

Writer's Guidelines

Find out the writer's guidelines and how to submit your text for REPTILES magazine.

What is REPTILES? Who reads it? REPTILES is a monthly magazine that caters to reptile and amphibian hobbyists at all levels of experience, from beginner to veteran. Articles focus primarily on the captive care, husbandry and breeding of reptiles and amphibians. REPTILES also has an annual sister publication titled Reptiles USA, which is geared toward beginning/intermediate herp enthusiasts. These guidelines are appropriate for both magazines.

Advice for "reptile people." Please query us first via e-mail at reptiles@bowtieinc.com. Be sure to give us an idea of your herp background. If you have some experience with the animals you wish to write about, or a particular type of setup, that's the best place to start. Long-term success with keeping reptiles and/or amphibians is great, and a track record of successful breeding is even better. This type of experience is much preferred over an author who simply scans a book or does some brief research on the Internet before churning out an article.

Advice for freelance writers. Submissions from freelance writers are welcome, though we ask that you query first at the e-mail address listed above. When pitching ideas, keep in mind that we do prefer that animal articles, whenever possible, be written by people who have experience keeping and breeding the animals.

Articles that interest us:

Husbandry — Husbandry articles about a particular species of herp, or family of herps, should contain a bit of natural history as well as detailed care and husbandry of the animal(s) in captivity. Include info about enclosure size and setup, food, temperature, potential cagemates, temperament, lighting, heating, potential life span, etc.

Breeding — Include information about how and when to brumate, courtship, gestation lengths, nesting, incubation, hatchling care, etc.

Field herping/travel — Articles about domestic and foreign herp-hunting trips. Accompanying photos usually mandatory.

Interviews — Q&A-style articles with "name" people and personalities in the reptile world.

Latest trends — New developments in the hobby, i.e. new morphs, new husbandry techniques, etc.

How-to's/tips — Step-by-step how-to's on creating setups, animal maintenance, building custom enclosures, feeding, handling, etc.

Health — Articles about disease are typically assigned to veterinarian authors, but if you're a vet with expertise in treating herps, you are welcome to pitch health-related articles.

All freelance submissions are sent "on spec." This means "on speculation," which means that until it is contracted we are under no obligation to accept or publish your article. Even if you query first and we tell you to go ahead and write the article, the submission will still be on spec. Rest assured that we would not tell you to go ahead and write an article if we did not consider your idea a worthwhile subject. After you submit your materials it may be a while before you hear back from us (few weeks to a month...maybe longer). Please be patient and avoid hounding us about your submission. Contacting us once to make sure we received your materials is fine.

If we like your article idea and want you to write it, we may also require you to provide online "bonus content." This is generally an approximately 500-word sidebar that will be published on ReptileChannel.com concurrently with your article's publication in the magazine. The sidebar will be on a related topic. For instance, if you pitch an idea about keeping dart frogs, we may request an online sidebar that discusses their toxic properties in the wild and how they are utilized by people in the frogs' native range.

For animal-specific articles, you may also be asked to provide a general care sheet for the species you are writing about. This care sheet will be published on ReptileChannel.com either before or after your article's publication in the magazine.

Of course, all submissions are subject to editing by our staff prior to publication in REPTILES or Reptiles USA.

Got photos to go with your article? Whenever possible, we like our writers to supply photos with their articles, and sometimes, depending on the subject, this may be mandatory. Even if you provide photos, however, we may still use

other photographers' photos to help illustrate your article. Good-quality, hi-resolution digital photos can be submitted, as well as 35mm slides (which often yield better cover images, in case you hope to have one of your photos on the cover). Digital photos must be sized at least 5x7 inches at 300 dpi in tif, jpg or eps formats. See our photographer guidelines for more information. Do not send lo-resolution images! When including photos with your article, try to provide as varied a selection as possible, showing the animals in different poses (eating, basking, swimming, etc.) and in both close-up and full-body shots. Photos of their environments should be included, too, whenever possible. Do not place photos directly into an article document; submit them as separate attachments.

