. [UsServiceAnimals.org](https://www.us-service-animals.org) defines, “Emotional support animals help individuals with emotional disabilities such as anxiety or depression by providing comfort and support. Quantitative evidence relating to the benefits of pet ownership

was mixed with included studies demonstrating positive, negative and neutral impacts of pet ownership. Qualitative studies illuminated the intensiveness of connectivity people with companion animals reported, and the multi-faceted ways in which pets contributed to the work associated with managing a mental health condition, particularly in times of crisis.” During this pandemic, humane societies are using social media to share the animals available. A large number of animals have been adopted or fostered during these times, hopefully increasing positive mental health.

In conclusion, this paper used eight articles to highlight the importance, and further express, the different methods used within social media and public relations to help promote advocacy for wildlife conservation. These articles, in addition to the current media examples, show the variety of ways social media and public relations can have an impact on Wildlife conservation, as well as, the power and influence that social media and public relations provides over an organization, or even society as a whole. The amount of influence that can come from social media is immaculate and if we do not take advantage of the overwhelming amount of advanced technology that we have today to expand advocacy for wildlife conservation, there may not be a ground for us to step on much longer.

Non-Scholarly APA Citations:

- MaqsoodMaham, Maham, and Quaid-i-Azam University. “How the Australian Wildfires Are Affecting the Koalas.” Home -, 28 Jan. 2020, scientiamag.org/how-the-australian-wildfires-are-affecting-the-koalas/.
- TodayShow. “How Steve Irwin's Family Is Carrying on His Legacy.” TODAY.com, 26 Jan. 2018, [www.today.com/popculture/how-steve-irwin-s-family-carrying-his-legacy-t121760](http://www.today.com/popculture/how-steve-irwin-s-family-carrying-his-legacy-t121760).
- Organ, Michael. “Dawn 'Wildlife' Campaign: ‘Cleaning Oil Spills’ Commercial.” CauseMarketing.com, 1 Jan. 2016, causemarketing.com/commercial-gallery/dawn-wildlife-campaign-cleaning-oil-spills/.
- USSA, Amy G. “Service Animal Registry - US Service Animals.” USServiceAnimals.org, 25 Sept. 2019, [usserviceanimals.org/certification?utm\\_content=Bing;Search;ECD;EmotionalSupportAnimal1;+emotional +support +animal;100&msclkid=bb34aeebccb318e226e2f079f1c127b0&utm\\_source=bing&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=MMP - Enhanced CPC - Desktop&utm\\_term=+emotional +support +animal](http://usserviceanimals.org/certification?utm_content=Bing;Search;ECD;EmotionalSupportAnimal1;+emotional +support +animal;100&msclkid=bb34aeebccb318e226e2f079f1c127b0&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=MMP - Enhanced CPC - Desktop&utm_term=+emotional +support +animal).