

Web Strategies for Fact-Checkers

(and other people who care about facts)

by Michael Caulfield

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What Is the Goal of This Curriculum?

The student-fact checking project of the Digital Polarization Initiative (Digipo) is meant to teach students basic web literacies necessary to civic discourse on the web. Unlike many previous attempts to teach “information literacy”, the Digipo project attempts to teach ways of approaching information that are particular to the problems of evaluating information in a decentralized network like the World Wide Web. It also aims to give students web-native strategies and tools for dealing with that environment.

While many information literacy and digital literacy programs have focused on a long series of questions one should ask of content, our approach revolves around giving students *web-native strategies*. The web, after all, is an interactive medium, and what we have found is that the most adept fact-checkers think through the use of the tools available to them. Strategies connect specific skills to the sorts of concerns readers need to address.

So, without further ado, let’s get to the strategies!

Strategy One: Go Upstream

Here's one of our most important strategies for checking claims on the web: Go Upstream.

What do we mean by this?

Usually, when you hit a web page that makes a claim it will be something like this, from conservative site *The Blaze*:

Report: US Government Ethics director approved controversial Trump tweets

Kaitlyn Schallhorn · December 30, 2016 4:02 pm



Getty Images/Drew Angerer

34

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Controversial tweets from the U.S. Office of Government Ethics that praised President-elect Donald Trump were approved by Director Walter M. Shaub personally, the Daily

So the headline claim here true?

Traditional information literacy tells you to start checking this article for credibility. Who is the author? What is the site? When was it last revised?

We'll do some of that, eventually. But it would be ridiculous to do it on this page. Why? Because like most news pages on the Web, this page actually provides no original information. It's just a rewrite of another page upstream from it. We see the indication of that here:

Controversial tweets from the U.S. Office of Government Ethics that praised President-elect Donald Trump were approved by Director Walter M. Shaub personally, **the Daily Dot reported Friday.**

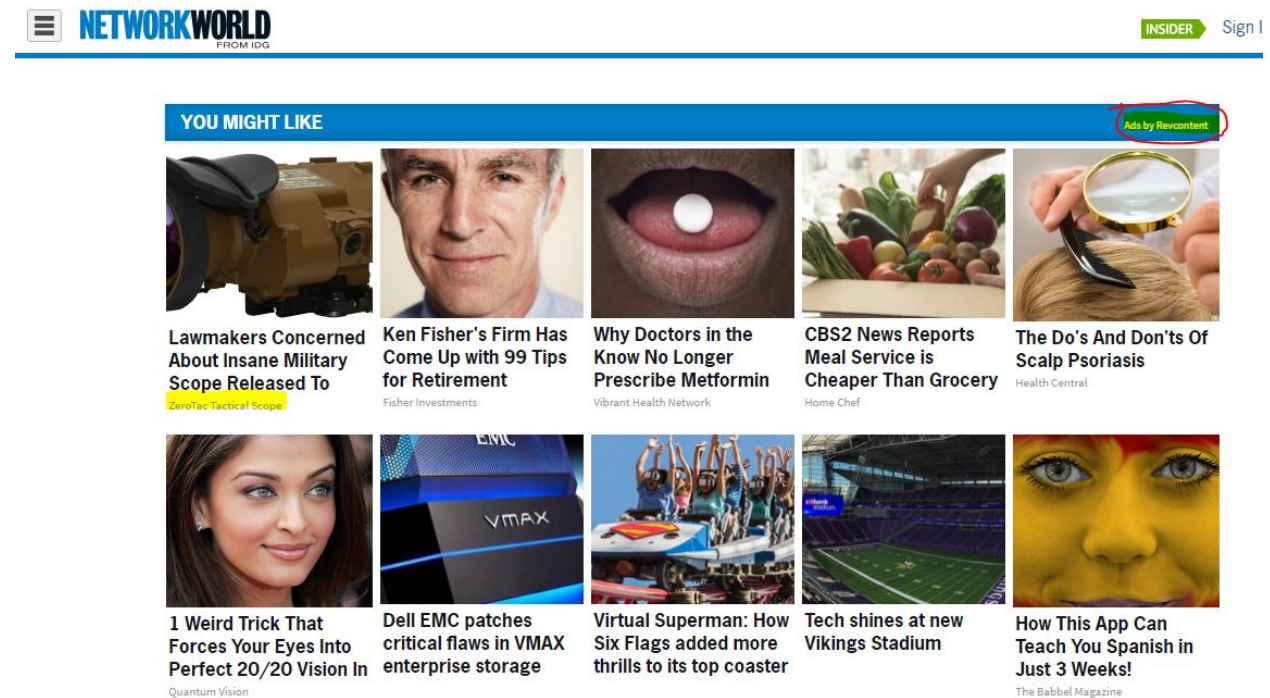
Through a Freedom of Information Act, the Daily Dot reported that Shaub sent an email ordering an OGE official to post the tweets. The series of tweets posted Nov. 30 applauded Trump for his supposed efforts to alleviate conflicts of interest with his businesses.



All the information here has been collected, fact-checked, and written up by *The Daily Dot*. It's what we call "reporting on reporting". Evaluating this page is meaningless.

So what do we do? Our first step is to **go upstream**. Go to the original story, so that we can look at the source of that. Our big understanding here is that most of the stuff on the site wasn't produced by the site, and to evaluate we need to trace where it came from as a first step. In this case that source would be *The Daily Dot*. When you get to the Daily Dot, *then* you can start asking questions about the site or the source. And it may be that for some of the information in their article you'd go a step further back, and look at primary sources they reference.

