



# Extra, Extra...Read All About It!

Writing; Reading; Adaptations

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Grade: 4

## Overview

A press release is an important tool for an organization to get the word out about something special. In this activity, the students will read an actual press release to learn some of the essential elements of a press release before writing their own about a new wildlife discovery.

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### Essential Questions

- How do we communicate science?
- What are the elements of an effective press release?

### Objectives

- Read and summarize an actual press release.
- Identify the components of a successful press release.
- Write a press release about the discovery of a new wildlife species.

### Arizona Department of Education Standards

#### Science

- S1.C4.PO3
- S4.C4.PO2

#### Next Generation Science

- 4-LS1-1

#### AZ College and Career Ready – ELA

- 4.RI.2
- 4.W.2
- 4.W.4

#### Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

- 1.7.1

### Materials and Resources

- *How to Write a Press Release* (one per student)
- Arizona bald eagle nestwatch OR captive desert tortoise press release (one per student)

### Teacher Preparation

- Make a copy of one or both of the press releases and the *How to Write a Press Release* worksheet for each student.
- Students should have already completed *Survival of the Fishiest*, *Desert Sponge*, or another activity that has them design a “new” animal that they can promote with a press release.

### Background Information

A press release is used to inform people about something. It provides the basic details to answer the five “W”s: who, what, when, where, and why. In addition, it includes contact information in case someone wants to learn more. Press releases are typically sent to news outlets, such as television and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines.

In this lesson, students will discover what it takes to write an effective press release. They

will review a sample press release before writing their own based on a set of guidelines.

The press release that students are asked to write is about a newly discovered animal. If they have completed *Survival of the Fishiest* or *Desert Sponge*, both lessons from the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Focus Wild Arizona wildlife education program, then this lesson will serve as an extension. Other activities may be suitable as well.

## Procedures

1. Ask students to describe the “news.”  
What is it? What purpose does it serve?  
Where do we find it?
2. After a short discussion, ask the students where news outlets (such as television stations and newspapers) get their stories. Discuss the purpose of a press release.
3. Hand out the sample press release and the *How to Write a Press Release* worksheet.
4. Inform the students that this is a copy of a real press release.
5. Instruct them to read the press release and write a summary in the space provided on the worksheet.
6. Provide the students with some time to complete the reading and summary.
7. Once all students have finished, ask for volunteers to share their summary. Discuss.
8. Inform the students that they will now have the opportunity to write their own press release about the animal they “discovered” in the earlier lesson.
9. Review the components of an effective press release from the bottom of the worksheet. Remind students that it should be creative and grab the attention of the reader.
10. Provide the students time to complete their press release.



## Differentiated Instruction

### Extensions:

- Have the students contact a local media outlet (newspaper, television or radio station, etc.) to discuss the process it goes through to choose its stories. How many are submitted through press releases and how many are their own? Do they take the press releases word for word or use them to inform a story they are writing? How do they choose which stories to do?
- Have students contact a local government agency to talk to a public information officer. They should try to learn how they get the word out. Do they use press releases? Where do they go? How effective are they?
- Write a press release about some event at the school. This could be shared with students during morning announcements or through the school newspaper.
- Compare how Internet-based news services are similar to and different from more traditional media outlets. Do press releases have to be different?

### Modifications:

- Students can notate the text to help with comprehension. This could include underlining the *what*, circling the *who*, highlighting the *when*, bracketing the *where*, and drawing a wavy line under the *why*.



### Reflection:

Use the space below to reflect on the success of the lesson. What worked? What didn't? What changes would you make? These notes can be used to help the next time you teach the lesson. In addition, the Department would appreciate any feedback. Please send your comments to [focuswild@azgfd.gov](mailto:focuswild@azgfd.gov). We'd love to see samples of the student press releases, as well!



# How to Write a Press Release

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A press release is used to inform people about something. It provides the basic details to answer the five “W”s: who, what, when, where, and why. In addition, it includes contact information in case someone wants to learn more. Press releases are typically sent to news outlets, such as television and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines.

A sample press release has been provided to you. Take a few moments to read it. Briefly summarize the article in the space below.

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Writing a good press release can be a challenge. News outlets are sent more stories than they can possibly cover. So, effective press releases need to provide all the necessary information in an easy and enjoyable format. And, they need to stand out from the crowd.

