

Forever Ago

Forever Ago, it was a Saturday, Matt and I drove up to the Cabin to do some black lighting. We pulled in, saw a lot of cars, and immediately departed. The children didn't wish to interrupt the adults at play. So we set up across the road on Chris' side and began black lighting. I got a few green lacewings, and Matt caught a few Marsh Beetles but complained they were *Cyphon*. That's not important though, the important part happened just after Chris arrived, but I'll not jump ahead. First Chris arrived. Matt and I collected, Chris drank his beer and we started talking about stuff and Chris brings up the idea of taking the lab on an international trip. Lets just all go

somewhere. The places put forth were Ghana or Taiwan. Both have good and bad points. But we settled on Taiwan before the others stumbled in. Like moths to a flame, a bunch of tipsy female professors wandered over and started conversations. Nice people all around.

After the party left and Matt and I were once again alone with nothing but bait and prey we had a quick conference:
"Holy Shit! Is this for real?"
"Let's hope it is."
"But will he remember in the morning?"

Eight months later...



Welcome to Taiwan

Chapter I

Getting Ready Early Trials The Loss of a Member Packing The Big Move The Loss of Another Member Transportation Hotel

Of course it wasn't quite that easy. I'm in my personal Golden Age of Travel, with all the benefits of the traveler, but few to none of the responsibilities. Tons of electrons and photons were whisk across the globe resulting in the necessary mountain of paperwork that not only tells you how and when you'll get to where you will be, but grants you the permission leave where you are. We have Chris and Victoria to thank for that.

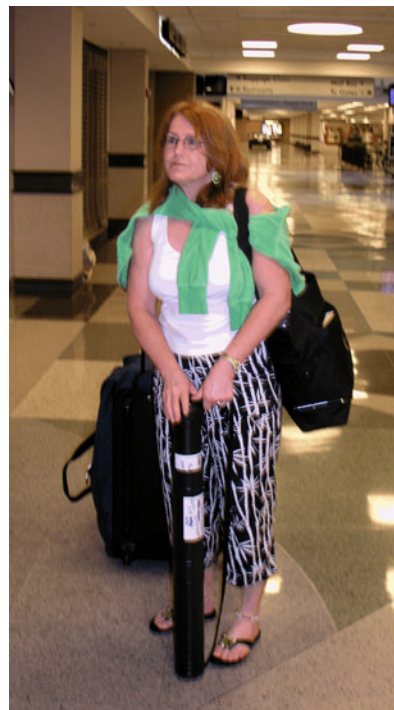
This is not to say my time was without trials and tribulation. As usual I was able to look deep within my heart and find a number of simple items which apparently do not exist on this Earth. I walked through every checkout lane in a Wal-Mart looking for Peppermint Altoids with no luck what-so-ever.

I visited numerous stores (including, I'm ashamed to say, and quite maddened also) a Bed, Bath, and Beyond looking for a fishnet bag. NO not a bag for a fishnet, but a bag MADE OF a fishnetty material. Strings, tied together at intervals resulting in diamond shaped holes approximately 2 inches across. That's all I wanted. Very simple. I got a perfect one at Wal-Mart just before I went to Costa Rica. Never mind what I wanted it for. It's a simple item, surely exists somewhere. But alas no. The best part is that I don't think anyone ever understood what it was I looking for. In defeat I went to Academy sporting goods and bought actual replacement fishnet bags. Of course they only had three 26 inch bags, so I also got a 22 inch bag.

And finally there was the FULL 180 Degree Fisheye lense. We'll talk about that

later. I'm still quite angered about that one.

At the trips conception, the travelers consisted of Chris, Victoria, Alexey, Matt, and myself. Possible additional participants included Stephanie, Erin, and Charlie and Sue Staines. Stephanie decided to stay and work on her mountains of research, but Erin and the Staines' decided to hitch their wagon to our train. This makes a party of eight. Unfortunately about a week before our



Victoria

departure Alexey (who is Belorussian) had determined that in order to satisfy all the requirements of leaving the US, entering Taiwan, then leaving Taiwan, and again entering the US, he would have to juggle knives, dance for the Queen, and possibly recite MacBeth from memory. In short, the



Chris with improperly deployed pillow.

paperwork Alexey had to do to come on the trip would be slightly harder than choosing his own parents. As the only sane one in the lab, his presence is sorely missed.

On my last few expeditions I took about 170-180 pounds of luggage, both personal and collecting gear. The limit was 70 lbs. per bag, plus there was my carry-on, vest, and pants pockets. This trip is entirely different. Each bag was limited to 50 lbs. Big collecting gear like blacklights, gallons of Low Tox antifreeze, battery packs, viles, flight intercept traps, etc. would be taken, so I was limited to one personal bag. I gathered and culled to obtain a bag (weighing 60 lbs.) that contained all my personal effects (clothes, etc.) and all my personal collecting gear as well. One extravagance I brought was an extra gallon of Low Tox antifreeze. I wrapped it in some pants and taped them up. Security was nice enough to re-tape the pants after they checked to see what I had.

Stronger tape too. Matt was nice enough to take a few pounds off of me, and we got the bag down to 53 lbs. just before the flight.

An added complication concerned our living arrangement after a return from Taiwan. Matt's lease ends on July 31st. We'll be returning from Taiwan on July 31st. At night. So his stuff had to be stored before departure. So after returning from the Smokys, but before Taiwan (a span of 9 days) we moved all his stuff into my apartment, which, although not cramped, is certainly no longer spacious. This, of course, added somewhat to the packing complications.

Chris gets an "I told you so." Chris was in a pessimistic mood and commented that probably not everyone had a valid passport. Victoria, to prove him wrong, phoned around and make sure everyone did. Turns out, Erin had an expired passport that was residing with her mother in Washington State. So, with less than 10 days to go, the



Lunch in Detroit

passport is overnight FedExed to Louisiana, then placed in the care of a company that, for a FEE, will overnight FedEx the passport (8am delivery!) to be renewed and then FedExed back. The tolerances of this exercise were absolute, not a day to spare.

Unfortunately, the little man filling out the paperwork checked the 10am delivery box instead of the 8am. This 2 hour difference sunk the whole enterprise. So we lost Erin, but luckily, she'll be arriving only two days late.

Up at 4am. To Chris's house by 4:30am. Baton Rouge Airport at 5am. Check in. Take off for Memphis, Tennessee at 6am. Land at Memphis at 7:30am. Meet up with the Staines'. Take off for Detroit, Michigan at 8:30am. Arrive at Detroit around noon. Leave for Osaka, Japan at 3:40pm. Thirteen hours later we landed in Japan around 5:30pm. This was my first flight across the Pacific where it was day the entire time. I got to watch Curious George, not too bad. A one hour layover and we took off for Taiwan, landing at 9:40pm local time. One lost bag. A box, really, with all our black lighting equipment, plus flight intercept traps. We were picked up by Wen-jer Wu, who was kind enough to bring two vehicles.



Hotel at last!

We made it to the Leader Hotel by 11:15pm. Check in was a breeze. It's a circular hotel with a large growth at the bottom which houses the restaurant. Matt and I are sharing a room, nice view, mini fridge, big TV, internet. The bath room is amazing, and the shower even more so.

We've been up for about 28 hours so falling asleep wasn't much of a problem. Breakfast lasts until 10am, so no need to get up early.

Chapter II

Breakfast Missing Bag Zoo Insectarium Lunch Herpatarium Great Meal

I took another shower just for the fun of it. Luckily the bunch didn't suffer from any terrible jet lag (the secret, I think, is to not sleep the entire time you're traveling until night time at your destination, that way you are guaranteed to be exhausted and sleep a long time during the night) so we were all up bright eyed and busy-tailed for breakfast. A grand affair! Eggs, sausages, some cabbage thing with mushrooms, breads, fruits galore, tomato juice, milk, grapefruit juice, and all the other fixings for the traditional watery rice breakfast (horrid stuff if you ask me).

