

Chapter IV

Lazy Day Tsiao-Gu- Poison Water Short Walk on the Windy Trail
Running up Hill Long Walk on the Windy Trail

Well it was a lazy day today, no great planned activities like hiking up hill or climbing horrible towers. I had spotted a great looking log a few days back and am really looking forward to a couple hours sit down just picking through it. And that's what I did. Got some nice beetles and other beasts.



Great Looking Log

After I finished with my log I started on a trail that roughly parallels the road and allows one to get from the field station to the botanical garden through the woods. It was nice walk, with lots of damselflies, the occasional beetle, frog and snake. I saw a snake with a frog in its mouth and only had time to one picture before I disappeared into the brush.

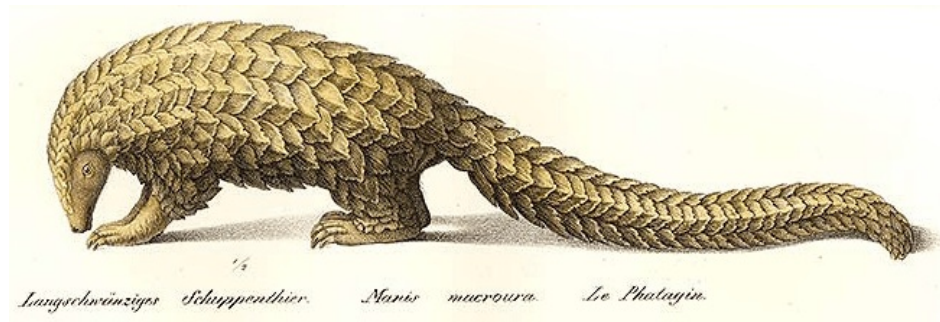


Snake and Meal

There are some holes dug in the clayey soil. They are about as big around as a cantaloupe and MAY belong to a pangolin. For some reason no one seems to know what these things are, and, as I didn't get to see any at the zoo, and as I haven't seen any here, I'll provide an ancient drawing of one that I stole off a web site. The drawing is quite accurate. These are mammals, just like you and me, but instead of bushy hair, they are covered in scales, which are reportedly razor sharp. When confronted a pangolin rolls into a ball (supposedly, I've read this about armadillos too, but the one I grabbed jumped about two feet into the air and produced a small sonic boom as it ran away, certainly no curling into a ball there).

They are often called scaly anteaters

and belong to the Mammal order Pholidota, or which there are only eight species. Genetic testing shows them kind of closely related to carnivores, but nothing else. They burrow to attack ant and termite mounds, also to provide shelter from potential predators. Apparently they are very finicky and very hard to keep alive in zoos. I'm very much wanting to see one, but they are rare, and apparently only out at night. So the chances aren't good, but better than in Louisiana.



Pangolin

the end they came across a small body of water, a pool really, resting in a depression. The water was stained about the color of dark tea, and after some dipping and no catching Chris declared "This is *Tsiao-Gu*, poison water." Of course he was just making it all up. But it certainly felt at home to the traveler bathed in Taiwanese for a week and a half.

So after lunch I packed up my gear and headed up the trail to check out this mysterious water. It was very strange. Not a real pond, this really was just water sitting on normal forest floor, with whole leaves on the bottom, etc. A vernal pool if you will. I swept quite a bit and came up with very little. Amazingly there will quite large *Corydalidae* (dobsonfly, hellgrammites) larvae, which means two things. First the water had been here for a while, and secondly there was food there somewhere. I suspect they were eating the forest litter insects that fell into the pool by accident, because I didn't get much else.

Heading back I was slowly wandering back down the trail when I heard a small passenger plane flying up the trail towards me. Well, it sounded like a small passenger plane. Actually it was a giant and I mean GIANT robber



Spider on the Trail

No pangolins, and its time for lunch so I head back. Chris and the rest hiked a new trail, a spur off the trail we usually take to the hanging blacklights. When they came to

fly flying up the trail carrying a cicada slightly larger than it was! Whoosh right by my face and gone- back up the trail behind me. I turned around, broke into a run (uphill), caught up with it, and WHACK! Got it. And the cicada it was carrying! A very lovely catch. Dr. Lee had given one of these (not quite as big as mine, though) to Victoria a few days ago and I've been green with envy every since. It was the first thing I showed everyone when I got back.



Tsiao-Gu, Poison Water

Erin was lazy, and I'm still sore with her about this, so Matt stayed behind to take the batteries to the hanging blacklights. Chris and I went down early to the Botanical Garden. I collected the crap out of that lake (no snakes this time), and came up with damn near nothing. Certainly not the Dryopid/Elmid mystery beetle we had seen at the blacklight a few nights back. Oh well.

Blacklighting went pretty well, with big female scarabs coming in and getting us excited only to find out they weren't males with big horns and points. After the blacklight was cleaned up (we swept the dead moths out of the shelter, apparently some of the tourists had been wondering what was going on), Chris suggest we hike the long trail back in hopes of spying a pangolin, or some other forest creature. It was quite a long hike, the worst parts being when we had to run to keep up with Matts long legs. Nothing more menacing than a barking deer though. Oh well. Back at the station I broke from the group to break into "The Restaurant" to get my last tea. Sinfully sweet.



Top to Bottom: Cicada, Robber Fly, Pencil for scale.