

**SHARE YOUR FIELD WORK WITH NASA EXPEDITIONS, A LOANABLE NASA SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT.** M.L. Wasser<sup>1</sup>, J.A. Richardson<sup>2</sup>, K. Mersmann<sup>3</sup>, and N. Whelley<sup>2</sup>, <sup>1</sup>ADNET Systems, <sup>2</sup>University of Maryland – CRESST, <sup>3</sup>Universities Space Research Association

**Introduction:** NASA is widely known for astronauts, rockets, and stunning images of astronomical objects, but NASA also conducts research here on Earth. The Goddard Instrument Field Team and Goddard’s Solar System Exploration Division created social media accounts in July of 2019 on Facebook and Twitter in order to feature the science and people behind field work. The focus of the NASA Expeditions accounts is on the scientific process – how do we collect the data that results in published papers, instrument design, and spacecraft design?

The NASA Expeditions accounts feature weekly ‘takeovers’ from different NASA-funded teams as they travel to extreme environments on Earth to study our changing planet and other planets in the solar system. The teams share science, logistics, and some of the personal stories of being out in the field. Social media is an ideal means for communicating this type of science as it is an informal and quick way to share what goes into data collection. The goals are to 1) Create awareness of NASA’s field work missions and 2) Humanize NASA science and scientists.



Fig. 1 – A very relatable moment during a field expedition.

**Process:** NASA Expeditions features week-long takeovers from NASA-funded teams. When a communications professional is able to travel with the team and there is adequate cellular service, the posts can be done in the moment. When a communications staff member is unable to join the scientists in the field, interested scientists put together material that is then reviewed by communications staff and shared after the field expedition. This is to ensure that all posts follow NASA social media guidelines and to allow scientists to focus on data collection during limited time in the field.

Most takeovers occur in a typical business week, although exceptions are made due to the unexpected nature of field expeditions. Each day features about 3-8 posts, starting with the main science questions and purpose of the trip and as the week progresses, narrowing in on day-to-day activities.

**Metrics:** In order to harness an audience already interested in analog work, we renamed NASA’s Desert Research and Technology Studies (Desert RATS) social media accounts. Since rebranding, the Twitter account has gained 16,000 new followers to have a total of 65,500 followers. The Facebook account has remained about the same with 225,000 followers.

**Impact:** Field work is rarely done by one institution and the NASA Expeditions accounts have been a great way to stress the collaborative nature of field campaigns. Partner institutions and scientists have been especially excited to see their work featured on NASA forums.



Fig. 2: NASA Expeditions emphasizes the collaborative nature of science and field work.

Teams that have participated in a NASA Expeditions week report a morale boost. Coming up with social media posts is fun and it is exciting to see positive feedback about one’s work. Scientists have also reported that the experience made them better prepared to share their work at professional conferences and in papers, as while they were doing the work, they were already thinking about how to communicate it.

For those interested in taking over the account, please contact Molly Wasser, molly.l.wasser@nasa.gov.

**References:** [1] <https://twitter.com/NASAE Expeditions/status/1174564002715725824> [2] <https://twitter.com/i/events/1240648363630084102>