

**Visit to the Lung Fu Shan Environmental Education Centre  
and Guided Walk in Lung Fu Shan Country Park  
7 May 2017**

*Report by Peter Stuckey*

The Lung Fu Shan Environmental Education Centre kindly arrange guided tours featuring Natural History for groups of interested members of the public. The Society availed itself of one such tour on Sunday 7 May from 10:30am till just after 1:00pm. Ten Members made their way to the Centre and met our staff guides for the day, Ray and Helen.

Both were highly experienced and knowledgeable, and shared their information enthusiastically leading us from one point of interest to another, but allowing time to deviate when a colourful butterfly or bird flew by. They answered all our questions along the way but also, having assessed our level of knowledge well early on, pitched their talk with information and stories at a very suitable level to spur our interest and teach us a lot while making the whole experience very enjoyable. Although the route was familiar to many of us, there was a lot to see that we had missed previously.



At the Centre itself, after looking at the displays in the converted waterworks keeper's cottage, now a Grade 1 listed building, we saw the several ecological zones set up in the garden. There was frog spawn of a Brown Tree Frog in the pool which used to be a recreational pool but which the staff have converted to a pond with ecological diversity in mind. The spawn can be seen in the photo in a cream colour, tucked underneath the rock beside the water lily leaves. The frogs have well developed suction discs on their digits enabling them to climb trees and lay their eggs on tree trunks and branches above water. The spawn drops into the water as the tadpoles develop. Also in the garden in full bloom, like a firework exploding, was a Maleba Chestnut tree shown in the second photo. There are also areas devoted to plants favouring butterflies, a herb garden patch, and a passion fruit flowering (at right).



Before we had left the HK University grounds Ray and Helen had pointed out the common Red Whiskered Bulbul, and the Eurasian Tree sparrow which is common in urban areas but less so in rural areas. There was a Masked Laughing Thrush and some Black Throated Laughing Thrushes among the bushes. A Blue Whistling Thrush had set up its perch on a rusting old tank near the entrance gate, while three raptors, Black Eared Kites, circled overhead. There was a Spotted Dove and upon crossing to Hatton Rd we saw some Blue Magpies.

Among the plants there was a Lanceleaf Sterculia native evergreen tree in bloom near the entrance to the Centre and at several other points along the route with its attractive small, five-petalled red flowers. Just opposite was a fan palm. By the gate was an Elephant's Ear, and a species of Bauhinia with black seed pods. On the road up to the Park we saw a tree with maple-like leaves which was, in fact, a Sweet Gum tree whose leaves when crushed smell like green apples and which turns reddish in autumn. Another interesting specimen was the "Turn in the Wind Tree", whose leaves have a green upper surface and a silvery underside. A syrup exuded at the base of the leaf attracts ants which in turn keep away other pests from eating the leaf. Beside it was a Paper Mulberry whose leaves are variable in shape, both lobed and unlobed. At the bridge beside the fire station Helen pointed out a fine camphor tree that was being slowly strangled by a ficus banyan.

Ray explained the Country Park was the latest to be established, in 1998, and is the smallest of Hong Kong's 24 Country Parks. The area had been relatively bare in 1945 so the Government had put in some quick-growing plantation Brisbane Box trees but the area was otherwise a mature secondary-type growth. Just before a pavilion was a longan bush, presumably seeded after someone threw away a seed. A tall slender leafed plant with white flowers, of the ginger family but inedible, was Hainan Galangal (pictured below). Some large leaves looking rather like taro were Giant Alocasia whose roots are poisonous. At the pavilion beside the plaque was a crevice hiding some Chinese Geckos, with their eggs attached to the upper surface of the crevice.

The third picture below is of an Ivy Tree which flowers in winter, an ingredient of the famous "24 herb" tea. Pictured with it is the excellent "Exploring Lung Fu Shan" book. Alongside were the Sandpaper Vine and the Mountain Fig, whose leaves were reminiscent of a dinosaur foot. Both of these had rough surfaces.



At the Pinewood Battery were several Taiwan Acacia, another quick growing species introduced at the end of the war. These were flowering with attractive yellow balls. There was a fine Indian Rubber Tree growing here too. Also near the Pinewood Battery, we found the Incense Tree, Aquilaria Sinensis, a source of fragrant wood, known as Agarwood. This was used to make joss sticks and incense, an industry that gave Hong Kong its name ("Heung Gong" where the "Heung" = fragrant). The trees are endemic to China but now reduced in numbers, and the industry had died out in Hong Kong.

On the route down past the bamboo bushes (with the black throated laughing thrushes), there was a Shiny Leaved Prickly Ash, with sharp black spines on both the upper and lower surfaces.

Butterflies spotted along the way included Paris Peacock, Red Base Jezebel, Common Mormon, Indian Cabbage White and Common Bluebottle. Also spotted was the Golden Orb Spider, the huge black and yellow female and the several much smaller red males keeping their discrete distance.

Other flowers encountered included the Bur Marigold, the Butterfly Weed (Asclepias), Lantana, Blue Porterweed, Chinese Ixora, Chinese Chrysanthemum, Hibiscus and Mountain Orange.

As may be gauged from the above description, the morning was immensely rewarding and our thanks go again to the Lung Fu Shan Environmental Education Centre for leading us so competently on such a satisfying route.



Along with the guides the following sources proved useful:  
Exploring Lung Fu Shan, A Nature Guide. (Book)  
The Lung Fu Shan Centre website:  
[www.sustainability.hku.hk](http://www.sustainability.hku.hk)  
[www.herbarium.gov.hk](http://www.herbarium.gov.hk)  
[www.hktree.com](http://www.hktree.com)  
Wikipedia