You have been asked to write your own press release to generate interest about your newly discovered animal. Here are some tips to help make your press release more effective:

1. Start with a title. Make sure it is creative and catchy. This is the first thing that someone will read. You want them to want to continue reading the whole story.
2. Write an opening statement or paragraph. You should cover *what*, *who*, and *why*. The reader should care about what you have to say.
3. Follow this up with the *when* and *where*.
4. Now that the basic details are out, it is time to expand. Write between one and four facts that provide more details about *what*.
5. Follow this with about three reasons *why*.
6. Write some background information to develop the story a little more.
7. Finally, make sure you provide the *who*, *where*, and *when* to contact if the reader wants more information.



## Contact

Lynda Lambert (623) 555-5555  
Public Information Officer

## Arizona Game and Fish Department

### NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release [Feb. 12, 2013](#)

### Arizona's bald eagle nestwatch program celebrates 35 years of dedication

PHOENIX — It isn't an easy job, and it isn't for everyone, but Arizona's Bald Eagle Nestwatch Program has contributed to the tremendous growth of the state's bald eagle population for 35 years. Dedicated teams of biologists camp out for months braving all elements so they can wake up at the crack of dawn to help protect our state's bald eagles.

"For more than 35 years, the state's unique nestwatch program has been an integral component of Arizona bald eagle management," says Kenneth Jacobson, head of the Arizona Game and Fish Department Bald Eagle Management Program. "Nestwatchers have helped save the lives of more than 60 eagle nestlings since the program began in 1978. Their contributions certainly have helped Arizona's bald eagle population grow."

This year's nestwatchers will begin their four-month tour of duty this week. They will watch 14 breeding areas, most along the Salt and Verde rivers in national forests, on Native American lands, and in Maricopa County parks. The contractors will observe from dawn to dusk, collecting data about the eagles' behavior, educating the public, and notifying rescuers of any life-threatening situations for the birds.

The nationally-recognized nestwatch program began as a weekend volunteer effort by the U.S. Forest Service and Maricopa Audubon to help ensure the continued success of bald eagle breeding. Now 26 government, private organizations and tribes are involved with the program to monitor bald eagle breeding areas that are under heavy pressure from human recreational activities.

So far in 2013, three new breeding areas have been documented bringing Arizona to a record 68 bald eagle breeding areas throughout the state. The department's bald eagle conservation program is supported by the Heritage Fund, a 1990 voter-passed initiative that provides funding for wildlife conservation and education from Arizona lottery dollars.

For more information on Arizona's bald eagles, visit [www.azgfd.gov/baldeagle](http://www.azgfd.gov/baldeagle) or [www.swbemc.org](http://www.swbemc.org).

**Note to media: Photos and video of nest watchers and eagles are available.** Reporters and photographers can also arrange to observe, photograph, and interview the nest watchers at work by calling Public Information Officer Lynda Lambert (623) 555-5555.



## Contact

Lynda Lambert, (623) 555-5555  
Public Information Officer

## Arizona Game and Fish Department

### NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release, [Aug. 27, 2013](#)

### **Arizona Game and Fish program seeks to minimize population of captive desert tortoises**

*Multi-faceted program works to prevent tortoise conservation challenge like Nevada's*

PHOENIX – Awareness seems to be increasing recently about the plight of the desert tortoise, especially those that are captive. While desert tortoise numbers appear to be declining in the wild, the number of tortoises being held in captivity is increasing at an alarming rate.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department, through its Tortoise Adoption Program, has been working for 30 years to educate the public about desert tortoises. Two of the elements of the program that are considered essential to avoiding overpopulation of captive desert tortoises are: never remove a tortoise from the wild – it's illegal – and never allow captive tortoises to breed.

Just like cats and dogs, there are currently more desert tortoises available for adoption in Arizona than there are homes willing to have one as a pet. Once captive, desert tortoises cannot be released back into the wild as captive animals can pass on upper respiratory tract disease or pathogens to wild tortoise populations.

“Without the public's help in keeping wild tortoises wild and preventing backyard breeding of captive tortoises, Arizona has the potential to end up with a conservation challenge similar to the one being faced by the closure of the tortoise conservation center in Nevada,” said Cristina Jones, Arizona Game and Fish's turtle program coordinator. “The public must do their part to help this iconic desert species.”

Desert tortoises are native to the southwestern desert and can live up to 100 years. They grow to be about 15 pounds and hibernate in the winter months. A desert tortoise can produce up to 12 hatchlings per year, which then must remain in captivity to protect wild tortoise populations.

Those interested in sharing their yard with a tortoise should visit [www.azgfd.gov/tortoise](http://www.azgfd.gov/tortoise) for more information on feeding, caring for, and creating a habitat for a tortoise. A desert tortoise adoption packet, which includes the adoption application, can also be downloaded at this site. There is a limit of one tortoise per household to prevent breeding.