Our missing bag has not arrived. Did I mention our missing bag? When we got to Taipei one of the hard plastic trunks we packed didn't arrive. The other (basically identical) trunk was missing its ID sticker tag thingy but it made it fine. We checked with the people at the airport and they said our missing bag was fine, and sitting in Detroit, it'll be here tomorrow. As a conciliatory prize Matt (to whom the bag was checked) received a spiffing blue bag full of toiletries for his troubles. (There is some discussion as to whether they will deliver, or we will have to retrieve it from the airport ourselves). Anyway, it has not yet arrived.

Today we are scheduled for a trip to the zoo. A cream colored van pulled up driven by Dr. Wong (amazing driver in these rainy, scooter infested streets). Additionally Yaw-Wen, 85 pounds of organizational translational furry, came along. She is the soft yet unbreakable envelope of order and sanity that protects these blundering children from the stinging harsh realities of what is actually simple everyday life. If affect, without her, we are stuck.

Pack them in tight, umbrellas all around. Three in the back, three in the middle, two up front. Off we go. Taipei is a massive city settled into a vast forest. The main city lies in the flats and is dominated by huge skyscrapers surrounded by an undergrowth of 5 story buildings, stores on the bottom, apartments up top. The hillsides are dotted with houses and buildings that spring from the trees as if they had been placed there by some massive helicopter. There is rarely any indication of a road or any means of access



Our shower. Rain from above, frontal assault in the middle, or self service to the right.

to these
perched
hamlets.

We
entered the
zoo via a
side road
after filling
out some
paperwork
with the



Suburbs

guards (Dr. Wong's job) and were driven to the front door of the zoo's new insectarium.



The steps lead down to viewing windows into
the pond that runs between the buildings.



Dragonfly at the Zoo

We were met by a wonderful
young lady, I-Hsin Wu, who
grabbed us, and pulled us
along through the many
exhibits.



Giant Stag Beetle

At the end of one hall we split from the main line and she led us through a side door for a behind the scenes tour of the facility. They have many live insect displays, and rear all their own bugs. So we found row after row of cups with baby water scorpions, cages with walking sticks, tubs with fat happy stag beetle grubs, and netted plants crawling with caterpillars. There are a variety of endangered insects, mostly large beetles and butterflies, that they also raise at the zoo.



Immature Waterscorpion



Exhibits Past



Immature of the butterfly to the right



Endangered Taiwanese Butterfly



Walkingstick



Collecting Walkingstick Eggs

We walked through a large greenhouse full of butterflies and a few dragonflies, but the most interesting thing were the large beetles hanging out on limbs, or eating the pineapple placed about for their enjoyment. Matt stuck his head in a tiger beetle exhibit. I guess being on the other side of the glass isn't close enough, but the other side of the bubble is!



Stagbeetle and scarab enjoying pineapple



The main greenhouse



Tiger beetle observation port



Butterfly host plant greenhouse

We spoke with one young man (wonderful English) about rearing whirligigs and stag beetles. Beetles are a big thing in Japan, so you can purchase bags of food for larval beetles. Its basically potting soil, well rotten wood infused with a particular strain of fungus. The adults feed on fruit and can live up to two years.

We got a royal tour.



Larva food for Stagbeetles
(*Dorcus* is the genus name)



A Taiwanese endangered stag
beetle



Insectarium Valley Walk in the Rain

Behind the insectarium was a wonderful walk, nearly a quarter mile round, up a valley past streams and through the forest. There were many insects. I saw some more nice dragonflies, and lots of hoppers on the elephant ears, not to mention butterflies and beetles.



Dragon at the Zoo



Hoppers under a leaf

After the Insectarium it was time for lunch. We walked to the food court which was, at the time, populated by thousands of children all attempting to form lines with various rates of success and failure. While food was being procured I wandered around the corner to check out the vending machines. They have many more products available, and while attempting an explanatory photograph, one young lady stuck her ice cream bowl in my



Attempting Lines

lense. Little did she know, I'm wide angle! We packed up the lunches, walked past the sleepy koala exhibit and boarded the tractor driven zoo train. Each bench seat seats two or three, so they have little short lines for you to stand in which correlate to each seat.



Vending Variety



Lunch Stop

We took a nice ride and ended up near the reptile house (0.7 miles away!) and attempted an outdoor lunch. However the rain proved too hard, so we squeezed into a little shelter near a snack bar.

The reptile house was huge, with large comfortable exhibits for most of the beasts. They had tortoises and turtles of all kinds, including some that are native to the island. Matt and Chris were especially interested in the snakes, as both are snake lovers. Whenever we saw a *Boa* Chris would say, "Mine's bigger". They had a cute display on how reptiles get hurt, and why not to hurt them. The best, most amazing



The Native Box Turtle

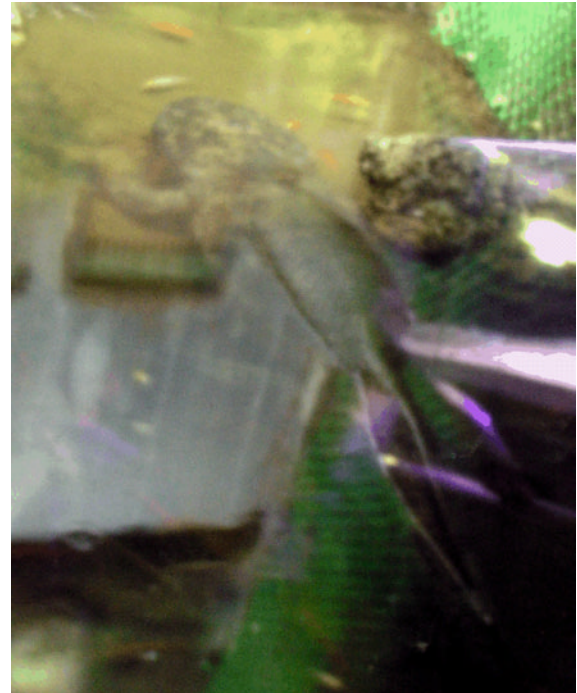
display they had was of a Chinese Giant Salamander. I've heard that these get to over 5 feet long, but always figured it would be some sort of long, skinny disappointing beast. Little



Riding the Tortoise Statue

Rouge.) I got one disappointing photograph, poor lighting and fog on the cage's glass. This

did I realize, they are huge!!! Its powerfully built, and looks really heavy. Big enough to take down a small cat in a single gulp. (We certainly need some of these in Baton



Fog, low light, and reflection equal a horrible picture of a HUGE salamander.



Sad Turtle

hooded cobras (the native species), turtles, giant monitor lizards, huge chameleons, even a crocodile. It was amazing. Room after room of beautiful wonderful beasts. After regaining our cameras I took a picture of the workstations of some of reptile workers. Each was a collector of gads of animal related toys and trinkets.

is certainly an amazing beast and a "before I die" goal is to see one in the wild.

After walking through the reptile house proper, we had to abandon our cameras, walk through a trough of chemically treated water, and we were allowed into the netherworld of the reptile house. This is where they breed, care for, and hold non-display reptiles and amphibians. They had



Full of Stuff

We walked through a number of bird sections for Victoria, the official trip Ornithologist. We entered one aviary that had to be larger than a football field, with entire ponds, streams, and extensive walkways winding throughout. We visited the Nocturnal House, which housed those animals that are normally out at night. The menagerie included a Bobcat and a Raccoon.



Entrance to the Big Aviary



This is IN the aviary, after a long hike!!!

After the zoo we went back to the hotel for showers and a bit of rest. We loaded up in the vans and headed to Taiwan National University for dinner with Dr. Wen-ger Wu. My first real Chinese dinner! All the tables were round each with a giant lazy Susan in the middle, leaving you with about 12 inches of non-rotatory space for your small bowl of rice, and short water glass. Six of seven dishes all meticulously prepared



Beware, Hippos!

burning three or four times more calories per input calorie than if you were eating American style where it's all right there and you can shovel it in as fast as you like. The food was not bad at all, although I shy away from the whole fish, as the bones annoy me. I'm a lazy eater, if I have to expend too much energy to get at the eatable bits I usually pass it by.

