

Spotlight on Student Research and Outreach Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting Abstracts

What goes into an abstract?

An abstract is a condensed, stand-alone summary of a paper or project that should be intelligible to a wide audience. The abstract summarizes and highlights the **major** pieces of information and makes it possible for readers to quickly decide whether they need more detail. Abstracts address all the sections of a formal research paper, i.e., study justification, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions, and in strictly that chronological sequence, but with only 1-2 sentences allotted for each section given strict word limits (generally 200-300 words). Thus, only key methods, results and conclusions are included in an abstract, leaving it up to the reader to follow up (read the paper, poster or contact the author) for further detail. Abstracts do not contain extensive background information, literature reviews, or detailed descriptions of methods, and normally do not reference other literature.

Abstracts are always short and written as a single paragraph. Concise writing and clarity is imperative. The writing style should be direct and non-repetitive, using an active voice and past tense.

Example Abstract

Title (limited to 150 characters):

Diet selection and use of deer by coyotes in central New York State

List of authors and affiliations:

Christina Boser, Jacqueline Frair, Gordon Batcheller*, and Paul Jensen*; Department of Environmental and Forest Biology, SUNY-ESF, *Furbearer Management Team, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation

Abstract (limited to 250 words):

Within the last few decades, coyotes (*Canis latrans*) have become widespread and abundant throughout the northeastern United States, with potentially broad implications for prey populations and the ecosystem processes dependent upon them. Of particular interest in New York State is the magnitude of coyote predation on white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), which is expected to vary with local deer abundance as a classic functional response. We quantified coyote diets and selection for deer in Otsego and Steuben Counties, representing similar habitat conditions (agricultural-forest matrix) but relatively low and high deer densities, respectively. Between Sep 2007 and Aug 2008, we estimated seasonal deer densities using distance sampling, and documented the composition of coyote diets by identifying prey remains in 85-100 scats/season. Deer dominated coyote diets (46-74%), and consumption varied seasonally. Nevertheless, within a season the magnitude of deer consumption remained similar between study areas despite a nearly two-fold difference in deer density. It appears that the rate of coyote predation on fawns, and overall consumption of adult deer (largely through scavenging rather than predation), was determined by factors other than deer density in this study. This may indicate that coyotes are handling rather than encounter limited in these regions. However, the density of coyotes seemed to vary inversely with the density of deer, and ongoing studies will evaluate the ratio of coyote/deer density as a driver of the coyote functional response.

Preparation Guidelines

Your abstract must include **an informative title** that conveys the nature of the study **in no more than 150 characters**. The list of author names and their affiliations follows directly under the title. For authors who are not immediately within the ESF community, please link author names to their affiliations using either a numeric or symbolic coding scheme (see example abstract).

The body of the abstract is not to exceed 250 words and should succinctly present a justification for the study (why is the study important?), the objectives (what did you set out to do?), methods (by what technique did you address your objective?), key results (what did you find?), and conclusions or implications (what does it all mean?).

Prior to submitting your abstract, it must be reviewed and approved by a faculty supervisor. Ill-prepared abstracts or those not conforming to guidelines will be rejected.

Submission Guidelines

On the abstract submission page, identify yourself as a graduate student or undergraduate student, indicate the type of project (research, outreach, class project), and identify the times you will be available for the presentation **(you must be present at your poster for at least a 1-hr slot of time in your scheduled session)**. Graduate students, also indicate your preference for an oral versus poster presentation, but recognize that only 6 talks can be allotted.

Abstracts must be submitted in a plain text format without any special characters or formatting. Copy and paste the sections (Title, Author list, Abstract) into the appropriate spaces on the online submission form, and then proof-read for clarity (to make sure formatting remains ok) before final submission. This process will strip special formatting from your text, so ensure that the abstract reads correctly after pasting in the appropriate sections. If you require a special character that will not paste effectively, contact Jacqueline Frair (jfrair@esf.edu) to make special arrangements (note that given the volume of abstracts submitted we discourage special characters and will make few allowances).