



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Reptiles & Amphibians!** Whether this is your 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. Please read this letter in full, as it contains information about our procedures related to **COVID-19**.

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 could easily fill 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 check in at the gift shop between 4 and 5 pm on Friday. The gift shop is in the parking area on your left after you cross the bridge. You can then drive up the hill either to the dorm or the tents to upload. After unloading your belongings, please move your vehicle to the bottom of the hill to accommodate others who are arriving.

Late arrivals: If you arrive after 5 pm, please plan to meet the group in the pavilion (or nearby dining hall after 6:00). The program will end after lunch on Sunday.

[See the full schedule here.](#)

Weather:

According to our Walker Valley records, the average daily high temperature for these days in July is 88 degrees F. and the average daily low is 64 degrees F. We will be outside much of the time, rain or shine. Bring a raincoat! The Smokies are very wet and humid- you can *expect precipitation in one form or another* at some point during your stay here.

Logistics:

Please read our latest [COVID-19 guidelines](#) and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. In order to slow the spread of **COVID-19**, please bring a mask and wear it when social distancing is impractical.

Please also refer to "[Your Visit to Tremont](#)" 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. If you'd like to bring a camp chair for the outdoor classroom, you may find that more comfortable than the provided benches. Also bring a [flashlight or headlamp](#) for nighttime herpin', notebook, pencil, and any field guides you like. Recommend sturdy walking shoes/boots, outdoor clothing, and a hat.

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:

Resources to help you prepare for the weekend:

- [Chapter 1: Why Herpetology](#) — Pough, et. al., (2016) *Herpetology*, fourth edition
- [Online resources](#)
- Walker Valley Salamander Key — [Text](#) and [Photos](#)
- [Species profile page](#)

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 15% discount on any merchandise you purchase from our gift shop—this is a great deal - take advantage!

I hope 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