Beer and whiskey were around and they have a tradition of toasting everything. *Gan Pei* is their "Bottoms Up", and it's rude not to follow suit. I don't drink, and Matt's not much of a drinker either, so Victoria real quick says, Mike and Matt don't drink. They thought it was a joke! When it finally got around that we didn't really drink, I explained that I let Chris have all of mine. That got another good laugh.

The rain had let up a bit. There is a typhoon (tropical storm) coming in soon. We walked back to the hotel, fell into our soft warm beds (the AC is as low as it can go) and fortified ourselves for the breakfast to come.

were placed on the Susan all with their own "serving chopsticks". You get your own eating chopsticks, which are not to be used to get food off the communal trays. You pick a little bit of food off a tray, eat it with rice, then get some more. All in all, you're



A plant at the Zoo that gets you coming and going.

Chapter III

Update of the Lost Palace Museum Lunch Bookstore Dinner on our Own

Our missing bag is, as of yet, unaccounted for. Many possibilities exist for its whereabouts and current status. According to the airline it is simultaneously hopelessly lost, sitting in the Detroit Airport, and on a plane soon to land in Taipei. Nothing can be done, we forge ahead.

Erin, our mysterious seventh traveler, has left Baton Rouge and will land in Taipei around 9:30pm tonight, unless the Typhoon arrests air travel. Oh yes, I forgot, we have a typhoon coming in today, so lots of rain, etc. Yesterday the hotel staff slid a memo under our door explaining that during the typhoon we should take cover in our rooms. Sue expressed interest in gathering some food stuffs in case of calamity. Taipei is huge, New York size. There is no hoarding food, if the city is that badly damaged you must be prepared to eat the bodies.

The first order of the day was to visit the Palace Museum. The building was huge, imagine stacking 4 Wal-Marts one on top of another. No picture taking allowed, so I can only offer up a shot of the gift store. Verbal descriptions of the displays will have to suffice. Before we began to wander we rented audio tour sets. These consisted of a half moon phone shaped device with a telephone earpiece on one end. There was a small display panel and a numeric key pad. Many artifacts had three digit numbers outside their cases, and upon entering said number a very nice man would tell you in detail about what you were looking at. It was very nice and added a lot to the tour.

If you ever read The Lord of the Rings trilogy you'll come across many instances of the narrator commenting on some blade, piece of armor, or artwork that was very ancient but could not be rendered in present times,



The most elegant gift shop I have ever attended.

as the needed skills and technology no longer existed. Its rather romantic to think of such things in our cutting edge society where nothing seems impossible, and so much we do now was impossible just a few years back. However, there were more than a few pieces of artwork here that couldn't be made today. While not impossible, it would

certainly take 20 or 30 years for someone to amass the skill to produce such an object, and even after all that time many still wouldn't be up to the challenge. This is assuming you don't need a master and apprentice set up, which would probably take a couple generations to get really good. All in all, someone financing, say, 20 people over 10 to 15 years might have a shot at getting something similar to that which was in the museum.

Its not all plates and bowls. Nor is it all ax heads and spears. I'll try to describe a couple things that really stood out. One was the vase within a vase. An inner vase, small at the bottom, ballooning toward the middle and necking at the top, was encased in a similar outer vase with large windows cut in the sides. Both were separated by only a 1/16th of an inch, so that by gripping the outer vase and the longer neck of the inner vase they could be rotated. The whole thing had to be made and fired as one piece. Of course both were painted in beautiful ornate designs.

Another was a box, I believe it held a tea set. It was made of ivory that had been carved through to look like a piece of tatting complete with scenes of birds, dragons, flowers, people, etc. Very fine details. And they had several miniatures, too, made of what looked like ivory. An entire house, or boat laden with animals complete with working doors, tea sets, etc. carved all the way through was less than two inches long and one inch wide. A large strategically placed lens enabled the viewer to see to great detail.

The most impressive thing I saw was also carved from ivory. It was a single piece, about two and a half feet long. There was a carved hanger at the top with a short ivory chain leading to a house complete with every detail imaginable including residents. From this hung another chain which held a sphere about 6 inches in diameter. Intricate designs surrounding huge holes were cut in the side, revealing another sphere with even more intricate designs and smaller holes, revealing another sphere with even more intricate designs and smaller holes, etc. Reportedly there were at least 17 spheres, one inside the other, all rotatable, all carved from a single piece of ivory. Below the sphere was more chain, and a very beautiful end piece, although I don't remember of what it was. This was all from a single piece of ivory, and is still a single piece of ivory. Amazing. If the Chinese had put as much effort into science as they put into art, the world would be a very different place.



Taipei 101

Taipei is a very tall city. Many buildings are 6 or 7 stories high, with others in the 12 to 15 range. However there is one building, known as Taipei 101, that stands above all the others. It is massively huge. I don't know what they do with it, but its an amazing Icon. I was able to get a quick picture through the typhoon enhanced rains as we entered the mall for lunch and shopping.

We went down a level to the food court. This is the same set up as any other mall with a dozen or so booths all selling various food items. There was one odd thing. None of the booths sold drinks. Not even water. Luckily there were some booths off to the side that had a few cans of Coke, or Apple Juice.



Lunch

Matt and I ordered by pointing to a picture, as did Chris and Victoria. It was good, although unusual food. Yaw-Wen and Dr. Wong got normal food. I love my lense! (I'll tell you the story later) So it was easy to get a picture of the entire party (sans the Staines'), even though those on the edge are a bit distorted.

But this is not just any mall, it's a special mall. This mall has a bookstore that occupies the second, third, and fourth floors! So after lunch (and after an apple juice I drank- my after lunch hydration event) we tore up to the third level and crowded into the insect corner of the nature section. I got the last copy of Dragonflies of Taiwan (the cover's falling off, but otherwise it's a great book), a book on the Neuroptera (lacewings!) of Taiwan, two books on the stag beetles (they have a lot here), another general book on the bigger beetles of Taiwan, and finally a book on selected ground beetles of Taiwan. Not a bad haul!



Eslite Bookstore Levels 2, 3, and 4



Inviting Entrance



Make your own life sized skeleton book!



I got a couple books!

Chris is off to the airport to collect Erin, so its supper on our own. Matt and I wandered down to the crosswalk and wove back and through until we found a nice little Vietnamese restaurant. There was no English here at all, but they brought out a nice picture menu with numbered items and a order form. You checked the box by what you wanted and wrote in how many. All in all not a bad meal. After, we slid back into the rain and on to the hotel.

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



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

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



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

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



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



The Other Side

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



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

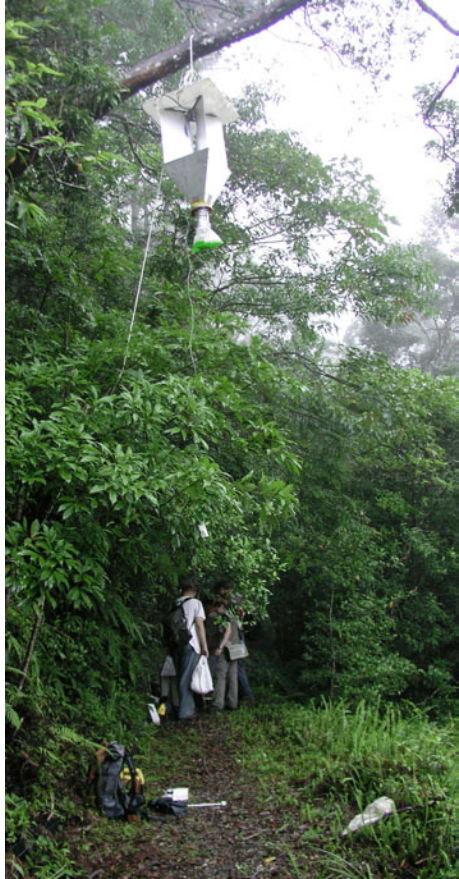
Time is of the essence, every second counts, time's a wastin'!!

