I & E SECTION
SYMPOSIUM — "TV AND THEE"

"An Abstract"

By
Larry Richardson

The impact of television as a mass media has been a powerful force in this country. Probably no other media has had such a powerful effect in such a short existence. In the wildlife public relations business, we are constantly looking for media which will present our programs in a sharp, specialized and pinpointed approach to an audience. Nowhere is this more applicable than in television. What other medium has such a widespread captive audience. Ninety-six out of every 100 American homes has one or more television sets. Surveys have shown that the average home will have their tv's turned on over six hours each day. Americans are so attuned to this media that by the time they reach age 21, 30,000 hours have been logged in front of the television screens.

The use of television for the promotion of wildlife conservation and hunting and fishing is relatively new. The first hunting and fishing series was produced only about 20 years ago.

There is a need for *quality* programs of varying lengths presented on educational and commercial television. Even the one-minute spot has been recognized as a valuable tool in reaching not only the sportsmen but all interest groups.

News reporting is an essential portion of wildlife conservation programs. Factual, concise and timely news is a must and the inclusion of visual materials such as photos, slides and film clips is preferred. News commentators should be encouraged and aided in participating in wildlife management and sporting activities as an investment in promotional advertisement.

Today a vast audience has been developed and the opportunities seem to be unlimited. Although magazines and newspapers are by no means dead, the broadcasting vehicle offered by television must be utilized if we expect to keep in step with the times.

SCIENCE TO FICTION

By
Woody Bledsoe

When Larry Richardson asked me to present a paper at this conference, he gave me a general idea of what he wanted me to expound on. In essence, it was days of converting the findings and writings of our wildlife biologists to laymens language for public consumption in our news releases, magazines and through out radio and TV boradcasts.

Today's public is better educated and hep to modern technology than we in the business of Information are prone to give them credit. However, I think just good common sense applies if we are to do a good job of conveying our conservation story in an understandable fashion. Now, I'm more closely allied with the listening and viewing audience than with the reader since my speciality is radio and TV, although I've been known to write an article on occasion. So, with that in mind, my concentration will be centered more toward the radio and TV audience.

Harking back to this title of science to fiction...maybe it would be better if we called it a matter of semantics...let me illustrate by giving you a far-out radio broadcast of a fishing report . . . "Hi! This is Woody Beldsoe from the Missouri Department of Conservation. Our reports this week indicate that anglers are quite often landing some good sized *Micropterus salmoides* from the depths of Lake Tablerock. Also, schools of *Roccus chrysops* are surfacing in isolated portions of the lake and are being creeled quite frequently. Most of our impoundments are producing good takes of *Pomoxis annularis* by using either *Notropis zonatus* or *Dionda nubila* extended on a hook in suitable habitat."

If you were an average listener...and even a good fisherman listening to that report, I suspect your immediate reaction would be...what in the Sam Hill did he say? Of course if you're a fisheries biologist it would make sense. The point is...make your message understandable for yourself and your listening or reading audience. For what I just said wouldn't make sense to ninety-nine percent of your readers either.

Let's take that same report and translate it.

"Hi! This is Woody Bledsoe from the Missouri Department of Conservation. Fishermen are having good success at Lake Tablerock for largemouth bass, from fairly deep water. Also, schools of white bass are showing up in some areas and hitting good. Crappie are hitting good in most of our lakes, fishing over the beds with minnows."

I mentioned a moment ago that the general public is better educated and comprehends technical information that a few years ago would have been gobble-de-gook. In our state in the field of conservation, this has come about through our own efforts in educating the public through the various media. For example...I have been approached by quail hunters in the past month or so (whom I would classify as average hunters) that have asked me...what does the Production Index show for this year. To this I have been able to answer, statewide 14, with the lowest of 10 in the Southeast protion of the state. From this answer, most hunters have replied with statements like..."Hey', that sounds good" or "That's almost as good as 1969". Why did these numbers of 14 and 10 have a meaning to these individuals? Because through our news releases, magazine and radio and TV broadcasts over a period of years, we have made them meaningful, and here's how we did it.

In 1947, our quail biologist, Jack Stanford, started a yearly survey of bobwhite quail population... production and harvest. The objective of this survey was to make an annual evaluation of bobwhite quail production and harvest as affected by weather. land use and hunter behavior. This was of course, a long range study, and until it had been underway a few years, its value as a public relations tool was limited. But, even during the early years of that study, we began using Jacks' dope on quail to enlighten the sporting public. I have a copy of Stanford's report covering the past twenty-five years, and here's a brief description as he has outlined it, of the procedures he uses to come up with a PI or production index, and I quote (read from manual), I won't go into all the details of this report, but the point I think is clear. The quail production index has been given a numerical figure...and during the past twenty-five years that figure has ranged from a low of 3, to an all time high of 15. As I mentioned, we haveexplained this in common terms through our various informational outlets...and now a great majority of our quail hunters are familiar with and can correlate the annual PI with their expected hunting success. Of course, this type of information must be used continually, and explained, if it is to be useful as a P.R. Item. So, we never let down, in fact, our news release of Sept. 18, 1972 carried this lead story (read from release).

We aren't unique in Missouri...our biologists carry on hundreds of surveys, work on myriad projects and though the data they compile is often highly technical and scientific in nature, it can and does make interesting and enlighten-

ing reading if handled properly. Many of our biologists write good stories that are easily understood by the average reader. For the most part they are all quite articulate. However, some don't have or are reluctant to take the time, unless given a little prodding. But all of them have a story, and if you're in I&E work, you're missing a good bet if you don't take advantage of material that may be right under your nose.

