Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Reptiles & Amphibians**! Whether this is you first course or eighth course, we hope this is one of many weekends we'll learn and practice naturalist skills together as we gain knowledge about the Great Smoky Mountains.

This weekend 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 spent 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.

**Instructors:**
I am pleased to be your instructor for this workshop. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our faculty. Additionally, Dr. John Maerz, who is Professor of Vertebrate Ecology at University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and head of the Maerz Herpetology Lab, will be joining us. 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 between 3:00 and 5:00 pm in order to have enough time to move into the dorm and meet other participants before our 6:00 pm evening meal. Check-In will take place in the Gift Shop located in our office building, which is the first structure to appear on your left after crossing the bridge onto Tremont's campus. The program will end around 3:00 pm on Sunday.

**Weather:**
For the past five years the average daily high temperature for July was 87 degrees F. and the average daily low was 63 degrees F. here in Walker Valley. We will be outside much of the time, rain or shine. Bring a rain coat! The Smokies are a very wet and humid climate and you can *expect precipitation in one form or another* at some point during your stay here.

**Logistics:**
Please read the "Your Visit to Tremont" link for important packing information. Along with your linens and toiletries, you may want to bring a mattress pad to ease the firm mattress, plus a bedside light or headlamp if you are a late-night reader. Also bring binoculars if you own a pair. If you don't own any we have a limited number of 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 a must for personal comfort. *Note: though wifi is available in the Activity Center, we invite and encourage you to unplug for the weekend.* Learn more about our food and facilities. Please note that food is not allowed in the dorm.

**Preparation:**
Please read the attachments emailed to you in advance of the course:

- 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. At the start of the 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.

**A special offer just for YOU…**
You will receive a copy of *Birds of the Smokies* during the weekend. Also, during the weekend, you will receive a 15% discount on any merchandise you purchase from our gift shop—this is a great deal!

I hope this information us 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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