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

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

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



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, alllllllll 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

Chapter IV

Alternative Traps SNAKE! End of the Road Hanging Dog Blacklighting

We are nothing if not smart monkeys. Yesterday went amazingly well, the blacklights were modified to fit our bulbs, and while we didn't have proper containers to collect the specimens in, that's nothing some duct tape and a ziplock won't fix (although we are dangerously low on gallon sized bags), Erin got cups and bait at the supermarket allowing for the construction and deployment of her pitfalls, and the sheet blacklight went up and worked without a hitch.

So today is a day for more improvisation. The saddest part of losing the luggage was the loss of the Flight Intercept Traps (FITs for short). I made the damn things, and, while not technologically rigorous, there is a lot of cutting, sewing, measuring, etc. involved. I broke two needles in my sewing machine making this batch and I was looking forward to using these again in the Smokies this coming fall (this past spring I was looking forward to using those FITs in Taiwan, but all but



Trail with a View



Slightly better than absolute utter failure

one was destroyed by bears, so back to the sewing machine). However, there is another passive technique for collecting flying and litter dwelling insects; a YELLOW pan trap. For some reason day flying insects tend to be attracted to yellow (while night flying insects are usually NOT attracted to yellow lights, weird). So if you put out a YELLOW pan with some preservative in it stuff will fly along, crash into it, and you have your specimens. Additionally any trap near the ground tends to pick up insects that hop, spring, run, or crawl through and over the

leaf litter. So, in the spirit of a YELLOW pan trap, Chris got the closest thing he could at the supermarket: a PINK pan trap. And not even a good pink, kind of a lazy, bordering on regurgitated strawberries and cream pink.

So it fell to me to make these PINK pan traps work, or at least try to achieve something slightly better than absolute utter failure. I haven't mentioned the rain much, but it's been raining, mostly in the afternoon, but sometimes it likes to sneak in a little drizzle in the morning, or around lunch, or just before bed time, or over night. Luckily the rain doesn't make me any wetter, I'm a veritable fountain in this balmy clime, so preventative measures such as a jacket or even an umbrella are laughably ineffective. I mention rain, because a plate left out on the forest floor with a little drizzle of antifreeze is poorly adapted in the areas of keeping rain out and keeping the preservative and specimens in.

But this is nothing a smart monkey can't handle. Andy and Arno tagged along as we slogged up the trail we went yesterday. Using a quart bag, an odd shaped bag Arno had, duct tap, and some sticks, we were able to make a makeshift FIT/Pan Trap that was rain proof. Hurray! Will they work? Who knows, but at least they look good. We set up 5 along the trail.



Green Viper

Matt, Chris, and Erin had continued on up the trail to collect anything that had come into the bait traps over night. After we got our traps deployed, Andy, Arno, and I started on up the trail to meet up with the other group. When we came to the last bait cup they were nowhere to be found. Chris had mentioned earlier that he had never been to the end of this particular trail, so I surmised this was his plan. We walked for what seemed like hours, and shortly after decrying that we would only walk for 5 more minutes before abandoning this wild goose chase, we met them just on the other side of another broken bridge. Just as we saw them, someone yelled "Snake!"

Snakes are usually hard to

come by, being predators and weary means that they are usually not in large numbers and usually well hidden. This turned out to be a beautiful green viper. Matt had been molesting some toad when he spied the snake resting peacefully under a frond. We all gathered around and took turns getting as close as possible for a photograph, while others commented that we'd be bitten fo' sho'.



Picture of a Pre-Picture

Continuing up the trail I was able to get a few more damsels. I checked my book last night, these are *Psolodesmus mandarinus mandarinus* a subspecies found in Northeastern Taiwan and mainland China. Personal space is much smaller to approaching nonexistent in Taiwan, so Andy almost got hit a few times when I went after a damsel and we was standing too close!



Hanging Dog Trap

We finally made it, well, not to the end of the trail, but as far as we were going to go. The trail proper faltered at a wooden (somewhat rotten and squeaky) platform on the edge of a sheer drop off into a raging torrent one hundred feet below. I convinced everyone to “gather ‘round” and took a picture of the crew and the view. How far the water hose when up and where it gathered its water, was anybody’s guess.

We stopped for some reason on the hike back down, and Matt pointed out a very boring brown bodied, clear winged damselfly that instantly sent heart pumping. I said “OH, OH!” which means, “get the hell out of my way,” but Erin was slow, so I shoved her back, not quite off the trail and over the edge, but nearly so, luckily Matt was there to break her fall, and I lunged in for the catch. In Thailand I collected only one of two specimens of a damselfly that looks almost exactly like this that belongs to the small family Megapodagrionidae. It turns out what I collected was *Rhipidolestes aculeatus*, the only member of this family in Taiwan.

After lunch it was time for more improvisations. I mentioned earlier looking for some sort of fish net bags, and eventually having to purchase real fishnet bags. I also got a few BIG, 20 gallons I think, Ziplock bags. The idea is to create what I am calling a “disturbance trap”. I gather up some dead wood, put in into the fishnet bag, encase all this in a sealed ziplock bag, pour some preservative in the bottom of the ziplock, and hang the whole affair in the sun.

The bugs abandon their hold for cooler places, and plop, into the preservative they go. Matt helped with the final design which incorporated a fill/drain spout in the bottom. We hung the affair from a tree limb on the edge of a



Sharp cliff, windy road, and rolling hills.

shear cliff that dropped about 100 feet to the road below. No need to walk far to check this one, it was about 30 paces from where we were staying! When we got it set up it looked more like we’d hung a Scottish Terrier than some dead logs, so the affair became affectionately known as a “hanging dog trap”.



Coolest moth of the night

Another rainy night, but the gazebo allows for rain free blacklighting. Still not very good for beetles, lots of moths though. If we could get a clear rainless night, then maybe we’d get more proper bugs.

Chapter IV

Lucky Fall Botanical Garden Near Death Experience

Water Please! Exploring the Bot. Gar. Tonight's Moth

Blacklights. They're like having a child, or pet, or something. You have to take care of them and it really impedes your freedom. The blacklights ran last night, and although the macaques seem to be leaving them alone, we still need to service them every morning, as the battery packs need to be retrieved and recharged. We're heading to the botanical garden today, but it's still a slog up the hill after breakfast, which means the longer hike takes place in a slightly hotter part of the day (although it's not the couple degree difference that counts, angle of the sun is more important). Why not service the traps before breakfast? Because early morning is a time spent pinning and labeling specimens from the day before (at least for me, most everyone else collects only into alcohol and doesn't worry with dry specimens). The dragons tend to take a bit of time, too, as each is placed in its own individually labeled envelope. In Thailand the specimens of the day were treated that night, but that was because we sought shelter at a reasonable hour and didn't have blacklights to attend.

Up the hill we went. The bag on the furthest light was securely taped to a square rim that was securely taped to the metal cone. However, sometime during the night, there occurred a horrific structural failure whereby the rim separated from the cone, and bag and all came a tumblin' down. Luckily the whole thing fell straight down, so not a specimen was lost. And it appears that the light got to run a while, as there were quite a few specimens in the bag. So a rather tame calamity



A Rather Tame Calamity



Spider in there?

specimen was lost. And it appears that the light got to run a while, as there were quite a few specimens in the bag. So a rather tame calamity

The hike to the Botanical Garden takes about 20 minutes, and it's probably on the order of a mile, maybe a mile and a quarter distance. It's rather warm, not sprinting weather, and there will be a thunderstorm in the afternoon. Taking this into account means that a trek back for lunch basically destroys any hope of any real collecting

that could be done in the garden. So we arranged to not have to come back for lunch at noon. The Americans (even I) were happy to skip lunch (I had hidden some snacks about my person), but our gracious hosts insisted that they would have it delivered. So off we went, a party of 13, to the garden to do some collecting. We took the road, which winds back and forth like a lazy snake, and watched for bugs the whole way there. I spied some great blister beetles, black with a bright orange pronotum, in a culvert on the side of the road. Matt was intrepid enough to jump over and get them.



