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## Species Spotlight: A Blog About Biodiversity

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When I started to think about what I wanted to do for a project I kept coming back to the idea of writing a blog. I wanted to use my writing skills in a way that would reach as many people as possible. Choosing a topic was easy as well. I have always been interested in biodiversity and endangered animals. This project seemed like a perfect way to combine my love of writing and my love of animals. The goal was to educate college age students about biodiversity issues, endangered animals, and what they can do to help.

To start the project I created a blog page using WordPress and I asked a friend of mine to design a banner for it. This can be seen below.



Once I had a space to write I got to work planning out the different posts. I started with a couple of introduction posts. One about biodiversity and the other about the endangered species scale. The information in these posts came from my own past knowledge and Google searches.

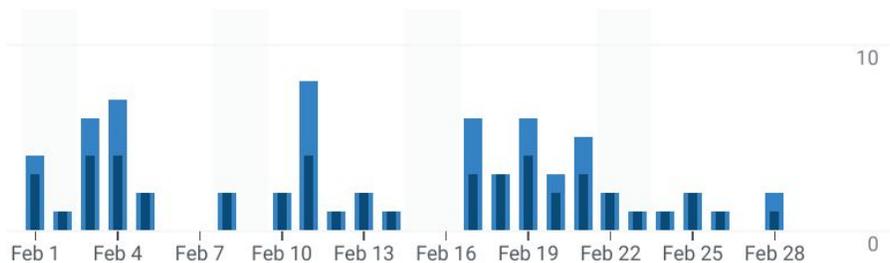
While writing my introductory posts I got in contact with Cindy Opitz, the collections manager at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History (UIMNH) to ask about pieces in their collections. I met with one of her assistance and was able to get photos of several species.

To the right are two images I took while at the museum. On the left is a Great Panda and Passenger Pigeon.



After that I spent 8 weeks posting a new species once a week in a spotlight piece. These included images that I had collected from the UIMNH and personal photos I had taken last summer at the Atlanta Aquarium in Georgia. A lot of the information for the spotlights came from the World Wildlife Fund.

Each week as the posts went up a social media post went up on Facebook and Instagram. This was how I obtained a lot of my readers. I would share it onto my personal Facebook to share it to a wider audience as well. When looking at the number of views there was always a spike after the social media posts. Posts were made on February 1st, 7th, 12th, 21st, and 28th. Those were the days with the highest views as can be seen in the image of the stats below.



Since most of my contact was digital I decided to market my project I needed to have some physical presences on campus. I designed and printed posters that went up in a few spots on campus before it was shut down due to the pandemic. I also was able to visit two student organizations to promote my blog in person to their members.

These groups were University of Iowa Gardeners and UI Environmental Coalition. The organizations also sent out email to their members to further promote the blog.

Going forward I feel that this blog is something that I will continue to post on. It is a space for me to share my love of animals and passion for conservation. The blog will also allow me to continue writing when I no longer have academic projects that I am working on. I also hope to use it as a place to highlight what I can do for future job opportunities that I pursue in science communication and education.

Overall I feel that this project gave me a look into how science communication can be done through an online format. I also learned skills in project management and how to communicate with others outside of my immediate circle. Being able to contact and continue communicating with someone new is something that I will continue to do for the rest of my life.

I may not have reached many people but I know I reached a few. I just hope that one of the people who read my blog was inspired to make a change in their lives to help make this world a better place.