

RANGER RICK, YOUR BIG BACKYARD, & WILD ANIMAL BABY

PHOTO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Ranger Rick and *Your Big Backyard* are monthly educational magazines for children 7–12 and 3-7 years old. They have circulations between 500,000 and 600,000, nearly all by subscription, and carry no advertising. The education division of the National Wildlife Federation, a non-profit environmental organization, publishes them.

STANDARDS

Ranger Rick and *Your Big Backyard* publish the best work of exceptional and well-established photographers worldwide, although skilled newcomers are always welcome. Photography drives many of our stories, and we go to great lengths to obtain the best possible images. Before making an initial portfolio submission, we encourage you to study the magazine at a public library and honestly evaluate your own work by comparison.

Natural history photographers have a responsibility to convey the truth about their subjects. We at *Ranger Rick* and *Your Big Backyard* take this very seriously, so we are concerned about the Pandora's box that digital alteration can open. Because it's very easy to make corrections to digital images, it's also easy to cross a line that violates trust and affects the veracity of your—and everyone else's—images. As a result, if you choose to make changes to your digital images beyond minor optimization, **we require that you tell us precisely what those changes are.** If changes are made to remove minor distracting elements or the like, we will identify the image in the credit line with an encircled letter A, meaning "photo altered," which is OK. But if you alter an image more significantly, such as by rearranging or adding components, or combining images, then we will identify the image as a photo composite or photo illustration. **This info MUST be in the metadata when delivered to us.** We do not like surprises and it will reflect badly on you.

If you have a substantial portfolio of published work, we would like to see it. If you are new to publishing, please make certain your photography is truly original, appropriate, and consistently up to our tight technical standards before contacting us. We have extremely high production values. We look for dramatic or engaging point of view, sharp focus, precise exposure, rich color, texture and detail, best possible lighting, and effective framing. Vivid illustration of traits and behavior in natural history subjects is an essential component of many of our stories about individual species. Depth will serve you better than breadth. (See SUBJECTS below)

Because we are discussing nature in the pages of our magazines, it is essential that we convey natural behavior and conditions. If your work demands controlled conditions, keep in mind the correct environment for the species, such as plant types. While we use studio, game-farm, and zoo shots, we have a preference for images made in the wild. However, that is not always practical, so we identify pictures made under controlled conditions or of captive animals with an encircled P symbol in the credit line. Please be forthcoming with your information. It is also requested and recommended that this information is included in the metadata.

Metadata: USE IT! The metadata capacity of digital images is invaluable, saving time and energy for all — and sales for you! In our fast paced world the information you include will go a long way to promoting your work. The depth and accuracy of your information will put you ahead of the pack.

SUBJECTS

Editorial photography must provide a compelling visual narrative readily understood by children; clearly defined subjects and situations that are highly appealing are preferred. Exciting, weird, cute, breathtaking, or hilarious shots are always welcome. We are typically interested in seeing:

- Behavior and details of wild animals of any kind, especially outstanding action shots. Pictures should clearly illustrate features and behaviors most characteristic of the subject. Feeding, courtship, rearing young, self-defense, and interaction with other animals are common themes. Scientifically accurate captions are expected. We are not averse to showing "tooth and claw"— the realities of nature— in *Ranger Rick*, and to a lesser extent, in *Your Big Backyard*. There is a point at which it can be too graphic, but we will determine that. Don't be too conservative.
- Portrait / strong, tight shots of animals of any kind including microscopic life. Cover shots are normally intimate portraits of animals making eye contact with the camera. They must be of the highest technical quality and preferably vertical with plenty of room at the top for the logo. It is particularly nice if there is some action or interest (Ears moving, licking, etc.).

- Plants, flowers, fungi, rocks, fossils, habitats, topographic features, and other non-animal aspects of natural history only in a broader biological or environmental context. We do not publish scenic landscapes or horticultural studies for their own sake. Example plant stories are: Bamboo, Topiary, unusual trees or flowers.
- Children anywhere in the world doing something in the context of natural history, the environment, and conservation, or enjoying the outdoors in an environmentally friendly way. Children, who for cultural reasons interact with their natural environment or wildlife in a remarkable way. We seek cultural and ethnic diversity among kids.
- Adults anywhere in the world doing remarkable things related to wildlife and natural sciences, such as research, education, exploration, innovation, conservation, or problem solving. Also, scientists as role models. The children of these people, working with their parents on projects. Also give a way for our readers to understand.

