

# **IUCN UK Committee**

## **Members Meeting**

### **“Conservation in the Media: getting your message across”**

**13<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

**Defra  
Conference Room 5  
Temple Quay House  
Bristol  
BS1 6EB**



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## **Preface**

The IUCN UK National Committee 2009 Annual General Meeting and a Members' Meeting were held concurrently on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2009 in the Conference Room 5 at the Defra office in Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol BS1 6EB.

The purpose of the AGM was to enable the membership to conduct the business of the UK Committee. Following the AGM, the Members' meeting addressed the topic of how conservation is portrayed in the media under the heading of “Conservation in the media – getting your message across”. The AGM and Members' meeting were both chaired by Chris Mahon.

This report on the AGM was prepared by John Henson Webb from his own notes.

## Members Meeting

### “Conservation in the Media: getting your message across”

The Powerpoint© presentations provided at the meeting have been reproduced as PDF files on the UK Committee website: [www.iucn-uk.org](http://www.iucn-uk.org).

#### Welcome

Chris Mahon, as Chair of the IUCN UK Committee, welcomed those attending to Bristol, acknowledged home of natural history media production. He gave a brief biography of Harriet Nimmo, CEO of Wildscreen, noting that she also sat on the Steering Committee of the IUCN CEC (Commission on Education and Communication). Concluding his introduction, Chris invited Harriet to begin the proceedings.

#### “Harnessing the power of wildlife imagery” Harriet Nimmo, CEO, Wildscreen

Harriet opened her presentation by quoting a statistic from the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) that 45% of people (**IN THE UK?**) thought biodiversity was a brand of washing powder. This illustrated the difficulty faced in getting the conservation message across. Her worry was that most organisations looked upon communication as an afterthought; for example, the entire IUCN budget for Red List news releases was just £1,500.00, a fraction of the overall funds. She noted that CEC had offered help to promote the Barcelona Congress in October 2008, but that the request came too late.

Provision of relevant scientific information was helping to develop funding opportunities and with it a need to build partnerships to exploit these opportunities. Bristol, as a world centre for wildlife filming, could bring together different organisations with expertise in all forms of media, such as the BBC Natural History Unit. It also provided a crucible for the development of recording techniques, for example those pioneered during the production of *Life on Earth* and refined through to *Blue Planet* and *Planet Earth*. And such programmes help address the issue of people never being able to see these animals in the wild.

Harriet then showed a series of film clips taken from longer works, each illustrating how documentary filmmaking can influence people’s thinking or even government policy. For example the 2000 film by **(NAME)** of whale sharks in India, and the adverse effect of fining in 2000, which led to the Indian Government giving protection to the species. This film was reviewed at the Santiago 2002 conference on *Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing* and led to the adoption of further protection measures.

Wildscreen is a charity that harnesses the power of wildlife photography to further conservation causes. Every two years the Wildscreen Festival is held in Bristol, covering all aspects of wildlife media and all levels of ability, professional to amateur, using awards to help raise the public’s awareness. The Wildphoto competition runs alongside Wildlife Photographer of the Year. Wildscreen works to build capacity among film-makers in developing countries and emerging markets; also taking both films and film-makers to help wildlife-related education in places such as Africa, India, and South America.

In closing Harriet noted that Wildscreen worked both with famous names in the wildlife media industry through to private individuals with their own films and photographs. She then passed the floor to Richard ‘Ed’ Edwards, Director of ARKive.

**“Brave New Media World? – online arks, oracles and networks”**  
**Richard Edwards, ARKive Director, Wildscreen**

Richard gave a brief overview of ARKive, providing a demonstration of the site’s capabilities and content.

Being available through the Internet, ARKive has a global reach and provides an opportunity for data sharing and collaborative working. It is a free, online audio-visual resource, which brings together the best images from a myriad organisations and individual scientists and acts as an information vault. Part of the concept is to promote access to information, through out-reach programmes run from local to global level.

The copyright of all donations, in whatever format, always remain with the donor, which includes information and films from numerous IUCN Species Survival Commission specialist groups. Each species covered has an associated ‘fact-file’ the content of which is peer-checked for accuracy. ARKive also utilises various search options to allow for access from multiple entry-points and features hyperlinks to related websites and organisations.

Currently ARKive houses around 3,500 species profiles, which contain approximately 5,000 film clips and 25,000 still images. The site receives around 20,000 visits per day, the majority from schools and academic institutions and is accessed from over 160 countries world-wide. ARKive has won various awards since it began, for example the Sunday Times “Website of the Year 2006”.

Richard then outlined future plans for the site. These ranged from increasing the number of species covered and the number of visitors, through improving user experience, to developing access via other platforms and interfaces, such as through Google Earth, YouTube, Encyclopaedia of Life and the IUCN Red List website.

