Part 2
Social media

[Today's objectives]

- How to write a **blog post** when you're used to writing scientific articles?

- How can I do effective SciComm on **Twitter**?

— — —

Why use social media?

- Tell your own story **in your own way**

- Informal and interactive
  (good for sparking conversations!)

- Potential for reaching **broader audiences**

- **Investment** of energy to build & maintain your audience

- Maintain a **barrier** between your personal/professional self

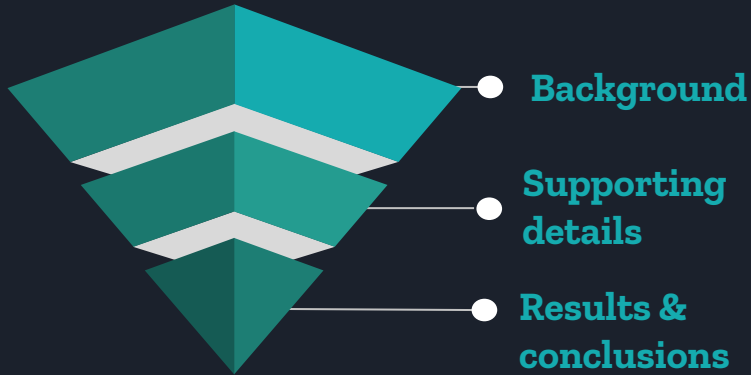- **Discomfort** with promoting yourself and competing for attention

- 1 -
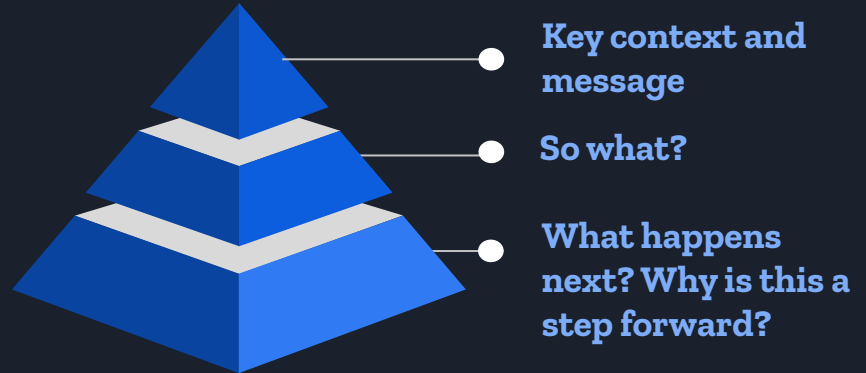
Writing
a blog post

Rethinking the flow of ideas

Typical scientific audience

Background

Supporting details

Results & conclusions

Broader public audience

Key context and message

So what?

What happens next? Why is this a step forward?

Essential building blocks

Essential context

Focus on a key idea that is relatable to your audience.

Key message

Give the answer early and make it clear.

So what?

What does this mean (or change) for your reader?

Piecing it together!

We broke a blog post into tiny pieces. Oops!

It's up to you to piece it back together again.

How to get your post shared

People share news and information for a few reasons, including:
- **Self-enhancement** - to make them look good!
- **Social bonding** - to form connections!

Well, we know that people are more likely to share:
- **Surprising, interesting, or entertaining content** (to look fun!)
- **Useful information** (to look smart & aware!)
- **Positive content** (who wants to make others feel bad?)
- **Emotional content** (bonding!)

Framing your information with this in mind can really help to get your content out there!

Milkman, K. L., & Berger, J. (2014). The science of sharing and the sharing of science. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *111*(Supplement 4), 13642-13649.

Language is your friend

- **Active voice**
  - Passive: "This **was done by me**"
  - **Active**: "**I did** this"

- **Positive phrasing**
  - Negative: We **did not find** a difference between turtles…
  - Positive: Turtles **had the same** …

- **Person-centered language**
  - Use "**I**"!
  - Be as personal as you want - share opinions, emotions, memories, jokes, etc.

Style is also your friend

- Break your text up!
  - Titled sections can be great
  - e.g. How nature restoration reduces flooding on the WWF-Canada blog

- Keep your main points at the front of your sentences / paragraphs

Have fun with it! It's your blog post!

