

Ma On Shan district office is thinking of making deer the symbol for their district. At least ten deer can be observed there at night, close to the iron quarry. They are also looking into the possibility of captive breeding the deer. (**Oriental Daily 29.11.02**)

A study by the AFCD has documented rich animal and plant diversity in Tai Tam Country Park, including barking deer, wild boar and Chinese leopard cat. Twenty percent of the 540 man-made 'bird holes' there are now occupied by birds, and AFCD is planning larger ones for owls. (**Apple Daily 1.12.02**)

South African abalone is being massively poached by gangs controlled by Hong Kong triads. Once plentiful along the coast near Cape Town, abalone is now on the brink of extinction. Coastal areas where the shellfish is found have been taken over by poachers who intimidate locals and tourists. The illicit money this has brought is fuelling drugs trade and crime there. Triads branched into abalone smuggling due to lower competition, having previously smuggled poached shark fins. (**SCMP 1.12.02**)

PUBLICATION REVIEW

Hong Kong Biodiversity: better than Porcupine!?

by Richard T. Corlett

For more than 20 years, conservation and Country Parks in Hong Kong were the responsibility of a government department, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, which considered these activities of too little significance to feature in its name. Agriculture and fisheries currently employ, respectively, 0.16% and 0.35% of Hong Kong's population, so the addition of Conservation to the name in year 2000, in recognition of the department's major function, was inevitable. Now the conservation tail wags the AFCD dog, and not only in the name. Over the last few years, there has been an explosion of new activity in both the Country and Marine Parks Branch, which manages the protected area system, and the Conservation Branch, which is responsible for conservation elsewhere in Hong Kong. There have been variety of conservation initiatives, a lively new website, and a lot of new publications, some of which have been reviewed in previous issues of *Porcupine!*

It is therefore with great pleasure that we welcome a new addition to the AFCD's growing publication list – and a potential rival to *Porcupine!* - *Hong Kong Biodiversity*. *Hong*

Kong Biodiversity is targeted principally at AFCD staff involved in the department's ongoing Biodiversity Survey, but it deserves a far wider circulation among Hong Kong's conservation community. So far, there is only a single, 16-page publication, consisting of the first three issues combined together. With its glossy paper and colour pictures, it looks, I must admit, more attractive than our environmentally friendly *Porcupine!*, but it has basically the same mix of contents: long articles (auto-trigger cameras, the history of Country Parks, an egret survey) and short items reporting new species records (two butterflies, *Acraea issoria* and *Chilasa agestor restricta*, and a bird, the Red-throated Diver), interesting sightings (Greater Painted Snipe breeding in an artificially created wetland), or survey results (fish in Country Parks). Rather surprisingly, most of the text is in English, with only summaries in Chinese. The contents reveal a knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, Hong Kong's native biodiversity that would have been unthinkable a few years ago, when such trivial things as wild species were left to amateurs and academics, while the department got on with its real job of collecting litter, fighting fires and planting exotic trees.

How can you get hold of a copy? At present, there appear to be no plans for *Hong Kong Biodiversity* to be circulated widely outside the AFCD, so I don't think I should reveal the Editor's name or email address in case he is swamped with requests from *Porcupine!*'s vast (?) readership. If you really need a copy, ask a friend in AFCD to smuggle one out. I hope that they will at least put future issues on their website. Hong Kong is big enough for both of us (and we are still the only local conservation publication with an exclamation mark in the name).

AFCD (2002). *Hong Kong Biodiversity: Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department Newsletter, Issues No. 1-3*. Hong Kong.

