

## *Snakes Alive – Report on NHS Outing, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2016*

On a wet Sunday in June, about fifteen intrepid/curious/brave/mad (choose the most appropriate adjective) NHS members met at Mui Wo for the short bus trip to the home of William Sargent, one of Hong Kong's official snake catchers.

The morning began with a powerpoint presentation about snakes in Hong Kong. We were told about the species of snakes that live here and how to identify them. We were told about the relative lack of danger from snakes: for those of us who fear snakes, it was reassuring to be told that snakes kill far fewer people in Hong Kong than cars or lightning strikes. In fact, no one has died from a snake bite in Hong Kong in the past twenty years!

William told us about rat snakes (which have black and white stripes under the chin, and are not venomous), kraits, Chinese cobras, bamboo pit vipers (which have triangular heads and are venomous) and greater green snakes (which are not venomous and have more slender heads than the bamboo pit vipers).

The presentation finished with a quiz, just to check that we had been paying attention.

Then we met some snakes. The venomous ones were only handled by William, wearing a thick mesh-reinforced gauntlet.



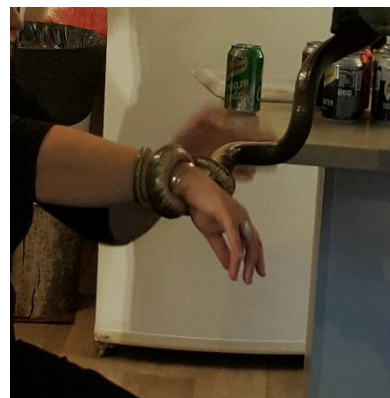
*A bamboo pit viper*



*William chasing a cobra*



*Frank keeping his distance*



*Judy modelling a rat snake bracelet*



*Red-necked keelback and eggs*



*A baby red-necked keelback (being held by William's wife)*



*I may be holding a grass snake, but I'm still not sure I like them.*

It was an interesting and informative session, well worth attending. Thanks to Jan for organizing it, and to Frank for leading this outing.

Report and photos by Julie Moffat