

# Writing and Publishing a Scientific Paper: an Insider's Guide

CHERYL R. DYKSTRA EDITOR, THE JOURNAL OF RAPTOR RESEARCH



# Would you rather....

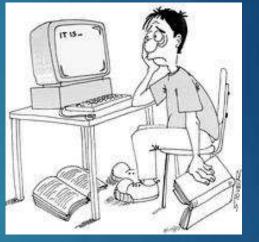






or







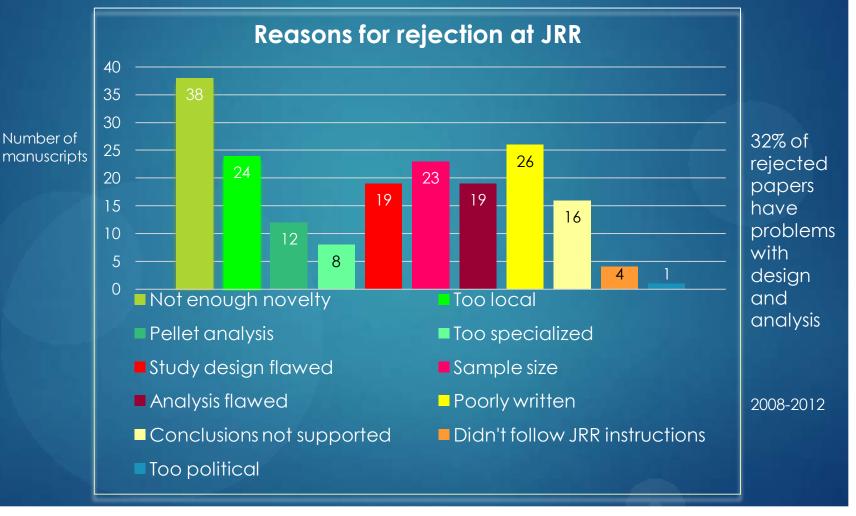


"Your study is not complete until it has been published. In a way, the research project really never even took place unless the results are published in a scientific journal."

Jim Bednarz, 2007



#### Successful publication: Learning from rejections





1. Design your study with the end in mind

32% of rejected manuscripts have a major flaw in study design, flawed data analysis, or sample size too small.

It is important to think about your papers before you start research

What question do you want to answer?

1

What would make a "publishable unit"?

Where is my biostatistician?



• Sample size



#### Raptors are

- Fascinating predators
- Appealing to the public
- Good research models for some ecological questions

#### But they

- Have low densities
- Are secretive
- Can be difficult to find
- Can be difficult to access



Vs.

• Sample size



One nest: 500 hours of observation















Ten nests: 25 hours each



• Sample size

#### Typical sample size in Journal of Raptor Research

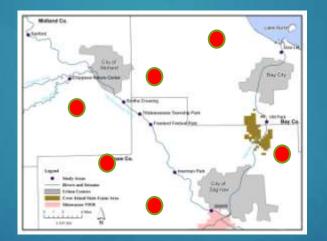
Type of study	Mean sample size	Range
Telemetry	19.8 ± 5.0 individuals	7 - 63
Habitat	31.3 ± 6.9 nests	12 - 62
Diet	15.9 ± 2.5 nests or roosts	4 - 44
Morphometrics	137 ± 54 individuals	35 - 592
Reproductive rate	372 ± 174 breeding attempts Median = 84	28 - 1198

Source: articles from JRR Volumes 45 - 47



- Sample size
- Pseudoreplication

The use of traditional null-hypothesis statistics to test for effects in experiments in which the replicates are not independent or the treatments are not replicated (adapted from Bednarz 2007).

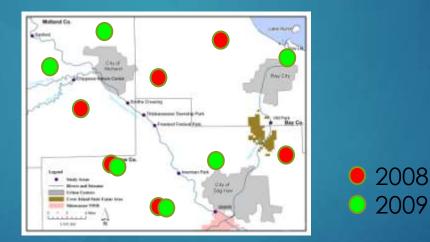


Nests studied in 2008



- Sample size
- Pseudoreplication

The use of traditional null-hypothesis statistics to test for effects in experiments in which the replicates are not independent or the treatments are not replicated (adapted from Bednarz 2007).

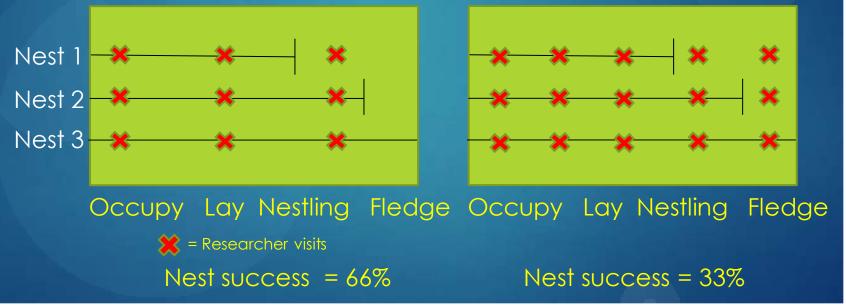


Nests studied in 2008 and 2009



- Sample size
- Pseudoreplication
- Procedural inconsistency

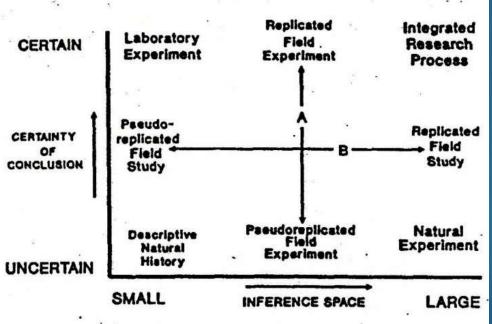
#### Apparent Nest Success with differing methodologies





Design your study with the end in mind
 Analyze appropriately

Appropriate analysis starts with understanding study design



E.O. Garton 1994. Research and Experimental Design. Pages 1-23 in Research and Management Techniques for Wildlife and Habitat, T.A. Bookhout (Ed.)

