

## **Think like a photographer: how to craft impactful images for natural resource communications**

Images are incredibly important forms of communication in our work as Natural Resource Extension professionals. We use images to draw people to our programs, document our work, demonstrate environmental problems, educate, and to impact behaviors.

However, most of us aren't taught photography skills, and can struggle to get images that communicate the messages we're trying to share. It's often said that people that create nice images, "just have the eye" for photography, or that "they must have a nice camera", implying that it's just the machine that's responsible for a nice image. But what if I told you, it's not all about the photography equipment, or inherently "having an eye for it", that matters, but instead it's a way of thinking? And what if you could learn how to think so you can create impactful images too?

In this presentation, I will provide examples of imagery I create as an outreach specialist and conservation photographer to get you started thinking like a photographer. I'll reveal a few simple tricks you can learn to use your phone for photos, my tool of choice for my Extension communication images. Importantly, I'll demonstrate how planning how you'd like to use the image can greatly improve the photos you take. Plus, I'll touch on some photography basics to help you create visually appealing photos.

This talk is directed towards anyone taking their own images for communications. However, the information could also be applied to guide someone in selecting impactful images from a web search.



### **Maranda Miller**

Maranda is an Outreach Specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension as a Natural Resources Educator. She works with two local demonstration farm networks conducting outreach around soil health and water quality to reduce non-point source pollution in the Great Lakes Basin.

Maranda studied social influences related to environmentally destructive behavior and earned her master's degree in the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As a lifelong photographer, she saw the opportunity for imagery to communicate complex natural resource issues and influence conservation behaviors.

She currently combines her social science and natural resources backgrounds with photography and communication skills to create images that promote conservation behaviors. She does this both in her work as an outreach specialist, and as a private conservation photographer.