Regal 'Piller

I've been without fizzy drinks for a while now, just water and the occasional 3 in 1 coffee (No way to cool it down, so had to be served hot). Chris guaranteed me that there would be a small visitors center with, if not an actual vending machine, at least a



The inability to reclamate can take all the pep out of a body.

water. But a very beautiful building and garden none the less.

small cooler with drinks.

Guaranteed. His word. Scout's honor. Etc. So I'm really looking forward to maybe a Pepsi, or at the very least, a Coke. On we trek, anticipation speeding my weary feet forward. We came to the official advisory sign of the park, which stated that there should be: No Entertainment, No Dumping Rubbish, No Poisoning Aquarism, and No Illegal Reclamation.

The official visitors center of the Botanical Garden is a large open air semicircle with benches all around. On the right hand side there is a small cubical for the attendant to set within. No vending machines, no coolers, not even -we were to later find out- running

The mowed moist ground in the parking lot and around the visitors center was populated with hundreds of round holes, all as big around as a dime.

Each was being attended to, dug out, or filled in, by a large

shining black and smokey orange wasp, known as a tarantula hawk here in the states, family Pompilidae. They dig individual burrows and fill them with paralyzed spiders. When the requisite number of spiders has been reached, they lay an egg and the larva, upon hatching, begins to eat its still fresh meal. Luckily these are not eager to sting, and generally pay no attention to the bunglings of great beasts that lumber through their territory looking for fizzy drink dispensers.

You enter the garden on a wonderful wooden trail that passes a large shelter and presently you are presented with a great pond to the left, and a mown lawn on the right. The pond is man made although true ponds do exist on the mountains of Taiwan,



Fu Shan Botanical Garden



Above the pond

to such an extent that they harbor freshwater fish found nowhere else on earth. Freshwater fish on this island surrounded by ocean seem to be more prevalent than fish in landlocked Costa Rica. This is no doubt due to the geologic history of the two land masses.

This particular pond was home to a roving gang of grass carp, each in the 20 to 30 pound range, another fish, endemic and orange finned, that swam by the hundreds

in the clear cool current of the spring feeding the pond, mandarin ducks, and the wonderful Little Grebe. We had seen pictures of these grebes during the presentation of the previous day, but it turns out they really



Fish in the current

are little. One could sit if your cupped hands. They are fantastically cantankerous and will quarrel with one another at the slightest provocation, sometimes fly-swimming nearly half way across the pond to engage in battle. They are also, in the fashion of their breed, wonderful submariners. Plop under they go only to come back up 50 or more feet from where they descended.

I do not have the pleasure of specializing on any particular group of insects, or mode of collection. I am, for all of the schooling, still a general collector. Not everything catches my eye, but I dabble in a little of it all. So as we descended on this beautiful pond, my gaze was first captured by dragon and damselflies that gilded its edges. While hiking the road Dr. Lee handed me a brilliant metallic green damselfly, *Matrona basilaris*, which looks very similar to our smaller Ebony Jewel Wing. At the pond he handed me a medium sized dragonfly with dark brown wings, *Rhyothemis regia regia*. Here were two species I have never collected, nor even saw on the walk!



Rhyothemis regia regia



My big female *Anax*

I collected commoner stuff around the pond but my big catch was a huge green dragonfly with clean wings, genus *Anax*. This looks very similar to our own Common Green Darner but holds special significance to me, because this is a genus I saw, but was never able to collect, in Thailand. These are big strong flyers, catching one is kind of like trying to catch a goose with a net. But they have two weaknesses. First, they tend to patrol. Where a good pond edge can be found they will fly up it and down it, back and forth, and while they are weary of wood-be

collectors standing at the waters edge, delicate subterfuge can entice them to come close enough for a swipe. Their second weakness has to do with mate guarding and egg laying. At times two or more males will fight over a female and become oblivious to the whereabouts of the featherless stork with the short beak. Females must land on the lily pads or duckweed, then extend their abdomen under the water, and insert an egg into the stalk of a plant, which leaves them vulnerable to the net. One such female fell prey in such a way, and will now, in death, live longer than any of her sisters.

Now I mentioned that I am a general collector, which means that all the while I was collecting dragons I was drooling at the possibility of getting into that pond with my dipnet (yes, carried that on my side the whole walk down, I also have an aspirator if I wish to go sweep netting or tearing up dead trees, bags etc. for collection of whole items such as mushrooms, a very fine net for dealing with bugs in fine sand or small tree holes full of water, AND only Victoria and I brought killing jars). So I spied a nice spot of the shore, next to a small tree where I could lean my pack while I swept the water for any number of things it might conceal. About two feet from shore, what should I see in the very spot I was planning on planting my weary bum, but a beautiful green viper curled in the grass, just waiting for a fat frog to come by.

Well I got my pictures, and it never wavered. Called Matt over to take his pictures, and it never wavered. By now some tourists had caught on that the round eyes had something of interest cornered, so they (about a hundred of them) came over and started taking pictures. And it never wavered! Good thing it was a calm snake, or everyone would have gotten bitten, including me!



Snake in the Grass

I went a little further down and dipped all I could, but catchings were sparse. I got my share of tourists, though. I don't know what it is, but tourists seem to be, well, nicer to deal with in other countries. Maybe its because of the language barrier. But while foreign-afield



Very Veiled Viper

no one pulls back in horror at the site of an inch long damselfly larvae, and that has nothing to do with language. When I would collect dragonflies near gawkers, Mr., Mrs., and Baby General Public will generally come forward, take photographs, search (and generally find!) the English word- "Drrragun Fies?" and be generally awed by the intricate beauty of the thing. In the states I get, "What do you want to collect those for?" and, "Are you a Scientist?" The children of course, provided they're young enough to be unpolluted by the imbecilic prejudice of their parents, are the same the whole world over- generally awed, inquisitive, and ready to learn.

I'm dripping and down to the last inch in my water bottle, but lunch will bring a respite. I had only ventured to the end of the pond and got some pictures of turtles on logs when the appointed hour of noon arrived, so I headed back to the large shelter and lunch, in Yummy Yummy boxes had arrived. It was rather good, and quite filling, but they could have served my slop or steak for all I cared. Believe it or not, there was nothing to drink! Not even that horrible tasteless, sugarless, colorless water!

We've noticed that the natives don't drink much (or anything) with their meal in "The Restaurant", but its melting out here, 'long ways from the faucet, and here is a meal of, among other things, rice- a starch consisting of long chains of glucose which must first be separated via hydrolysis using WATER!

Douglas Adams wrote a wonderful article one time explaining that whenever you travel you must first find out what are the rules of the place you are at, because

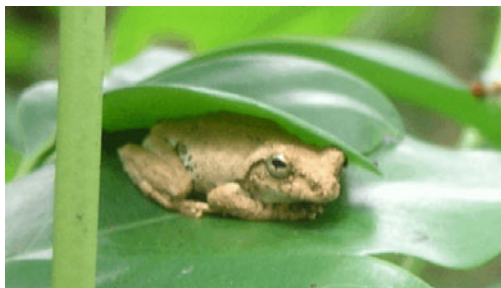
some places make no sense at all. He pointed out that you may parallel park with or against traffic on a British street, but parking against traffic in the US will render you in violation of the law. We should not have taken it for granted that drink would be served, even though every other place we've collectively traveled, especially hot locations, are fanatical about making sure everyone has LOTS of water. We ventured up to the attendant and he had enough water to refill most everyone's bottle, but I stayed back with Erin's and my own while two of the girls took a scooter to the headquarters to fill the pot with more water. Yes, they only have one pot, and well more than 100 people come here on a good day, but they either must not need much, or bring their own.

After my bottle was filled, I drained it. They filled it again and I drank half of that, too. I hate water, but sometimes it's the best thing in the world.

The official duties of the day (lunch at noon) done, it was now time to explore the Bot. Gar. (as my labels say) unfettered. Apparently, Matt spied an unknown snake and felt the best course of action to take when faced with an unknown tropical snake on an island with over a dozen venomous snakes was to rush into the bushes and catch it. By the time I happened on the scene, Chris had taken possession of the serpent and the credit for its capture.