How nature restoration helps reduce rising flood waters

WWF

APRIL 28, 2020

Saint John River. Credit: Terry Kelly/WWF-Canada

It's flood season again. Simon Mitchell, WWF-Canada's Freshwater Lead Specialist, lives steps away from the Saint John River in New Brunswick, so we asked him how our restoration work can help provide nature-based solutions to this increasing problem.

Why is flooding in the Saint John River getting worse?

Flooding is a complex issue that's affected by many things. Over the last couple of years, we've had a slightly higher than average snowpack. Development and land clearing have also changed the landscape and we're seeing warmer temperatures sooner than what we're used to. When all of this is accompanied by rainfall, snow melts more rapidly than ever before. Basically, the river system becomes overwhelmed and floods occur.

What are the effects of this?

While all of Canada is **coping with the pandemic**, many still face the same risks from extreme weather that come every spring. Communities, businesses and households are experiencing flooding, closures and property destruction. Many people are forced to leave their homes during this time, which is a challenge at the best of times, let alone during a global pandemic.

We're seeing flood water in places we aren't used to seeing it, and many of these places don't have the infrastructure they need to deal with flooding. Wildlife are at risk, too, because flooding shifts their habitats — sometimes eliminating it entirely. Just like when we face displacement, wildlife are threatened by flooding, and these are often species that are already at risk.

Titles
Short, clear, and reader-friendly

The Arctic is cool — let's keep it that way

ELISSAMA MENEZES
· Analyst Marine Shipping and the Climate Emergency

The strange incident with the giant clam
by **Maria Dornelas** 19.05.2020

Frozen Toes, Wet Sock, and Icy Boots - Studying Bats in the Canadian Winter

WCS Canada's Muddy Boots blog

The real Tinkerbell: don't mess with these tiny fairy wasps

July 4, 2019 1.50am EDT

Manu Saunders
Research fellow, University of New England

What trees would we plant to maximise carbon uptake?

Dr Markus Eichhorn (Trees in Space)

R-r-r-remix a title!

Remix this article title to make it more suitable for a blog post:

"Ice Cream Structural Elements that Affect Melting Rate and Hardness"

Muse, M. R., & Hartel, R. W. (2004). Journal of dairy science, 87(1), 1-10.
https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.S0022-0302(04)73135-5

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How
Twitter works

Is Twitter the right platform for you?

Real-time

Fast-paced, immediate communication

Audience expands quickly

Tweets can be seen by followers and by people who don't follow you (yet!) thanks to hashtags, and algorithms.

Direct engagement

You can talk to people directly, and start conversations.

Concise

Limited to 280 characters per tweet, Twitter isn't necessarily the place to elaborate deeply on complex ideas.

The Twitter audience: Age

Distribution of Twitter users worldwide as of April 2020, by age group

Share of users

Age group	Share
13-17	11.4%
18-24	24%
25-34	28%
35-49	21.9%
50+	15.1%

Sources
DataReportal; We Are Social; Hootsuite; Twitter
© Statista 2020

Additional Information:
Worldwide; DataReportal; Twitter; April 2020; 13 years and older; based on addressable ad audience

The Twitter audience: Countries

Leading countries based on number of Twitter users as of April 2020 (in millions)

Country	Audience in millions
United States	64.2
Japan	48.45
Russia	23.55
United Kingdom	17.75
Saudi Arabia	15
Brazil	14.35
Turkey	13.65
India	13.15
Indonesia	11.8
Mexico	10.2