From Ratti, J.T. and

Fig. 1. The potential for wildlife study designs to produce conclusions with high certainty (few alternate hypotheses likely) and widespread applicability (a diversity of research populations where inferences apply).



# Design your study with the end in mind Analyze appropriately

#### Classic hypothesis testing (traditional null-hypothesis testing)

Table 1. Male American Kestrel nestlings that received three previous ectoparasite removals (13 experimental broods) had lower *Carnus hemapterus* loads at 20–22 d than males not receiving previous removals (11 control broods), but did not differ significantly in size or body condition (body mass/wing length). Data from northwestern New Jersey, 2005. Values are means  $\pm$  SD.

VARIABLE	EXPERIMENTAL <sup>1</sup> BROODS	CONTROL BROODS	$U^2$	Р
Wing length <sup>3</sup> (mm)	$66.4 \pm 6.9$	$64.4 \pm 8.5$	56.0	0.621
Tail length <sup>4</sup> (mm)	$43.2 \pm 5.5$	$42.0 \pm 6.8$	53.5	0.761
Body mass (g)	$129.8 \pm 13.0$	$131.4 \pm 16.6$	42.5	0.595
Body mass/wing length (g/mm)	$2.0 \pm 0.2$	$2.1 \pm 0.3$	42.0	0.569
Number of C. hemapterus per nestling	$1.3 \pm 3.3$	$2.3 \pm 2.5$	26.0	0.035
Number of other parasites per nestling	$0.1 \pm 0.2$	$0.1 \pm 0.2$	48.5	0.455
Number of nonparasites	$0.1 \pm 0.1$	$0.2 \pm 0.2$	33.0	0.077

<sup>1</sup> Ectoparasites removed 5–7, 10–12, and 15–17 d after hatching.

<sup>2</sup> Mann-Whitney tests: two-tailed for size variables, one-tailed for ectoparasites.

<sup>3</sup> Right seventh primary.

<sup>4</sup> Right outer rectrix.

Lesko, M.J. and J.A. Smallwood. 2012. Ectoparasites of American Kestrels in northwestern New Jersey and their relationship to nestling growth and survival. JRR 46:304-313



# Design your study with the end in mind Analyze appropriately

Other common types of analyses include information-theoretic approach, reporting estimates of effects (means and Cls), Bayesian inference approach, and specialized techniques.

Table 3. Selection of Cox proportional hazard models of covariate pairs of the length of dependence period of hacked juvenile captive-bred Harpy Eagles in Panama and Belize. Only models which were significant at P < 0.05 and AIC weight greater than zero are listed.

MODELS	LR.	P	AIC	$\Delta AIC$	AIC WEIGHT
Age at release + sex + interaction	35.9	< 0.001	113.21	0.00	0.19
Age at release + body mass + interaction	35.8	< 0.001	113.33	0.12	0.18
Age at release + individual in hack box	32.4	< 0.001	114.71	1.49	0.09
Age at release + body mass	32.1	< 0.001	114.99	1.78	0.08
Age at release + sex	32.0	< 0.001	115.10	1.89	0.07
Age at release + enclosure time	32.4	< 0.001	115.15	1.94	0.07
Age at release + season	31.9	< 0.001	115.29	2.07	0.07
Age at release + individual in hack box + interaction	32.6	< 0.001	116.55	3,33	0.04
Age at release + enclosure time + interaction	32.3	< 0.001	116.85	3.64	0.03
Age at release + season + interaction	31.9	< 0.001	117.27	4.06	0.02

Likelihood ratio.

<sup>b</sup> Akaike's Information Criterion.

#### Consult a biostatistician before starting your research



Campbell-Thompson, E. et al. 2012. JRR 46:158-167.



- 1. Design your study with the end in mind
- 2. Analyze appropriately
- 3. Choose the right journal
  - Check the target journal's website
  - Review the articles published in the target journal
  - Ask colleagues or the Editor

J. Raptor Res. 46(4):420-423 © 2012 The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.

#### JOURNAL OF RAPTOR RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Journal of Raptor Research (JRR) publishes original research reports and review articles about the biology of diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey. All submissions must be in English, but contributions from anywhere in the world are welcome. Manueditor should be notified if extenuating circumstances prevent a timely return of the manuscript.

Authors will receive proofs of their articles prior to publication. Proofs must be read carefully to correct any printer errors and returned within two days of



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JRR accepts manuscripts on 109 topics, from "anatomy and morphology" to "wintering ecology"



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- 3. Choose the right journal
  - Check the target journal's website
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#### From the RRF website:

A peer-reviewed, international publication dedicated to the dissemination of scientific information about raptors, *The Journal of Raptor Research* publishes original research reports and review articles on the biology and conservation of diurnal and nocturnal raptors. Articles describing ecology, behavior, life history, conservation, or techniques are appropriate, as are reviews of published studies. International contributions are encouraged.