This warning to "go upstream" before you evaluate is particularly important with sponsored content. For instance, a lot of time on a site you'll see "headlines" like these, which I pulled from a highly regarded technology magazine:


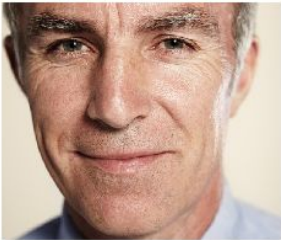






The screenshot shows the NetworkWorld website header with a navigation menu, the logo "NETWORKWORLD FROM IDG", and a "Sign In" button. Below the header is a "YOU MIGHT LIKE" section featuring a grid of sponsored article thumbnails. A red circle highlights a small "Ads by Revcontent" logo in the top right corner of this section. The thumbnails include:

- Lawmakers Concerned About Insane Military Scope Released To** (ZeroFlac Tactical Scope)
- Ken Fisher's Firm Has Come Up with 99 Tips for Retirement** (Fisher Investments)
- Why Doctors in the Know No Longer Prescribe Metformin** (Vibrant Health Network)
- CBS2 News Reports Meal Service is Cheaper Than Grocery** (Home Chef)
- The Do's And Don'ts Of Scalp Psoriasis** (Health Central)
- 1 Weird Trick That Forces Your Eyes Into Perfect 20/20 Vision In** (Quantum Vision)
- Dell EMC patches critical flaws in VMAX enterprise storage**
- Virtual Superman: How Six Flags added more thrills to its top coaster**
- Tech shines at new Vikings Stadium**
- How This App Can Teach You Spanish in Just 3 Weeks!** (The Babbel Magazine)

So are lawmakers really concerned about this *amazing* military/tactical scope? Concerned because it's just so *good*? Maybe. But it's worth noting that this is not a claim that *Network World* is making, but rather a claim that -- wait for it -- ZeroTac Tactical Scope is making. It's an ad, served from another site into this page in a way that makes it look like a story

YOU MIGHT LIKE

 Lawmakers Concerned About Insane ZeroTac Tactical Scope	 Ken Fisher's Firm Has Come Up with 99 Tips Fisher Investments	 Why Do the Kn... Longer Vibrant Hea
		

Sponsored content isn't always purely an advertisement. Sometimes it provides helpful information. This piece below, for example, is an in-depth look at some current industry trends in information technology, and might be worth reading to the right person.

Home > Datacenters



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By Paul Miller | Follow

OCT 31, 2016



But when you see that “sponsored” on top of it, you should immediately realize that evaluating *InfoWorld* as a source will tell you almost nothing about the reliability of this article. The source of this article is not *InfoWorld*, but the technology company Hewlett Packard, written by a VP of Hewlett Packard, with no *InfoWorld* oversight.

You can see how this is not just an issue with political news, but will be an issue in your professional life as well. If you go to work in a technology field and portray this article to your boss as “something I read on *InfoWorld*”, you’re doing a grave disservice to your company. Portraying a vendor-biased take as neutral *InfoWorld* take is a major mistake, which could have unfortunate consequences.

Another place you see upstream issues is syndication. Syndication is a method where a third party is able to publish material directly on a site. So, for instance, you can look at the New York Times web page here:

EUROPE

Germany's Latest Best Seller? A Critical Version of 'Mein Kampf'

By MELISSA EDDY 11:02 AM ET

Historians say their annotated edition of Hitler's manifesto has provoked a necessary discussion and sold 85,000 copies one year since publication



LECCE JOURNAL

Italian Inmates Sip, Smell and Taste Their Way to Rehabilitation

By GAIA PLANIGIANI

A program teaches prisoners new professional skills and helps them develop a bond with the region known for its Negroamaro grape varieties.



ISIS Claims Responsibility for Istanbul Nightclub Attack

By TIM ARANGO

The authorities are still searching for the gunman who killed at least 39 people at the upscale Reina nightclub.



NEWS FROM A.P. AND REUTERS

UK Stock Market Hits Record as Manufacturers Win Business

JANUARY 3, 2017 7:30 AM ET

The Latest: Lebanon Bids Farewell to Istanbul Victims

JANUARY 3, 2017 10:57 AM ET

Inmates Involved in Brazil Prison Massacre to Be Transferred

JANUARY 3, 2017 10:45 AM ET

Severe Bolivian Drought Hurts Crops, Threatens Capital

JANUARY 3, 2017 18 Minutes Ago



15 of the Best Journals by Our Reporters Around the World

Compiled by BARBARA TIERNEY



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WORLD

Several German Victims in Istanbul Shooting

German officials confirmed Monday that one German and one Turkish citizen residing in Germany were killed at the shooting at an Istanbul nightclub on New Year's Day, while another three German nationals were

What you'll see is a set of stories on the left ("Germany's Latest Best Seller", "Isis Claims Responsibility") that are written by New York Times staff, but also a thin column of stories ("UK Stock Market Hits Record") which are identified as being from the Associated Press.

And when you click through you'll find a page on the New York Times site, but it is not by the New York Times:

SECTIONS **The New York Times** SUBSCRIBE LOG IN

	Germany's Latest Best Seller? A Critical Version of 'Mein Kampf'		LECCE JOURNAL Italian Inmates Sip, Smell and Taste Their Way to Rehabilitation	ISIS Claims Responsibility for Istanbul Nightclub Attack	PAID Do Yc Mora
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EUROPE

UK Stock Market Hits Record as Manufacturers Win Business

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS JAN. 3, 2017, 7:30 A.M. E.S.T.



LONDON — Britain's main stock index hit a record closing high Tuesday as a survey showed manufacturers gaining business from the slide in the value of the pound since the country's decision in June to leave the European Union.

The FTSE 100 index ended the day 0.5 percent higher at 7,177.89, slightly down on its earlier all-time high of 7,205.21.

One of the main reasons why the FTSE 100 has rallied in recent months

Notice that if you are going to evaluate the source of this article that evaluation is going to have very little to do with the New York Times. You're going to look at the reporting record of the Associated Press.

People get this wrong all the time. One thing that happens occasionally is an article critical of a certain politician or policy suddenly disappears from the New York Times site, and people claim it's a plot to rewrite the past. "Conspiracy!" they say. "They're burying information!" they say. A ZOMG-level freakout follows.

It always turns out that the article that disappeared is a syndicated article. AP articles, for example, are displayed on the site for a few weeks, then "roll off" and disappear from the site. Why? Because the New York Times only pays the Associated Press to show them on the site for a few weeks.

You'll also occasionally see people complaining about a story from the New York Times, claiming it shows a New York "liberal bias" only to find the story was not even written by the New York Times, but by the AP, or Reuters, or some other syndicator.

Going upstream means following a piece of content to its true source, and beginning your analysis from there rather than from the page you happen to be looking at. Your first question when looking at a claim on a page should be "Where did this come from, and who produced it?" The answer is quite often something that has very little to do with the website you are looking at.