Chris and the snake "he" caught



Peek-a-Boo

Further back into the garden there was a large mown expanse with sparse tree cover. In some areas of the world you plant a bunch of trees so people can have a look at them, and in other places you clear a bunch of trees away. It all depends on what one has to start with. There was a wonderful bamboo garden, although rather than a bamboo forest as Matt had envisioned, it consisted of round clumps of various varieties of bamboo plunked into the mown field. While not all together aesthetically pleasing, this had the added advantage of allowing the observer the opportunity to comment on the overall figure and stance of the particular cane.

Matt, Erin, Chris, and I hiked to the top of a levee that curtailed the stream exiting the lake. I spied a brilliant blue bullet of a dragon, *Rhyothemis triangularis*, perched on a small tree at the side of the stream. As they blundered along blindly I held a steady eye on it until it flew, never closer than 20 feet away, it was soon lost into the infinity of the sky. But presently I found the most beautiful blue long horn beetle sitting on a bush. We all started watching bushes and succeeded in capturing 4 specimens, including one that I saw in flight, Chris tracked to a branch, and Matt jumped to catch!



Erin has this habit of constantly winking and batting her eyes, which sends into a fury young men and photographers alike.

The afternoon rain began slowly then picked up, coming down harder and harder. We sought shelter in a wonderful gazebo with the rest of the gang. As the rain waned, but certainly didn't stop, we set out again. Walking to another section of park Chris set out towards a large dead log, announcing that sometimes stag beetles perch on those very logs and can be easily collected. I was about ten paces behind him and rang out, "What about this one," as I stooped to collect a male stag beetle perched on a small bit of dead branch over which Chris had nearly stepped.



Bats, not quite, in a belfry

We visited a gazebo full of bats, the floor heaped with guano, then winded our way back through the garden and the rain for the long trek home.

That night, after a hot shower and a cool drink, we went back to our gazebo blacklight. The prize of the night was a very angry four inch long long horn beetle. Chris showed us his newest collection improvisation- the “Buprella” an umbrella used to collect beetles in the family Buprestidae who are reportedly attracted to purple. The flanges on the side are fly paper. Unfortunately this breakthrough method of design and function has provided less than desirable results.

The moth of the night was mirror silver with bright metallic gold edges. Sorry the camera can’t capture it all, but some things just can’t be caught on film.



Our intrepid narrator on the road home



Buprella in action!



Lep de jour

Chapter IV

Early Escape The Magnificent Catch Meandering Blacklighting in the Bot. Gar.

Last night Matt, Erin, and I decided to skip out early this morning, before breakfast, and walk the stream we saw yesterday. Matt is hoping to come across some giant salamanders. There are three species of these beasts (in the family Cryptobranchidae). Japan and China have one species each, both in the genus *Andrias*.



Roaring to go!

And, amazingly, the third species is our own Hellbender! I'm dreaming about the multitudes of mayfly, stonefly, caddisfly, larvae, not to mention adult and larvae true bugs, beetles, etc. that I'll get from the stream. Plus a walk down a tropical stream is nothing but heaven to a dragonfly collector.

dragonfly, *Pantala flavescens*. This species is found all over the world, I've seen them in Belize and collected them in Warrensburg, MO and Chiang Mai, Thailand. This is a speedy, high flying species that is just as happy 30 feet from the ground as 3 feet. Their only weaknesses are curiosity and playfulness.

The stream was beautiful. Cool water and shade kept us comfortable,

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Catching Striders

So we were up and out the door by 6:30 am. At the pond I swiped dragons while Erin had a sit down and Matt had a go at hand catching water striders. As we hiked through the Great Plains region of the gardens Matt caught a yellow



Good Catch on the Great Plains

we were mostly hidden from the garden visitors, and the terrain provided for easy walking. Unfortunately, as far as beasts in the water, the stream couldn't have been more dead! I



Bridge over sterile water

sampled the hell out of that waterway, and I have some experience in these things, but came up with basically nothing. I have a couple explanations, but no real answers. While the stream felt cool, it was certainly warmer than it would have been for having traveled through the lake, so perhaps the water temperature was unfavorable. Then again streams and springs that maintain the same temperature year round tend to be



Long straight run

Otherwise the general collecting was wonderful. I got quite a few nice dragons and damselfly nymphs, along with all sorts of other beetles, etc. One catch in particular stood out. Patrolling up and down stream was a huge black and yellow dragon. I let Matt and Erin get up way ahead of me and secured a beachhead in the middle of the stream in the middle of a long straight run. This sounds like craziness, and may be, BUT I maintain that dragonflies are not only aware of a

inhabited by fewer beasts (at least in temperate areas), so perhaps there was a depauperate fauna to begin with and due to the temperature, or season, it was, for today at least, nonexistent.



Giant Deadly Water Spider



Matrona basilaris

persons presence, but what way they are facing, and if that person is paying it attention. I won't go into all of it, but this seems to pay out sometimes. If you watch a dragonfly it will often stay well away from you or buzz the back of your head, which has happened many times, but never the front. So I, the dragonfly whisperer, stood facing the shore, paying as little attention as possible, using the peripheral vision as best I could. There were two passes, one upstream toward the others, then back downstream. I waited patiently looking upstreamish as much as possible, to appear disinterested and on the next pass I spun around and WHACK! Got it! With my little 2 foot net.

Yesterday I went after one of these beasts. I cut from the trail and plunged into some brush and missed the dragon, but caught some Biting Cat. This is a hairy little plant that makes stinging nettle seem positively lovely. I just brushed the outside of my left thumb and it still hurts today. It feels like thin metal or glass has been ground into my hand. Sparky and sharp. The hairs on the stem and leaves of Biting Cat are called urticating hairs. The same term is used to



Euphaea formosa



Big male. Don't know what it is yet.

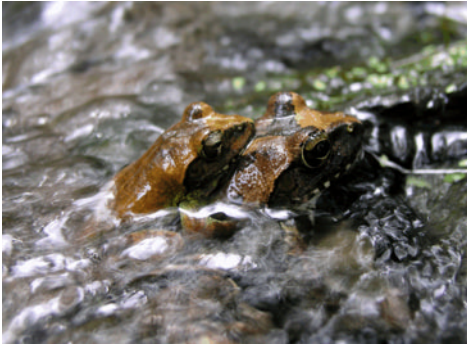


Biting Cat



A little Spiky

describe the stinging hairs of caterpillars. Generally these hairs serve to either make a caterpillar unpalatable, like our woolly bears, or offer more immediate protection by actively stinging (really pricking the skin with poison tipped hairs) the aggressor.



Mating Frogs



A lot Spiky



Pineapple Trap

We pulled up out of the stream at the dam. Half way along the boardwalk a group of tourists came by. Where are you from, what are you doing, etc. Two of them wanted their pictures taken with us. Back at the research station I processed specimens and rested my feet.

Our poor results at the blacklight the last few nights have prompted us to consider moving. The large shelter right by the lake is very tempting, so we scouted for electricity, and found a plugin 200 feet away back at the main garden building. Dinner is promptly at 7pm, so Chris and Matt volunteered to postpone dinner, lug all the equipment to the garden, and put up the blacklight. Team B would follow after dinner and bring boxed food for Team A. Also, Mike and Erin will go back up the hill to plug in the blacklights before dinner. So everyone was scurrying.

Victoria, Sue, and I left the restaurant. As I pulled the net from my belt, commenting that it might be a good evening for dragons, a huge *Anax* flew from behind over my head and I swatted it with my net. It fell to the ground in the shadows and I darted in to swat it down again, but couldn't find it. Turns out I stepped on it. Better a damaged specimen than no specimen at all.



At the blacklight: Aerial View

While this was happening...

Out of The Restaurant Yaw-Wen slipped on the steps and went down. Vicky Lou and Sue saw it happen. Our conversation for most of the trip to the garden consisted of diagnostic predictions concerning the plethora of ailments the poor girl will be plagued with from now to the moment of her death rattle. From broken tailbone, they can't do anything for you but give you a pillow, to broken wrist. We later found out that it was her wrist, but no

permanent or even temporary damage. I suggested they amputate.

