

increasing the appeal of this volume to local divers. He is also to be commended for recording a number of new species for Hong Kong waters such as the Coral hawkfish (*Cirrhitichthys oxycephalus*), Dusky batfish (*Platax pinnatus*), Brassy chub (*Kyphosus vaigiensis*), Saddleback hogfish (*Bodianus bilunulatus*) and Kner's wrasse (*Halichoeres kneri*). More critically, I would question the wisdom of listing the fishes in alphabetical order of the scientific family name as, i) few divers will be familiar with these and, ii) closely related families such as the wrasses and parrotfishes do not appear together. There are also a small number of misidentifications, a juvenile Moon wrasse (*Thalassoma lunare*) has been identified as another labrid (*Halichoeres tenuispinis*), one of the pictures of Yellowstreaked snapper (*Lutjanus lemniscatus*) is not of that species (*Lutjanus vitta* perhaps ?), and Keith's exciting new record of Alligator pipefish (*Syngnathoides biaculeatus*) is labelled as *Syngnathus schlegeli*. As the latter is correctly identified on an AFCD website (www.hk-fish.net) I assume this is an unfortunate oversight.



Fig.1. *Plectropomus leopardus* (photo: Andy Cornish)

Such quibbles are minor, however, compared with some of the unsubstantiated claims about ARs in Hong Kong made in this book. For the sake of space and to avoid rehashing old debates I'll stick to those on reproduction and comparisons with natural reefs. A significant number of commercially important species are noted as forming "spawning groups" giving the impression that many such species are reproducing all over the ARs. Fishes aggregate for many reasons and it is near impossible to know why without observing spawning rushes and release of eggs and sperm, careful examination of caught fishes or other direct evidence of spawning such as egg masses (as is noted for some damselfishes). Without such evidence, claims for reproduction are premature, especially when some of the species involved are found in schools most of the time anyway. In addition, it is unlikely that aggregations of Leopard Coral trout (*Plectropomus leopardus*) on one AR are a spawning aggregation as is hypothesized. The first juveniles of this species settled on the ARs in May 2000 (Management Services to the Environment Ltd. 2001), but studies from Australia have shown females take at least 2 years to reach sexual maturity and males take at least 3 (see www.fishbase.org for summary) so the first time those individuals could be expected to spawn is summer 2003.

Even more dubious is the claim, based on monitoring carried out within the Yan Chau Tong and Hoi Ha Wan Marine Parks, that "Artificial reefs support higher numbers of medium and high value fish than both rocky shore and mud bottom control sites." In no way can the rocky reef sites used be considered as proper controls. A control site should be as similar in every practical way to the "treatment" site, bar the treatment itself, but the rocky reef "controls" were at different depth (0-5 m compared with 5-16 m on the ARs). The lack of physically similar natural reefs nearby to use as controls for the ARs is acknowledged in the AR monitoring report (Management Services to the Environment Ltd. 2001), "the lack of appropriate control sites ensured that the formulation of unambiguous and testable null hypotheses was not possible" but no mention is made of these misgivings when the monitoring data were analyzed to produce conclusions that are repeated in this book. In reality the "control" sites are so different from the artificial reefs that comparisons are not only meaningless, but worse, misleading. Furthermore, natural reefs in these 2 marine parks are fished by hundreds of licensed fishers, while the ARs are supposed to be unfished under a "gentleman's agreement."

Overall, this book has many redeeming features but I was disappointed by the flimsiness of some of the evidence being put forward to justify this 100 million dollar programme to the public.

Andy Cornish

Management Services to the Environment Ltd. (2001). SCUBA Fisheries Assessment of the Artificial Reefs – Final Report. Contract AFCD/ARD/M/98-2. pp 36 plus Figures.

WILD CORNER

Any sightings of civets, mongooses, ferret badgers, leopard cats, barking deer, pangolins and porcupines – live or dead – should be reported. Rare birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, or unusual behaviour by common species, are also of interest, as are rare or interesting invertebrates and plants. If you think it is interesting, our readers probably will! Please give dates, times and localities as accurately as possible

MAMMALS

Annika Walters saw a **Porcupine** (*Hystrix brachyura*) at around 6.30 am on the verge of Route Twisk road around mid-February 2003.

On 9 February 2003, at about 5.45 pm, Robert Davison saw a large adult **Barking Deer** (*Muntiacus* sp.) crossing a footpath between Lion Rock and Amah Rock in the south central New Territories. It was moving up the hillside, feeding slowly as it went. This is a wooded area, with dense secondary forest and undergrowth on steep slopes.

A **Barking Deer** (*Muntiacus* sp.) was sighted by Ian Roper in the late afternoon of 26 June 2002 at Tai Po Kau Forest Reserve. Barking Deer were also heard on the mornings of 12 December 2002 at Hok Tau side of Cloudy Hill (near Tai Po) and on 28 December 2002 above Wu Kau Tang (Plover Cove Country Park).

Rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) in Shing Mun Country Park were observed tearing off bark of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and searching through it (possibly for insects) on 27 January 2003 by Sukh Mantel.

Ian Roper saw **Porcupines** (*Hystrix brachyura*) on the following evenings: two adults on 17 April 2002 in Sam A Chung (Plover Cove Country Park); one on 19 July 2002 in Tai Po Kau Forest Reserve; one on 4 September 2002 in Lam Tsuen Valley near Tai Po; one on 20 September 2002 on Tai Mo Shan.

One **Chinese Pangolin** (*Manis pentadactyla*) was seen by Ian Roper on the morning of 11 May 2002 in Tai Po Kau Forest Reserve.