Tracking the Source of Viral Content

The examples we have shown so far have been fairly good at providing information about the source of the content. The *Blaze* story, for example, clearly links to the *Daily Dot* piece so that anyone reading their summary is one click away from confirming it with the source. The New York Times makes apparent that the syndicated content is from the Associated Press, so that if you wanted to check the credibility of the source you could easily do that.

This is good internet citizenship. Articles on the web that are repurposing someone else's information or artifacts should make it clear where those articles come from, and, if appropriate, add a link to the original. This is important to creators, because they deserve credit for their work. But it's also important to readers, who need to check the credibility of the original sources.

Unfortunately, most citizens of the web are not good citizens. This is particularly true with so-called "viral" content on the web -- material that spreads very quickly through hundreds or thousands of people individually sharing it.

When that information pings around a network, very often people decide not to link, or hide the source all together. For example, here is an interesting claim that two million bikers are going to show up for the inauguration. Whatever your political persuasion, that would be a pretty amazing thing to see.

But the source of the information -- Right Alerts Polls -- is not linked.

Enabon

What are you looking for?

BUSINESS POLITICS ENTERTAINMENT TECH BREAKING

Home » Breaking » Politics » DO YOU SUPPORT PATRIOTIC BIKERS DEFENDING TRUMP'S INAUGURATION?

Breaking, Politics

DO YOU SUPPORT PATRIOTIC BIKERS DEFENDING TRUMP'S INAUGURATION?

8 Hours Ago No Comments

FACEBOOK g+ TWITTER P EMAIL

← PREV ARTICLE

Approximately two million bikers are planning to arrive in Washington, D.C. by January 20, 2017. The patriotic bikers are volunteering to attend President-Elect Donald Trump's inauguration to enhance safety during the event.

The bikers have stated they want to thwart efforts by "libtards" to ruin the Donald Trump's inauguration, Right Alerts Polls reports. Do you support their efforts to prevent the ceremony from erupting into chaos?

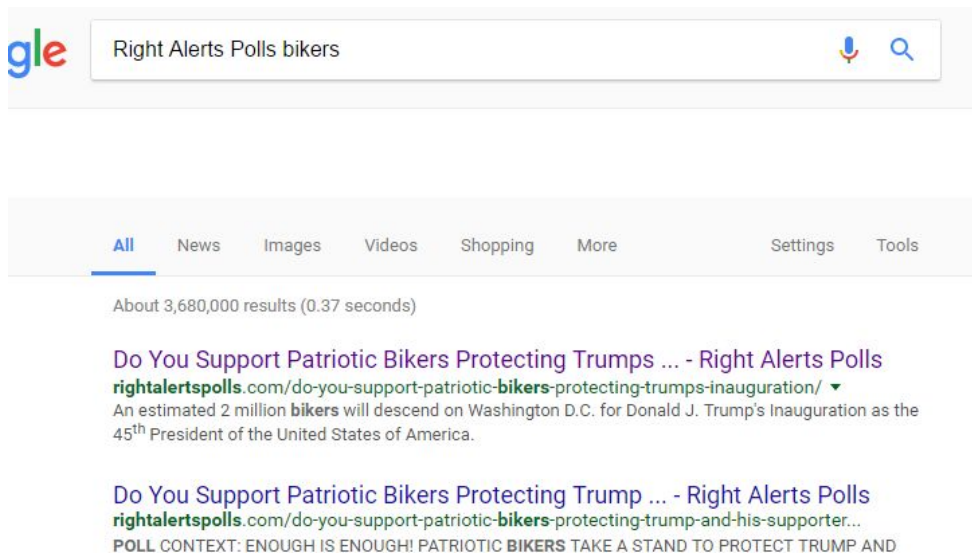
As previously reported by the *Angry Patriot*, liberal activists have launched the "DisruptJ20" to hamper Trump's swearing in by virtually any means possible. The Bikers for Trump Guardians of Our Republic

So here's where we show our first trick. Select the text "Right Alerts Polls". Then right-click your mouse (control-click on a Mac), and choose the option to search Google for the highlighted phrase.

ers have stated they want to thwart efforts by “libtards” to ruin the Donald Tru
ation, Right Alerts F
vent the cere
aos?
iously reported by
s swearing in by virt
Guardians
s willing to step in and offer protection to the millions of proud Americans plan
to watch the 45th president of the United States be sworn into office.

It will execute a search for “Right Alerts Polls”. (Remember this right-click action, though -- it’s going to be the foundation of a lot of stuff we do.)

To find the story, add “bikers” to the end of the search:

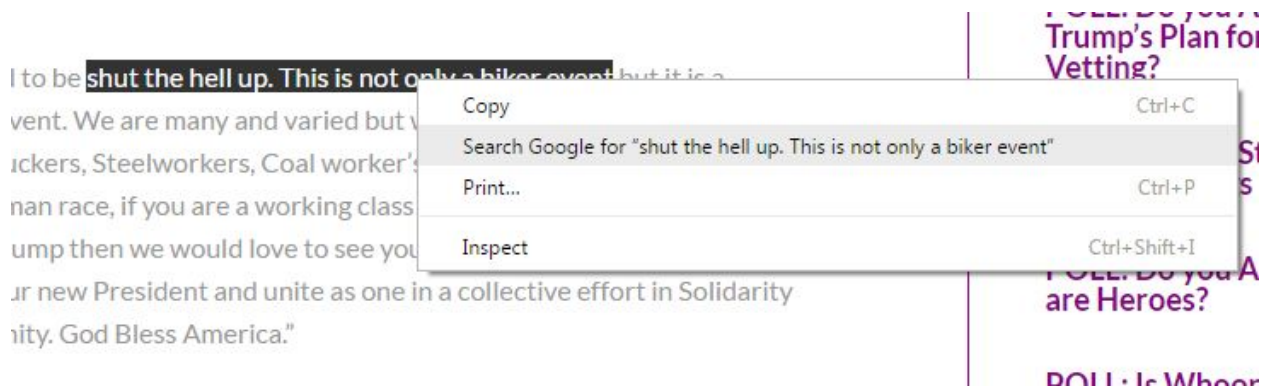


We find our upstream article right at the top. Clicking through, however, we find that this article still doesn’t tell us where the information is coming from either. However, it does have an extended quote from one of the Two Million Bikers organizers:



From the 2 Million Bikers to DC

“ These libtards need to be shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event but it is a Trump Supporters event. We are many and varied but we unite as one. Christian, Veterans, Bikers, Truckers, Steelworkers, Coal worker's, Preachers, Fast food workers, all Colors on the human race, if you are a working class American and you support Mr. President Donald Trump then we would love to see you there. Our main objective is to show our Love for our new President and unite as one in a collective effort in Solidarity Brotherhood and Unity. God Bless America.”

