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I used to study owls. I loved studying owls. Then, one day, a funder asked me to make management recommendations based on my results, and I realized that my very high statistical significance had pretty low real-world significance. I wanted my science to matter to conservation, but I didn't know how to make it.

So, I went to Washington D.C. as a policy fellow to learn how to better incorporate science into decision-making. D.C. was full of smart, busy policy makers with little-to-no science background. They depended on staff, lobbyists, and topic experts to inform their priorities and decisions. Information presented the way I'd been trained to present it (with graphs, stats, and jargon) had little value in this environment. It didn't engage or stick. Science needed messages that could be conveyed accurately, be memorable, and be replicated faithfully. Science needed storytellers.

This, I thought, was the exact right challenge for me—I was a former English major, a freelance science writer, and a ravenous consumer of stories. I could develop and apply my storytelling skills for science! So that's been my focus ever since.

If a game about climate change were to be based on my work, players would have to tailor appropriate messages about climate science for specific audiences. They'd have to combine patterns in data with narrative structure about the specifics of a single case, eliciting concern (not fear) and hope, keeping the emphasis on the benefits of adaptation efforts, using elements of surprise, relatable protagonists, and evocative details that ultimately point to the larger theme. They'd lose points for inaccuracy, jargon, typos, too much exposition, ineffective tropes, talking down, eliciting fear, eliciting nothing, being obvious, being boring, being too long, or failing to connect with their audience.

They'd win when their message led to better climate policy.

One great resource on this topic is Randy Olson's book "Houston, We Have a Narrative: Why Science Needs Story."