Audience in millions
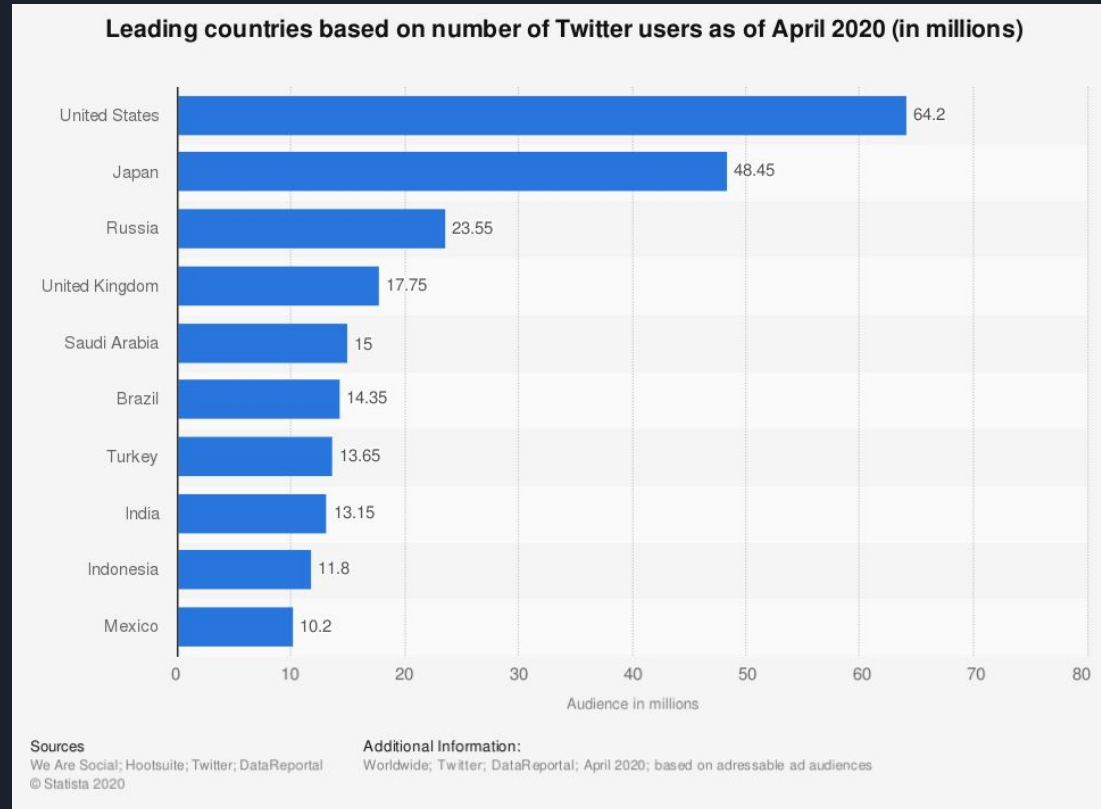
Scientists' Twitter audiences

(a) Violin plot showing proportion of followers by category: Scientists, Public, Media, Applied, Outreach, Decision makers.
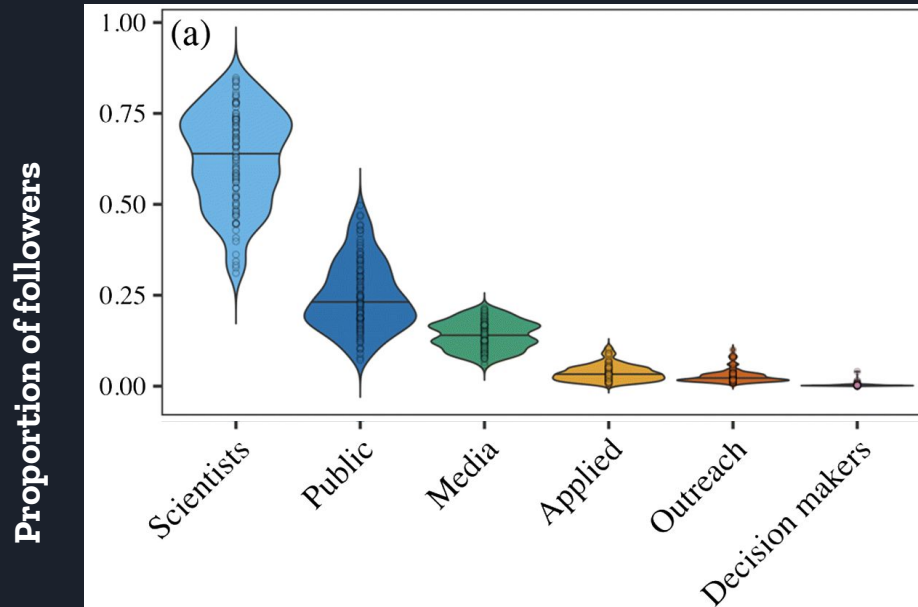
Not just scientists...

- More **non-scientists** than you might think
- Main platform used by journalists!

