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## TIPS FOR USE OF THIS IMBD PRESS KIT

Thank you for promoting IMBD with the news media. We believe that this approach is one of the most effective means of educating large numbers of people about the need for bird conservation. To assist you in your efforts, we offer the following tips for use of this Press Kit. For additional information and ideas, please contact the IMBD National Coordinators: Jennifer Wheeler, 703-358-2318 , [IMBD@fws.gov](mailto:IMBD@fws.gov) or Susan Bonfield, 970-513-7017, [Sbonfield@aol.com](mailto:Sbonfield@aol.com).

- Establish your overall goal
- Determine your target audiences
- Develop specific, measurable objectives for your target audiences
- Identify media strategies
- Develop your media pitch and messages for each audience
- Generate a variety of story ideas
- Draft your Press Release and customize your Press Kit
- Contact the media
- Evaluate

### **Develop your overall goal**

What is it that you want the world to know? The primary message you'll probably want to share is the news of your IMBD-related activities. If they're open to the public, you'll want to attract participants, or at least, let people know what they missed! Think about the "big picture" as well; what are the basic reasons that you care about IMBD?

### **Determine your target audiences**

Who do you want to reach through the media — families, young people, business leaders, politicians, activists? Which media routes are likely to reach which audiences? Determining your ultimate target audience will help you focus on your media audiences. These could include: daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, school or community newsletters, radio stations, television stations, news wire services, and electronic bulletin boards and mailing lists. Note: Books listing local media are often available in public libraries.

### **Develop specific, measurable objectives for your target audiences**

What outcomes related to awareness, attitudes, or behaviors in target audience groups do you want to cause through your media efforts? Increased attendance at this or next year's IMBD activities? Increased involvement in ongoing conservation programs? The appearance of shade coffee in a local grocery store? A statement from an official recognizing the importance of bird conservation? The protection of a local habitat? The development of additional partnerships and financial support for your institution?

### **Identify media strategies**

Providing a Press Kit is just one strategy, and it is seldom useful alone. Typically, reporters must have prior interest to use the contents. Thus, at a minimum, plan on contacting media contacts prior; and definitely after you provide the Press Kit. Be ready to offer additional information, and talk-up any pitches and stories you think would appeal to the reporter.

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Integrate use of the Press Kit with other strategies:

*Special Opportunities for Reporters:* Can you offer any “behind-the-scenes” or special demonstrations to members of the media?

*Live Interviews:* Do you or a partner have the public speaking skills and confidence to make a personal appeal on camera or audiotape?

Draw from information in the Press Kit for additional approaches:

*Advertisements*

*Public Service Announcements*

*Submission of Articles or Letters to the Editor*

*Postings to World Wide Web Sites and Electronic Mailing Lists*

## **Develop your media pitch and messages**

Ask yourself “Why should members of our local news media care about migratory bird conservation?”

Consider the status of migratory birds found in your area; the importance of these birds to the community; and any related local conservation issues that are particularly relevant.

## **Generate a variety of story ideas**

You never know who might be interested in migratory bird conservation. The news of your activities could be spun into numerous stories: the importance of key local habitats to birds, migration feats of species breeding in your area; ornithological research at a local university or college; local or international partnerships that exist to help birds; economic values of birds and birding in your community; successful conservation activities by local citizens.

## **Draft your Press Release and customize your Press Kit**

Once you have thought through the steps above, you’re ready to draft your Press Release. Keep in mind the messages, stories, audiences, and objectives you’ve developed; you may need to draft slightly different versions of the Press Release depending on whom you want to see it. See the supplemental sheet, Preparing a Press Release, for tips and instructions on this task.

Do you have items specific to your activity or goals that you can add to the Press Kit? Photos from similar past activities? Brochures or pamphlets describing your organization or mission? Past articles on related subjects? Add a business card so that your personal contact information stands out. Take out items that seem extraneous to your specific messages.

## **Contact the Media**

Be enthusiastic, but avoid being a nuisance. Also, depending on the size of your community, there may be stiff competition for media coverage, so be ready to state your wishes succinctly and be prepared for possible disinterest or rejection. Relationships with media contacts take time.