So we just repeat our technique here, and select a bit of text from the quote and right-click/control-click. What we want is to figure out where this quote came from, and searching on this small but unique piece of it should bring it close to the top of the Google results.



When we do that we see that there are *dozens* of articles covering this story, using the the same quote and sometimes even the same headline. But one of those results is the actual Facebook page for the event, and if we want a sense of how many people are committing, then this is a place to start.

e shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event  

All Images Videos Shopping News More Settings Tools

About 2,310,000 results (0.84 seconds)

QUESTION - Do You Support Patriotic Bikers DEFENDING Trump's ...
www.angrypatriotmovement.com/support-bikers-who-defend-trump/ ▼
"These libtards need to be **shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event**, but it is a Trump supporters event. We are many and varied, but we unite as one," a ...

2 Million Trump Supporters To DC. Inauguration Day - Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/events/987730038021648/?active_tab=about ▼
These libtards need to be **shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event** but it is a Trump Supporters event. We are many and varied but we unite as one.

Trump Supporting Bikers Rally in Solidarity To Show Support For ...
observatorial.com/2016/11/.../patriot-bikers-ride-shut-protesters-good-didnt-see-comi... ▼
Nov 22, 2016 - Do you support their patriotic effort? "These libtards need to be **shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event**, but it is a Trump supporters event.

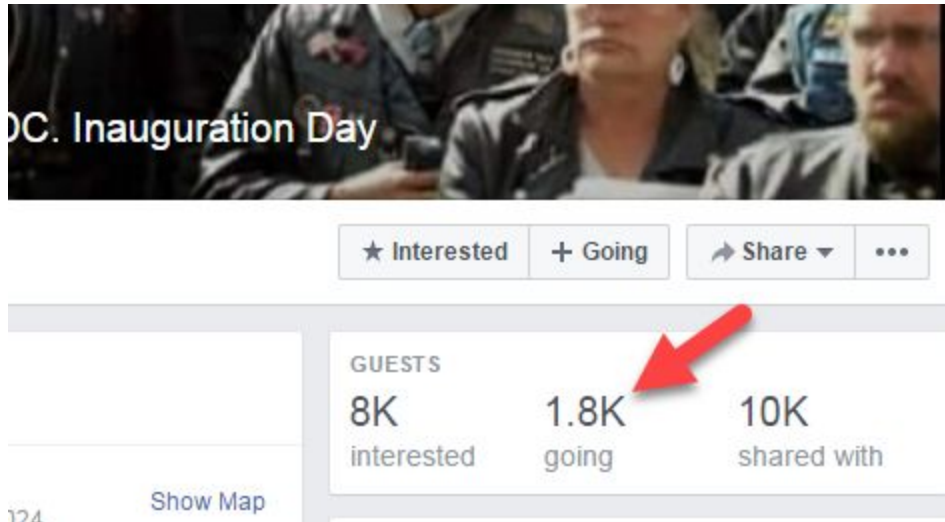
Question – Do You Support Patriotic Bikers Defending Trump's ...
www.usapoliticstoday.com > News ▼
Nov 21, 2016 - "These libtards need to be **shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event**, but it is a Trump supporters event. We are many and varied, but we ...

Inauguration Day Protesters: Expect Heavy Biker Thunder
theblacksphere.net/2016/11/inauguration-day-protesters-expect-heavy-biker-thunder/ ▼
Nov 19, 2016 - These libtards need to be **shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event** but it is a Trump Supporters event. We are many and varied but we ...

Bikers For Trump Ride Again, This Time To DC In January For ... - Prntly
prntly.com/.../bikers-for-trump-ride-again-this-time-to-dc-in-january-for-inauguratio... ▼
Nov 15, 2016 - These libtards need to be **shut the hell up. This is not only a biker event** but it is a Trump Supporters event. We are many and varied but we ...

This also introduces us to another helpful practice -- when scanning Google results (or Bing results, or DuckDuckGo results) novices scan the titles. Pros scan the URLs beneath the titles, looking for clues as to which sources are best. (Be a pro!)

So we go to the Two Million Biker Facebook event page, and take a look. How close are they to getting two million bikers to commit to this?



Well...it looks like about 1,800. That's nothing to sneer at -- organizing is hard, and people have lives to attend to. Getting people to give up time for political activity is tough. But it's pretty short of the "two million bikers" most of these articles were telling us were going to show up.

When we get into how to rate articles on the DigiPo site as true or false, likely or unlikely, we'll talk a bit about how to write up the evaluation of this claim. My sense is the rating here is either "Mostly False" or "Unlikely" -- there are people planning to go, that's true, but the importance of the story was based around the scale of attendance, and all indications seem to be that attendance is shaping up to be about a tenth of one percent (0.1%) of what the other articles promised.

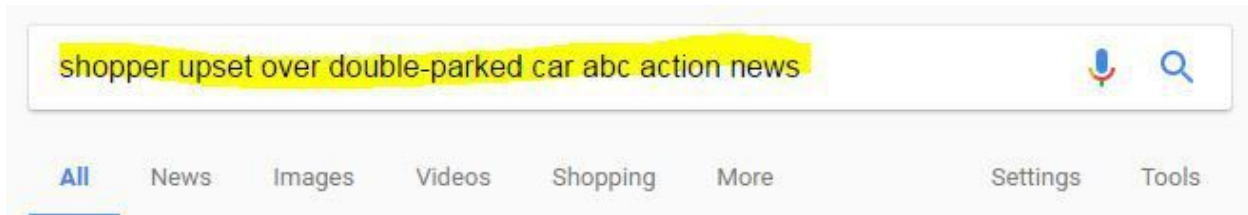
But the main point here is we would have learned none of this had we decided to evaluate the original page. We learned this by going upstream.

