

ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH: CAN CREDIBILITY BE MAINTAINED?^{TWS}

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Research in wildlife biology frequently involves an investigation of the relationship between a human-caused perturbation and a vertebrate population; often, the perceived or actual relationship evokes strong emotional and/or economic consequences. A researcher who examines these relationships and is highly partisan generally has little credibility among the public due to real or perceived bias. Whether the bias is real or perceived makes little difference in terms of credibility. For example, a researcher from Safari Club International examining whether a rare ungulate population in Africa would benefit from a trophy hunting program would have credibility similar to a researcher from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals with a large segment of the public. Most people would expect results from timber company researchers into the effects of timber harvesting on a wildlife species would be quite different than similar research conducted by wilderness advocates. Researchers using public funds are expected and trusted to produce reliable information that can be used in the decision-making process. Wildlife

researchers should strive to eliminate bias and maintain credibility. They should publish their results through the peer-review process *and* make their information available to the public through talks and the media.