SOSF Blogging Guideline

Why do we have a blog?

- Blogging is a powerful way to engage with the public and make your work visible.

- The SOSF blog is an opportunity for you to showcase your work and create public awareness around it. The more interest there is in your project, the higher its conservation value, and the more likely it is to get funded and become self-sustaining. We like to think of our blog as a kind of Kickstarter for marine scientists.

- For a young person considering a career in biology or conservation, it is hard to imagine what the work will actually entail. We want to provide a resource where aspiring biologists can find out about the realities of field research and access role models they can contact for advice or simply inspiration.

- We want to know what other people think of our funded projects and our organisation as a whole.

- We aim to give our audience a platform where they can communicate with us – and each other. The blog should also become a portal for discussion.

- Blog posts also enable us to keep up to date with our project leaders and provide a source of story ideas (for the *Save Our Seas Magazine*, website features, interviews, etc.), which will lead to additional exposure for your work.

- You directly benefit from the extensive Social Network reach of the Save Our Seas Foundation which will help grow your own networks to grow as well as share your work and passion with the world.

Storytelling

Scientists, conservationists and educators are passionate about their work and the animals they work with. The easiest way to encourage our readers to relate to your work is for them to be able to relate to you as an individual. We want to tell stories that find a balance between scientific integrity and emotive, inspiring content. When you start writing your blog post, think carefully about the kind of person you would like to reach and be sure to allow your personality to come through.

Basic requirements

- Blogs can vary in structure and length. They can have **one** headline image and some text, or be around **400 words** and/or contain multiple images. People have short attention spans when reading online and long, text-heavy posts can be intimidating.

- Blogs should have an interesting **title** that draws the reader in.

- There is the option for your blog to have a main image (header), this image needs to be **landscape** and to be able to work in the designated header space (**2560x480**). *See attached layout template for reference.*

- All blogs need **at least** one image or video in the body of the text.

- Indicate **clearly** which image is the **main image** and where the other images and videos should fall within the text.

- All images need an informative **caption** and a photographer/institution **credit**.

- Images included in blogs are in addition to the 20+ original format images stipulated in your agreement ('contract images'). However, if you would like to send one of these blog images as a contractual image, you may submit it to Nadia directly as well.

- **All blog images should be at lease 1920 pixels wide and must NOT be watermarked with any credits or logos.**

- If your blog reaches more than 600 words, consider if it would be possible to rather separate the blog into two blogs.

Structuring your stories

Blog posts can be formatted in different ways. We want our blog to engage with our viewers on multiple levels. Different content and structure will appeal to different readers. We would like you to experiment with different formats. People have short attention spans when reading online and long, text-heavy posts can be intimidating. As a guideline, an engaging blog post is no more than 400 words.

Language

The main language of the Save Our Seas Foundation communication is in English (British or American). However we are sensitive to the fact that writing an enticing and personal blog for non-native English-speaking project leaders may be challenging, and you may not be able to fully share your story. We welcome blogs in your native language, and believe that this may be even more relevant for very localised projects whose communication will appeal mainly to the local population.

Examples of blog structures you can experiment with…

- **Lists**
  People love to read lists and they are easy to put together
  Example title – '*10 amazing species you could run into at Miller's Point*'
  A good rule to remember: **lists make content visible; stories give content meaning**. Both are valuable.

- **Photo blogs**

- **Tips | Need to know**
  Example title – '*How to get the most out of your Crittercam*'

- **Opinion pieces**
  Example title – '*Unsustainable farming: why I can't stomach prawns*'

- **Topical issues**
  Example title – '*Shark fishing in West Africa: sustaining a species vs. sustaining livelihoods*'

- **Interesting facts and data**
  Use your findings to tell a story. Often a piece of data can be meaningful to scientists because they have a broad contextual understanding. Most of our audience needs a lot more information to make this link. For example, if you find that a manta travels thousands of kilometres between Indonesia and Australia, you could explain why this is significant and what the implications are for effective conservation management and legislation.