Expanding on the latter point, Richard noted that ARKive received 105 of its visits through Google Earth. There was now a dedicated ARKive channel on YouTube which, despite some complex copyright issues, received keen support from a large number of amateur donors. Encyclopaedia of Life, an American web resource, was undertaking to create webpages for every known species. EoL gathered its information from elsewhere rather than creating or writing its own and currently had access to more than 10,000 images through FLIKR. Richard finished by noting that the Global Amphibian Assessment is hosted on ARKive and there are hopes for a similar undertaking with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the IUCN SSC, among others.

**“Multi-platform, multi-audience and multi-partner success”**  
**Reema Lorford, Series Producer, Springwatch, BBC NHU**

Reema introduced herself as a broadcast communicator and stated that her task was to empower people to take an interest in their local environment. Springwatch and Autumnwatch are the vehicles she uses.

Springwatch and Autumnwatch are now multi-platform presentations, though they were not conceived as such, requiring the formation and maintenance of both internal and external partnerships for their success. Under the ‘Springwatch’ banner the programme spreads across a number of different media and targets a range of demographic constituents, for instance CBeebies for a younger audience and Nightshift, which ran in the early hours. However, by adhering to the BBC’s guiding principles the programme retains its focus and this is considered the key to its success.

Reema concluded by noting that two key partnerships had helped Springwatch move beyond a purely broadcast platform. The first was by finding an alignment between the programme’s strategies and the issues addressed by conservation or wildlife organisations; for example there will be a future focus on the marine environment in association with Natural England. The second was the BBC Breathing Places campaign, a network development facilitated by the by Breathing Spaces initiative. Reema noted that the BBC was uniquely placed due to regional representation to deliver community out-reach programming.

**“Connecting natural history TV audiences to effective conservation”  
Paul Appleby, Series Producer, Saving Planet Earth, BBC NHU**

Paul began by stating that one objective of ‘Saving Planet Earth’ was to connect the wildlife TV audience to effective global conservation; the series was developed and aired between January 2005 and December 2008. The production team were now looking forward to 2010, an important year for biodiversity and conservation, and were developing the necessary dialogues with partner organisations. Bridgeheads were being established to take the message to new places, for example the BBC DJ Edith Bowman searching for the Siamese crocodile, expanding on the BBC’s advocacy role.

Saving Planet Earth had reached an audience of 20 million, across 20 media platforms, such as TV, radio, books and events. The online resource had been visited on 600,000 occasions, with 44,000 viewings of the videos held there. Funds had been received from 45,000 donors (including corporate sponsors) including \$75,000 from an American donor. 11 shows had become 36, from 6 separate production areas. £2,000,000 had been raised for partner projects.

Paul believed that the success of the endeavour had in part been due to the approach the production had taken. Planet Earth had been the initial stimulus and the BBC Fund was a logical outcome.

Production had addressed a number of issues:

- Delivery of a clear message that met the audience need - “I love wildlife, I want to help save it”.
- It was honest – the audience were shown a true picture
- It was inclusive – it was aimed at the entire audience and not just a knowledgeable few
- It was both passionate and expert – those involved were commitment to what they were doing

Saving Planet Earth was a collaborative effort which, through an open process, received 133 project applications. Of these, nine were filmed, each one as a quest. There were 19 global beneficiaries from the fund, matched by 19 projects within the UK, which were also filmed. Thirty-five charity organisations were partners in the production.

Paul noted that projects relating to keystone species had been selected as this gave a better overall picture of changes in habitats or ecosystems and provided a wider perspective. There had to be a clear plight to be addressed and one that required some form of community involvement. This latter consideration also created some surprising stories.

The story itself needed to deliver high quality visuals and audience experience. Celebrity advocates helped draw in the audience and provided a focus, it being their investigations and their effort which comprised the core of each film.

Paul closed by stating that the challenge for 2010 would be to report on the next ‘Inconvenient Truth’, whilst reflecting that biodiversity is a necessity for life on Earth not just something “nice to have”. Relevance is the key issue for broadcasters to address to ensure involvement and support from the audience. His final slide suggested that “Together we can save endangered wildlife (alone, we can’t)”.

**“Media campaigns – limited budget, unlimited potential”  
Colin Butfield, Head of Campaigns, WWF UK**

Colin introduced himself and noted that he had previously worked for Wildscreen. He posed the question of how could a campaigning organisation get its message across, given the available platforms and budget constraints? In the ‘good old days’ a scientific report might be launched with a press release, but little else. In the ‘brave new world’ there was a surfeit of options, such as Wikipedia, Google, FLIKR, IPOD, YouTube, etc., but into which media do you put your budget?

He reported on a WWF campaign ‘television anywhere’, which was used to address the issue of Shell’s exploitation of Canadian oil sands. Instead of a press release three video screens were erected at Waterloo station, the main terminal used by Shell workers travelling to their UK head office. He campaign saw an increase in WWF webpage during its run.

