Caption Workshop

Captions are one of the most important elements of a good manuscript. Often, a reader will flip through a paper, read the captions, and decide if it is worth the read. A caption should be clear and succinct, yet detailed. It should convey all the information needed for a reader to understand the figure, without reading the whole manuscript.

For example, a good caption of a graph would tell the reader what the graph illustrates, what samples were used, if any (not just "Sample B-12", but "Sample B-12, the potassium-rich feldspar"), and the relationship displayed.

This last one is very important – a caption should tell the reader the meaning of the figure or table. Does the table illustrate a trend that the reader should be noting? Does this figure illustrate the sample site, and, if so, what are the features of note at this site? Captions have a lot of information to relay, so they must be longer than one or two sentences. They shouldn't be longer than about 10 sentences.

CAPTIONS (5 points)
___ Appropriate information available (site name, species name, test) (1)
___ Data described in sufficient detail (1)
___ Axes described (units and any Abbreviations or acronyms are described) (1)
___ If statistics present, described in sufficient detail (1)
___ Meaning of the figure is stated (1)