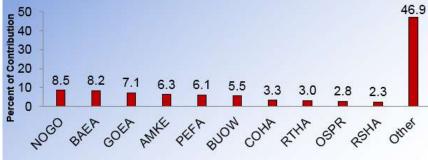


# Study species and countries for papers published in JRR, 1995 - 2010

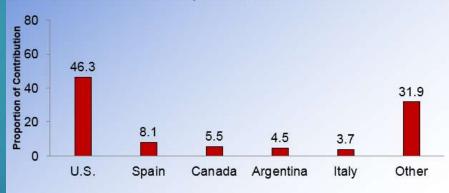
#### J. Raptor Research Top 10 species.

Total species represented: 166.

Species contribution: Median: 0.2%, Mean 0.8%.



J. Raptor Research
 Study Country (n = 706).
 Total countries represented = 69.

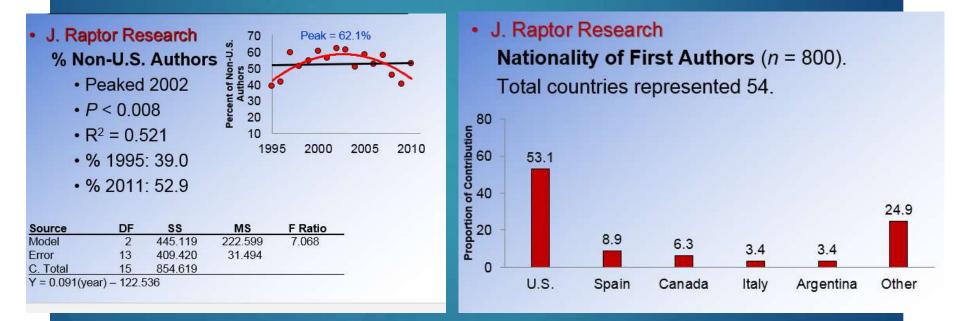


#### It is JRR's goal to increase the number of international papers

Source: Chiavacci, S.J., K.E. Pias, and J.F. Dwyer. 2011. From Duluth to Duluth: How has the focus of raptor research changed since 1995? Talk presented by James Dwyer at Raptor Research Foundation meeting, October 2011, Duluth, MN, USA



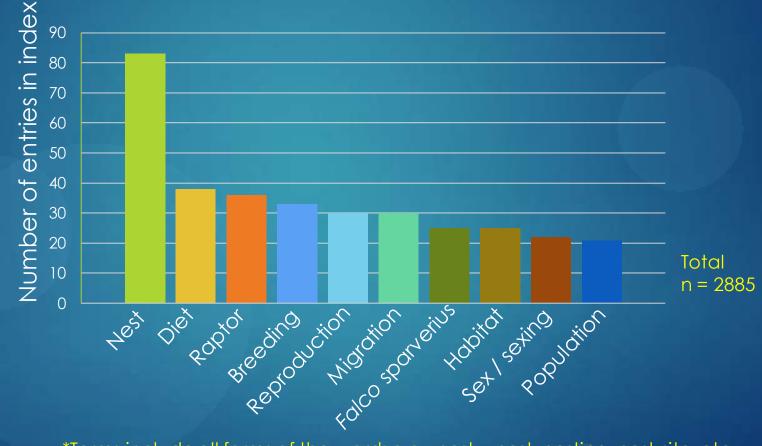
### Nationalities of authors of papers published in JRR, 1995 – 2010



Source: Chiavacci, S.J., K.E. Pias, and J.F. Dwyer. 2011. From Duluth to Duluth: How has the focus of raptor research changed since 1995? Talk presented by James Dwyer at Raptor Research Foundation meeting, October 2011, Duluth, MN, USA



#### Most common key words indexed in JRR, 2009 - 2013



\*Terms include all forms of the word; e.g., nest = nest, nesting, nest-site, etc.

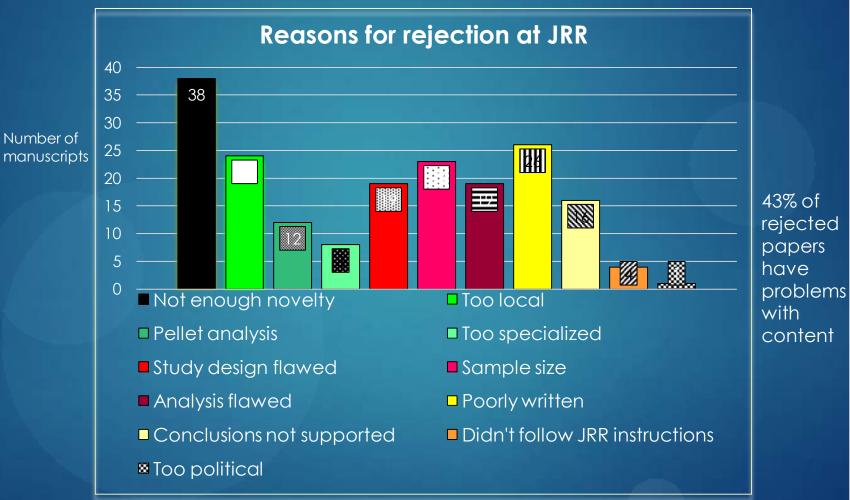


- 1. Design your study with the end in mind
- 2. Analyze appropriately
- 3. Choose the right journal