With the prevalence of new technology, such as simplified handheld cameras or even cameras built into mobile telephones, everyone had the opportunity to be a film-maker. So how do you keep a handle on all of this production? WWF launched their own YouTube channel, divided into three distinct levels – high end content, amateur productions and natural commentators, those people used to providing short, coherent messages.

A brief video presentation, caught on a handheld camera by two students, related to the issue of disturbance caused by the passage of shipping through polar bear habitat, with potential damage from even minor oil spills. It drew in a large audience and was seen as the perfect tool for that particular use. These efforts should compliment, not replace, high end work, as long as they can stand out! One particular WWF campaign used a giant paper plane and boat to highlight concerns over greenhouse gas emissions from shipping and flying and their treatment under the UK Government's climate change bill. A second campaign, One Planet Living, was a determined effort not to report a perceived doom and gloom story. It addressed everyday choices that could help the environment – ten guiding principles aimed at giving the target audience a personal viewpoint and stake in improving the environment.

Colin noted that it was important to distribute content to where audience was, be that global, national or local. As an example of this he reported on the WWF Earth Hour initiative that began in Sydney, Australia, in 2007. It required only simple engagement from the audience, the turning off of all house or office lights for one hour at a prearranged time, which became a global event in 2008. It would occur again on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2009 and WWF were encouraging both personal and organisational engagement and interpretation.

The Chair thanked all of the speakers for their presentations and then opened the meeting to questions from the audience.

## Discussion / Q & A

How do you get those who are disinterested involved?

**Paul Appleby:** There is no single, simple solution. For example, DJ Edith Bowman's search for the Siamese crocodile – she provided an important link to the audience; the story was good and provided some surprises. Changing the direction of a report can help reinforce the issue under scrutiny.

**Colin Butfield:** Having the right people in the right place at right time – sometimes!

**Reema Lorford:** Pursuing key aims based on the anticipated audience. Working in UK involvement is mostly through 'grass roots' movements. Also getting schools to sign-up to wildlife projects through Autumn and Spring Watch.

How can you increase value of interaction or contribution by people? E.g. all anglers in Denmark pay €40 for a licence, which generates €80m. There are around 26 million anglers in Europe, which would provide a strong resource. There can be further challenges in working with people in specific areas.

**Harriet Nimmo:** There is a need to bring everyone together and promote inclusive action: 'We' not 'You'. Organisations need to invest more in communications.

**Tamas Margeschu:** Efforts to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem services are still losing ground every day. To be successful it needs to be a social movement, starting with educating children and then building upon that. Campaigns start and stop, but we need continuous involvement in a social movement. It is admitted that 'Sailing to Barcelona' was not as successful as hoped. One problem is that conservation efforts tend to occur in competition with one another – we need to work together.

**Mike Pienkowski:** There is the potential to address conservation in the Overseas Territories. However, it is perceived as a local issue and is not well understood in the wider UK.

Directed at ARKive: If someone possess images, what is wanted by ARKive?

**Richard Edwards:** Initially we received images and media on a few select species from a small number of donors. Now ARKive is looking more broadly and accepting more user generated data.

**Sarah Dalrymple** made an observation: Social movements already exist, for example the co-operation between Oxfam and Greenpeace. What is the IUCN CEC doing to aid such activity.

**Harriet Nimmo:** Not sure of CEC's intentions, but it would be a good time to be involved.

**Colin Butfield:** We do need a balance when working in a partnership, e.g. IUCN Red List. We should take forward what we do brilliantly, then look for partnership opportunities to take even further.

**Tamas Margeschu:** In regard to the 2010 target, it is an important opportunity to promote issues for viewers or consumers of information. But what is to be the vision or message for after 2010?

**Harriet Nimmo:** Post-2010 could be exploited as the next 'inconvenient truth'.

### **Closing remarks**

Chris thanked the presenters for sharing many biodiversity issues with the audience; for a demonstration of current, state-of-the-art technical resources and the human-resource that supports it. We have clearly seen that there is a power to influence and involve the public through messages broadcast in the various forms of media. Politicians are people too and they can also be moved by the messages. As has been demonstrated today, thinking outside the box is equally powerful and can bring great benefits.

2010 is the next landmark. We can work together to promote the issues and with assistance from CEC create a platform here within the UK.

So a huge thank you to all who have attended. We hope this has been mutually beneficial.

We extend our thanks to Defra for hosting the meeting and to the UK Executive Committee for developing a programme. Thanks to the UK Committee Secretariat for the arrangements. The Secretariat will be changing from April 1<sup>st</sup>, when JNCC retire from providing the service and a new Secretariat is appointed.

Thanks to everyone for participating in today's meeting.

The presentations given on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009 are available on the UK Committee website (<http://www.iucn-uk.org/>).

## Appendix I Attendance List

IUCN-UK		<i>Meeting Attendance List</i>	
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