Tracking the Source of Viral Photo

One of the more viral types of content on the World Wide Web is photography. It is also some of the most difficult to track upstream to a source. Here's a picture that showed up in my stream the other day:



OK, so what's the story here? To get more information, I pull the textual information off the image and throw it in a Google search:



About 2,830,000 results (0.57 seconds)

Shopper upset over double-parked car - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QU7zqdr7IY>

2 days ago - Someone didn't appreciate this bad **parking** job in Oregon, and decided to box it in with **shopping** carts. ... The **ABC Action News** app brings you the latest trusted **news** and information. ... **ABC Action News**, WFTS, covers local **news** in Tampa Bay and Florida.

Double-parked car blocked with shopping carts - FOX 13 News

www.fox13news.com/trending/224946987-story

1 day ago - We've all been there. You're in the midst of holiday **shopping** and the **parking** lots are full.

Missing: action

You visited this page on 12/22/16.

This brings me to a YouTube video that tells me this was taken “outside a Portland, Oregon Walmart” and has been shared “hundreds of times since yesterday”. So back to search. This next result shows you why you always want to look past the first result:

Google shopping carts double-parked portland or

About 153,000 results (0.97 seconds)

Top stories

Double-parked car blocked with shopping carts | FOX 13 Tampa Bay
 FOX 13 News, Tampa Bay · 1 day ago

→ More for shopping carts double-parked portland or

Double-parked car blocked with shopping carts | FOX 13 Tampa Bay
www.fox13news.com/trending/224946987-story ▼
 1 day ago - We've all been there. You're in the midst of holiday shopping and the parking lots are full. You visited this page on 12/22/16.

Shopper upset over double-parked car - YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QU7zqdr7IY>
 2 days ago · Uploaded by ABC Action News
 Someone didn't appreciate this bad parking job in Oregon, and decided to box it in with shopping carts ...
 Missing: portland
 You've visited this page 2 times. Last visit: 12/22/16

Driver Double Parks, Gets Instant Karma (Photo) - America Now
www.americanow.com/story/society/.../driver-double-parks-gets-instant-karma-photo ▼
 10 hours ago - A Walmart shopper who double parked got a dose of karma when ... showing the car clearly parked in two spots outside of a Portland, Maine, Walmart. ... angry shopper -- was a series of shopping carts completely blocking it.

Photo of car surrounded by shopping carts at Walmart goes viral | WGME
wgme.com/news/local/photo-of-car-surrounded-by-shopping-carts-goes-viral ▼
 BIDDEFORD (WGME) – A photo of a car taking up two parking spots surrounded by shopping carts at the ... Matthew Mills of Old Orchard Beach took the picture of the parking lot justice ... Eight arrested in South Portland prostitution sting.

Which one of these items should I click? Again, the idea here is to get “upstream” to something that is closer to the actual event. One way to do that is to find the *earliest* post, and we’ll use that in a future task. But another way to get upstream is to get closer to the event in *space*. Think about it -- who is more likely to get the facts of a local story correct -- the local newspaper or a random blog?

So as I scan the search results I’m looking at the URLs. Fox 13 News has it in “trending”. AmericaNow has it in the “society” section.

But the WGME link has the story in a “news/local/” directory. This is interesting, because the other site said it happened in Oregon, and here the location is clearly Maine. This URL pattern is a strong point in its favor.

Further indications here that it might be a good source is that I see in the blurb it mentions the name of the photographer “Matthew Mills”. The URL plus the specificity of the information tell me this is the way to go.

That links me to what looks like the news page where it went viral, which embeds the or

BIDDEFORD (WGME) -- A photo of a car taking up two parking spots surrounded by shopping carts at the Biddeford Walmart has been shared all over the country.

Matthew Mills of Old Orchard Beach took the picture of the parking lot justice Sunday afternoon.

CBS 13 posted it Monday morning, and it went viral.



That post alone has been shared over 100,000 times and seen by

We see here that the downstream news report we found first had a bunch of things wrong. It wasn't in Portland, Oregon — it was in Biddeford, which is near Portland, *Maine*. It hasn't been shared “hundreds of times” it's been shared hundreds of thousands of times. And it was made viral by a CBS affiliate, a fact that ABC Action News in Tampa doesn't mention at all.

OK, let's go one more step. Let's look at the Facebook page where Matthew Mills shared it. Part of what we want to see is whether it was viral before CBS picked it up or not. I'd also like to double check that Mills is really from the Biddeford area and see if he was responsible for the shopping carts or just happened upon this scene.

The news post does not link back to the original, so we search on Matthew Mills again, and see some news outlets mentioning the original caption by Mills: "This guy got a lesson in parking".

is going viral. matthew mills, of Biddeford, took the photo at the Biddeford Walmart and shared it with WMTW News 8. Mills wrote the driver "got a lesson in ...

Bad parker in Maine gets blocked in by shopping carts
6abc.com - 10 hours ago
A shopper in Maine is doing something we all dream of: getting back at a terrible parker. Matthew Mills of Biddeford, Maine, took the photo at a Walmart parking lot and posted it to Facebook with the caption, "This guy got a lesson in parking." In the ...

Bad parking prompts shopping cart justice
WFMZ Allentown - 4 hours ago
A Walmart customer paid back a bad parker big time with justice that person will not soon forget. Matthew Mills posted a photo to Facebook, showing a car parked in two parking spaces at his local

That's not the same as the caption that the news station put up -- maybe it's what Mills originally used? We pump "got a lesson in parking" Matthew Mills into Facebook, and bingo: we get the original post:

got a lesson in parking" Matthew Mills

Top Latest People Photos Videos Shop Pages Places Group

POSTED BY

- Anyone
- You
- Your Friends
- Your Friends and Groups
- Choose a Source...

TAGGED LOCATION

- Anywhere
- Camas, WA
- Boston, MA
- Choose a Location...

DATE POSTED

- Anytime
- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- Choose a Date...