Choosing the wrong journal wastes your time and that of the editorial staff









Articles that are too specialized

e.g., A study of sperm motility in Red-tailed Hawks

#### Articles that are too local

Often "range-expansion" manuscripts are too local

Articles that do not have enough novelty for JRR



Articles that are too specialized

e.g., A study of sperm motility in Feterailed Hawks

#### Articles that are too local

Often "range-expansion" manuscripts are too local

Articles that do not have enough novelty for JRR



### Articles that are too specialized

NORMAL PLASMA CHOLINESTERASE ACTIVITY OF NEOTROPICAL FALCONIFORMES AND STRIGIFORMES

Comparison of Two Falconid Mummies from the Late Period of Ancient Egypt Using Noninvasive Techniques

#### Articles that are too local

Often "range-expansion" manuscripts are too local

### Articles that do not have enough novelty for JRR



### Articles that are too specialized

NORMAL PLASMA CHOLINESTERASE ACTIVITY OF NEOTROPICAL PUBLISHED

Comparison of Two Falconid Mummies from the Late Period of Ancient Egypt Using PUBLISHED! Noninvasive Techniques

#### Articles that are too local

Often "range-expansion" manuscripts are too local

### Articles that do not have enough novelty for JRR

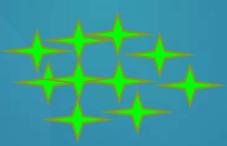


- 1. Design your study with the end in mind
- 2. Analyze appropriately
- 3. Choose the right journal
- 4. Identify the main finding and write an outline

### Choose the new result



study



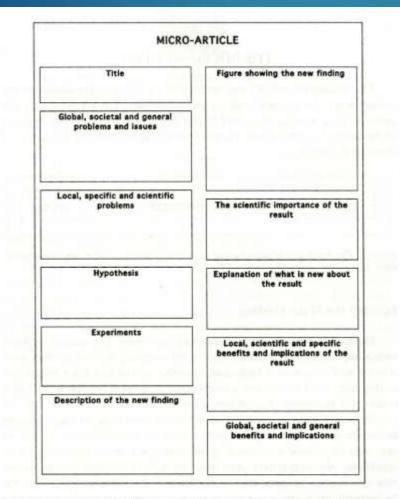
0 results

1 new result 2 supporting results = 1 article

Adapted from: Lichtfouse, E. 2013. Scientific writing for impact factor journals. Novinka, New York, USA



#### Write a traditional outline or a one-page micro-article

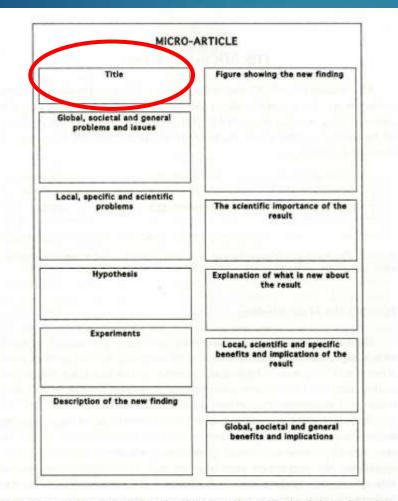


Source: Lichtfouse, E. 2013. Scientific writing for impact factor journals. Novinka, New York, USA

Figure 3. The micro-article. This tool enables the author to identify their results and to focus their article on one main finding.



#### Write a traditional outline or a one-page micro-article



Your title should not include "..with notes on..." or "..and natural history of..."

These words suggest that you are including many minor results and diluting the focus of your paper

> Source: Lichtfouse, E. 2013. Scientific writing for impact factor journals. Novinka, New York, USA

Figure 3. The micro-article. This tool enables the author to identify their results and to focus their article on one main finding.



- Design your study with the end in mind 1.
- 2. Analyze appropriately
- 3. Choose the right journal
- 4. Identify the main finding and write an outline
- 5. Explain the novelty of your result
  - --ideally in the abstract, discussion, and conclusion

WO

#### Table V. Examples of forms of novelty

		4070	
FORMS OF NOVELTY		Law of	Oranges also follow
BASIC RESEARCH	APPLIED RESEARCH	Gravity !	the law of Gravity !
A new mechanism	A new invention	6 0	Charley .
A new concept	A new technology		0
theoretical advance	An improved technique		2
A new interpretation	A practical advance		
The first observation	New methodology	AN AN	
The first exploration	An improved method		
		High Impact Paper	Low Impact Paper

Source: Lichtfouse, E. 2013. Scientific writing for impact factor journals. Novinka, New York, USA



- 1. Design your study with the end in mind
- 2. Analyze appropriately
- 3. Choose the right journal
- 4. Identify the main finding and write an outline
- 5. Explain the novelty of your result

Bednarz (2007) lists two kinds of raptor science:

"Normal science" = replication of studies on classic paradigms or investigation of a local question that has been well-studied elsewhere

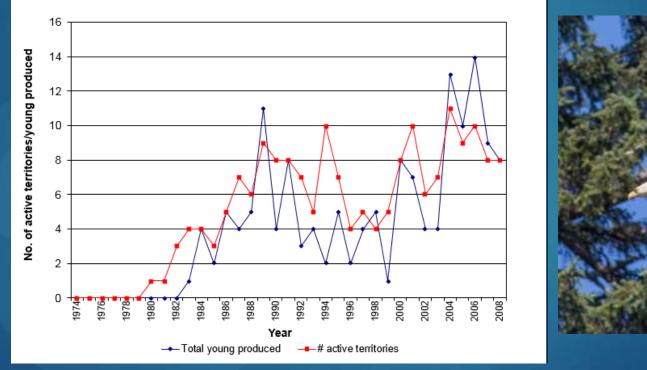
"Revolutionary science" = novel ideas that challenge long-held paradigms and stimulate cutting-edge and exciting investigations

Adapted from: Bednarz, J.A. 2007. Study design, data management, analysis and presentation. Pages 73-88 in Raptor Research and Management Techniques.



