

Consider Field Herping

By Russ Case

January 16, 2009

Try to get into nature and do some field herping. What's the coolest place you've ever gone herping? In REPTILES magazine we often run stories from people who have visited some very interesting places while tracking down reptiles, everywhere from Africa to Australia to Egypt, the Galapagos Islands, Madagascar and beyond.

The intrepidity of these authors has always impressed me. Some of them are young, fit people, but not all. Some of them are older guys who are still out there trekking in some pretty wild areas in the hope of finding their elusive reptilian quarry. I would venture to say that some of them are also, at least not to appearances, in top physical shape.

This goes to show you that herping in the wild can be a great adventure for anybody. I wouldn't advise someone to undertake an extremely strenuous herping trip that could result in their keeling over from sheer exertion, but there are choices as to how you could go about it. Check out local hikes in your vicinity; chances are there are some nature walks that aren't too exerting that might yield some herps.

For the truly adventurous there are ecotours. During these you will venture into wild areas in the company of a professional guide, and guides with vast herp knowledge are out there to lead reptile-related ecotours. Some of these treks can be strenuous, but they may also include hikes that are more palatable to the less physically inclined.

I place myself firmly into this latter category. Since early 2007 I have undertaken a weight loss effort -- as of this writing I've lost 106 pounds -- yet I still in no way consider myself a prime physical specimen (I don't think I can be; at this point I'll be content to leave behind a prime skeleton after I shuffle off this mortal coil). Until I made a concentrated effort to lose weight I was a pretty hefty guy, with a top weight of 330 pounds. And back when I was bigger, even I was able to survive an adventurous ecotour to the Peruvian Amazon, which included its share of mud-slogging, swamp exploring, trail hiking, etc. (not to mention a dizzying variety of herpetofauna and other wildlife).

Perhaps I'll write about my Amazonian adventure in a series of future blogs -- it was definitely the most exotic herping trek I've ever been on. For now I'll simply leave you with this suggestion: Try to get into nature to do some field herping. It's a lot of fun and chances are a trip can be catered to your needs, even if you have some physical limitations.

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