Links

Shoppers get revenge on car taking up two spaces
BIDDEFORD, Maine -- A visitor to a Wal-Mart in Maine took ...
kdvr.com
2 hours ago · 247 shares

Public Posts

Matthew Mills
December 18 at 11:22am · Biddeford, ME

This guy got a lesson in parking Hahah biddo walmart

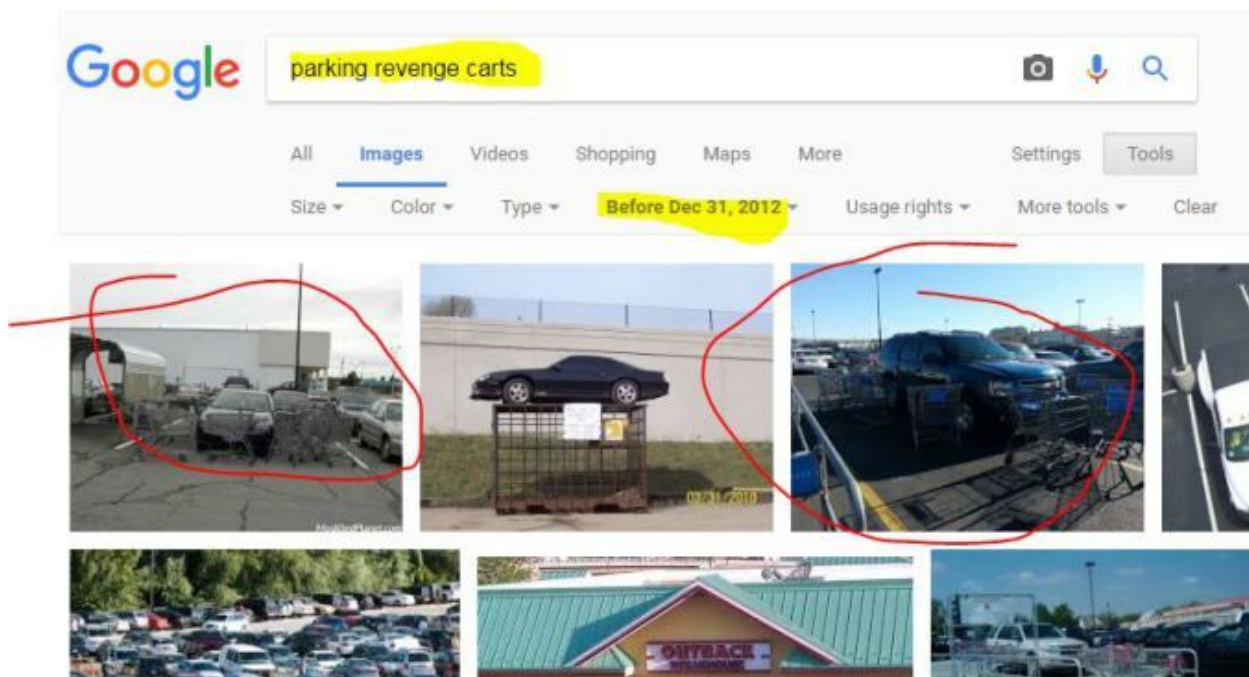
And here's where we see something I really dislike about news organizations. They cut other news organizations out of the story, every time. So they say this has been shared hundreds of times because in order to say it has been shared hundreds of thousands of times they'd have to mention it was popularized by a CBS affiliate. So they cut CBS out of the story and distort the truth.

On the other hand, one of the good effects of it is sometimes it makes it easier to track something down to the source. News organizations work extra hard to find the original source if it means they can cut other news organizations out of the picture.

But it also tends to distort how virality happens. The picture here did not magically become viral — it became viral due, largely, to the reach of WGME.

Incidentally, we also find answers to other questions in the Matthew Mills version: he took the picture but didn't arrange the carts, and he really is from Old Orchard Beach.

Just because we're extra suspicious, we throw the image into Google Image to see if maybe this is a recycled image. Sometimes people take old images and pretend they are theirs -- they just change the supposed date and location. A quick use of Google Reverse image search shows that it does not appear to be the case here, although in doing that we find out this is a very common type of viral photo called a "parking revenge" photo. The specific technique of circling carts around a double-parked car dates back to at least 2012:



When we click through we can see that the practice was popularized, at least to some extent, by Reddit users. See for instance this post from December 2012:



So that's it. It's part of a parking revenge meme that dates back at least four years, and popularized by Reddit. It was shot by Matthew Mills in Biddeford, Maine, who was not the one who circled the carts. And it became viral through the re-share provided by a local Maine TV station.

Using Google Reverse Search from Chrome

Most of the time finding the origin of an image on Twitter is easy. Just follow the links. For instance, take the chart in this tweet from Twitter user @NinjaEconomics. Should you evaluate it by figuring out who @NinjaEconomic is?

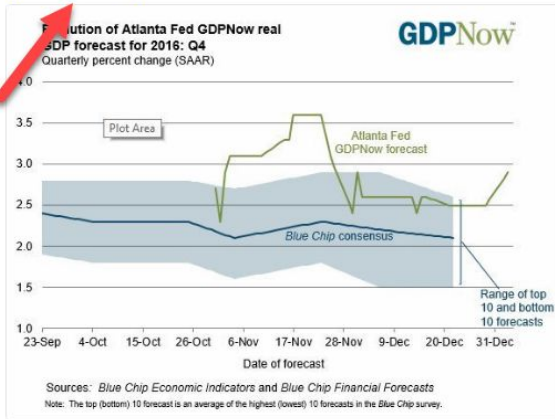


Ninja Economics
@NinjaEconomics



Following

On January 3, the #GDPNow model forecast for real GDP growth in Q4 2016 is 2.9%
goo.gl/Abqchm



RETWEETS

6

LIKES

5



3:00 PM - 3 Jan 2017



6



5



Nope. Just follow that link to the source. It's usually the last part of a tweet.

If you do follow that link, the chart is there, with a bunch more information about the data behind it and how it was produced. It's from the Atlanta Fed, and it's the Fed -- not @NinjaEconomics -- that you want to evaluate.

But sometimes people will post a photo that has no source, as this person does here:



So I have questions.

First, is this actually a National Geographic photographer?