Ian Roper saw one **Ferret-Badger** (*Melogale moschata*) on the evening of 12 June 2002 and a **Masked Palm Civet** (*Paguma larvata*) on the morning of 27 April 2002 in the foothills of Kai Kung Leng (Lam Tsuen Country Park).

Vijaykrishna Dhanasekaran saw a half metre long **Masked Palm Civet** (*Paguma larvata*) at 11.57 pm on 17 March 2003 near the service lift of on the ground floor of Kadoorie Biological Sciences Building (HKU). It ran off towards the spiral stairs upon being sighted.

Ian Roper sighted **Wild Boars** (*Sus scrofa*) as follows: one adult and two young on the morning of 26 January 2002 in Lam Tsuen Valley; one on morning of 23 February 2002 in Tin Fu Tsai (Tai Lam Country Park); two adults and two young on the evening of 19 June 2002 in Tai Po Kau Forest Reserve; one on the morning of 14 October 2002 in Sha Lo Tung near Tai Po; one on the evening of 22 October 2002 on Kap Lun Trail (Tai Lam Country Park); one adult and two young on the evening of 4 December 2002 above Kowloon Reservoir; one on the evening of 11 December 2002 on Bride's Pool Road near Tai Po.

Kylie Chung caught a 45-55 cm long **Javan Mongoose** (*Herpestes javanicus*) near the roadside of Tai Mo Shan on 26 November 2002. Some insect remains and more than 40 intact *Rhodomyrtus tomentosa* seeds were found in its droppings along with some whitish grey long hair, which did not seem to belong to the mongoose. On 21 February, Katie Chick trapped a 60 cm long (including tail) **Javan Mongoose** (*Herpestes javanicus*) in a wire cage trap in an open grassland near Pak Ngau Shek. On 26 February, she came across a **Barking Deer** (*Muntiacus* sp.) at the site around 11.00 am. The deer looked quite large, around 120 cm tall. It immediately fled on seeing her.

BIRDS

A **Streaked Spiderhunter** (*Arachnothera magna*) was seen by Kwok Hon Kai in old woodland in Chatham Path, near Barker Road at the Peak on 24 January 2003 and 20 February 2003. The bird did not have a blue nape, but was streaked on both the back and the belly. The bird flocked with two **Black Bulbuls** (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*) on both occasions. There is at least one previous local record of this species in Ng Tung Chai (M. Kilburn, pers. comm.). Since this species is not known to migrate, the bird was believed to be an escape (R. Lewthwaite, pers. comm.). The eastern limit of distribution for Streaked Spiderhunters is western Guangxi. Kai has never seen this species in the bird market.

On 12 March 2003 Kwok Hon Kai saw two **Oriental Pratincoles** (*Glareola maldivarum*) at Lut Chau. He saw another 14 in a drained fish pond in San Tin on 21 March, and also a **Eurasian Hoopoe** (*Upupa epops*) on Po Toi Island on 22 Mar 2003.

Jose Cheung and Captain Wong saw one juvenile **Mugimaki Flycatcher** (*Ficedula mugimaki*) with about 10 **Japanese White-eyes** (*Zosterops japonicus*) feeding on fruits of *Mallotus paniculatus* at the entrance of Kowloon Hill catchment on 1 January 2003. It is unusual (but not unknown) for flycatchers to eat fruit.

Kwok Hon Kai saw a flock of 20 **Red-rumped Swallows** (*Hirundo daurica*) feeding at a fishpond in San Tin on 9 December 2002.

A **Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*), an **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*) and a **Eurasian Black Vulture** (*Aegypius monachus*) were seen soaring at the same time by Kwok Hon Kai at Lok Ma Chau on 6 March 2003.

Kwok Hon Kai noticed one **Black-headed Bunting** (*Emberiza melanocephala*) in Tai Sang Wai on 13 February 2003.



Fig. 1. Black-headed Bunting (*Emberiza melanocephala*)

Kwok Hon Kai saw a flock of six **Azure-winged Magpies** (*Cyanopica cyanus*) on a fishpond bund at Lok Ma Chau on 6 March 03. Solitary birds (presumably from the same flock) were frequently seen near the Peter Scott Centre at Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve between November 2002 and February 2003. The Azure-winged Magpie is an escaped/released species, first noted at the ZBG on Hong Kong Island in 1975, where a small and extremely sedentary population bred for

several years before dying out. Their native range is northern and eastern China (Carey et al. 2001).

AMPHIBIANS/REPTILES

James Hopkinson came across a **Burmese Python** at least 3 m long (*Python molurus bivittatus*) at around 10.30 pm on 15 December 2002, on the road between Shek O and Central.

Emma Long, Cecily Law, Roger Kendrick, Will Trewella, Kevin Caley and Jacqui Weir noticed eggs of the **Hong Kong Cascade Frog** (*Amolops hongkongensis*) on rocks under the largest waterfall at Ng Tung Chai. The eggs were seen on 23 March 2003.

PLANTS

Billy Hau and Katie Chick found a very peculiar flowering tree along Black's Link on 13 February. It was later identified by Ng Sai Chit as the rare *Sycopsis dunnii*. No flower specimen has ever been collected for this species in Hong Kong. It was previously recorded on Ma On Shan, Tai Mo Shan, Tan Chuk Hang and Sunset Peak. This represents a lowland record (330 m) of this montane forest species and the first for Hong Kong Island.



Fig. 2. *Sycopsis dunnii* (Copyright: Billy Hau)

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