We had the best fried chicken I've ever had in my life. I suggested we not put any in Matt's and Chris' dinner pale, and save that for ourselves, they would never be the wiser, but Victoria was nice. Erin did add a little something to Matt's supper. He said it was delicious:)

The Taiwanese students came down and helped collect. Dr. Lee took me to a dead tree with shelf fungus



At the Giving Tree

on it. I must have collected 500 rove beetles, not to

mention about 100 more specimens of various types of beetles. The students loved it, and Rita took about 100 photos of various fauna we collected off the snag. Matt brought in a "glow worm," family Lampyridae, this is a beetle larvae that flashes like a lightning bug.

Slowly everyone faded back to the station until it was just Chris, Matt, and I. We packed of the equipment and stowed it in an unlocked equipment shed. The whole walk back we swept the forest and trees looking for eye shine. I have a headlamp with, among other things, a red LED. Its not much for letting you see far ahead,



Dinner- Fish head included



I'm holding it by the glowy end.



Beetle from a shelf fungus

but it does make an animal's eyes glow bright red even when they're 100 feet away. We spotted several giant squirrels and a couple barking deer.

Chapter IV

Climbing to the Top of Hell In the Name of Science Noises From the Dark

There are two reoccurring themes in my varied adventures. One is more uphill hiking than downhill hiking, which my smart friends point out is impossible provided I start and end in the same place and hike all the way. I maintain that they are wrong, somehow my uphill climb is about 25% longer than my downhill shuffle. The other theme of my adventures is some sort of shoddily built or poorly enclosed tower that must be climbed. Why must it be climbed? Because its there.

So today we are following Yaw-Wen through the botanical garden and up a very tight trail to a little tower of blissful Hell. Two themes in one. We come to the tower on the top of a hill, the taller trees are cleared away and a bright red dragon, *Neurothemis*, is floating around, tempting me. Matt, Erin, and Chris go up first. There isn't much room so most groups limit their number to three at a time.

The tower is basically made of scaffolding and held up with guy-wires. Its very bare bones. Wonderful if you're not scared of heights, but the utter lack of anything to arrest your fall at the base of each stairway is a bit upsetting. I swat at a robber



Long way to the top



About half way up

fly and let others take their turn. There were at least 9 levels each about 7 feet heigh, so its not monumentally tall, but tall enough.

Finally everyone has gone and down and I will try my best. The first couple



Looking down on the world

levels aren't bad at all, but by the third I'm hunching something terrible, and on the fourth I'm using a technique rock climbers use, you maintain three points of contact at all times. So I clutch at the bars with both hands and keep one foot firmly planted while I move the other foot. Then with one hand very tight and two steady, but somewhat shaky feet, I reluctantly release the grip of one hand, which turns from white back to a pinkish, and grab some other piece of railing. By the 5th or 6th level I'm stopped. Cussing, wanting to scream and cry at the same time, perfectly aware that this is madness- I'm in less danger than when I drive to Wal-Mart- I try to calm myself down, wedge myself in a corner and very carefully take out my camera for some shots, just incase I can't make it to the top. Which, of course, is not an option. The top must always be gained.

After sufficient picture taking I very slowly begin my ascent again. Finally, wanting to



Three at the top

curse, scream, and cry, my body hurting from the tension I make it to the top. Again I wedge myself in the corner and breath heavily. Presently Erin and Matt come bounding up, "Hey, how ya doin'?" Chipper bastards.

More pictures, more time to calm down. Then its time to leave this hell hole in the sky and get to solid, lovely, only 6 feet away, ground. I'm doing a butt scoot technique so I stay as low and stable as possible, making good time! Matt, about two thirds down accidentally drops his walkie-talkie. It clangs on the tower, but ultimately falls in the impenetrable scrub and grasses below. We finally make it to the bottom!

Hurray! Lovely ground! I could kiss it. By now I've forgotten most of my fear, it was a lovely view, nice breeze, I don't remember being scared or upset at all really, could positively run up those steps if I wanted to... but have to get back for lunch.



Nice View



The Research Station- Our quarters on the right, "the restaurant" on the upper left.

I had a slow walk back down the hill. It was nice, there were some particularly noisy birds along the trail, but even Victoria couldn't coax them out to be seen. I headed straight for the room and a shower. A siesta was sorely needed. But it wouldn't last long.

Matt used Erin's walkie, "Hello, hello, where are you?" and Chris replied, "Down the trail." Matt explained the situation of the lost walkie and Chris said he would help us look for it. So we turned off Erin's walkie and listened. Suddenly a tiny little voice came out of the grass, "Help me! Help me! I'm lost! I'm over here, in the bushes. Help me! I'm over here!" Matt doubled over with laughter, and I, perhaps not entirely over my previous experience wondered, How would Chris know where the lost walkie was? But, after Matt gained his composure a bit more he was able to rescue the lost.



Flower, perhaps the family Melastomataceae

Dr. Wu came back today to see how we were doing. He brought supplies. I put in an order for 3 mangos and 5 black tea juice boxes. Yaw-Wen was blown away by the size of the order, how could anyone drink 1.5 small boxes of tea a day!? So my order has arrived and Matt and I instantly devoured a Mango.

I had been eyeing a large black mass in a tree near the building ever since we got here. It was about basketball sized, perhaps a little larger, and about 9 feet up. I originally identified it as an aerial termite nest similar to the ones I've seen in Thailand, but Chris figures its an ant nest, and he is right. There are some beetles that are only found in association with ants, and the only way to collect them is from the nest. Now consider the challenge faced by the collector



Preparing for the attack



Wasp attacking an unlucky cicada

who wishes to poke through a nest of several thousand suicidal stinging biting ants in pursuit of the one, two, or possibly as many as five, small round unmoving brown beetles that may be found therein.

Luckily there may be a way. Its called floating. The idea is that in water living things, such as insects, float, while nonliving things, like dirt or nest material, sinks. So Matt and I got a trash can, a tub, some small dip nets, water, and a long handled machete-like implement with an inward curved tip. He pulled down the limb, hacked at the nest, which was made of a paper wasp nest like material, cut off a large portion of the nest and drug it down the limb. I grabbed the nest, turned around and shoved it into the tub. In the three seconds it took me to do this I had about 200 ants on my hands and arms. They stung.

Matt came over and helped, mashing up the nest, swirling the contents of the

tub, the ants were swarming everywhere, climbing up our shoes and legs. An audience gathered and watched as we hopped and slapped, and went about our business. Finally we had two quart bags full of ants and hopefully some beetles. It took quite a bit of work, lots of scooping, swirling, and slapping. Lots of fun in the field.



Botanical Garden in the twilight

I took another shower, but I'm still picking ants off my clothes and backpack. Matt and I volunteered to postpone supper and set up the black light at the garden tonight. I left specific instructions for Victoria to bring the tea in the freezer with her along with my dinner. Hurray!



Hurray, another possible killer snake!

We got the black light set up and I experimented with some long exposure pictures of the gardens in the twilight. As the sun set the usual blacklighting tails began to be retold. We've gotten so many big metallic green June beetles we almost ignore them. People started trickling in, and enjoyed my dinner and tea. Matt and Chris drifted into the darkness and came back with another unidentified, yet much molested snake.



Photographing the Serpent

All of a sudden a sound, not unlike a helicopter, could be heard approaching. You will rarely use it, but you should always have a net at a blacklight. I sprung into action and after a lot of dancing, bobbing, and weaving finally caught the great beast. It was a huge male scarab beetle, like our unicorn or rhinoceros beetle. This one with a huge four forked nose piece and a double forked head piece was the biggest beetle caught so far.

Not as impressive, but very intriguing was a tiny little beetle that looked like it belonged to the family Elmidae or Dryopidae. These are aquatic families and there should be some in the pond. Perhaps tomorrow I'll spend some more time dipping.



Big Beetle

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.

