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## Article

### Finding Reptiles and Amphibians - a few tips

by **Nick BAKER**

Category: Technique

**The budding wildlife photographer can choose to specialise in any number of subjects - trees, plants, landscapes, birds, butterflies, spiders, and mammals. My favourite subjects are reptiles and amphibians. The tropical rainforest is full of these creatures but they are masters of camouflage. So how do we go about finding them? Let me share a few tips to improve your chances.**

I would recommend you travel light for these subjects. This will give you mobility and stamina. I take along my 80-210 mm zoom, which is useful for grabbing those first 'insurance' shots before attempting to move in closer to the subject. The only other lens I carry is my 90 mm macro, and of course my flash. I leave my tripod at home.

Stealth and silence are the key for these creatures. Work alone or with just one or two buddies and walk slowly ... very slowly. At night check tree trunks carefully for geckos. Remember that the geckos may have already heard you approaching and may well have moved to the other side of the tree trunk.

Trees with peeling bark are particularly good - geckos hide under the bark by day, and emerge by night. Man-made structures too are favourable for these lizards - check behind signboards, or under the roofs of huts and shelters.

During daytime in the forest the best spots for reptiles are where the sunlight reaches the forest floor, such as in the area of a tree fall. Reptiles are cold-blooded so they are in the habit of sunbathing to raise their body heat. This also makes them more active. Be extra cautious when approaching sunny spots - scan these area carefully for Sun Skinks and snakes before moving in closer.

Frogs and toads are to be found in the smallest ponds or ditches. Their calls can be heard some distance away, however they are notoriously hard to locate. I've used a method of "triangulation" with some success to find frogs. If you have two buddies with you can try this method. Simply surround the general area where you know the frog to be, and when the next call is heard each person should point in the direction the sound came from. The intersection of these three lines should reveal the frog's location.



For snakes a good degree of luck is needed because they are extremely well camouflaged. They can feel the ground vibrations made by an approaching person and will quietly slide away into the forest. Remember, however, that for many snakes a fat juicy frog is an ideal meal. So where there are frogs there are snakes too.

At all times have concern for the welfare of the wildlife. Don't attempt to touch lizards or they may decide to drop their tail. Larger lizards can also give a nasty bite. Frogs and toads should only be handled with wet hands, if at all. As for snakes, treat them with respect and they will cause you no harm.

Lastly, to assist in the preservation of these species keep details of any sightings (time, date, place, habitat, weather etc.). This information, along with a photo, should be forwarded to the Vertebrate Study Group of the Nature Society (Singapore) who compile such records for conservation purposes. Or pass the

sighting records to me and I will forward them to the appropriate person.

#### Image text:

Changeable Lizard - male in breeding colours, Singapore. Kodak Elite Chrome 100 Extra Colour, 90mm Macro.

Common or Four-lined Tree Frog, photographed at Endau-Rompin National Park, Malaysia. Kodak Elite Chrome 100 Extra Colour, 90mm Macro

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