



# A FOCUS ON NATURE CAREERS HUB JOURNALIST

## DAWOOD QURESHI – FREELANCE JOURNALIST



### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **What is your role, and how long have you been doing it?**

I have several different jobs and roles, but I consider myself a writer and a storyteller at the core of everything I do, which directly corresponds to my job as a freelance journalist.

This means I can be commissioned to write articles the publisher/editor has come up with or can pitch ideas around articles I want to write, to various organisations, blogs and magazines, and then work with them to put the article together. As a journalist, I am a researcher (information and statistics in the article itself are paramount to back up the idea you have and make it something that you are writing clearly and truthfully about), a writer (the article must be written based on the points you have made but also the editor who you will probably be working with), and often will write about completely different subjects, based on the magazine, blog or organisation I am working with. However, I spread into other topics after firstly writing about natural history, and this makes up the bulk of the work I do.

I have been a freelance journalist for a couple of years now and started as a means of making my day-to-day blogging a career path when I was around 15 and continued this work alongside, and now after, my degree.

#### **What are your main responsibilities?**

As a journalist, my main responsibility is to communicate clearly and truthfully; I have an influence on people's ideas and their source of information on topics, so must make sure that the information accessed is useful, but also tells the story in an accessible and interesting way. I am responsible for research of the subject of the article, so need to be good at finding sources online that are reliable, understanding basic jargon over the internet, and also contacting people in an approachable and open manner in order to get them onboard for interviews and so forth. I am sometimes also

responsible for the layout and edit of the article, and here is where I make sure that the article sticks to the word limit suggested by the editorial team or lead-editor. As I may be asked to edit other articles, I make sure I am able to cut articles down whilst still keeping the main storyline, message and deleting anything useless or straying from the point.

## AURELIA MAGAZINE

ABOUT

CATEGORIES

COLUMNS

CLOSE-UP PODCAST

EVENTS

NOVEMBER 27, 2021 BY DAWOOD QURESHI

### As a trans person of colour, I feel our voices have been erased from the climate conversation

Dawood's article for Aurelia magazine

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#### Who are the main people you have to work with?

As a journalist, the main people I have to work with can be editors, photographers, artists, experts in their fields and subjects of articles (this can be ANYONE who is the main focus point of the article), filmmakers, speakers - really it can be very, very varied - but I will always have an editorial team/person who will work with me to make sure that the article comes together clearly and concisely.

#### What does your day-to-day look like?

Because I'm a freelance journalist, my day-to-day work usually consists of a combination of my current most consistent job as a researcher at BBC Natural History Unit (a job that can be obtained using experience as a journalist) and coming up with ideas to pitch to certain magazines and blogs. These constantly need to be written down for them to be developed, but if you are a journalist who works for a magazine, or for a specific organisation, then you will usually be writing or researching all day, and this can fluctuate from articles on conservation that you have to write up using research on the internet (reading scientific papers, scrolling through websites, etc.), to interviews that you may have to do with certain experts and scientists.

I have had to interview many experts before, and it is handy to have experience in speaking and thinking about useful questions that you may need to ask in order to get the point of your article across. You may also have to ghost-write articles, which means you will interview an expert, activist, scientist, etc. and then write the article as if they are writing it – here you will be credited as the interviewer, when otherwise you would be credited as the writer if you are writing it as your own idea or opinion, or perhaps the expert. Basically, my day-to-day consists of writing and coming up with ideas of what to write next, which is my dream job so yay!

## What was your pathway into your role?

My pathway is slightly unconventional but shows that this can be a career for anyone wherever they come from. I started blogging about wildlife and observations I made in my garden and in general nature when I was quite young and put together my own website. Because I was so fascinated by the natural world, I wanted to write about it in magazines, and applied to several magazines, such as Junior Wildlife Trusts, and the RSPB, to feature in some of their issues and blogs, I also wrote as a guest writer for other bloggers whom I knew. I started a Twitter account in order to connect with other wildlife enthusiasts and writers, so that I could grow my career.

From here I worked alongside my degree, which was in Marine Biology, using the knowledge I gained from my studies to pitch ideas about science and about nature to magazines and blogs that dealt with this, I started to apply for larger magazines and papers, and although I had started out writing for free and in voluntary writing, I was now being paid for articles because of the experience I had accrued. I also began writing articles about my personal experiences and pitching these, combining them with the experience I had picked up writing my blog and also the experiences I had working with nature organisations, which made me stand out as a writer and journalist and allowed my articles to be published.

