



Fig. 3. Barking deer carcass from feral dog kill at KFBG's Apiary, 3 Feb. 2005.

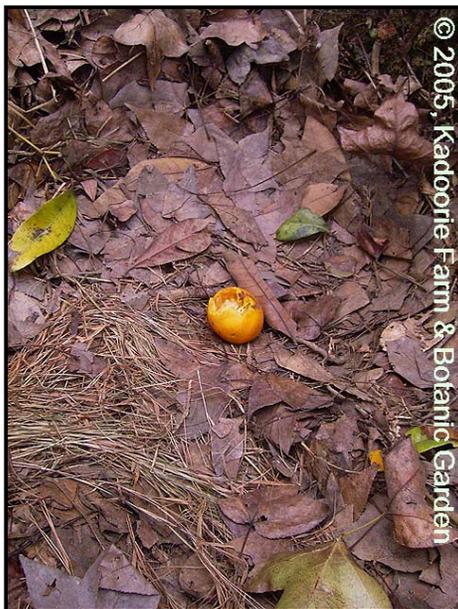
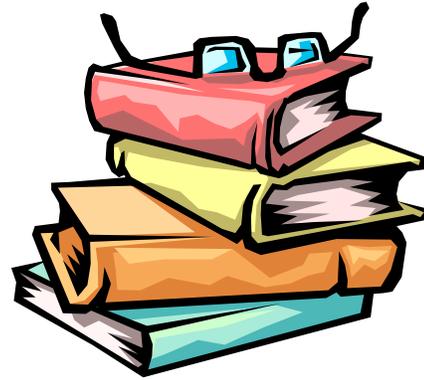


Fig. 4. Deer's resting site, with food item,



Fig. 5. Severe ulcer in eye – a possible reason why this animal was predated. (Photos: Paul Crow)



BOOK REVIEWS

Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Hong Kong 2nd Edition

by Keith D.P. Wilson, 383 pages, softcover.
Cosmos Books Ltd, Hong Kong, 2004

The first edition of this landmark field guide, which appeared in the shops late last year, went completely unremarked in *Porcupine!* That is unfortunate, since this book, now in its second edition, has set a new standard for field guides of the local fauna.

The author, Keith Wilson, worked in Hong Kong for the Agriculture, Conservation and Fisheries Department from 1991 until 2003, and it is under the auspices of AFCD that this fine field guide has been published. The book was written in collaboration with AFCD's Dragonfly Working Group, whose survey work has resulted in four new species records for Hong Kong, including one undescribed gomphid, since its establishment in 2001. However, no-one should be under any doubt that this book is first and foremost the result of one man's efforts.

Wilson's first book on the subject (*Hong Kong Dragonflies*) was published in 1995 and listed 102 species for the territory. It was a truly ground-breaking work, with no local antecedents, but its large, floppy landscape format, coupled with the fact that species descriptions rarely appeared on the same page as their photographs, made it confoundedly unwieldy, and hopeless as a field guide. This was followed in 2002 by the mystifyingly pointless *Hong Kong Flying Colour: Dragonflies* booklet - another AFCD collaboration (and I beseech them not to repeat it) - which contained photographs of most Hong Kong species, but no text. The peril of producing this kind of anti-information, with no clues on habitat associations or diagnostic features of particular species, was brought sharply into relief for me when I reviewed the results of a dragonfly survey conducted in a disturbed lowland pond and marsh mosaic by an environmental consultant who had made his identifications from the photographs in *Flying Colour*: many dragonflies look superficially similar, and the hapless consultant had included several stream specialists and many other highly

improbable species in his impressive-looking but tragically-flawed list.

