

# Interview with Penny Kuhn M.Sc. – Managing Editor at *Endangered Species Research*



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Penny Kuhn is the managing editor of *Endangered Species Research*, a journal based out of Germany. She works remotely and lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. We asked her some questions about life in the science communication world.

## What is your official title and what are your specific responsibilities?

Managing Editor for *Endangered Species Research*. As managing editor, I keep the publication process running. I communicate between the authors, reviewers, editors, editor-in-chief, and the publisher, Inter-Research. I update our Facebook page, write press releases on occasion, and produce promotional material (flyers, posters, ads). I also co-write the annual report.

## What is your scientific background?

I have B.Sc.'s in biology and environmental science and a M.Sc. in Geography (Atmospheric Science). After school, my work in atmospheric science led to employment with Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) on a joint project. The project involved looking at UV-B impacts on early-life stages of marine organisms. This launched a career in marine sciences. Over 15 years I worked at Dalhousie University, a marine institute in Norway, and later DFO again. I've also worked for a non-profit in Nova Scotia called Supernova, where I developed hands-on ocean science curriculum for a week-long camp, for elementary school students.

## How did you get involved with science communication?

My boss in Norway was involved with Inter-Research, and they needed more copy-editors. I started in that position, and eventually moved up to Managing Editor. I did this work in conjunction with scientific research.

## What are the pros and cons of working for this science journal remotely?

Pros- Ability to work flexible hours. This was great when my daughter was a baby, as it allowed me to work and be at home with her. Cons- Time change of 4 hours with head office in Germany. Lack of face to face communication with co-workers, and feelings of isolation.

## What do you love about working in the science communication field?

Helping authors clearly express their important research to the scientific community is very satisfying. Bringing science to a broader audience via social media is particularly important (we now use Twitter and Facebook). The more knowledge and understanding society has about science the better off we'll be. By 'we' I mean the entire ecosystem.

## What is the biggest challenge you've faced in the world of science communication?

The publication process in a peer-reviewed journal tends to be slow. The journal sets timelines for reviewers and editors, but they are volunteers and often have very busy lives. Authors want their work to be published in a timely manner, but it usually takes longer than expected, sometimes months. As a managing editor, this discrepancy is always a challenge.

## How has technology changed the way we communicate scientific research through scientific journals or through marketing techniques?

The world of scientific publications has changed dramatically over the past decade. More and more journals are online. Some promise very quick turnaround times, which unfortunately means that the peer-review process is not always as robust as it should be. Be wary of working for publications that don't have a rigorous peer-review process! And, we don't usually associate marketing with science, but in this "information age", we have to fight for peoples' attention. Using aggressive marketing approaches in science communication may be needed to reach a wider audience.

## Do you have any advice for someone who is starting out or hopes to one day be involved in the science communication field?

The world of communication is ever changing as society becomes more heavily dependent on social media, therefore anyone entering the field needs to be social media savvy. Unfortunately, social media has produced a culture of short attention spans. This can be a significant challenge when presenting scientific information which is often complex and nuanced. Being able to take complicated information and communicate it succinctly is vital. A lot of communication today is visual (images and videos), so learning how to use those media tools is critical.