6. Prepare simple figures that clearly illustrate results

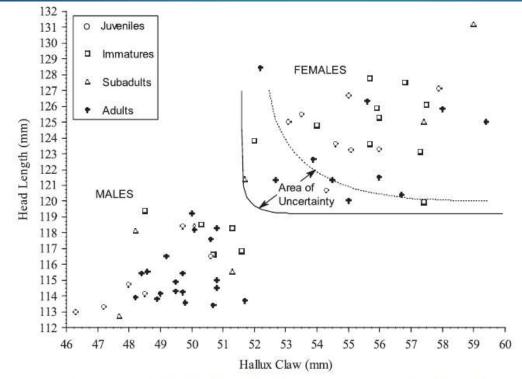
### Bald Eagle recovery, Apostle Islands, Lake Superior, USA

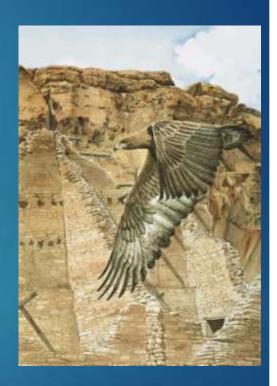


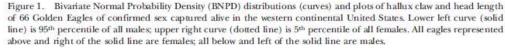
Source: Dykstra et al. 2010. Mercury, DDE and PCB trends in Bald Eagle nestlings in the Upper Midwest. Talk presented at 2010 RRF meeting, 2010.



6. Prepare simple figures that clearly illustrate results







Source: Harmata, A. and G. Montopoli. 2013. Morphometric sex determination of North American Golden Eagles. JRR 47:108-116.



6. Prepare simple figures that clearly illustrate results

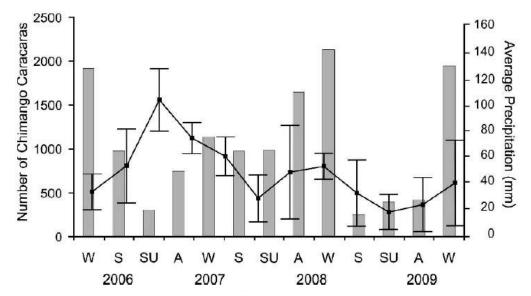


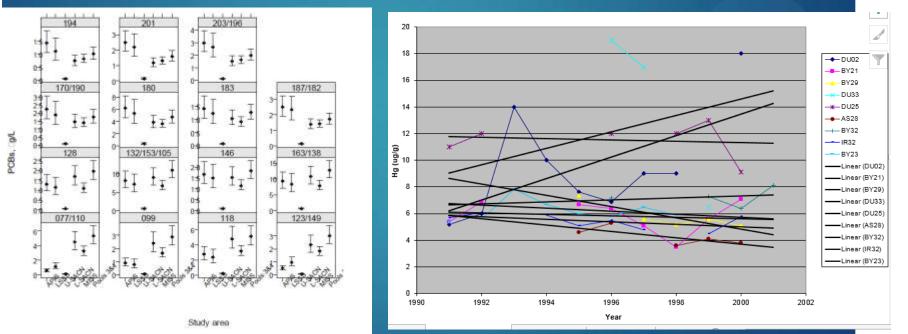
Figure 2. Seasonal variation in the average number of Chimango Caracaras and precipitation from July 2006 through June 2009, in Los Padres Lake Reserve, Buenos Aires province, Argentina. Seasons are: winter (June, July, and August), spring (September, October, and November), summer (December, January, and February) and autumn (March, April, and May). Seasonal Chimango Caracara abundance data are shown as vertical bars, and the points (±SE) show average seasonal precipitation.

Source: Josens, M.L. et al. 2013. Communal roosting of Chimango Caracaras at a shallow lake in the Pampas, Argentina. JRR 47:316--319