- **Stories about people and places**
  Example title – '*Joseph Mbira: the life of a Tocc Tocc Reserve ranger*'

Examples of blog structures you can experiment with…

- **The Guardian and SciLogs.com blogger Ed Yong on what makes a truly great science writer (like Carl Zimmer):**
  'Scientific papers aren't known for their catchy titles. Here's a typical example: "*Ancestral capture of syncytin-Car1, a fusogenic endogenous retroviral envelope gene involved in placentation and conserved in Carnivora.*" A good science writer could tell you what each of those technical words meant, or translate them into their everyday equivalents. They would also explain the concepts encapsulated by those words, and why they deserve your attention. And a great science writer might start with something like this: "*If not for a virus, none of us would ever be born.*"'

- **The Guardian's Alok Jha on brilliant science writer Tim Radford's manifesto for the simple scribe:**
  'It starts with perhaps the most important instruction for any writer: "*When you sit down to write, there is only one important person in your life. This is someone you will never meet, called a reader.*" Remember what it is you're trying to do when writing for a wide audience: communicate an idea clearly and accurately. If a reader ends up confused, it's not their failure as a reader but yours as a writer.'

- **Science writer David Dobbs describes how to choose your opening line:**
  'Normally I write the first thing that comes into my head and fix it later, once I've written the rest of the story and have a better idea of what really makes it interesting, but occasionally writer's block strikes and I can't think of a way to start. In those situations, it's always best to start writing the second paragraph, and work backwards.'

Working with visual content

A blog that includes video or photos is much more likely to show up on the first page of a Google search than one without imagery. Marine life is incredibly visual. We need to make the most of beautiful photographs and interesting videos that engage our audience and <u>grab</u> their attention, while maintaining the integrity of our content. We understand that project leaders have limited photographic resources, but please use cell phones, cameras and GoPros to build up a good folder of visual content.

We also have access to the ShutterStock image library, so feel free to send us the link or the image reference to some relevant images from *www.shutterstock.com* and we will download these.

Tips for taking photographs

- Go into your camera's menu and make sure it is set to the highest resolution available.
- Try to place your camera on a flat, steady surface when taking pictures.
- Use a fast shutter speed for fast-moving images.
- In low light, use a wide aperture (small number) or a tripod.
- Use the flash, especially if shooting close-ups in bright light, to avoid shadows on faces.
- Always try to shoot with the sun behind you.
- For composition, think about the rule of thirds: *digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds/*
- Taking pictures from unique angles makes them more appealing. Use low angles to create respect for a subject and high angles to do the opposite. Try to get close to your subject to create an emotional response to it. For example, if you have rescued a baby manatee, take a close-up of it being fed.
- Try to capture facial expressions.

Tips for shooting video

- Shoot away from the sun whenever possible.
- Include establishing shots that give people a sense of the environment in which you work.
- Use a tripod or stable surface whenever possible.
- Follow the rule of thirds.
- Shots with interesting or rhythmic movement are particularly effective.
- Hold your shots for at least 10 seconds at a time.
- When panning or zooming, stop for 10 seconds on either side of the movement.
- If shooting interviews, think about sound quality and pick a background that is relevant, attractive, not blown out and not distracting.
- Use ambient sound as it helps to create atmosphere.
- Shoot from interesting angles.
- Use a combination of mid-shots, wide shots and close-ups.
- Allow subjects to enter and exit your frame.
- Beautiful light makes beautiful shots. The best light is in the early morning and late afternoon.

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**Headline image (optional)
dimensions should be 2560 x 480 pixels**

Photo by Name Example | © Copyright

*Credits - please provide us with the
name of who took the photo and the
copyrights if applicable.
(watermarked images won't
be accepted)*

Heading
(must be short, catchy and give an idea of what the blog is about)

Your text here (max 600 words - we advise that if you have a longer story or blog to share, then divide it into separate blogs) borem facearu mquame parum et rerae la qui dundaerspe eiuntio di volenis alibusape invel id quam fuga. Facero cum rem re derovitatiam andit ommoditatias mo ius. Henienti dolum volum reste poriatur sam am, sed qui omniendi ut officii ssectur?

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The images you send us must be 1920 pixels wide (minimum). They can be landscape or portrait. Multiple images can be added in the blog, especially if the text is long.

**The photo is showing something related with your project or with your blog.
Photo by Name Example | © Copyright**

*Caption - description of what is
happening in the image. Credits
- please provide us with the
name of who took the photo and
the copyrights if applicable.
(watermarked images won't
be accepted)*

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