Fortunately, such calamitous failures of identification should now be a thing of the past, as anybody armed with *Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Hong Kong*, and a good dose of common sense, ought to be capable of making a decent fist of putting a name to most dragonflies they encounter in Hong Kong. An impressive total of 112 species has now been recorded in the SAR, and all of them are illustrated in this 2nd edition. Good, clear photographs of adult males and females are provided in most cases, along with useful information on distinguishing features, biometrics, habitat and distribution. This information is backed up with excellent, user-friendly keys to adults at sub-order, family, genus and species levels. There is also a handy pull-out photo index, a check-list, and a section on additional species which could be expected to occur locally. The layout is compact and attractive. Best of all, it fits easily into a field bag. One could wish for a more robust, hard-back production, and a less cursory treatment of the larvae, but otherwise this has all that one might reasonably ask of a field guide to adult dragonflies.

Graham Reels

Hong Kong Butterflies

by Philip Yik-fui Lo and Wing-leung Hui,
571 pages, softcover. Cosmos Books Ltd,
Hong Kong, 2004.

In terms of the amount that has been written about them, Hong Kong butterflies are right up there with the birds. Certainly, no other insect group has received anything remotely approaching the attention that has been given to this small component of the Lepidoptera. I can think of at least ten books on the subject over the past four decades, including such major texts as Marsh's *Hong Kong Butterflies* (1968), Johnston & Johnston's *This is Hong Kong: Butterflies* (1980), Young & Yiu's *Butterfly Watching in Hong Kong* (2002) and, of course, the magnificent (and unrivalled) *The Butterflies of Hong Kong* by Bascombe, Johnston and Bascombe (1999). So the authors of *Hong Kong Butterflies* have built their attractive and impressive guide on a well-established foundation, and certainly could not have produced such a comprehensive text without the work of their accomplished predecessors.

Sadly, you would not know this from reading the book, which somehow manages to give the impression that the serious study of butterflies in Hong Kong began when AFCD belatedly took an interest in them in 2001 (there is a limited bibliography, but I could not find a single citation in the text outside of the brief sections on vagrants and suspected species). This failure to give due credit is perplexing. Some rather spurious "firsts" are claimed for the book on the back cover ("first butterfly guidebook in Hong Kong complete with information on 238 local species"; never-before-published species photographs) but in truth only one "first" can plausibly be claimed: Lo and Hui's *Hong Kong Butterflies* is

the first major local text on this attractive group of insects to be published in field guide format.

This fact alone ought, one would think, to represent a significant step forward for the active study of butterflies in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, however, it is more a case of one step forward, two steps back. Information on larval food plants for the vast majority of Hong Kong species was provided by Bascombe *et al.*, while the local status and known flight periods of more than 230 butterfly species were given by Young & Yiu (who in turn were building on the work of George Walthew in the 1990s). Such readily-accessible information would have added immeasurably to the value of any butterfly field guide, but the authors of *Hong Kong Butterflies* appear to have ignored these rich sources of knowledge. Instead we have terse family-level generalisations for larval food plants, and a bizarre "status" system tucked away in the check-list at the back of the book, in which the vast majority of local butterflies, irrespective of their rarity or otherwise, are classified as "General Species", whatever that means. And there are no keys.

As for the information on local distribution of the Hong Kong species (another invaluable quality for a good field guide), one would again be better off turning to previous texts. Lo and Hui have a curiously myopic vision of Hong Kong, whereby the commonest (indeed, almost the only) geographical unit is the Country Park. Thus, if you wish to see common fare, such as Lesser Grass Blue, you can take heart from the fact that it is distributed in "Most Country Parks." If, however, you have a yearning to see the tiny Pigmy Scrub Hopper, you are advised to go to Sai Kung West or Plover Cove. Couldn't be simpler, could it? Except for the fact that many of the best butterfly sites in Hong Kong are not actually in Country Parks. Perhaps AFCD prefer not to let that particular cat out of the bag.