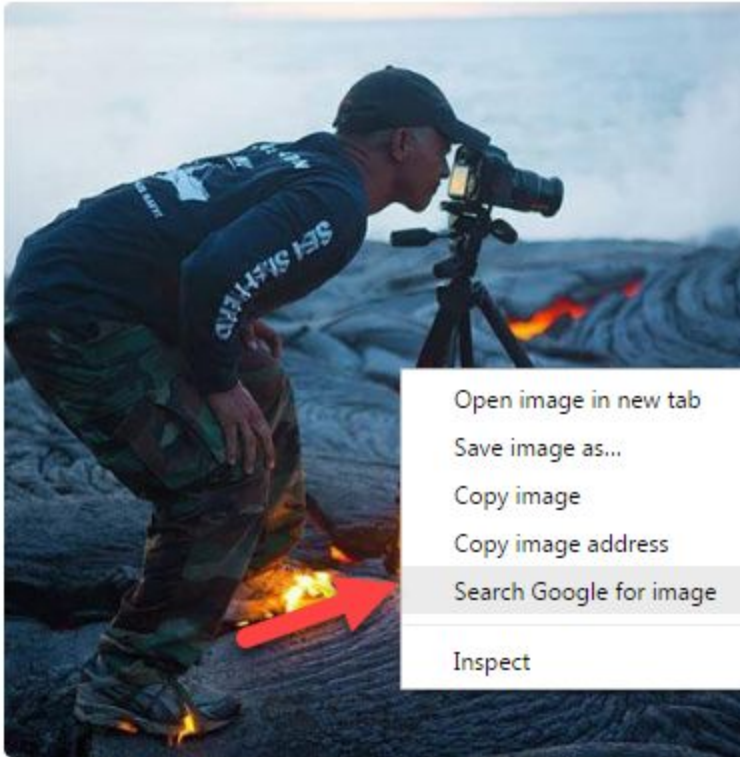
More importantly, is this real? Is that lava so hot that it will literally set a metal tripod on fire? That seems weird, but I'm no lava expert.

There's no link here, so we're going to use *reverse image search*. If you're using Google Chrome as a browser (which you should be for this class) put the cursor over the photo and right-click (control-click on a Mac). A "context menu" will pop up and one of the options will be "Search Google for image".



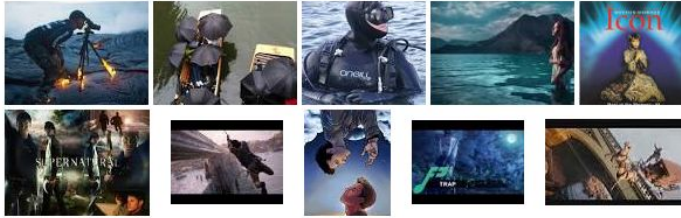
dead boyfriend
@unsmokable

the life of a national geographic photo



Doing that you get a bunch of sites that have the photo on them. One of them is Reddit. Reddit is a site that's famous for sharing these sorts of photos, but it also has a reputation for having a user base that is very good at spotting fake photos.

Visually similar images



Report images

Pages that include matching images

In the heat of the moment : pics - Reddit



https://www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/.../in_the_heat_of_the_moment/
1600 x 1066 - Jan 28, 2014 - A place to share photographs and pictures. Feel free to post your own, but please read the rules first (see below), and note that we are not a ...

Mind Blowing Images of the Planet With Live On - Page 2 of 2 ...



<https://www.outdoorrevival.com/news/mind-blowing-images-of-the.../2>
640 x 426 - Aug 26, 2015 - IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT. kawika-singson-standing-on-lava-shoes-tripod-on-. Photograph of KAWIKA SINGSON | Taken by Chris Hirata.

similar image search for post: When you want the perfect shot. [PIC ...



karmadecay.com/r/woahdude/.../when_you_want_the_perfect_shot_pic/

Moment.. - YohYoh.com Showcase online and Promote



www.yohyoh.com/tags/moment..
481 x 320 - An Extremely Dedicated Photographer In The Heat Of The Moment.. Tag it. Add your own tag. Login, click on the image in inner page, fill the form and save.

When we go to the Reddit page we find there is an argument over whether the photo is fake or not. But again, Reddit is not our source here -- we need to go further upstream. So we click the link that says it's real and get [taken to an article](#) where they actually talk to the photographer:

This is an archived post. You won't be able to vote or comment.

743  [In the heat of the moment](#) (i.imgur.com)
submitted 2 years ago by gabberc
54 comments share

all 54 comments

sorted by: **best**

[-] **WhiteRun** 107 points 2 years ago

It's fake.

permalink embed

load more comments (10 replies)

[-] **weezermc78** 36 points 2 years ago

...Hey man

permalink embed

[-] **prickinthewall** 18 points 2 years ago


Looks real to me


permalink embed

load more comments (3 replies)

Hot Lava Sets Adventurous Photographer's Feet on Fire

By Katie Hosmer on July 15, 2013

LIKE MY MODERN MET ON FACEBOOK  Like 1.6M

 GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



Now we could stop here, and just read the headline. But all good fact-checkers know that headlines lie. And not just lie. They lie all the time. So we read the article down to the bottom:

For this particular shot, Singson says, "Always trying to be creative, I thought it would be pretty cool (hot!) to take a lava pic with my shoes and tripod on fire while photographing lava."

This may be a bit pedantic -- but I still don't know if this was staged. Contrary to the headline the photographer doesn't say lava made his shoes catch on fire. He says he wanted to take a picture of himself with his shoes on fire while standing on lava.

So did his shoes catch on fire, or did he set them on fire? I do notice at the bottom of this page though that this is just a retelling of an article published elsewhere -- it's not them who talked to the photographer at all!



Kawika Singson's website

via [PetaPixel]



In webspeak, “via” means you learned of a story or photo from someone else (our “reporting on reporting” model from *The Blaze* above). In other words, we still haven’t gotten to the source yet. So we lumber upstream once again, to the PetaPixel site from whence this came.. When we go upstream to that site, we find an addendum on the original article:

Update on 7/17/13: [Hawaii News Now confirms](#) that this was done as a stunt:

!! *The photo is real, but the flames are not the result of spontaneous combustion. “The flames on the tripod and my shoes did not start because of the lava” Singson freely admits. “It’s like if you put your shoe in a hot frying pan, it will not catch fire right away”.*

Singson used an accelerant to start the flames then had his buddy snap the shot. The reason? “It’s just something I wanted for my Facebook cover photo”.

So a local news outfit has confirmed the photographer did use an accelerant. The photograph was staged. Are we done now?

Not quite. You know what the next step is, right?