Modified from Fig. 2 in Côté, I.M. and Darling, E.S., 2018. Scientists on Twitter: preaching to the choir or singing from the rooftops?. Facets, 3(1), pp. 682-694.
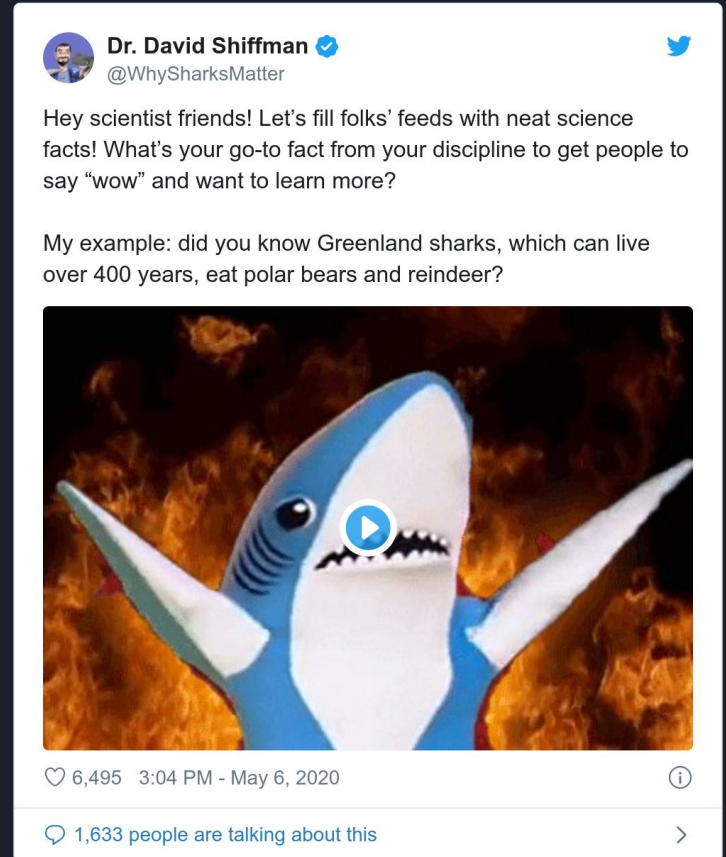
The Twitter audience
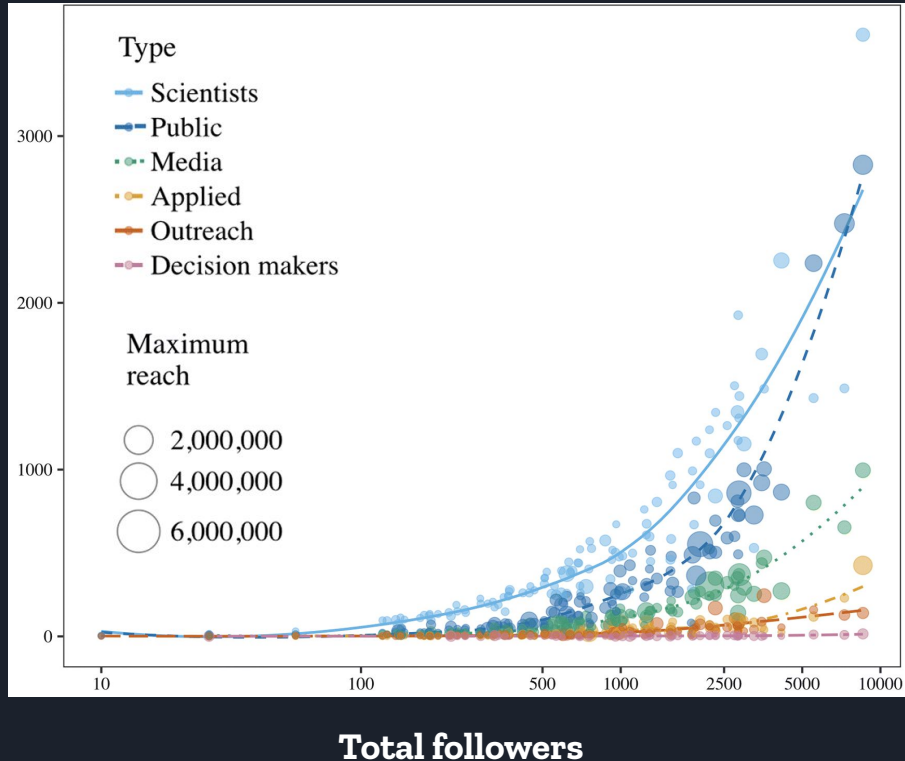
"Academic scientists on Twitter start by preaching to the choir but can eventually **sing from the rooftops**."