In spite of all this carping, I rather like this book. Although the authors have perversely contrived to prevent it from being the perfect field guide package, to have put together such a complete set of very high quality species photographs in such a short period of time is nothing less than remarkable, even with a large number of AFCD staff involved. The combination of live field photographs and set specimen photographs works very well indeed, and this is certainly one area in which *Hong Kong Butterflies* outdoes Young & Yiu's *Butterfly Watching in Hong Kong* (in which there are no specimen photographs, and many of the live photographs are of rather poor quality). Limited biometric information is provided for each species, along with useful pointers as to habitat and diagnostic features. Larvae are illustrated for many species. As with its companion, *Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Hong Kong*, the book is compact, easy to use and almost ridiculously inexpensive.

I particularly like the book because of the choice of photograph on the back cover. Whether or not this is the first "published" live photograph of the rare endemic Beggar's Ace skipper (and I suspect the Hong Kong Lepidopterist's Society might have something to say about that), this fabulous butterfly was, ahem, first discovered by me.

Graham Reels

The Ecology and Biodiversity of Hong Kong

by David Dudgeon and Richard Corlett, 336 pages, softcover. Joint Publishing (HK) Ltd., Hong Kong, 2004

Don't be fooled by the title. This book is in fact *Hills and Streams Mk 2: New Improved Formula*. It has been published in collaboration with AFCD (what's come over AFCD these days? They are scattering new books around like confetti) but is still authored by the same two academics – Hong Kong's most distinguished terrestrial ecologists – who wrote the original.

Hills and Streams: An Ecology of Hong Kong was published in 1994 by Hong Kong University Press, and ran to some 234 pages. That this revised edition is some hundred pages longer is testimony to the vast amount of new information on Hong Kong's terrestrial ecology that has become available in the ensuing decade (although it is also testimony to the fact that there are a lot more photographs in the new book). It is no coincidence that the Department of Ecology & Biodiversity of Hong Kong University, where the authors are based, is also ten years old this year.

The book is essentially structured in the manner of its predecessor, with the rather significant addition of a chapter on biodiversity (another proof of the rapid expansion of our knowledge base since 1994), and takes the reader, through a series of logical chapter progressions, to an elegant synthesis of the current state of published knowledge on the territory's ecology and biodiversity. It should be essential reading for all undergraduate and graduate students in the DEB, and indeed for anybody who is interested in the natural history of Hong Kong. There certainly isn't any comparable text to which the student or lay person can turn.

Naturally enough, in a book of such sweeping scope, the approach has to be selective to some extent, and there are no doubt omissions of fact or subject matter which will frustrate some readers. My own main gripe is with the chapters on Biogeography and Seasonality. The authors exercise themselves quite strenuously in establishing that Hong Kong is tropical, whilst stating that "The real questions are: how does the biota of Hong Kong differ from that of land areas to the north and south, and what accounts for these differences?" These are certainly very interesting questions, but the authors could have answered them far more illuminatingly than they have done. For example, much information is given on seasonality and breeding of animals in Hong Kong, but little attempt is made to put this into perspective by discussing how such patterns differ in well-studied areas, having partial species overlap with Hong Kong, to the north and south of here (e.g. warm temperate Japan and equatorial Singapore). I would like to have seen a more concerted and detailed effort to place Hong Kong in its regional biogeographical context.

I have one or two other minor quibbles - there is not enough about upland grassland and shrubland (surely the most extensive terrestrial habitat in Hong Kong); the authors' brief remarks on this major habitat are largely restricted to a discussion of the effects of hill fires. And I am mystified by the comparison with the British Isles, which is made on more than one occasion in the chapter on Biodiversity. Comparison with a remote archipelago in northwest Europe, having a depauperate post-glacial fauna, may occur naturally to the two authors, both of whom have British origins, but is obscure, arbitrary and, frankly, irrelevant for anyone from Hong Kong.

It is easy, and perhaps rather trivial, to nit-pick in this manner. The bottom line is that this is an immensely valuable book, into which much thought and research endeavour has been poured, and which we should be grateful to be able to put on our bookshelves.

Graham Reels