### Types of figures to avoid

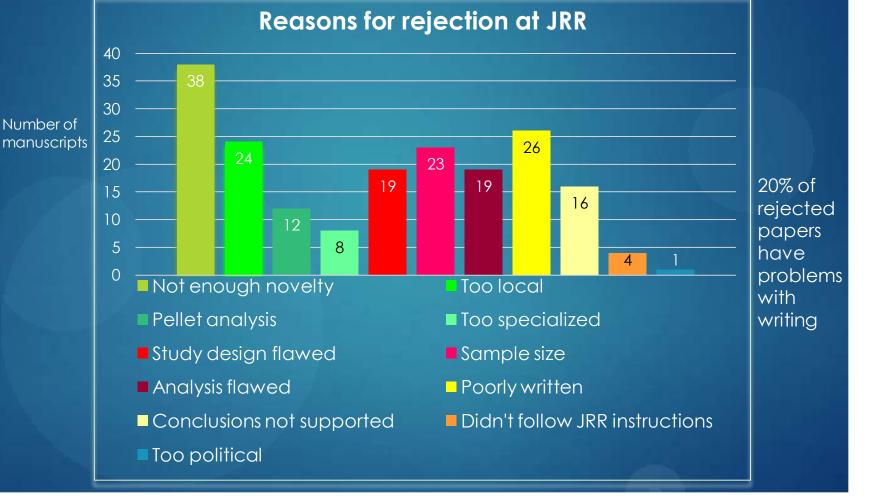
- Too busy/too many data points
- Font too small
- Too many ideas
- Unclear abbreviations
- Equations and statistics cluttering graph



Readers should be able to easily understand your figure without reference to the text of the manuscript



7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice





7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

APPENDIX. Habitat variables of Red-shouldered Hawk nest sites.

NESTHTHeight of nest tree or plot central tree (m)NESTDBHDbh of nest tree or plot central tree (m)SLOPESlope of plot, measured with clinometer (deg)ELEVElevation of plot, from 7.5' USGS topographical maps (m)OVERSTNumber of overstory trees in plot (stems > 8 cm dbh whose major foliage fell within the upper third of overall stand height)UNDERSTNumber of understory trees in plot (stems > 8 cm dbh whose major foliage fell within the lower two-thirds of overall stand height)TOTALTotal number of trees in plot SNAGSBASALBasal area of all trees in plot (m² ha⁻1)
NESTDBHDbh of nest tree or plot central tree (m)SLOPESlope of plot, measured with clinometer (deg)ELEVElevation of plot, from 7.5' USGS topographical maps (m)OVERSTNumber of overstory trees in plot (stems > 8 cm dbh whose major foliage fell within the upper third of overall stand height)UNDERSTNumber of understory trees in plot (stems > 8 cm dbh whose major foliage fell within the lower two-thirds of overall stand height)TOTALTotal number of trees in plot SNAGSNumber of snags (dead trees) in plot
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Iower two-thirds of overall stand height)       TOTAL       SNAGS       Number of snags (dead trees) in plot
SNAGS Number of snags (dead trees) in plot
<b>BASAL</b> Basal area of all trees in plot $(m^2 ha^{-1})$
is to the busin men of the trees in plot (in the )
DBH1 Percentage of trees with dbh 8–12.4 cm
DBH2 Percentage of trees with dbh 12.5–22.6 cm
DBH3 Percentage of trees with dbh 22.7–37.8 cm
DBH4 Percentage of trees with dbh $\geq$ 37.9 cm
SHRUB Number of shrubs $< 8$ cm dbh and $> 50$ cm tall within 5 m of plot center
SHRUBHT Estimated height of dominant shrub species (m)
GRCOVER Percentage ground cover, measured with ocular tube (James and Shugart 1970) at 1-m inter- vals between 1 and 10 m from plot center in cardinal directions
UNCOVER Percentage understory cover, measured in same manner as GRCOVER
CANHT Canopy height of plot, measured in each quadrant and averaged (m)
CANNEST Percentage canopy closure at the nest, measured with a convex densiometer in each cardinal direction, and averaged
CANPLOT Percentage canopy closure in the plot, measured with a convex densiometer in the four cardi
nal directions at the nest and in the four cardinal directions at four points 8.5 m from plot center, and averaged
WATER Distance to nearest permanent or seasonal water (m)



#### DISCUSSION

Red-shouldered Hawks at both SW Ohio and Hocking Hills selected nest sites in areas of relatively mature forest that were near a water source. Several of the inter-related variables that differed between nest sites and paired random plots were related to the size of the nest tree and the surrounding forest (i.e., NESTHT, NESTDBH, CANHT, and BASAL). Nest sites also were closer to water than paired random plots at SW and probably at HH. Distance to available water sources may have influenced the significance of the variable ELEV. ELEV, which was significant in univariate tests at SW, was significantly, but weakly, correlated to WATER (r = 0.26, P =0.003). Most of the water sources nearest to nests at SW were small streams running through

Source: Dykstra et al. 2000. Nest site selection and productivity of suburban Redshouldered Hawks in southern Ohio. Condor 102:401-408



7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

Unclear pronoun antecedent: Barred Owls have been studied by ornithologists for several years. They typically initiate breeding behavior in March.
Better: Studies by ornithologists have revealed that Barred Owls typically initiate breeding behavior in March.
Even better: Barred Owls typically initiate breeding behavior in March.

Sources: <u>http://fishwild.vt.edu/ornithology/Ornithology/ScientificLiteratureandWriting2.htm</u> and Journal of Raptor Research files



7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

**Sentence too long**: At 0900 PDT and approximately 1 km south of the location where we first observed the resident Bald Eagle pair perched together, both adult eagles (both unmarked, but likely the same resident mated eagle pair at the lake just observed) were observed flying rapidly <20 m above the lake surface towards an in-flight Osprey ca 100 m away and ca 30 m above the lake surface with a fish in its talons flying near the only active Osprey nest on the Warm Springs Creek arm of the lake, in a dead ca 30 m Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*).