Especially if you have >1000 followers!

Modified from Fig. 3 in Côté, I.M. and Darling, E.S., 2018. Scientists on Twitter: preaching to the choir or singing from the rooftops?. Facets, 3(1), pp. 682-694.

How Twitter works

- Public by default

- Maximum of **280 characters** per tweet

- Text and lots of media options:
  images, videos, polls, gifs, links, and #hashtags

- Username, picture, and bio to present yourself

Dr. David Shiffman ✔
@WhySharksMatter

Hey scientist friends! Let's fill folks' feeds with neat science facts! What's your go-to fact from your discipline to get people to say "wow" and want to learn more?

My example: did you know Greenland sharks, which can live over 400 years, eat polar bears and reindeer?

♡ 6,495   3:04 PM - May 6, 2020   ⓘ

💬 1,633 people are talking about this   ›

Screenshot captured by screenshot.guru

How Twitter works

- Follow accounts

- Feed shows tweets/retweets from people you follow

- Reply to, like, retweet, and/or share these tweets

- Write your own tweets
  - Note: you can't edit them!

See **Wired "How To Use Twitter: Critical Tips For New Users"** for more info on the basics of Twitter (how to create an account, use lists, etc.)
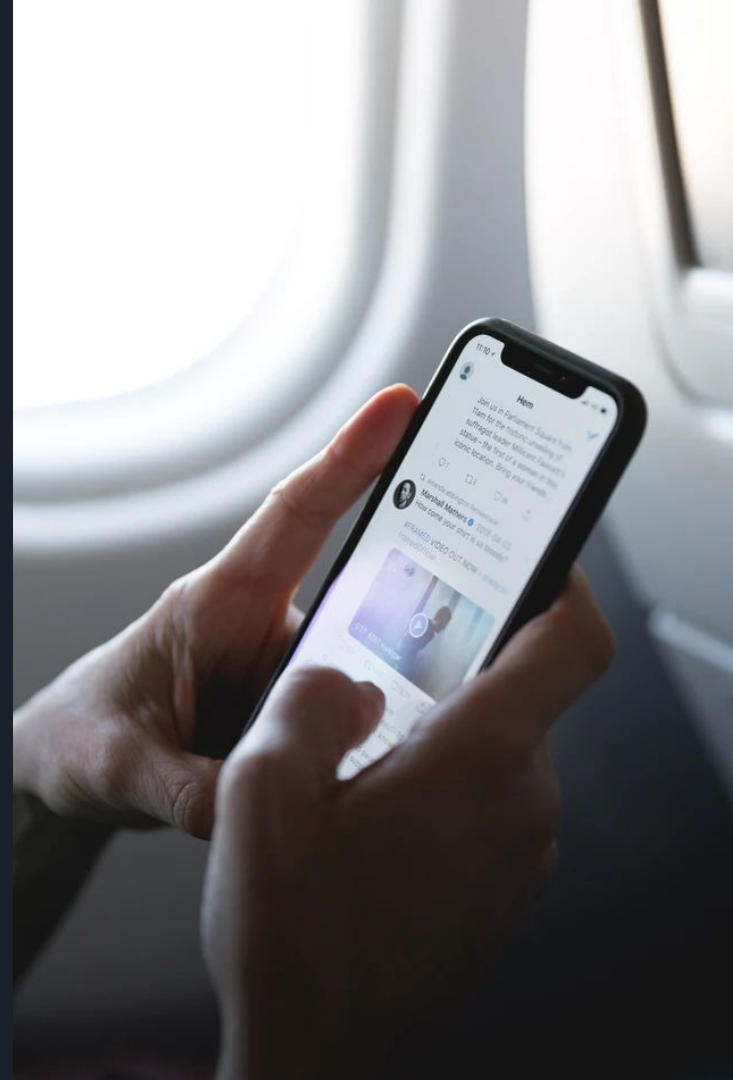
The algorithm behind Twitter's feed

Recency

When was the tweet published?

Engagements

How many likes/RTs/etc. the tweet already has

Media

Are there photos, GIFs, videos?

Activity

How active is the user?

Twitter's feed is not chronological.

It shows "top tweets" first.

Use Tweetdeck!

Build a profile

Emily Darling
@emilysdarling

WCS conservation scientist thinking about coral reefs, fisheries, climate change, big data, and how to tweet about it. Tweets my own.