General comments about writing style. Articles should be easy for hobbyists of all levels to understand. Examine back issues and articles posted on ReptileChannel.com to get an idea of tone and structure. Break the text up using subheads for specific sections. Be sure to include catchy opening statements as well as worthwhile closing statements. Don't end your article too abruptly.

Regarding references: If you submit them, do not expect a lengthy list of references to appear at the end of your article. While we may run a short references list on occasion, we don't have the room or the inclination to publish exhaustive references sections in the magazines. References may appeal to some of our readers, but if the references are out of print, obscure papers or foreign publications that the average reader cannot procure, they are of little use. Occasionally, if an article really warrants a lengthy list of references and one is submitted, we may decide to list them on our website, and reference that in the article. But for the most part, we are not trying to present technical papers or dissertations that need a large reference backup.

Regarding charts and diagrams: If you send a chart or diagram that you did not create yourself, you need to let us know the source. We cannot simply reprint one that has already appeared elsewhere and was created by someone else. While charts and diagrams can be useful, they should be easy to comprehend at a glance. Detailed charts with a mind-numbing glut of figures typically turn off the majority of readers. We may choose to re-create a chart or diagram of yours, as well, if we think we can do so in a more graphically pleasing way. Do not insert charts and diagrams directly into your article document; submit them as separate attachments.

Regarding acknowledgments: Even though it's a nice gesture, we prefer that you thank the people who helped you with your article in person or with a personal letter, not in print. Acknowledgments are nice for those receiving them, but they have zero benefit for our readers and take up valuable space that could otherwise be used for text/photos. Space permitting, however, we may include very short acknowledgments on occasion, but this is not a guarantee.

Biographical information: Include a short bio (one or two sentences) at the end of your article. When applicable, use it to illustrate why you were qualified to write the article. For instance, if you write an article about breeding a certain reptile species, the bio should briefly outline your experience with that species ("John Smith has been keeping and breeding XXXX for two decades," etc.). A bio may also include a website URL or author e-mail address, if desired.

We do not accept poetry or fiction.

Mailing and submitting: We prefer that articles be e-mailed to us as Microsoft Word attachments. When mailing materials that you want returned to you in the event of rejection or after your article has been published, such as hard copies of articles, CDs or 35mm slides or other photos, be sure to provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope with sufficient postage to cover their return to you. Otherwise, we are under no obligation to return materials to you at our expense, and they may be discarded.

Contracts: If we like your article, we will send you a contract telling you we want to purchase it for potential future use in the magazine. You'll need to sign the contract and return a copy to us before we can publish the article. It is unlikely, unless previously arranged, that we will be able to tell you exactly when the article will appear in the magazine. Therefore, keep in mind that there is a chance your article will be with us for some time before it is published. You will be provided two contributor copies upon publication.

Pay rates. Prices can vary, depending on length, level of technicality, whether or not the article was assigned and if a good selection of excellent photos are provided. We generally pay \$500 for a 2,000- to 2,500-word article with plenty of



good photos and online components, such as a care sheet for ReptileChannel.com, if requested; \$350 is the average for shorter articles or those that do not include enough photos for our purposes. Payment is made upon publication, during the cover month of the issue in which your work appears (e.g., you will be paid in May for an article that appears in the May issue).

What rights do we purchase? We buy first-time North American rights. Online use, licensing options and foreign language rights are covered in our article contracts. Do not send articles that have been previously published anywhere in North America, or on any websites, in herpetological society newsletters, etc. We also do not accept simultaneous submissions.

Where to send your stuff. E-mail queries can be sent to reptiles@bowtieinc.com. Our mailing address is REPTILES, P.O. Box 6050, Mission Viejo, CA 92690. You may phone us, if necessary, at (949) 855-8822, but we prefer e-mail queries over phone calls.

We make every effort to handle materials with the utmost care and respect. However, we cannot be held responsible for lost or damaged materials.