A moment ago, I quoted from Jack Stanford's Federal Aid report on bobwhite quail...I'm sure you're all aware, that when Federal Aid projects are being conducted by our biologists, a progress report is required. Take a close look at those reports! While they may be technical and often dry reading for the uninformed, they can be the basis for a darn good story, radio or TV show.

For example, we've had an experimental program on pheasant range extension and rearing of different species of birds with some experimental releases for a number of years. Our biologist in charge of this program is Glenn Chambers. Glenn, in addition to being a biologist is a fine photographer...both motion picutre and still. This is of course an unusual situation...but he is first a scientist and prepared his findings in a technical manner. I have here a copy of his very comprehensive report...(quote from report). When I first began seeing some of this study, I got excited. Here was something that would be of general interest and in fact a story that the public needed to be informed about.

Glenn wrote an article or so for use in our magazine, and news releases concerning progress and releases of birds were distributed from time to time. But, I could see an interesting and colorful TV show, provided we had enough good visual material. Well...I contacted Glenn...found he had some excellent slides of different species of birds, types of release methods etc. In addition, we were able to shoot some movie footage of captive birds...and captured on film the actual hatching of pheasant eggs. The result was...we got a very good TV show that was interesting, informative and entertaining. Incidentally, Chambers is also a very articulate and personable young man. I'm not saying that every biological study or project will lend itself to a radio or TV show, or magazine article, but don't let those latin names, charts and graphs turn you off...there's a good chance a story of public interest can be gleaned from all this technical information.

I'm sure you're all aware that statistics can be quite a revelation and often dynamic...but by the same token they can and often are dry and boring if not used properly. A classic example of this happened to me a few years ago. We had a very fine biologist who was doing an extensive study on the ups and downs of cottontail rabbits (I don't mean this literally) and this brings to mind another story of a guest I once had on my show...a farmer whom I had been doing some dove hunting with. We had shot some movie footage on his place and during the course of my interview with him on the show, we were talking about some of the wildlife management practices he had employed on his farm. I asked him what the rabbit population was like on his place and he replied, "This year I don't see very many rabbits, and I don't understand this because last year I had rabbits on top of rabbits!" This was a live show...and I had to hold on to my composure and retort with...."Well, we're experiencing a statewide decline in the rabbit population."

But I've digressed...back to my original story of our rabbit biologist. This gentleman was an avid hunter and quite articulate. He also had a scientific background and approached his subject material in a technical manner. I was doing a radio interview with him, and we were discussing hunter success during the past rabbit season. He made a remark that the average hunter bagged 1.2 rabbits per hour during the past season. Now, I immediately took exception to this...a hunter doesn't kill two/tenths of a rabbit...even though the statistics showed this. After some discussion...we finally agreed that we would use this statistic...but re-phrase it in this manner...during the past season hunters spent

an average of 45 minutes in the field for each cottontail they bagged.

Many of the routine things that our biologists do in the laboratory are fascinating. If well illustrated they can make a good written story. But, I've found that some of these things can best be used on TV. After all TV is a visual medium...and it doesn't take a great deal of imagination to come-up with some very interesting material. Just recently, I did a rather impromptu interview and experiment with two of our fisheries biologists within the confines of our laboratory. I spent a few minutes discussing what we might do with the two individuals involved...we set-up the camera and sound equipment...did a walk-through and shot the two sequences which I later used on my TV show. I would like to run those for you now...then I will discuss them afterwards..or field any questions that you might have. I don't pretend to be an expert... I can only speak from my own experience...but I've had over thirty years in this business and if I don't know the answer to your questions...perhaps we can work them out together...now let's have the film.

WHY WE DID WHAT WE DID
A Readership Analysis of a Wildlife Conservation Magazine

By
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According to the American Association for Conservation Information, 44 states now publish magazines that may be loosely categorized as "conservation" magazines. The range of specific types within this broad category is fantastic. The group includes rather technical publications on wildlife and fisheries management techniques and research projects, "slick" promotional and travel magazines, and those stressing the environmentalist approach. Almost without exception, they share one rather questionable quality — they are published without the benefit of knowledge of who the readers are.

A number of questions can be applied with equal validity to any publication or group of publications. Who reads it? Why do they read it? How valuable is it to them? What do they particularly like or dislike about it? From the readers' point of view, what can be done to improve it?

From the time it was first published in October of 1966 until early 1972, *Georgia Game & Fish* existed without the benefit of readership analysis. *Outdoors in Georgia* replaced *Game & Fish* with the July, 1972, issue. Content planning for the new magazine has been greatly facilitated by a readership analysis of *Game & Fish* subscribers conducted during the months immediately prior to its demise, and the results of the analysis justify the format of the new magazine.

A survey was made of a stratified sample of *Game & Fish* paid subscribers to determine which portions of that publication subscribers read and valued, and to identify additional areas of interest to readers for future features. Almost 1600 questionnaires were mailed out, with over 60% being returned before the cut-off date (30 days after mailing). The unexpectedly high percentage of return assures an exceptionally high degree of accuracy.

It is important to keep in mind that the survey population was constituted through a form of self-selection — subscribers unhappy with the content and format of *Game & Fish* would drop from the population by electing to not renew their subscription. Also, the population underwent continual self-randomization, by the process through which they were carried on the list of subscribers. Each new subscriber is placed on the computerized listing first by