

# Shorebird News

*Adapted with permission from Quinlan, "Alaska Wildlife Week."*

**Grade Level:** upper middle school/ high school

**Duration:** two 40-minute class periods

**Skills:** application, communication, presentation, using technology

**Subjects:** language arts, science, and technology

## Concepts

- Sharing our knowledge about shorebirds with others is one way we can help shorebird conservation

## Vocabulary

- press release
- style manual

## Overview

Students research what makes a good newspaper article and then write a story for their local paper about their involvement in the *Shorebird Sister Schools Program*.

## Objectives

After this activity, students will be able to:

- Write a newspaper article using the standard press release format
- Correctly incorporate quotes into a news story
- Explain the Shorebird Sister Schools Program and how the class has participated in the program.

## Materials

- classroom copies of model newspaper articles
- a copy of the *Press Release Guidelines*

## Optional

- photographs taken during shorebird field trips or activities

## Introduction

Since this is a sharing and review activity, there is no introductory material.

## Activity Preparation

1. Collect short newspaper articles, preferably on natural history (biological science) or natural resource topics. Make copies for the class.
2. Collect an array of articles that clearly represent different formats such as news articles, human interest stories, and editorials.

## Procedure

1. Have students read the articles you collect. Compare the newspaper articles with editorials, human interest, and news stories. Have students brainstorm a list of elements found in newspaper articles.
2. Give each student a copy of the *Press Release Guidelines* reading. Ask them to write a press release for the school, local, or statewide paper about your class participation in the *Shorebird Sister Schools Program*, a recent shorebird field trip, or what they have learned about shorebirds and the local habitats they use. Be sure to submit this article to the Shorebird Sister School Website at <http://sssp.fws.gov>
3. Hold a class contest in which all the students vote on each other's articles in as many categories as possible (best format, most interesting, best punctuation, grammar, etc.) Submit the article voted "best overall" to the intended publication.

## Additional Activities



### Cultural Connections

- Students can be international correspondents and report on the cultures of other communities where shorebirds spend part of their time breeding, migrating, or wintering.
- Students can write an editorial column on the importance of understanding cultures.

### *"Covering" Shorebirds Throughout the Year*

Give students an opportunity to try their hands at writing different styles of articles on as many shorebird topics as they can find within their communities. Have students pick stories and formats that interest them. Here are some ideas.

- An interview with a local or nearby shorebird artist or shorebird enthusiast
- A calendar of shorebird events each season (migration peaks, breeding cycles, festivals, classes, shorebird viewing outings etc.)
- A full-length article addressing all opinions and facts surrounding a shorebird controversy in the community.
- A student editorial on a shorebird controversy.

# Press Release Guidelines

1. Lead sentence tells “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.”
2. Keep it short, no longer than one page (double-spaced and typed).
3. Put the most important parts of the story first, followed by less important information. (If the article must be shortened, the last paragraphs can be cut without losing critical parts of the story.)
4. Keep aware of the difference between fact and opinion on all points.
5. Know your audience! A middle school student reading the school newspaper will have different expectations than a businessperson reading the city news.
6. Include accurate quotes that are properly cited. Make sure that the quotes enhance your article by adding something in a fresh way, not simply repeating the same words appearing elsewhere in the article. If a quote represents an opinion, does it seem to reflect a majority or dissenting opinion? Either is acceptable, but the writer needs to be aware of the difference so the quote is properly placed and introduced.
7. Check your spelling and grammar!
8. A short news release accompanied by photos will have the best chance of being printed.
9. For more information on writing for newspapers, consult a writer’s style manual such as *A Manual of Style*, published by University of Chicago Press.

