

approved, and much of it appears dedicated to capital construction. Some of the budget was approved for buildings, roads and landscaping from 1998 through 2003. Funding for construction and operations after 2003 has yet to be approved. MNNR generates income at a rate of RMB¥20-30,000 per month from tourist gate receipts. This is enough to feed 12 tigers but provides little extra for salaries and other operating expenses (RMB 8.1 yuan = US\$1).

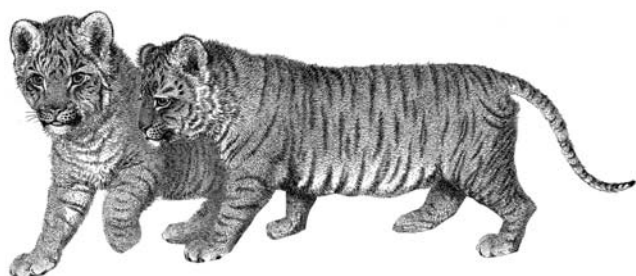
The two cubs born on 20 July were the first litter for tiger number 4. They were rejected by their mother and were reared for a few weeks by Tiger Centre personnel. This is a challenge, most importantly in terms of food supply. While goat milk was being used as a short-term substitute for tiger milk I shipped Feline Veterinary Diet™ Kitten Nursing Support™ (Waltham®) on my return to Hong Kong. Unfortunately the cubs died before the milk replacer arrived.

The China Action Plan for Saving the South China Tiger (SFA 2001) put the captive South China Tiger population at 62 in June 2000. Since 1998 the Meihuashan population has doubled in size. The SFA (*ibid.*) target for the captive population at Meihuashan was “at least 10 captive-bred ...cubs before 2007 and [to] prepare an integrated habitat of over 600 square kilometers before 2010 for reintroduction back to nature”. Meihuashan has already bred 6 cubs at the Tiger Center and an additional litter was expected in mid-August 2003. This indicates that the breeding program is ahead of schedule and that the emphasis at Meihuashan could shift away from breeding and rearing to preparation of habitats for release of tigers into the wild. This is probably the greater challenge because decades of over-hunting have left little tiger prey in most reserves in south China, probably including MNNR. The 467 ha Tiger Center has adequate land area and high-quality habitat to take the first step toward releasing tigers into the wild. SFA (2001) includes budgets for 5 km of fence, rehabilitation of abandoned farmland, and prey re-introduction. However, a critical shift in thinking will be required at MNNR before release of tigers can begin. The Tiger Centre must become a place where tourists are protected in fenced enclosures and tigers are set free: At present these roles are reversed.

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Losing a leaflet: why “*Schefflera octophylla*” is *Schefflera heptaphylla*

by Richard T. Corlett

Schefflera octophylla (Lour.) Harms. (Araliaceae) is probably the best-known native tree species in Hong Kong. Apart from being exceedingly common, it is instantly recognizable by its palmately compound leaves, with 5-10 leaflets radiating from the end of the stalk. The specific epithet “*octophylla*” means “eight leaves”, which is a good way of remembering the plant if you know Greek (or the Greek if you know the plant). Now for the bad news. In 1990, David Frodin, the undisputed world expert on *Schefflera*, published a paper showing that our tree should actually be called *Schefflera heptaphylla* (L.) Frodin, with the specific epithet now meaning “seven leaves”. The full story (Frodin, 1990) is long and complicated, but the essential facts are clear and the picture of the type specimen will convince any doubters. The original name for this specimen was published by Linnaeus in 1771 as *Vitis heptaphylla*. He described it as a climber – although nothing on the specimen itself suggests this – and this may have influenced his decision to place it in the grape genus, *Vitis* (Vitaceae), which, in any case, he considered to be close to the ivy genus, *Hedera* (Araliaceae). Linnaeus did not mention a source or collector, but simply gave its origin as “in India orientali”. Later, however, it came to be believed that this supposed Asian origin was an error and the specimen then became (incorrectly) associated with an American species of *Schefflera*, until Frodin recognized it as the plant long known as *Schefflera octophylla*. The Linnaean name was published 19 years before Loureiro’s and so has precedence.



Fig. 1 *Schefflera heptaphylla*

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SWIMS tidings....



This is the start of a new section to *Porcupine!* in which we shall provide a regular update on activities at SWIMS (Swire Institute of Marine Science). As most of you may know there have been some pretty major changes at SWIMS over the last few months. The Institute has, thanks to the generosity of The Swire Group and matching funds from the University, undergone an extensive refurbishment. This is going hand-in-hand with a change in staff and a new influx of postgraduates.

The renovation has involved connecting the laboratory, and most importantly for all our residents, the residence block to the mains freshwater supply. Within the Institute we have extensively upgraded the aquarium and seawater system. Now, thanks to a consultants report, we have a much-improved water supply, having removed the high sediment loads which were a constant problem. The aquarium has been gutted and a more flexible system installed including separate rooms for controlled experimental work. The main laboratory has been totally renovated and redesigned to provide greater working space per student, as well as to rationalize the central facilities such as the chemical stores, ovens, freezers etc. This has also freed up the old small laboratory, now remodelled as a molecular/analytical facility. Along with these major renovations, SWIMS has had a face-lift, with a new reception area and external façade, and further improvements in the seminar room. More good news for our resident postgrads is that we have been able to renovate the old residence block – and also plan to install Broadband connections.

In line with the renovation there has also been a change of personnel as Prof Morton has retired and left Hong Kong. Drs Kenny Leung and Cynthia Yau have just been appointed as

new Assistant Professors who join Dr Benny Chan as part of the research team at SWIMS. These staff are joined by a number of new (and not so new) postgraduates who are now able to either start, or return to, their work at SWIMS following the renovations. With the new facilities and the fresh start we plan to report on the research and other activities in future issues of *Porcupine!*

The new renovations are nearing completion. The official university opening will take place sometime in late October – dependent on the availability of senior members of The Swire Group and HKUs Vice Chancellor. There will, however, soon be an “unofficial opening” to thank everyone for their help and support over the last year or so and to celebrate the new SWIMS with friends and colleagues at DEB. I hope many *Porcupine!* readers will be able to attend both the formal and informal meetings that we plan at SWIMS over the next year and onwards into the future...!

Gray A. Williams
Hon. Director SWIMS

DIVERSITY AT A GLANCE

This column aims to introduce interesting species of Hong Kong flora and fauna that might be encountered during fieldwork. Distinctive physical characteristics and some interesting ecological facts are included for each example.

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“*Desmos*” by Ada Ng

Desmos Lour. is a small genus in the pantropical plant family Annonaceae. This genus comprises about 25-30 species. They are either climbers or scandent shrubs that often have leaves that are glaucous below. Some species have edible fruits while some are commonly used as folk medicines in Asian countries.

One *Desmos* species, *D. chinensis*, is found in Hong Kong. It is a spreading shrub in shady places and may develop into a higher climber. This species is widespread in Asia and northern Australia. The plants are commonly found in thickets and hedges in Victoria Peak, Pokfulam Country Park, Tai Mo Shan, Tai Po Kau, Sai Kung, Lantau Island, Lamma Island etc. The flowers open between April and July and fruit can be observed from June to March of the following year.

Phenology

The solitary flower is pendent on a pedicel and often terminal or supra-axillary. Each flower consists of three sepals and six valvate petals in two whorls. The outer three petals are longer