

Summer 2017

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program (SANCP): Reptiles and Amphibians!** Many of you are returning for another SANCP session and we hope this will be one of many courses we will spend together learning naturalist skills and gaining knowledge and experience in the Great Smoky Mountains.

These three days will include an overview of Herpetology and a more specific focus on reptiles and amphibians of the southern Appalachians. This means lectures in the evenings and days in the field, observing a variety of forest ecosystems throughout the Smokies, from mid-elevation Cove hardwood forests to the low swampy areas of Cades Cove.

Get ready! You have registered for an intense course during which we will cover material and skills that most people receive in a semester-long class. In order to accomplish these ambitious goals it is necessary for you to do some pre-course work, in the form of readings, to give you the background information needed to take part in discussions and build your toolkit of skills. You should find that information in a separate email.

### **Instructor**

Dr. John Maerz and I will be your co-instructors for the course. I have been education director at Tremont since 2008, and I attribute my beginning as a naturalist and environmental educator to an early interest in snakes! I have a BA in English Literature and an MS in Environmental Education. Dr. Maerz is Professor of Vertebrate Ecology at University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and head of the Maerz Herpetology Lab. His love of herps is infectious! He will open your eyes to the magical world of this amazing and diverse group of animals.

### **Arrival and Departure**

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Friday, July 7<sup>th</sup> between 3:00 and 5:00 PM, giving you opportunity to move into the dorm and meet other participants before our 6:00 evening meal. The program will end shortly after lunch on Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Weather**

It may help you to know that over the past five years the average daily high temperature for July was 87° F. and the average daily low was 63° F. here in Walker Valley. We will be outside much of the time rain or shine. Rain gear is always necessary here in the Smoky Mountains. Please bring it along.

## **Logistics**

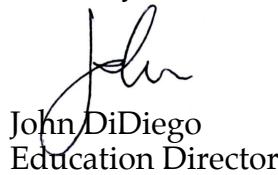
Please read the "Your Visit to Tremont" link for important packing information. Along with your readings, linens and toiletries, you may want to bring a mattress pad to ease the firm mattress and perhaps a headlamp or flashlight if you are a late-night reader. Please bring binoculars if you own a pair. If you don't own any we have a few pairs to loan. Also bring a notepad and pencil and any field guides you like. Sturdy walking shoes/boots, outdoor clothing, and a hat are also important for your comfort.

## **Health & Waiver Form**

Please fill out the Health/Waiver Form and bring it with you to turn in upon check-in. If you have special needs, dietary (go to <http://www.gsmi.org/Food.html> for more specifics), medical, or otherwise, please send in your form ahead of time. It will be challenging to accommodate special dietary needs if they are not communicated to us in advance. This form must be filled out and turned in to us for you to participate in the program. Please note that food is not allowed in the dorm.

I hope that this information is helpful to you in planning for your upcoming visit to Tremont. Please tell a friend about us so that they too can learn about the wonders of the Smokies. If you have further questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,



John DiDiego  
Education Director

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## **Readings and Homework**

The SANCP has attracted a wide variety of individuals, some of whom have a significant background in natural history and others for whom all of this is very new. The level of pre-course reading that you do to be prepared for the course may vary as well depending on where you are on that spectrum. If you are a novice, reading related sections in a biology text and or exploring on-line resources will be helpful and will assist you in being involved in discussion and allowing your instructor to spend minimal lecture time on the basics.

The reading list for this course will be sent by email:

- Pough, et. al., (2016) *Herpetology*, fourth edition, chapter 1, Why Herpetology?
- On-line resources

It will be useful to spend some time reviewing these resources to help you build from a basic knowledge of reptiles and amphibians to a deeper understanding of these groups and the natural history of those species that live in the southern Appalachians.

For the Reptile and Amphibian course you will be provided with a copy of *Reptiles and Amphibians of the Smokies* published by the Great Smoky Mountains Association, authors Tilly and Huheey.

During the week we will also be offering you a 15% discount at our bookstore. We carry several fine field guides and reference books for herps.