

Chapter IV

Erin Arrives Tunnels Shopping Fu-Shan Botanical Garden Traps

We put the AC as low as it can go (19°C) and sleep under thick soft comforters. Its almost a little too cool of a morning. Got up, bleary eyed, got dressed, opened the door and skinny ball of blonde bubbly energy jumped right in front of me from out of nowhere. Erin has arrived.

Breakfast, updates, back to the room to prepare for the days trip to Fu-Shan.

Chris knocks on the door, "Are you ready, 'cause half of Taiwan is waiting on us." There were three vans and a car. Counting us and the drivers there were 19

going on this expedition. There is an order, Chris (head guy) is in the lead van, while

Matt and I (students, lowest on the totem pole) are in the last.

Multitudes of gear (still missing the lost bag, we were served papers last night) are stowed and we are off. It's a short drive today. We head out of Taipei, and drive about 2 hours away, through Ilan City to Fu-Shan Station.

Mountains abound around



City from the car



Pink Palisades

and in Taipei. In the old days (last year) this trip would have taken twice as long, and involved a reportedly frightening venture up and over the mountains on a twirling ribbon of a road. Luckily, just a few months ago (everything still sparkles) a series of tunnels were opened. We drove through

two main tunnels, the longest was 6 miles long!!! Wonderfully lit, the tunnels were very



Going Under

clean, and everyone drove exactly 45 mph. Every mile or so there was a mural of some sort on the wall.



Baiting for insects with either rotting fruit or flesh is a time honored

The Other Side

tradition, and often gives good rewards. We needed to stop by a supermarket for supplies, first and foremost for fruit and dead things like squid, fish, and chicken, and also for snacks, etc.



I got some acetone, a little bottle, for any dragonflies I might collect on the trip. To get to the supermarket, however, required a

Shopping Market

rather harrowing U-turn in the middle of traffic. Matt, who hasn't experienced the wonders of foreign land travel, was dually impressed.

The supermarket was a wonder of space and product. Somehow they are able to pack half a Wal-Mart into an area the size of a large Casey's. I got some snacks and drinks, and an extension cord. While we were shopping Erin apparently had quite an adventure exchanging money (they wrote down the serial number of every bill).

One of our party, Mr. Hisamatsu, is not Chinese, but a Japanese student. Unfortunately, he doesn't understand a word of Chinese, and speaks only broken English. Still, he gets along fine. The reason I mention him at this juncture is that it was here that I first noticed a metal triangular box strapped to his hip. He is currently working on Nitidulid (Sap) beetles, but in a former life



Dragonfly Holster

he collected dragonflies! The Japanese take their Dragons seriously, and this metal container is used to hold them after they have been caught and put into a traditional triangular envelope.



Group Photo

About an hour down the road we came to the main gates of the station. All the vans pulled over and we all bailed out for a group photo. I was taking photos of people organizing themselves, so became the defacto taker of the picture. Major and Minor characters, we're all in there somewhere.

Lunch was waiting for us at the "restaurant." Fans labored long and hard to stir the soup thick air, there was a refrigerator in the corner, and the corner opposite had a water heater/cooler. These are wonderful inventions that I first encountered in Costa Rica. Push the blue button and out comes refrigerated water, for hot water push the red one.



You get a little bowl that you fill with rice, then put a little bit of prepared food in and eat it up with rice. Add a little more, eat a little more. Add a little more, then eat a little more. To further complicate things each plate of food has its own chopsticks, you're not to use yours to get food, only to eat with. So you're constantly picking up and putting down chopsticks. I can eat with chopsticks really well, but I can't pick them up one handed and use them so it's constantly a two handed affair. All

"The Restaurant"



Room with a View

went to the visitors center for an introduction to the garden.

They had a HUGE wasp nest on display, and a few dragonflies that had gotten trapped in the building and died. The most interesting one was *Chlorogomphus brevistigma*, a rare species endemic to Taiwan. We were taken to a large theater and shown an WONDERFUL movie about the flora and fauna of the Garden and surrounding forest. The movie highlighted the major plant and animal groups, then the



Chlorogomphus brevistigma

this, while spinning the Susan, waiting on others, and fighting for the good bits. A maelstrom of activity.

After lunch we dropped our stuff off in our rooms (wonderful affairs with a TV (only one channel), INTERNET!, two nice beds, reportedly the most complicated shower Matt has ever encountered (this statement was evidenced by the small pond in the floor after he bathed), a balcony, and a nifty door bell that rang for about as long as it would take you to walk from the back of the room to the front of the room and back again 9 times). After checking in we



Matt with pointer

major systems such as forest floor, aquatic, and the nocturnal habit. Among other things we learned that “the more tightly curled a fern frond, the more elegant it is,” and “the Chinese culture is unimaginable without bamboo.”

After this movie we were taken to the Multimedia Room across the hall and shown an amazing presentation on

things that make noises. There were two independent screens, the left showed still pictures of wildlife, while the right displayed names and short comments. They had an excellent sound system, so you heard owls hooting to the left or the right, birds calling back and forth, katydids screeching all around you, etc. Chris was itching to get traps set up, but it was a worthwhile presentation.



Theater



Erin and the Singing Frogs

Time is of the essence, every second counts, time's a wastin'!!

We needed to get out three types of traps. We lost our hanging light traps in the lost luggage, but they had two available for us!!! We had the lights, thankfully, and the battery packs made it through security. Chris has been here before so he had some ideas about where to set the hanging traps up. So some of us hiked up, up the trail and started setting up traps.

We followed a nice wide trail



Preparing the bait - Note the special connection between Erin and Matt captured in this picture.



Hanging Light Trap

cut into the mountain side. There was a hard rubber hose stretched along the trail on the mountain side. Somewhere, more than a mile ahead, water was collected and piped down to the station. Some of the bridges were out but in true fashion we carried on. As the team I was on was putting up the light traps, Erin's crew were putting in bait traps full of rotting meats along the trail.



A slightly broken bridge

Flitting to and fro, just out of reach, I saw a beautiful damselfly. Very large, in the ancient family Calopterygidae, it had a bright white patch on each fore wing. All I have is my sweep net, a stubby little thing made to beat bushes with, but it will have to do. After much cursing, and many near misses, I finally get one!!!

We still want to set up a blacklight tonight. Chris had spied out a wonderful gazebo deep in the woods on a trail leading from the visitor center. We lost our extension cords with the luggage, but they had one that we could use. An extension cord to end all extension cords. We unplugged the water dispenser at the front of the visitors center and



Local Megafauna - the Barking Deer



Please do not feed the snakes and hornets.

plugged in the cord,
drug the cord across the
front steps, through the
hedge, across the road,
along the opposite
hedge, started up the
endless wooden stairs,
got to the top, started
down the endless
wooden stairs, saw we
would never make it,
went back to the top,
went back to the bottom,
walked back up the
road, cut through the
hedge, bushwhacked
through the jungle,



The endless wooden stairs

intersected the endless wooden stairs, went up to the top, all the way down to the bottom on the other side, down the trail, and dropped the end of the extension cord at the base of the gazebo.

The perfect spot. Hypothetically. The beetles were so few some of us began collecting moths!



Erin and Victoria manning the light