SECTIONS

We also have unique sections of the magazines, which you can submit for at any time. Note how some are connected but others are not.

The Front Cover always relates to one of the feature stories. Since it is the first thing our readers and future readers see, this image has to draw the reader in. The perfect cover image is one that is dynamic, colorful, engaging and razor sharp. We require original film or hi-res digital capture files for the cover, though submitting digitally is best because of the length of time an image may be held for cover consideration. The front cover has to have the ability to make someone who has never seen our magazine want to pick it up and look at it, but it also has to fulfill the quality that our long-time readers have come to expect from us. While few images make the front cover cut, don't despair.

Image on pages Two-Three is the most important in the magazine after the cover. It sets the tone and frequently "balances" the issue. It must be engaging (exciting, funny, or sweet) and informative—but overall really strong. When not part of the lead story, this is a stand-alone spread that includes our table of contents. Sometimes a poem or funny tagline will be called for. But the photo must tell a story all its own.

Funny Fotos can be a single full-page image, or up to a 4 page story that features different animals engaged in various amusing behaviors. We usually gather and hold photos until a theme is seen in a group that will make a 2-4 page story. It is usually a multiple-choice game with the real answers mixed in with funny possible answers.

What's Going On? Is typically a 2–4 page story that features an image of an animal exhibiting strange and/or unusual behavior, which is usually described on the same page in a small blurb. This is a great opportunity to show and explain things that are very scientific but seemingly odd and frequently funny.

Say What? is another single or double page story that usually features animals that look like they are talking. (This is another version of "Funny Fotos.") We then ask our readers to fill in what they think the animal(s) are saying and send us their responses. We then reprint the image with the answers in a later issue.

Who Am I? is usually a single page section that asks our readers to do some research to find out what the pictured animal is. The key features of the animal are essential to enable research. Occasionally this section can be run as a double-truck if a particularly stunning image comes in that fits this section. These must be dynamic and engaging images, too.

Poem Page is another single or sometimes two-page section that features an image that stands alone from the rest of the stories in the magazine. Typically the poem will be about an animal but it also can be a place where more refined concepts can be shown. An image that portrays a season or maybe the flowering of a plant is just at home in the poem section as an image of a duck or other animal. Sometimes we want images of people (children) in the environment, which strike a mood.

Back Cover is the final note in the symphony of *Ranger Rick*. Unlike the front cover, it does not need to be related to anything in the magazine. It too is used to "balance" issues. The back cover has to fulfill the same quality standards that the front cover requires. This image needs the same dynamics of engagement as a front cover but also needs to be able to crop into a square. (There is a mailing label area at the bottom of the page.)

Your Big Backyard Poster is much like the two-three in *Ranger Rick* in that it is sometimes linked to a story and sometimes may stand-alone. Because this poster is for our 3- to 7-year-old readers, it needs a level of visual clarity suitable for the younger readers. It must be fun, non-ambiguous, engaging and suitable for a wall.

RATES

We pay the following standard page rates for one-time North American reproduction rights in the magazine, for individual stock pictures. These rates do not apply to pictures used in the Dear Ranger Rick, Ask Ranger Rick, and news sections. There is no payment for photos submitted by amateurs for these sections. Rates for complete picture stories from a single photographer or source are negotiated. Purchase orders for use are mailed two months before publication, and the originals are returned as soon as the printer is done with them.

Front cover	\$1000	Back cover	\$550
Full page	\$500	1½ spread	\$585
Background spread	\$675	Two page spread	\$750
1 2/3 spread	\$665	3/4 page	\$425
½ page	\$350	1/4 page	\$300
Spot photo	\$200 (\$100 in YBB)		

2nd Use from sister publication pre-press file is fee less 20%

PORTFOLIOS

The best way to present your work is a DVD. You **MUST** include lo-res files of all the images and a contact sheet. Another acceptable way is with a small group of high-quality dupes—three or four sheets of slides. It is better if you can demonstrate your strength in a particular arena. It will set you apart from the generalists. Portfolios and other unsolicited submissions shipped to our office will be returned as promptly as possible if accompanied by a paid return waybill and adequate packaging, but we cannot guarantee how quickly.

