

# Hong Kong Natural History Society

## JANUARY 2015 OUTING

### Pat Sin Leng Nature Trail to Luk Keng

We had beautiful weather for the first hike of 2015. Twenty-five members and guests met in Central and Kowloon Tong and our bus dropped us off near the Pat Sin Leng Management Centre where we set off for our hike. .

After a short walk we had our first stop at the Sea Breeze Pavilion which was erected as a memorial to the students and teachers who died in a hill fire in 1996 and serves as a reminder of how careful we need to be on the hiking trails of Hong Kong.

We continued uphill along the nature trail and took the opportunity to read the many signs along the way providing information about the vegetation near that particular part of the trail. One such sign informed us that the Taiwanese Acacia, which were quite plentiful, were grown in this area as a fire break because they burn quite slowly. We were also quite lucky to see many displays of the Chinese New Year Flower (*Enkianthus quinqueflorus*) along this trail. As the name indicates the Chinese New Year Flower blooms in early spring and because of the time it flowers it was used to decorate homes during the Lunar New Year celebrations. While



once the hillsides of Hong Kong were covered in it, it is now illegal to pick it as it is protected by law.



Further along we joined the Wilson trail and stopped at a lovely stream for a leisurely lunch. Overhanging this gully we sighted a strange orange fruit which by later reference to our reports we realized we had last seen in March 2014 in Sha Lo Tung, also in the Pat Sing Leng Country Park. It is the mountain orange (*Melodinus suaveolens*) which grows on a liana and is used in Chinese Traditional Medicine. More of these fruits were sighted further along the trail.

After lunch we headed towards the Sir Edward Youde Pavilion passing through Wang Shan Keuk and Che Muk Kiu Villages which have been deserted for over 100 years. These poisonous-looking but very attractive berries were sighted there; grateful for anyone's help with their identification.



At the pavilion we stopped to take in the view over Nam Chong and Luk Keng, and we could see Starling Inlet stretching to Sha Ta Kok and Shenzhen. Below we saw the organic farms where farmers like Fai Gor rent the land from villagers that live in London, thus keeping the developers at bay and providing somewhere birds and animals can survive.



Unfortunately Farmer Fai was selling his produce in Central and we were unable to visit his farm on this occasion (maybe another time).

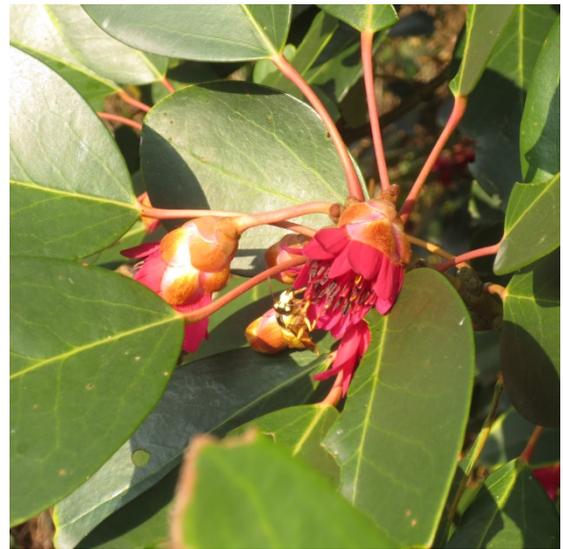
After leaving the pavilion we headed downhill

and here we saw (as identified by Dr Lawrence Ramsden) the *Rhodoleia (rhodoleia championii)*, endemic to Hong Kong and deserving of conservation.

As we continued towards Luk Keng some members noticed a very small dead snake at the edge of the road near the old Management Centre; since it was lime green with a bright yellow belly, it was believed to be a very young venomous Green Bamboo snake. Many birds were also seen along the road and we reached our

pick-up point at Luk Keng at about 4.30 pm. After a bit of confusion about where the pick-up point was, and with Ming thankfully intervening in Cantonese with the driver, the bus finally arrived just before 5.00pm and we were returned to Central just before 6.00pm.

I just want to thank everyone who came and enjoyed the walk with me.



**Report** by Frank Bradley **Photos** by Pamela Ball and Ming