⊙ Toronto, Ontario 🔗 emilysdarling.com 📅 Joined May 2011

2,192 Following   **7,062** Followers

Username that represents you

- Does it work when read as one word?

Short, but informative bio

- Use **keywords** and/or **hashtags**
- Add **affiliations**
- Add **links** to your work (website, online material)
- Don't forget - you have a personality

Add a picture of yourself (and a header)!

Write a bio!

Write yourself a Twitter bio
*(or update it, if you have one)***!**

Give feedback to 1 bio in the etherpad.
Get feedback on yours.
It's a win-win!

Okay, but...
What should I tweet about?

One of the most confusing things about Twitter is what to tweet.

We have some suggestions of where to start!
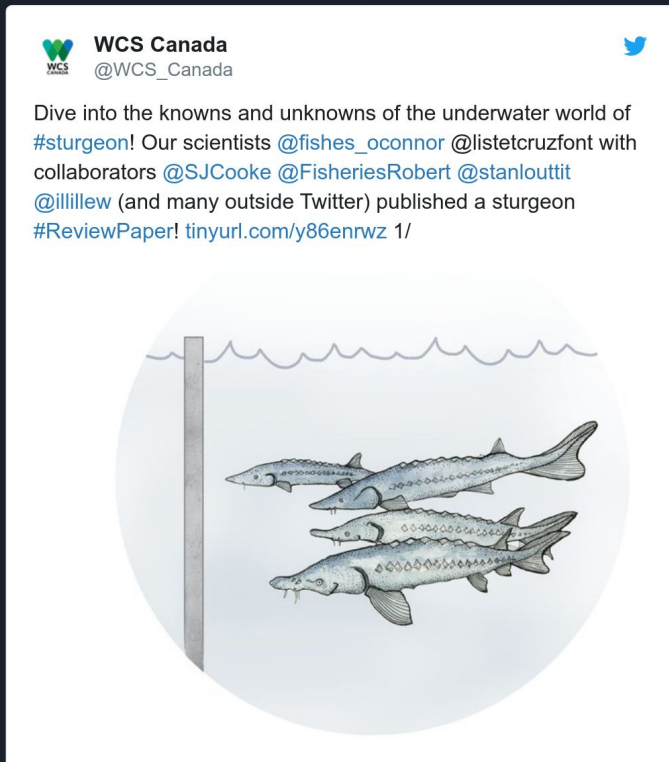
Some ideas to get started...

- **Fun facts about your species, system, or process**
    - Add pictures, GIFs, videos!
- **Promote your science**
    - Blog post or an article that just got published?

- **Work life in the lab, office, or the field**
    - Catching bugs? Identifying bugs? Fixing bugs?
- **Engage!** Retweet and reply! Talk to people.

Be creative and get out there!
The more you tweet, the easier it will become.

Anatomy of a tweet

WCS Canada
@WCS_Canada

Dive into the knowns and unknowns of the underwater world of #sturgeon! Our scientists @fishes_oconnor @listetcruzfont with collaborators @SJCooke @FisheriesRobert @stanlouttit @illillew (and many outside Twitter) published a sturgeon #ReviewPaper! tinyurl.com/y86enrwz 1/

#Hashtags
#sturgeon and **#ReviewPaper** marks the tweet for related searches

@Mentions
@authors and **@collaborators** to tag relevant people & direct interested readers to their accounts

tinyurl.com/…
Space is valuable! Use tinyurl, bit.ly, etc. to shorten your links.

Media
Add photos, illustrations, gifs to make the tweet stand out to interested people (who like fish!)

