



Dr. Mark Moffett

Doctor Bugs

From the top of the world's largest tree to deep in unexplored caves, Mark Moffett is an explorer, ecologist and photojournalist whose subject matter are those things in nature that creep, crawl and slime throughout the planet.

An acclaimed academic with a laundry list of awards, Mark says, "first and foremost, I am a storyteller." To get those stories, Mark has eaten scorpions, spiders and grubs with the native peoples of five continents, ascended a tree to escape bull elephants, discovered an Aztec burial chamber crawling with blind cave tarantulas, tracked down a frog so lethal, their touch can kill, used blowguns in defense against Columbian drug lords and accidentally sat on a fer-de-lance, the deadliest snake of the Americas.

As a Research Associate in Entomology at the Smithsonian Institution, Mark investigates two fields: the ecology of forest canopies and the behavior of social insects, especially ants. He has served as Associate Curator of Entomology (in charge of the world's largest ant collection) and Research Associate in Entomology at the Museum of Comparative Zoology and the Peabody Museum, both at Harvard University. Mark is a Visiting Scholar at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and an Associate Curator at the Essig Museum, both at the University of California, Berkeley.

Mark was fortunate to receive his Ph.D. under famed conservationist Edward O. Wilson at Harvard. Wilson once famously remarked about Mark, "I don't know why you're still alive."

With more than 24 National Geographic articles to his credit, Mark has had another 500 of his photographs featured in that publication. He was awarded the 2008 Poynter Fellowship in Journalism from Yale University, the Bowdoin Medal, Harvard's most prestigious prize for writing, the Lowell Thomas Award from the Explorers' Club, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Science Museum of Long Island, and the 6th Distinguished Explorer Award from the Roy Chapman Andrews Society.

Awards aside, Mark is just as happy sparring intellectually in his many appearances on Late Night with Conan O'Brien and The Colbert Report with his many-legged or no-legged friends along for the ride.

Praise for Mark's storytelling come from no less a celebrity than two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Edward Wilson himself. "Mark has the soul of a 19th-century explorer, a wandering naturalist in the tradition of Darwin and Wallace." National Geographic calls him "The Indiana Jones of Entomology."

According to Mary Smith, Senior Assistant Editor at National Geographic Magazine, "You haven't lived until you've seen Mark imitate courtship displays of a jumping spider or praying mantis. The way Jane Goodall looks at chimpanzees is the way Mark looks at bugs, ants, and spiders."