## **Evaluate**

Attempt to obtain copies of the media coverage you generated (e.g., articles, TV spots, newsletter postings). After IMBD and your-related activities are over, take a little time to consider what worked and what didn’t work. Which of your objectives were met due to your work with the media? Did participation in your activities increase? How much time and money were spent? Keep notes to refer back to for your next media campaign. It will be sooner than you think!

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# PREPARING A PRESS RELEASE

Press Releases, also called News Releases, are short, simple, stories describing a newsworthy activity or happening. They should be written clearly, briefly, and completely in an accepted format. Below are 10 helpful steps to preparing a Press Release\*:

1. **Try to write a release that will catch the attention of the editor or reporter who opens the envelope.** The release should be interesting, clear, and factual, while not attempting to be clever or provocative.
2. **Tell the most important part of the story in the lead (the first paragraph) by incorporating the “five W’s.”** You should be able to describe *what, who, where, when, and why* in three or four typewritten lines.
3. **After the lead, elaborate on details in descending order of importance.** Describe details that would not fit in the lead, bring in significant facts, and explain any of the “W’s,” such as *why*.
4. **Brevity is the heart of the news business.** Can you complete the release in 40 sentences or fewer? Find a reviewer who will help you achieve simple, straightforward language and active sentences.
5. **Keep the presentation simple and in accepted style.** Use letterhead stationary, or type facility name and address on white bond paper. Type double-spaced and use only one side of the paper.
6. **Be sure to include the name and phone number of the person(s) the media should call for more information.** The person(s) listed should be available to answer general questions, arrange interviews, or put the reporter in touch with additional contacts.
7. **Stick to the facts without speculation or giving opinion.** Never editorialize: do not give opinions or speculations as facts in the release.
8. **Don’t use bureaucratic and scientific words, phrases, clichés, slang or organizational terminology.** Don’t assume the reporter or reader will know terms which you might use routinely.
9. **Attribute news to a responsible, personal source.** If you share opinions or issue statements, attribute them to a person who, by his or her title or expertise, is a qualified spokesperson.
10. **Some stories require a follow-up.** For example, if you are planning a bird count, or tree planting, or coffee sale, a follow-up release with the results of your activity may be appropriate.

*\*Extracted from “How to Write a News Release,” prepared by the Office of Public Affairs, Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240*

## ***SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR IMBD 2004***

For Release April 28, 2004

Contact: Stephanie Sandhill, Wet Meadow State Park

Phone Numbers: 999-324-3456 or 999-324-5678

### Wet Meadow State Park Celebrates Its Colonial Birds on International Migratory Bird Day, May 8, 2004

Wet Meadow State Park will celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on Saturday, May 8, 2004 by offering a special day of family-oriented activities at its visitor center and boardwalk. The park is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with interpretive volunteers and staff on-hand to guide visitors. Bird enthusiasts of all ages and abilities are invited to learn about the park's birds, especially its rookery of Great Blue Herons on the west side of Muddy Lake.

International Migratory Bird Day is an annual event to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation. The theme for IMBD 2004 is the conservation of colonial-nesting birds, such as the Great Blue Heron. These birds are favorites of the general public, because of their size and visibility, but are surprisingly vulnerable to human-related threats. "The courtship and nesting activity at the Park rookery offer great opportunities to watch these big, beautiful birds in action. We'd like the public to know that these birds represent the the less visible parts of the wetland environment as well." says Jennifer Aigrette, Education Manager for Wet Meadow. "The presence of this largest and most widely distributed North American heron reflects the health of its wetland home."

Wet Meadow State Park will offer interactive displays, workshops and birds talks focussing on the Great Blue Heron and other birds of the Park. Free posters featuring the Great Blue Heron will be available to the first 50 families. Talks are scheduled for 7 a.m., 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on the east boardwalk, and spotting scopes will be set up to help visitors get a close look into the rookery. Two workshops are scheduled: "Heron Family Life," designed for families is at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.; "Great Shot! -- Photographing Birds," for those interested in photography is at noon. Both meet in the visitor center and require free registration.

Wet Meadow State Park was established in 1976 to preserve open space and wetland functions in the rapidly urbanizing outskirts of Capital City. Its 200 acres contains streams, wetlands and wet meadows, which are home to a variety of wildlife, including birds, mammals, and butterflies. It offers year-round nature-related activities for visitors.

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