Sources: <u>http://fishwild.vt.edu/ornithology/Ornithology/ScientificLiteratureandWriting2.htm</u> and Journal of Raptor Research files



7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

Wordy	Concise
Due to the fact that	Because
With regard to	About
Has the ability to	Can
It is possible that	May or might
It is important that	Must or should

Source: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/style/



7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

Define your terms and be consistent

Ex: reproductive terminology

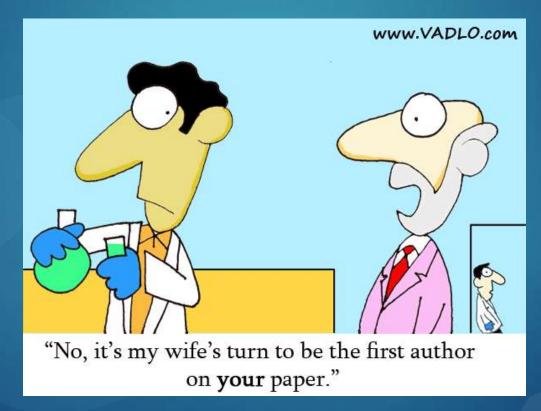
Nest with signs of reproductive activity	Nest with eggs	Nest producing 1 or more fledglings
Occupied nest	Active nest	Successful nest
Nesting attempt	Breeding attempt	
Territorial pair	Laying pair	

See: Steenhof, K. 1987. Assessing raptor reproductive success and productivity, Pages 157-17- in Raptor Management Techniques Manual. Steenhof, K. and I. Newton. 2007. Assessing nest success and productivity. Pages 181-192 in Raptor Research and Management Techniques



8. Assign authorship appropriately

### Who should be an author?





8. Assign authorship appropriately

Who should be an author?

An author should participate in at least 2 of the 5 key areas of research:

1) Conception: study idea, proposals, funding

- 2) Design: development of study design and logistics
- 3) Execution and data collection: data collection and administration
- 4) Data analysis: data entry, data verification, analysis
- 5) Writing the manuscript

Adapted from: Bednarz, J.A. 2007. Study design, data management, analysis and presentation. Pages 73-88 in Raptor Research and Management Techniques.



9. Follow the journal's formatting instructions exactly

Slack presentation = slack science!

Editors and reviewers "believe that if an author is unable to apply some simple formatting instructions, then their science is probably equally slack" (Lichtfouse 2013)

Most errors in: references, section headings, title page



9. Follow the journal's formatting instructions exactly

Slack presentation = slack science!

What are the reasons authors format incorrectly?

- Author thinks formatting can be done after acceptance
- Paper has been rejected by another journal and author did not change the formatting. (This also suggests that author did not make any revisions requested by the first journal.)

These strategies waste time and encourage rejection



6. Prepare simple figures that clearly illustrate results7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

8. Assign authorship appropriately

9. Follow the journal's formatting instructions exactly 10. Understand the publishing process



## 10. Understand the publishing process

## 1. Scientific assessment

Preselection	Detailed assessment	Corrections
Editorial office	Editorial office Associate Editors Reviewers	Author Editorial office
	Kevieweis	

## 2. Production and Publication

Preparation of proofs	Corrections	Publication
Publisher	Publisher Editor	Publisher Editorial office
	Author	

Adapted from: Lichtfouse, E. 2013. Scientific writing for impact factor journals. Novinka, New York, USA

