

## Hong Kong Natural History Society

### 15 November 2015 Outing Report – Chi Ma Wan Peninsula, Lantau Island

The Society's November outing was an 11km, grade 3 hike around the Chi Ma Wan (Sesame Bay) Peninsula on South Lantau. The route involved a coastal walk from Pui O, through Mong Tung Wan, to join the Chi Ma Wan circular country trail. The final stages involved a descent to the Shap Long Reservoir with termination at the Chi Ma Wan ferry pier. An alternative section involving a challenging ascent of Lo Yan Shan was offered to the more ambitious, but there were no takers; clearly group cohesion was the higher priority.

An easterly airstream gave initial overcast conditions and rain was forecast. Notwithstanding the brief deployment of a couple of umbrellas, the weather remained dry and prolonged sunny spells eventually prevailed. The going remained good to firm with temperature and humidity at comfortable levels.

Twenty-one members gathered late morning at Pui O before departing the village across old paddy fields which now provide grazing to water buffalo. Despite their imposing stature and fearsome



horns, these beasts remain placid and appear uninterested in passing ramblers. The wetland estuary of Pui O also provides a habitat for a number of water birds and members were able to glimpse an egret and what was reliably identified as a Chinese pond heron. On leaving the village a fritillary of tigers (*danainae*), common/dark veined and blue, was introduced to the iphone – the butterflies were not camera-shy.

The route to Mong Tung Wan beach was along a coastal and woodland concreted path involving a moderate ascent and gentle descent into the village. To the west stunning views across Pui O and Mong Tung Bays with Lantau Country Park on the skyline were on offer. To the east Lo Yan Shan with its rocky escarpment kept an eye on our progress, cognisant that no one had accepted its invitation. The group took a break at the village.



The trail out of Mong Tung was steep, but quickly covered. At the top the group joined the Chi Ma Wan country trail, a dirt track which contoured round the south-western tip of the peninsula towards Tai Long Wan. Spurred on by the promise of a lunch stop, the group made good progress.

Lunch was taken on a rocky outcrop overlooking Yi Long Archaeological Site and the semi-desolate Sea Ranch luxury resort. The Hong Kong - Macau traffic in the channel was perpetual. The weather was kind, views were striking and everyone was happy.



After lunch the group slowly gathered together its things to return to the trail. A brief rest was taken at a junction of trails where a second invitation to climb Lo Yan Shan was offered, but this was not taken seriously. The group then descended to Shap Long Irrigation Reservoir. The reservoir lies in a sheltered valley and is hemmed by mature woodland. One cannot traverse the dam at the eastern end without pausing to take in the idyllic prospect.

Leaving behind the woodlands the group passed through the sombre site of the now-closed Chi Ma Wan Correctional Institution.



With one hour to wait for the ferry to Mui Wo, the trip organiser plucked from his rucksack a sachet of Semillon chardonnay. Those who had brought a Dopper water bottle were able to put it to its primary function. After the ferry ride most of the group concluded a very pleasurable day at a Turkish restaurant in Mui Wo. Members dispersed in good spirits.

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*Photographs: Rose Godfrey, Frank Bradley*