Use threads to elaborate

WCS Canada
@WCS_Canada

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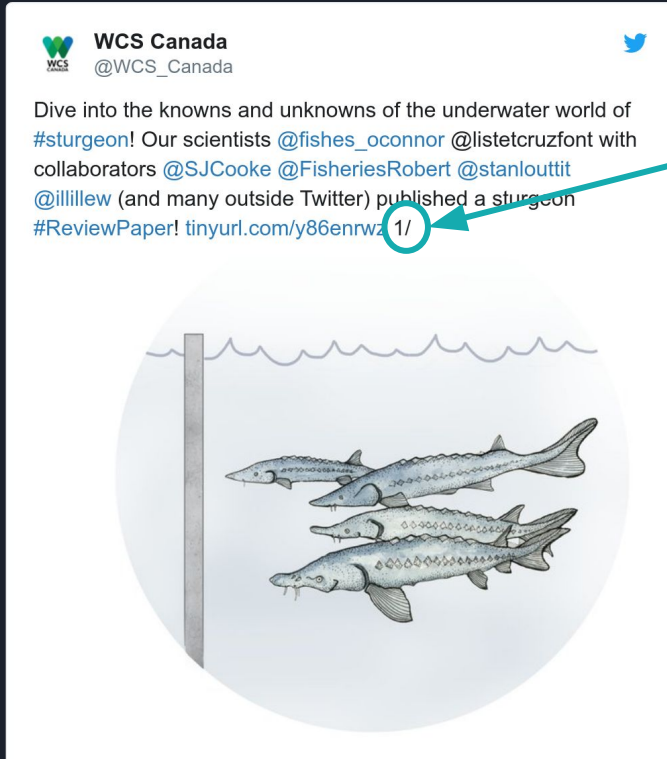
This is the first tweet in a thread!

A **thread** is a series of tweets that are linked together, like a discussion or an elaboration of the original tweet.

Very useful if you need more than 280 characters!
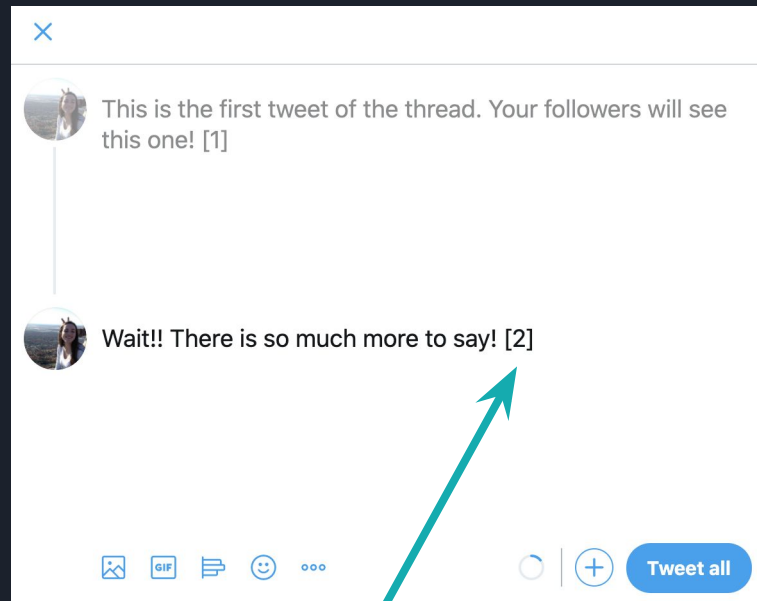
Use threads to elaborate
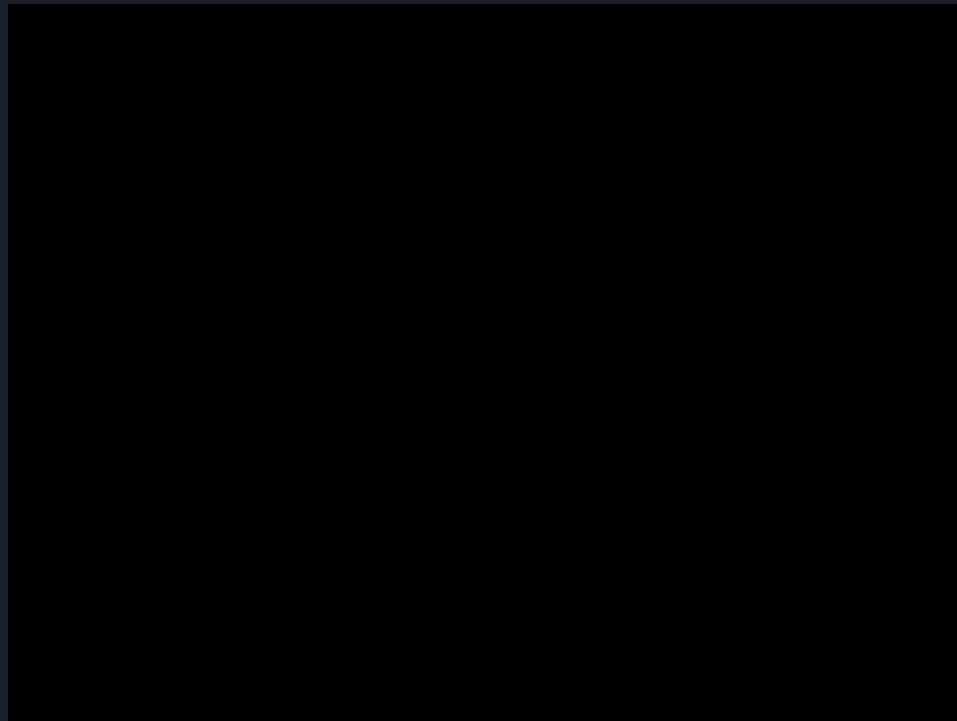
How to make a thread

