

Guidelines to Wild Pursuits

Supplement and references for the February 2008 REPTILES magazine article "Guidelines to Wild Pursuits."

By Gerold and Cindy Merker

Guide to the Guides

For all levels of expertise a good field guide is essential for correctly identifying reptiles or amphibians. Here are several superb handbooks.

Western Reptiles and Amphibians, Robert Stebbins (2003)

Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America, Roger Conant and Joseph Collins (1998)

Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of the San Diego Region, Jeff Lemm (2006)

A Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles in Arizona, Thomas C. Brennan and Andrew T. Holycross (2006)

Amphibians and Reptiles of New Mexico, Degenhardt et al. (1996)

No Herping on the Road

Looking for reptiles and amphibians on roadways is now illegal in Texas.

Last spring the state legislature passed House Bill 12 (HB 12), placing severe restrictions on driving roads and walking on shoulders while searching for herps among other things.

Most herpers feel this law is punitive, and they do not appreciate how it was enacted. When a similar law, House Bill 2414, first surfaced in the spring of 2007, a nationwide contingency of reptile and amphibian enthusiasts launched a massive letter, e-mail and phone campaign attempting to change the proposed legislation. By midspring 2007, it appeared the legislation would be modified with favorable text taking into account people searching Texas roadways and right of ways in search of herps.

However, Rep. Harvey Hilderbran got around this limitation. Changing the wording to ban collection of reptiles and amphibians on Texas roadways and right of ways, he presented this new resolution to the Texas House of Representatives. It passed. Then Sen. Craig Estes presented a similar resolution in the state Senate, and it passed. Both resolutions gave the conference committee on HB 12 permission to add the pre-amendment version of HB 2414 to HB 12, which was passed at the last possible moment.

What was the conclusion? The ban on collecting reptiles and amphibians from public roads and right of ways was duplicitously added onto another bill and passed into law after the governor signed it. Besides banning roadway herping in Texas, this legislation's ramifications include preventing people from legally moving an animal off the road to safety and preventing institutions from legally collecting roadkill for scientific research.

References

Brennan, Thomas C. and Andrew T. Holycross. 2006. A Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles in Arizona. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, AZ. 145 pp.

Conant, Roger and Joseph T. Collins. 1998. Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York. 616 pp.

Degenhardt, William G., Charles W. Painter and Andrew H. Price. 1996. Amphibians and Reptiles of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM. 431 pp.

Lemm, Jeffrey M. 2006. Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of the San Diego Region. University of California Press; Berkeley, Los Angeles and London. 326 pp.

Stebbins, Robert C. 2003. Western Reptiles and Amphibians. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York. 533 pp.

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