

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Reptiles & Amphibians!** Whether this is your first or eighth course, we hope this is one of many weekends we'll learn and practice naturalist skills together in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. **Please read this letter in full, as it contains essential information for your visit to Tremont.**

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. It's going to be a fun-filled learning experience, full of discovery and wonder.

Instructor:

I am pleased to be your instructor for this workshop. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our [faculty and staff](#).

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 4:00 and 5:00 pm to have enough time to move into the dorm and meet other participants before our 6:00 pm evening meal. When you arrive, head to the Visitor's Center at the Main Office for name tags and check-in. You can then pull up to the pavilion to unload your belongings if you are staying on campus. Please move all vehicles to the blacktop at the bottom of the hill before dinner.

Late arrivals: If you arrive after 5:00 pm, please park on the blacktop across from the activity center next to the field. We will give you your nametag and check-in materials in the pavilion.

[View the full course schedule here.](#)

Parking Passes

Valid parking tags are required on any vehicles parking for longer than 15 minutes inside Great Smoky Mountains National Park as part of the Park it Forward program; this includes when parked at Tremont. **Please purchase your parking tag in advance, not when you arrive.** Click here to [purchase your daily or weekly pass online](#). All revenue will stay in the park to provide sustainable, year-round support focusing on improving the visitor experience, protecting resources, and maintaining trails, roads, historic structures, and facilities. [Learn more about Park it Forward.](#)

Weather – Being Prepared:

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 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 our [latest COVID-19 guidelines](#) prior to your trip and let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Please read the "[Your Visit to Tremont](#)" document 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', a notebook, pencil, and any field guides you like. Recommend sturdy walking shoes/boots, outdoor clothing, and a hat.

Wifi is available in the Activity Center, but 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 following materials ahead of time — 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.

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

Last but Not Least...

We offer a 15% discount to all program participants in our Visitor's Center during the workshop. **Please note that the store will only be open on arrival day.**

I hope that this information is helpful to you in planning for your upcoming visit to Tremont. If you have further questions, please feel free to call or email.

Sincerely,



John DiDiego
Education Director
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