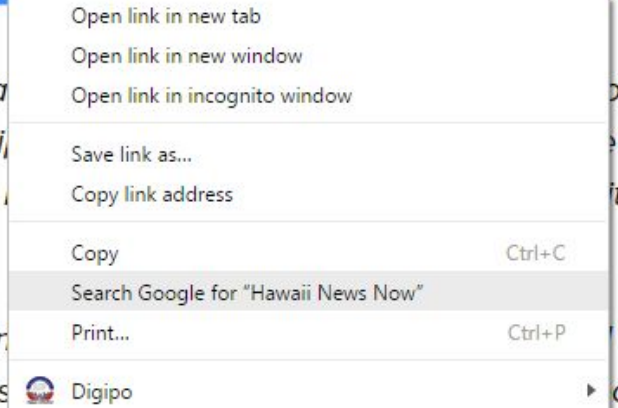
Go upstream to *Hawaii News Now*!

So we do that, we click the link, and we find the quote is good. And I like *Hawaii News Now* for another reason -- they are a local news service, and so they know a bit about lava fields. That’s probably why they asked the question no one else seemed to, which is essentially “Is that really possible?”

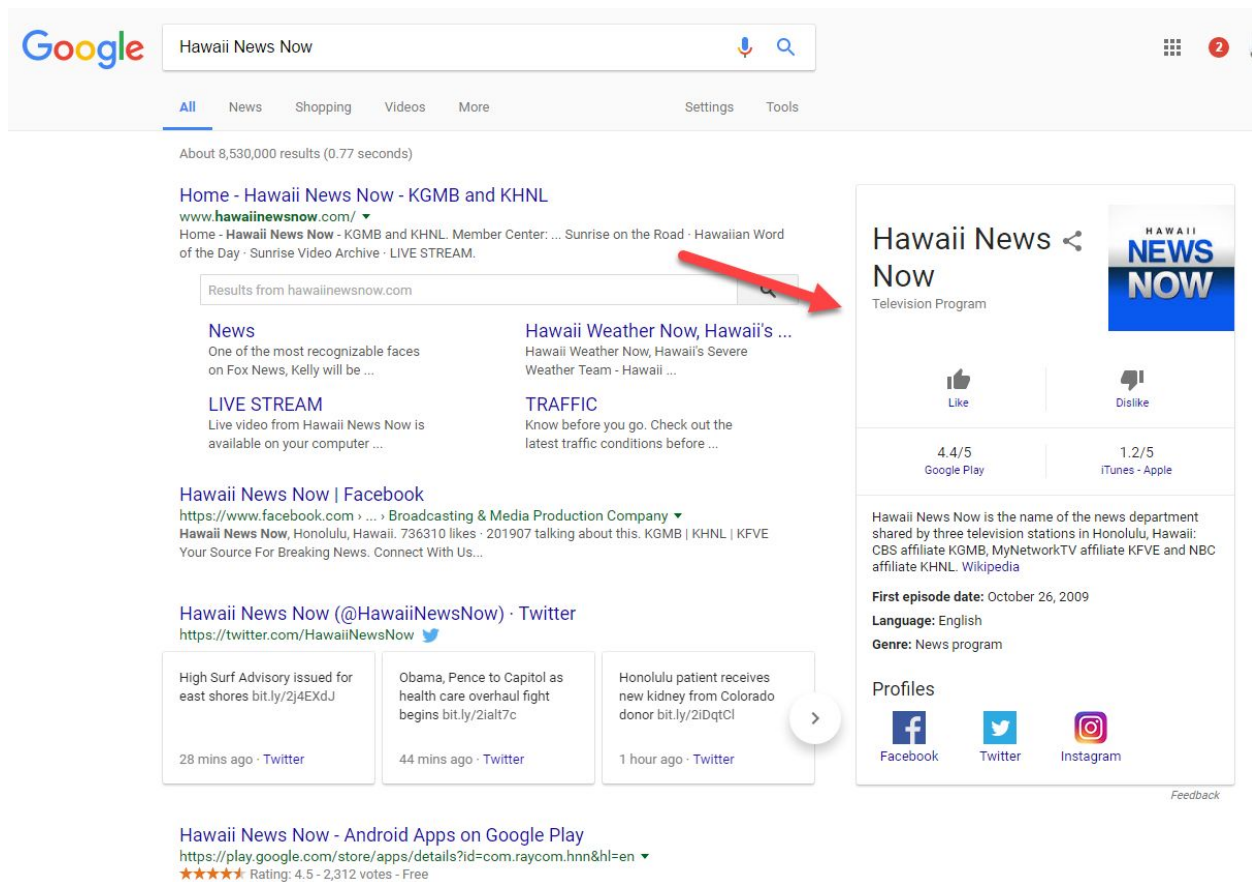
One last check, to check the *Hawaii News Now* source -- let’s check who *Hawaii News Now* is. We start by selecting *Hawaii News Now* and using our Google search option:

Update on 7/17/13: [Hawaii News Now](#) confirms that this was done as

“ The photo is really
flames on the trip
admits. “It’s like
away”.
Singson used an
The reason? “It’s



And what we get back is pretty promising: there’s a Google Card that comes up that tells us it’s bona fide local news program from a CBS affiliate in Hawaii.



And honestly, you could stop there. We’ve solved this riddle. The photographer was really on hot lava, which is impressive in itself, but used some accelerant (such as lighter fluid) to set his

shoes and tripod on fire. Additionally, the photo was a stunt, and not part of any naturally occurring National Geographic shoot. We've traced the story back to its source, found the answer, and got confirmation on the authoritative nature of the source.

We're sticklers for making absolutely sure of this, so we're going to go upstream one more time, and click on the Wikipedia link to the article on the Google card to make sure we aren't missing anything, but we don't have to make you watch that. I'll tell you right now it will turn out fine. In this case at least.

Activity: Trace Viral Photos Upstream

These three photos have been attributed to National Geographic shoots as well, by the same tweeter. Find out where these photos were taken and whether they were staged or otherwise faked. For bonus points, get the name of the photographers (or videographers) pictured and if the shoot was associated with National Geographic.

We put the photos below, but to do a reverse image search on them you'll have to go [find them at the Hapgood blog](#), and use your Google Reverse Image Search right-click.



