

Mark Moffett

Anyone can have an adventure. What nature photographers have is a whole lifetime of adventures. Just off the top of my head, I clearly remember: in Peru, backing a jeep a quarter mile down an obscenely narrow mountain road flanked by a drop-off of hundreds of feet after meeting a vehicle that was too wide for me to pass . . . accidentally sitting on the New World's most deadly snake, the fer-de-lance, again in Peru . . . crawling a hundred yards on hands and knees while tracking an ant column in Thailand, to suddenly realize I had accidentally sneaked up on a bull elephant that loomed overhead . . . being among the first to visit one of Venezuela's flat-topped *tepu* mountains (subject of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World*) . . . crouching out of view in the back of a taxi to get past protesters burning American flags in the southern Philippines the day Benigno



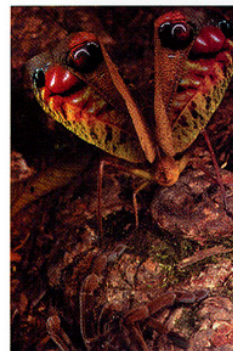
Wandering spider explores Aztec skull, Oaxaca, Mexico

Aquino was shot . . . vaulting the front steps of a cheap Australian hotel to avoid the amazing hordes of leaping fleas that hung out there . . . for a photo, persuading a girlfriend to provoke a huge spider into throwing its toxic hairs at her at night while we waded in a crocodile-infested swamp in Guinea . . . watching an ape climb down from the trees to unbutton another girlfriend's dress in Malaysia (she had made the mistake of wearing "orangutan orange") . . . using tribal blowguns for self-defense against smugglers in Colombia . . . being driven out of a tree by a spectacled bear, again in Colombia . . . searching a Montana cave for ice-loving beetles on Christmas Day . . . hunting the world's largest tarantula for dinner with a shaman in the

Orinoco basin . . . tagging behind two Texan spelunkers to stumble upon an Aztec burial chamber in a cave inhabited by giant spiders . . . having my helicopter dive down into the trees of a rainforest interior to avoid a severe storm in Brazil . . . being caught in stampedes of both Asian and African elephants in the same week . . .



Male tarantula seeks a mate, Joshua Tree National Park, Arizona



Giant katydid confronts tarantula, Iquitos, Peru

attempting to concentrate on insects at a topless beach resort, the only place my colleague and I could find to stay for a night in Mauritius . . . having a tent washed from around me by a nocturnal flash flood in Chile . . . being surprised by a tiger in Nepal that leaped out of the forest in front of us to kill a spotted deer . . . realizing a companion had collapsed from heat exposure as the temperature hit 132°F in Paraguay . . . in Namibia, learning it is right to be suspicious when a !Kung bushman says something is within "walking distance" . . . discovering two new ant species while on a tour of a Balinese temple . . . having a tethered horse killed and eaten by lions in Kenya . . . watching the cook flay live snakes at a restaurant in Vietnam . . . eating scorpions in China, rats in Africa, and beetle larvae on five continents . . . arguing with

Iranian militia at 3:00 A.M. while chasing scorpions near the Afghan border . . . descending with a flashlight into tombs in Egypt's Valley of the Kings to photograph hieroglyphs . . . sitting in Darwin's writing chair to study his beetle collection at his house in Downe, England . . . remaining motionless for a painful seven-hour stretch, arms furry with mosquitoes, hardly daring to breathe while waiting for a caterpillar to stalk an aphid in a swamp in Japan . . . seeing a centipede in Trinidad that was so huge it yanked stones out of the roadbed during its death throes after our jeep ran over it . . . having my safety harness snap open while climbing a hundred feet up a rope in a tree to photograph biologist (and doctoral mentor) Edward O. Wilson in Panama . . . tracking down the world's largest dung beetle in South Africa, largest frog in Cameroon, and largest cricket in New Zealand . . . living in India for six months on a \$100 traveler's check . . . and, along with my teammates, being the first to ascend the world's loftiest tree, a California redwood 365 feet tall . . . and managing somehow to never be sick along the way and to keep my total lifetime excess baggage expenses below \$500. . . But I've rambled on so long there's probably no room left for any of my pictures.



Antler flies lock "horns," Papua New Guinea