SUBMISSIONS

Digital images are the way of the future. We are reluctant to accept slides unless we have asked for them specifically. When we edit, images submitted for one story may be repurposed or reused for another story. Ranger Rick and Your Big Backyard share material and stories, so images may be held and reused later. Low-res files are great for initial edits, but original slides and hi-res digital captures are required for uses from ½ page through full-spread.

All slides must be in individual sleeves and slide sheets and packed in firm and waterproof materials with complete delivery information. We cannot be responsible for poorly packaged materials.

But we realize that there are goldmines of transparencies out there and it will be a while before those gems have lost their luster. However, the provider is responsible for the shipping both to and from NWF offices.

Embedded ID, info and watermarks are an excellent way to secure and identify your work. Images get moved during editing, **Ranger Rick and Your Big Backyard will not handle incorrectly or unidentified images.** For final production we require original color transparencies, hi-res digital capture, negatives, or drum scans of transparencies. The digital files must be minimally adjusted, (set white and black points—NO sharpening!) and saved in Adobe98RGB and have the IPTC information with each image.

Digital images:

- Each image file **must** show caption and ID information in the IPTC fields (metadata) including all you would have on your slide mount, if not more. More information is better than less. **This information remains married to the image through downloads and will protect you!**
- All digital alteration to an image **must** be indicated in the IPTC information.
- All digital files must indicate whether they are from transparency or digital capture.
- Digital capture files **must** indicate original file size. Our requirements are 300 dpi to image usage size.
- If submitting via lightbox, Please organize by stories, features, and magazine.
- A corresponding set of laser prints (hard copies) **must** accompany all files sent on CD or DVD. This will help your images compete.
- Low resolution digital files for review **must** be JPGs saved in Adobe98RGB and **must** not be larger than 3mg or smaller than 400 kilobytes.
- All CDs and DVDs **MUST** have low-resolution preview files if high-resolution files are being sent.
- A **maximum** of ten images will be accepted by email without prior approval.

- Do **not** sharpen images. This will be done at our discretion during the prepress phase.
- After first edits we will request hi-res files to judge quality for use. Images may be eliminated after that time due to insufficient quality. For final production we require high-resolution first-generation digital capture or original transparencies.

SHIPPING

Effective March 1, 2009, NWF will not pay for the shipping of any images we have not specifically called for. When we send out a want list, if slides are shipped via UPS, FEDEX, USPS, etc there must be a SASE for the return of the material. All material in our possession before that date will be our responsibility. Pictures submitted upon specific requests (originals for usage or in final cover consideration) of this office will be returned by the same delivery means they arrive at the expense of NWF. **The upshot? Please submit files digitally.**

CAPTIONS

Captions should include identification and location, and scientific names if appropriate. This applies to **EVERY** digital image as well, which should also have ID's embedded in the image. Ship pictures with an itemized delivery memo and include a description of each picture in the package or a photocopy of the slide sheets. Be sure that every image, even electronic, bears the photographer's name. Detailed and accurate caption information is critical to the effective use of your images. You are our field journalists, so please give us the information we need.

QUERIES

Ranger Rick and *Your Big Backyard* welcome picture-story proposals without text, but we no longer accept unsolicited manuscripts. Please note, however, that story packages rarely appear in the magazine without extensive changes. Occasionally we will accept a text/picture package but it is the exception. We revise text with our readers in mind and sometimes supplement the photography with stock from other sources. A good way to submit story proposals is with a tight edit of slides or digital images with laser prints, along with a one page story "blurb", which we can keep on file.

IF WE WANT TO USE A PICTURE

We do not pay holding fees under any circumstances, but we do return unneeded pictures as quickly as possible. We normally make our selections 3 - 6 months before publication, but we hold some pictures a year or longer. We will return any material promptly upon request.

We will assume we have your permission to make digital file copies of any images unless otherwise stated.

LIABILITY

Neither *Ranger Rick*, *Your Big Backyard*, *Wild Animal Baby*, or the National Wildlife Federation can be responsible for unsolicited materials, but we do assume responsibility for specifically requested material while in our hands. If by any chance transparencies are lost or damaged by us, we will negotiate to pay the real and fair market worth. We do not sign delivery memos with binding prices and conditions.

ADDRESS

Please direct your correspondence and submissions to: mcelhinney@nwf.org
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