*September 13, 2021*

## Intelligence of Organisms

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE INTELLIGENCE OF ORGANISMS HAS ALWAYS BEEN QUESTIONED. HOW SOMETHING THAT IS CONSIDERED ALIVE THINKS, IS FAMOUSLY WHAT HAS GIVEN HUMANITY POWER, LEADERSHIP, AND THE ABILITY TO REIGN SUPREME OVER ALL OTHER SPECIES.



Dawood's article for Bloom in Doom

## What is the salary range for this type of role?

The salary range can be as wide as £40 per piece for indie magazines to £350 per piece for larger magazines, for freelance journalists, to a constant salary for permanent roles such as £20,000 - £27,000 per year for a starting journalist, which will become much greater as they progress to senior roles in the organisation they work in.

## Is a degree essential to your role?

Not at all. Many, as I once did, think that you need a degree in English to be a journalist, or even a writer, but the truth is you just need passion enough for writing, storytelling and communication and a need to tell people about narratives and stories that others may have. That being said, it may be helpful, if you are studying or considering studying a degree, to do it in something that you want to

be a journalist for, if you want to be a journalist for a specific subject; for example, as a natural history journalist, I have often been able to use my degree in Marine Biology to pitch articles more successfully.

### What are the most useful skills to have for this role?

Organisational skills are essential – there will be times where you have a lot of work and then next to nothing other days. Passion for writing and the topic you wish to write in; speaking and communication skills are always handy; tech skills as you will be working on devices and computers/laptops; and data skills as these are often needed to crunch numbers required.

# TROPHY HUNTING:

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE NOT WHAT YOU THOUGHT.

Dawood's article for Nature's Gold magazine, Issue 6, Spring 2021

I said, "Trophy hunting is wrong". But who am I to make that decision...?

Close your eyes.

Feel the intense heat rising. Inhale the rich, coarse air, ridden with scents of the undergrowth. Floating between the waves of heat are the sounds of wildlife, close and far, large and small, they approach your ears tentatively, playing between the fronds of your limp hair.

You're walking. Forward. Slowly. The lucid movements of crickets leap into your brain from either side, dust jumps excitedly up to meet you, punching you softly in the mouth.

A crackle from the tough grass startles you. Relax. This is a land you are not used to but have always been a part of...

Real? Romantic? Movie magic? Fantasy?

All of this and more I think. This is what always ran through my mind whenever I thought of strolling through the

dust ridden fumes of cars driving away into the sunset, the dusky sounds of insects come out to play in my mind...

See, there I go again. Fantasizing about this world I have truly never seen. Where did I get this fantasy?

Look no further dear reader. I have a shelf full of wildlife documentaries right here. Narrated by Sir David himself.

Don't get me wrong, I love these films; the beauty of the story, the incredible shots, and the wildlife are what inspired me and many others, including most of my peers, to become so involved with our environment and with the fate of the planet. But they are one perspective. Just the one. And sometimes, with the rock and roll of beautiful documentaries, leaks in a tiny bit of lets-stretch-the-truth.

Take today's subject (I know, it took a while but you got through my waffle eventually) - Hunting. As a child I'd watch in awe as the camera panned up and down in search of greater challenges, wildlife seeping out of every angle. And then I'd see an article, or a

It also helps to have resilience – there is a lot of rejection within this job, but it's crucial not to be dissuaded! You have the skills, and anyone with a passion for writing can achieve - I myself am still only just starting out - there's so much to be learnt, and remember to have fun and enjoy it, because that's why we write at the end of the day!

## CAREER PATHWAYS

### What GCSEs could someone study to help get into this career?

English is useful, sometimes sciences, I myself took English Lit, Lang and all 3 sciences, but I have met many people who didn't take these and are very successful journalists.

### What A-Levels or BTECs could someone study to help get into this career?

Again, it's not important if there is enough experience in writing, but if I had to choose any; English, sciences and extra-curricular activities such as the school paper and writing clubs are very useful as experience and passion boosters.

### **What could someone do after they leave school to help develop their skills for this career?**

Going to university isn't essential for this role, no matter what people might assume – building up experience and a portfolio of writing can be just as useful! If you do go to university, what degree you do isn't hugely important so choose what you are passionate in, as you're likely to get more out of it if you really care about it!

### **If someone has graduated university, what next steps could they take to develop their skills for this career?**

Look for ways that you can turn your experiences into something that people will want to read, but also look for experiences you have picked up. I always write from my own experiences, but also use the interests I have in art, in movies, in fashion, etc. to bolster my CV, as these are VERY useful when you are writing about certain subjects. You do not have to do another degree for journalism, but you can consider it if you want to have another career alongside it, such as a zoologist, geologist, etc. and then use those experiences to help you grow your journalism career.