



PHOTO: UD RESEARCHERS TAGGING SAND TIGER SHARKS, DELAWARE BAY

Guidelines for Documenting Your Field Research

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From tagging sharks to preserving ancient Egyptian mummies, UD researchers get involved in amazing fieldwork of great interest to the public. These guidelines, developed by the Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM), are designed to help you capture the best possible video, images and audio for telling your research story. If you're heading out into the field, contact OCM-Research Communications (udresearch@udel.edu) so that we can plan appropriate coverage—whether a UDaily story, mini-documentary video, media interview or other outreach.

VIDEO & PHOTOS:

Take the audience on the journey with you:

- **Key content:** Show where you are working (location, environment, culture), your research subject (e.g., salt-marsh sparrow), the people on your field team (including you) and the scientific tools you are using.
- Use a variety of close-up, medium and wide shots to capture hands-on work, as well as a sense of place (textures, colors, lighting, landmarks, weather).
- Keep in mind the time of day and available light—capture the beginning, middle and end of your work. A natural progression, from setting up camps and field labs to hands-on work and documenting milestones, provides a great framework for storytelling. This includes vehicles used in transit, views out of an airplane, roadside scenes.



Capture the beginning, middle and end of your work. Giving the viewer a sense of place and timing makes for great storytelling.

EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Wherever possible, use a tripod. This applies to iPhone as well as standalone cameras.
- GoPro cameras are an excellent choice for durability and the range of environments in which they can operate. A GoPro strapped to the head or chest can capture a “walk-through experience” in many settings, freeing the arms to carry other equipment.
- A microphone with a windscreen is very important in windy conditions.
- Avoid heat exposures with batteries.



In high-temperature environments with humidity over 80 percent, use silica gel packets in your gadget bag or equipment case to absorb excessive moisture and protect your camera gear.

LIGHTING

Use natural light when you can by shooting outdoors in the morning or early afternoon. On sunny days and when possible, position your camera between the subject and the sun. The sunlight will illuminate your scene, rather than backlight it. When shooting video indoors, choose a location that provides **the most light**. You may want to set up your subject near a window to use the sunlight flooding in, but avoid shooting into a window so your subject doesn't appear darker than your background. Try to stay away from fluorescent lighting—it gives a greenish cast to your video. Avoid backlighting a subject unless a silhouette effect is desired.



Before your trip, read your camera's manual to familiarize yourself with your equipment's functionality. Being able to obtain good results in different conditions is an invaluable skill.

FRAMING & FOCUS

- **Asymmetrical shots**—those with the subject off-center—look better. Use the artists' rule of thirds: Imagine a tic-tac-toe pattern across your lens. When filming a person, frame them on the left or right side, aligning their eyes with the upper line. Shoot closer to your subject for the web; think about viewers on a phone or tablet.
- **Zooming.** While useful as a function it degrades the pixel quality of your video. Too much zooming can give viewers a vertigo effect. Take care not to zoom while shooting—it will be obvious in the video. Stop, move in, then resume.
- **Depth of field:** Strategically placing things out of focus reduces background distraction and gives your video a cinematic flair. Review the settings available to your device before going out to the field.

AUDIO

- **Recording great interviews:** Get close to your subject when using the internal microphone on your camera. A clip-on microphone should be used whenever possible. Be aware of the noises around you: air conditioning/heating, trains, airplanes, lawn mowers, chatting co-workers or even a refrigerator whir can ruin your audio.
- **Capture ambient sound where relevant.** The natural environment of your work (urban or wild) is critical for conveying a sense of place. Record a variety of sounds using a microphone with a windscreen. A dedicated field recorder uses minimal energy (e.g., ZOOM H2N), is inexpensive and has a variety of settings that are able to capture multiple channels of audio and produce a 360-degree field of auditory experience.

STORAGE/RESOLUTION

If your camera has different settings for resolution, record at the highest setting possible, but bear in mind your storage cards will fill up faster. Most of our work is done at HD 1280x720 so there is no reason to shoot at higher resolutions unless storage isn't an issue or the video needs to be broadcast quality.

SHARING

Files can be shared with a video editor via www.udel.edu/dropbox. Please name the files to describe what they capture (e.g., *close-up-mushroom.mov*, *interview-james-jones.mov*).



Be sure to take a look at some of the examples we have provided to get ideas for framing your shots and subjects.



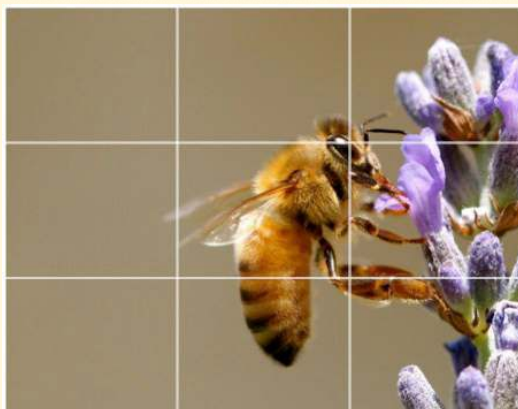
Your device should have a means of "previewing" audio levels as they are recorded. Familiarize yourself with what is "normal" and what is "hot" to avoid distorted levels.



You may need to invest in an external drive to serve as an archive for your files. Bring extra storage cards for your device as a backup.



UD's DropBox can be used to share files with the UD community as well as people without a udel.edu email address.



RULE OF THIRDS: The theory is that if you place points of interest in the intersections or along the lines, your photo becomes more balanced and enables a viewer to interact with it more naturally.

PLANNING A TRIP? DRONE VIDEO? NEED EQUIPMENT? HAVE QUESTIONS?



The Office of Communications and Marketing has assembled a group of video and photography professionals from across campus to help answer questions about purchasing and renting gear, technical considerations, planning shoots and scripts for voiceovers, using drones and any other questions you might have.

Send an email to udresearch@udel.edu and we will provide you with a consultation. It's as easy as that.

EXAMPLES OF FOOTAGE AND STILLS



- **Shark Social Networking**—Researcher Danielle Haulsee provided a number of GoPro clips collected while documenting the tagging and migration behaviors of tiger sand sharks. Above water and underwater footage provides an immersive experience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3bT9xQIR7U>

- **Goose Camp: Nesting Sites of the Atlantic Brant**—Researcher Chris Williams provided a number of GoPro and iPhone clips which captured travel to and from a research site and many “point-of-view” examples of handling and measuring eggs in Brant nesting sites. Chris has captured footage during multiple seasons to ensure fidelity to the research trips.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irlurt-2yBI>

- **Redbird Reef: Language of the Seafloor**—A variety of b-roll including shots from a small boat, aboard a research vessel as well as close-up shots of 3D-printed models provided a sense of place to the seafloor bathymetry research off Delaware’s coast. Research figures/data can also be incorporated into videos effectively through animation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMozB4BZpAU>

- **Art Conservation Group from UD and Winterthur Experience Historic Educational Trip #CubaVisit**—Students and instructors provided many interesting scenes and experiences through images shared on a social media channel.

<https://storify.com/udelaware/university-of-delaware-in-cuba>