Step 1: Start a new tweet

Step 2: Click + and continue the thread
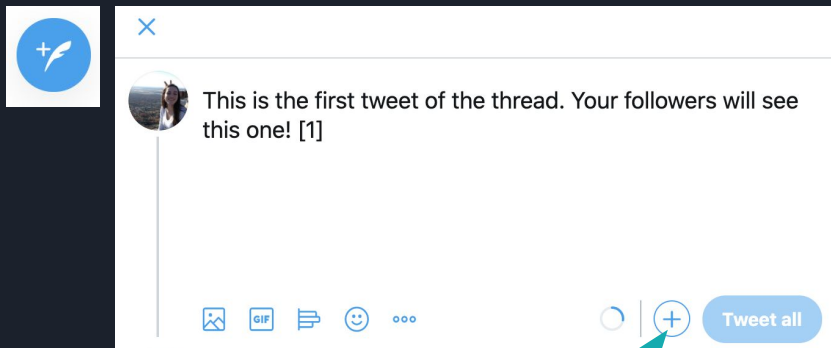
Clicking this will open a thread!
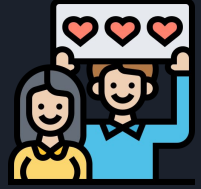
Numbering the tweets can improve readability

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Tips, tricks, and best practices

Follow people!

Twitter's best benefits are conditional on building your network actively and continuously.

- **#FollowFriday (or #FF)**

- **Click and search hashtags**
  #ecology, #scicomm, etc.

- **Followers/Following**
  Who are your followers, your labmates, your affiliations following?

- **#PhDChat, #AcademicChatter, #SciComm**
  general chatting about life and work as a scientist

- **"Who to follow" suggestions**
  Twitter's suggestions will improve as you build your network

#Follow...Tuesday

Find 3 accounts to follow. Go!

Don't forget to share them in the etherpad!

Accessibility

Many Twitter users use screen readers. To make sure your content is readable using text-to-speech software:

- **Shorten** your hyperlinks ([bit.ly](bit.ly) or tinyurl.com)

    - e.g. I love happy dogs #DogsRule bit.ly/3e1aqdl

- **Capitalize** each word in your hashtags

    - #LikeThis instead of #likethis

- Avoid **acronyms** when possible (or spell them out!)

- Add **alternative text** to image posts

Describes the content of images to convey the information they contain.

- **Settings > Accessibility >** ☑️ **Compose image descriptions**

A note on misinformation

It's tempting to engage with tweets that are spreading false information, but you could end up amplifying it!

Some things to think about:

- Explain the context to your audience **before** replying/quote-tweeting/retweeting misinformation. Be very clear!

- If possible, respond without linking your audience to it directly.

- Think about what you'd do in case you accidentally spread misinformation:

  - Delete post? Respond with the correct information?

  - How can you make sure the original audience sees your correction?

Resources

IGNITE – Science Communication Training

SciCommCollective

Great list of resources (assembled by McGill students, including BIOS^2 fellow Alex Arkilanian!) for science communication and STEM!

BES Guide to Social Media for Ecologists

In-depth guide about using social media (including Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) to do SciComm.

BES Guide to Promoting Your Research

This guide is to help people at all career stages find the best way to promote their research using various forms of media.

How To Make A Personal Media Kit For Your Scientific Work — And Why You Need One

The importance of capturing photos, video and audio of yourself and your research in action for SciComm.

A Beginner's Guide to Science Communication Opportunities in Canada

Training opportunities, as well as outreach, public speaking, writing, journalism and social media initiatives to in Canada as of 2019.

Questions?

Thank you!