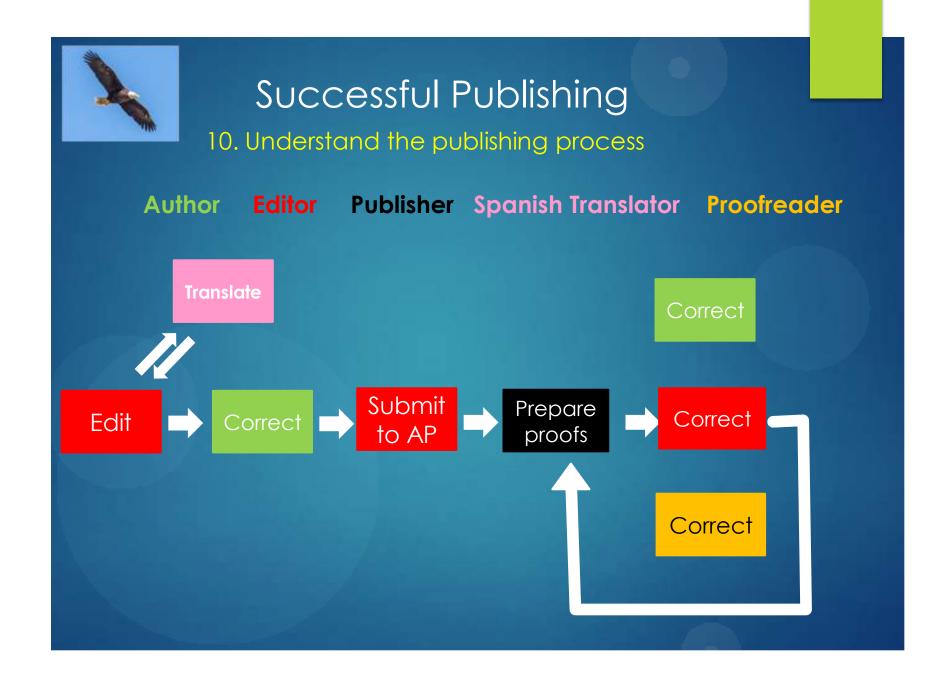


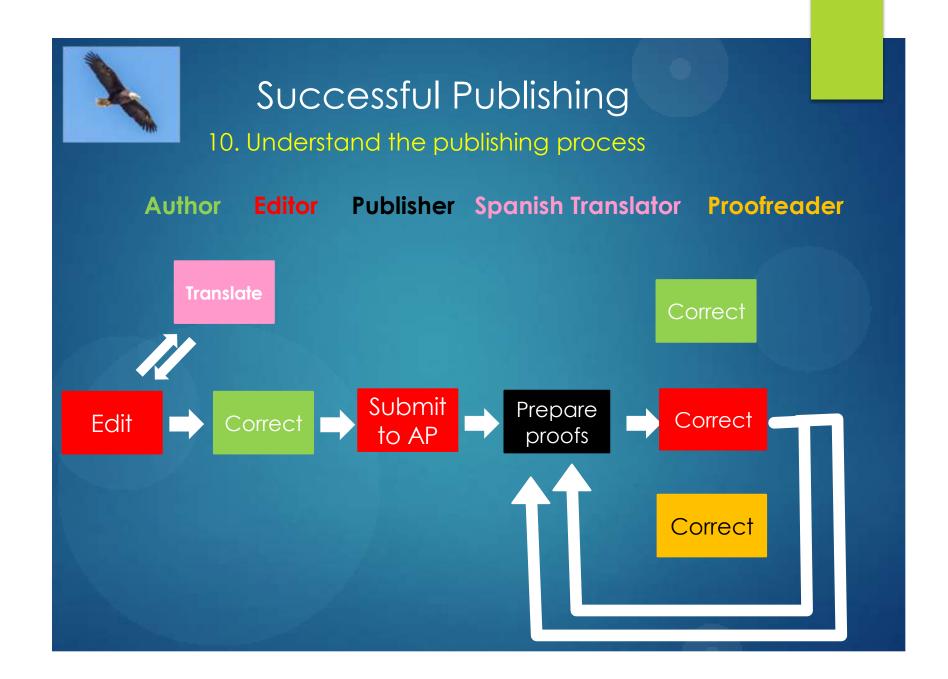








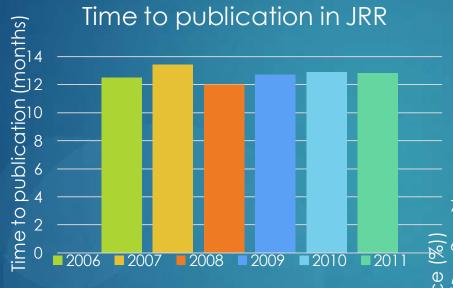






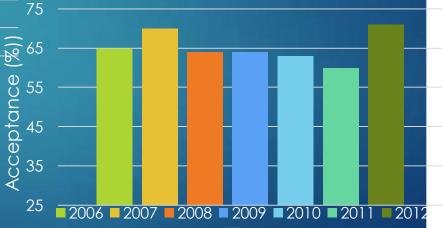


10. Understand the publishing process



Time from submission until publication of print edition

Acceptance rate for JRR





## Why choose Journal of Raptor Research?

- It is the preeminent journal dedicated to raptors in the world
- Your work will be seen by raptor biologists worldwide
- We understand the challenges of studying raptors
- JRR wants to help you publish your study
- You will be helping RRF

#### Welcome to the Raptor Research Foundation

The Raptor Research Foundation (RRF) is an international acientific society whose primary goal is the accumulation and dissemination of scientific information about (aptors.

More »







- 1. Design your study with the end in mind
- 2. Analyze appropriately
- 3. Choose the right journal
- 4. Identify the main finding and write an outline
- 5. Explain the novelty of your result
- 6. Prepare simple figures that clearly illustrate results

7. Write clearly, avoiding abbreviations, wordiness, and passive voice

8. Assign authorship appropriately

9. Follow the journal's formatting instructions exactly

10. Understand the publishing process



# Celebrate!



## And then get back outside:



## Acknowledgments

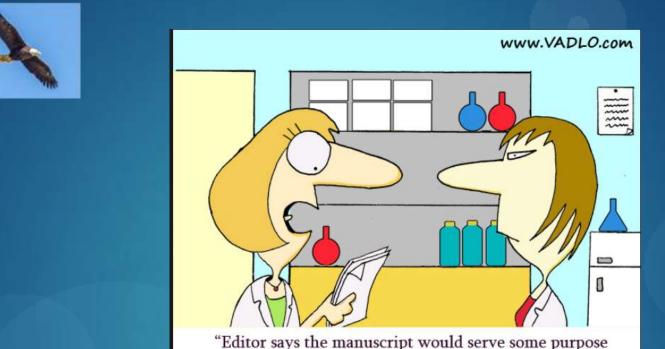
Thanks to James Dwyer for providing data on JRR publications, and to Sara Miller, Jeff Hays, and Bob Dykstra for photographs.

Further reading:

Lichtfouse, E. 2013. Scientific writing for impact factor journals. Novinka, New York, USA

Bednarz, J.A. 2007. Study design, data management, analysis and presentation. Pages 73-88 in Raptor Research and Management Techniques.

Cargill, M. and P. O'Connor. 2013. Writing scientific research articles, Second Ed. Wiley-Blackwell.



"Editor says the manuscript would serve some purpose if it were written on toilet paper."



