

THE DREW LAB AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND CONSERVATION OF CORAL REEFS



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Reaching out to science communicators Pt. 1

Growing up I used to watch a lot of nature documentaries. Shark Week, Nature, National Geographic, even old Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom, these were always on. As I grew older I transitioned from [Zoo Books](#) and [Ranger Rick](#) to [Smithsonian](#) and [Natural History](#) magazines. These articles were a real inspiration to me, and showed me the diversity of things one could study as a scientist. Now that I am doing science of my own, I am excited to find ways to communicate my work to others. While this blog serves as a way for me to share what I am doing, I have also had the good fortune to collaborate with science communicators and journalists to tell share my research in a much more professional way. For example this summer I am thrilled to be working with [Helen Scales](#) to document our expedition to Fiji.

There are two main reasons why I like to collaborate with communicators. The first is that I like what I do, and hopefully without sounding egotistical, I think what I do is pretty interesting and I'd like to share my passion with others. Secondly, and perhaps less selfishly, the state of science awareness in the United States is pretty low, and I have great admiration for people who spend their days helping to share good stories and inform people as to why science matters.

Despite having grown up loving science stories, when it came time for me to reach out to science communicators I found it very difficult. I didn't know what to say, and frankly I'm not sure what I ended up having to say would be that important/interesting enough for them to care. **Don't be like me.** Go ahead and contact them. Even if you don't have a specific story to pitch it is still well worth your time to introduce yourself.

Here are some helpful (?) hints on making that first general step:

- If you read an article that you like, give it a positive comment.
- If you notice that an author keeps writing interesting articles drop them a line.
- If you see that someone keeps writing about something you do, introduce yourself, they'll probably be glad to know someone who is in the field.
- Even if they don't want to interview you right away, it's helpful for journalists to know that someone is working in a field. They're always looking for expert opinion quotes.
- Be an active participant in the community. Go to regional events like [SONYC](#), or see if there are organizations you can get in touch with.
- Most journalists are on twitter. Follow their feed to get an idea about what they're working on.

There are probably *many* other helpful hints out there, and I'm hoping science communicators will comment on some things that I'm missing! Again, I should note that if you have a specific story idea to pitch you'll have to use a slightly more refined and focused technique, but that will be another blog post.

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