

Georgia teen's love of "herping" gains him a following on TikTok

USA Today

Required Annotations	Student-Created Annotations	Summary / Questions / Reflection
Student-created		Required (bold)



As Tim Holland walked along a creek, a large black snake suddenly slid out from a bush. He was **ecstatic**.

When the snake slithered up a hill and through tall grass at incredible speed, Holland dropped his bag and ran for it. He stopped halfway up, slowing his pace as he followed the snake, which was only visible by the grass moving about 3 feet in front of him. When he reached the top of the hill, the snake had escaped, but Holland had won the thrill of the experience.

Holland is 18 years old and a senior at Lucy Craft Laney High School in Augusta, Georgia. Some of his friends think Holland is crazy for what he does, but herping (the practice of searching for reptiles and amphibians) has become his passion.

A Love For Cold-Blooded Creatures

Ever since he was young, Tim Holland has loved animals, particularly the cold-blooded kind. He decided to try herping in 2020 but said the first time was "low-key hard" because he didn't know exactly where the animals were.

After doing more research on local animals and their natural habitats, he went back out and found his first reptile: a kingsnake, a **nonvenomous** species commonly found in Georgia.

"It was cool," he said. "I know there's a lot of people that's not gonna get to see this. It's a cool experience."

Experience and hands-on education have taught Holland a lot since then. He now knows the hot spots for particular breeds of frogs, lizards, bugs and other creatures, and has developed a sharp eye. As he walked along the trails with a reporter, he found a skink that was so small and so camouflaged, that it was

practically invisible until it started moving. Skinks are a type of lizard.

Sharing His Love Of Herping

After a while, some of Holland's friends tried out herping too. It was one of these friends, Ro Smith, that inspired him to start a TikTok page about herping.

It took some convincing, but Holland eventually decided to try it and started his TikTok page, which he named Nukherping (Nuk is a nickname). He posted his first video in February 2021. The overall format is pretty simple: Holland shows an animal he has found, says a bit about it, then repeats. The channel has slowly become very popular, with his biggest video gaining more than 2 million views in early April.

As of April 28, 2022, the channel had nearly 102,000 followers and almost 750,000 "likes." Holland said it's gotten so big that fans have started asking him for merchandise with his logos and phrases he says like "That's a pretty cool find." He is currently designing them.

"It makes me happy," Holland said of his TikTok channel. He encourages others to "find something that you love to do, not just go the route that people keep telling others to do."

Animal Safety

Though his videos are laid back, Holland takes herping safety very seriously and says his audience should take it seriously, too.

Holland keeps a distance from any venomous or otherwise dangerous animals he finds and adds warnings to videos with such creatures, telling his viewers "do not try this at home." He also carries supplies such as hand sanitizer, gloves and snake sticks to ensure safety and cleanliness.

He's taking the smart approach, according to Katie Cheeks, an exotic veterinarian at St. Francis Animal Hospital in Augusta, Georgia. Cheeks said that herpers should be cautious, and she strongly recommended that explorers wear closed-toe shoes and long pants, long sleeves and gloves when handling animals.

"The best practice is not to handle the animal unless necessary," advises Amanda L. Hurst. She is an animal caretaker and outreach educator with the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory. Amphibians have thin skin and can absorb the oils, salts and remnants of chemicals on your hands, which could make them sick, Hurst said.

You might be inspired to give herping a try, but Holland **stressed** that no one should interact with wild animals unless they have educated themselves on what they are seeing and how to safely engage with them. Otherwise, just look, don't touch.

Holland's Next Adventure

Holland hopes to travel after graduation so he can check off some of the animals on his "must-see" list. When he chased that snake up a hill, he said it was because he thought it was an indigo snake, which is on his list, but it turned out to be a common Eastern racer snake. Some of his other "must-sees" include the

scarlet kingsnake and the coachwhip.

Holland plans to study zoology with a focus on **herpetology**, or the study of reptiles and amphibians, at North Greenville University in South Carolina. He will also play on the soccer team there.

Holland's mother, Latasha, said she supports her son. A lot of young men like him are not into things like herping, she said, and she hopes he can inspire and educate other young Black boys and Black girls.

"I think that's gonna be very interesting, and it's also something that's going to be good for the community," she said.

1. Read the paragraph from the section "Sharing His Love Of Herping."

It took some convincing, but Holland eventually decided to try it and started his TikTok page, which he named Nukherping (Nuk is a nickname). He posted his first video in February 2021. The overall format is pretty simple: Holland shows an animal he has found, says a bit about it, then repeats. The channel has slowly become very popular, with his biggest video gaining more than 2 million views in early April.

What can be inferred from this paragraph?

- a) Tim Holland's TikTok channel has had 2 million visitors since February 2021.
- b) Tim Holland repeats too much animal content on his TikTok channel.
- c) Tim Holland was an instant sensation when he started posting videos on TikTok.
- d) Tim Holland was initially reluctant to post herping videos on TikTok.

2. Read the list of sentences from the article.

- 1. He encourages others to "find something that you love to do, not just go the route that people keep telling others to do."
- 2. You might be inspired to give herping a try, but Holland stressed that no one should interact with wild animals unless they have educated themselves on what they are seeing and how to safely engage with them.
- 3. Holland plans to study zoology with a focus on herpetology, or the study of reptiles and amphibians, at North Greenville University in South Carolina.
- 4. A lot of young men like him are not into things like herping, she said, and she hopes he can inspire and educate other young Black boys and Black girls.
- 5. Which two sentences taken together provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that Tim Holland can be a role model to others?

- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1 and 4
- d) 2 and 3
- e) 3 and 4

3. How are the opinions of Katie Cheeks and Amanda L. Hurst connected?

- a) They both describe the dangers that humans pose to amphibians.
- b) They both offer advice on how to safely practice herping.
- c) Hurst thinks Holland is too young for herping, but Cheeks thinks he is being smart about it.
- d) Hurst thinks Holland is handling animals unsafely, but Cheeks thinks he is being safe.

4. Which option would BEST describe Tim Holland's reaction to his encounter with the large black snake?

- a) The thrill of the encounter helped make herping his passion.
- b) He realized he needed to keep a safe distance from snakes.
- c) Recording the thrilling encounter made him an instant TikTok celebrity.
- d) The encounter made him decide to study herpetology in college.