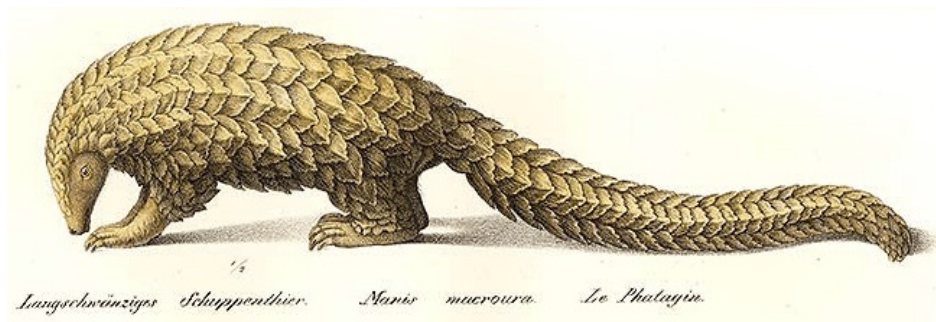


Snake and Meal

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.**

Chapter IV

Last Day in Fu-Shan Story of the Cameras Back to the Leader

Our last day at the Fu-Shan Research station. We gathered up the light traps, cleaned up the sickly little pan traps (one actually caught a stag beetle!), took down the hanging dog trap, cleaned up our rooms, packed, and got ready to leave. They were nice enough to let us borrow any equipment we might need for the next station. There



Our fantastic abode

is a chance that our bag is waiting for us at the hotel in Taipei, complete with hanging blacklight traps and FITs, but it's rather remote. So we borrowed the monster extension cord, one hanging blacklight, and the curved machete that Matt used to pull down the ant nest. I got some parting photos of the place we were staying, and lunch.



Lunch

A couple things I should mention before we leave this place. First, when we first got here they gave us all vests, with something, presumably "researcher" written on the back in Chinese. This is nice, because I currently have 3 collecting permits in my wallet and don't really feel the need to carry around any more. Also, there are no ticks nor are there chiggers here. They do, however, have terrestrial leaches. Leaches are invertebrates and can shrink and stretch however they like, so an individual is somewhere in the neighborhood of a half inch to 4 inches

long. Leaches are nice in that they don't carry diseases that affect humans. They also tend to get in and get out quickly, you never feel them. When they bite they secrete an anticoagulant, so when they drop off you keep bleeding for a while. The only evidence that you were got is blood running down your leg.

We loaded our bags and equipment into the back of an almost flat bed truck and hoped it wouldn't fly out. The trip back through Taipei took us back through tunnels, although while I only remember going through two on the way here, we went through at least a half dozen this time. Several times a woman's voice would boom through the



Lunch in action

tunnels and over the radio. The volume and the echo, along with the feminine quality of the voice made you want to do whatever she was telling you to do, partially because you were scared of being hit by a bolt of lightening, and partially because you wanted to make her happy in hopes she would look favorably upon you.

Apparently she was directing traffic. Cameras were linked to a command center where she monitored the flow of traffic, watching for accidents and stupidity. But also she would give general orders, everyone needs to speed up 10 kilometers per hour, or everyone needs to slow down 5 kph.

While we're headed back to Taipei let me tell you the saga of the camera, which I eluded to a while back. I bought an Olympus C5050 just before I left for Thailand back in 2003. I wanted to update that by getting something bigger, better, and above all faster. I have also wanted, for at least 10 years when I saw a photo display in National Geographic magazine, a fisheye lense. These are lenses like door peepholes that give you a 180 degree view. Some people don't like them because there is a lot of "distortion" the further you get from the center, but I love them. Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote that she hated to wear her bonnet because it made her feel closed in. She liked to throw it off and run through the prairie. Conventional lenses make me feel closed in, too. You have to take a short hike to get far enough away to capture any kind of idea of the look or feel of a place. For portraits a "flat lense" is great, but I want to see everything.

My friend Brad had just purchased a new digital Canon Rebel and loved it. He let me hold it and I loved it. It turned on instantly, it took pictures as fast as you clicked the button, and at 8 megapixles you could print a photo quality poster from the pictures

you took with it. And best of all, canon makes a readably available lense called the "Canon EF 15mm f/2.8 Fisheye Lens." Everywhere I looked this was described as a "Full 180° Fisheye Lense." So I got the camera, a zoom lense, and the fisheye. It was an obscene amount to money, but if taken care of the lenses would last forever, the camera was a really good deal and I was leaving for the Smokies and REALLY wanted some wide angle photos of the old growth forest. Not to mention Taiwan.

I was like a giddy school girl. Of course I wanted them to ship the camera to the school and the company couldn't accept my debit card because the address associated with the card did not match the school's address. Turns out the bank lost my address months ago, which explains why I hadn't been getting any statements. So after calling the bank and confirming that they had lost my address I then had to walk to a physical bank and set up an permanent address, so that I could walk back to a phone and call the bank to set up a temporary shipping address. Only then would the camera seller ship. This isn't in any way an omen of things to come, this is standard business in the world of Mike.

I got the package about three days before we left for the Smokies, played with the camera, laughing, clapping, giggling all the time. Finally I got the fisheye lens out of its special packaging. Wow was it heavy, even the lense cap was metal. I carefully put it on my camera. This was it, I'd waited years for this. I knew that when I looked through that view finder I would see a circle with my lap at the bottom and the ceiling directly above my head on the top. I knew this because I had bought a "Full 180° Fisheye Lense."

Slowly I put the view finder to my eye as I pointed the camera across the room. You know what's coming, don't you. The image I got was a rectangle. It really wasn't that much wider than the photos I used to take with my Olympus and an extension .45x wide angle lense. Yes, this "Full 180° Fisheye Lense" was a full 180° from corner to corner, NOT all the way around in a circle! Its my own fault, you see my whole life I've only known circular fisheye pictures, and never known the angle of a lense given as corner to corner, nor could I ever image anyone ever saying that a lense which gives a rectangular photo is a "Full 180° Fisheye Lense." So I should have never presumed that I was getting what was being described. I'm young, I'm stupid.

Needless to say I was also upset. Upset to the point of wishing every sort of pestilence on anyone having to do with Canon, lenses, advertising, society in general, and damn near everything and everyone else. Luckily the company would take back the lense and refund my money, minus a restocking fee, or course.

This leaves me solvent, but with no lense. Is there a real, true, full, circular 180° Fisheye Lense available to fit a Canon mount? Of course! Its made by Sigma. We live in the internet age, I've bought products from England and Australia and had then delivered the next week. New or used, everything is available on the internet! About 12 hours of searching later I discover that a Sigma Fisheye that will fit on a Canon is

certainly NOT available. Want the same lense that only fits a Pentax? Sure we have those. Want one for a Nikon? We'll send you two! Need one for a Canon? Oh, so sorry, those are on permanent backorder. Any used ones? Oh my no.

I have the uncanny ability to desire products that are not made because no one wants them, and never available used because those who have them will never give them up except in death, whereby the product is immediately snatched away by one of the hungry thousands that desperately wants it. This is the only way you could possibly explain the actions of the manufacturers and consumers. Orwell called it Doublethink.

After I got back from the Smokies I only had 9 days before I left for here. There is one final option for a real, true, full, circular 180° Fisheye Lense. Its made by a company in Belarus that used to make optics for the Soviet Military. Its called a Peleng and there is one available on Ebay. The only draw back is that it is entirely manual. The camera doesn't even know is has a lense on it, so you have to fiddle with stuff to get good pictures. My lense came from Belarus a few days before I left for here. I was happy again.

Do I get circular photos? No. But almost. One more obstacle set in my way. The lense makes a 35 mm diameter circle of light, as it should. But the sensor on my camera is only 21mm wide. So I get a circle with the top, bottom, and side chopped off. Its much better than the Canon Lie Lense, but not what I was really after even yet. I'll just have to wait, but in the mean time I'm loving what I have right now.

So I'm carrying two cameras with me, my old Olympus that is wonderful at close ups and low light, and my Canon that captures area and action.

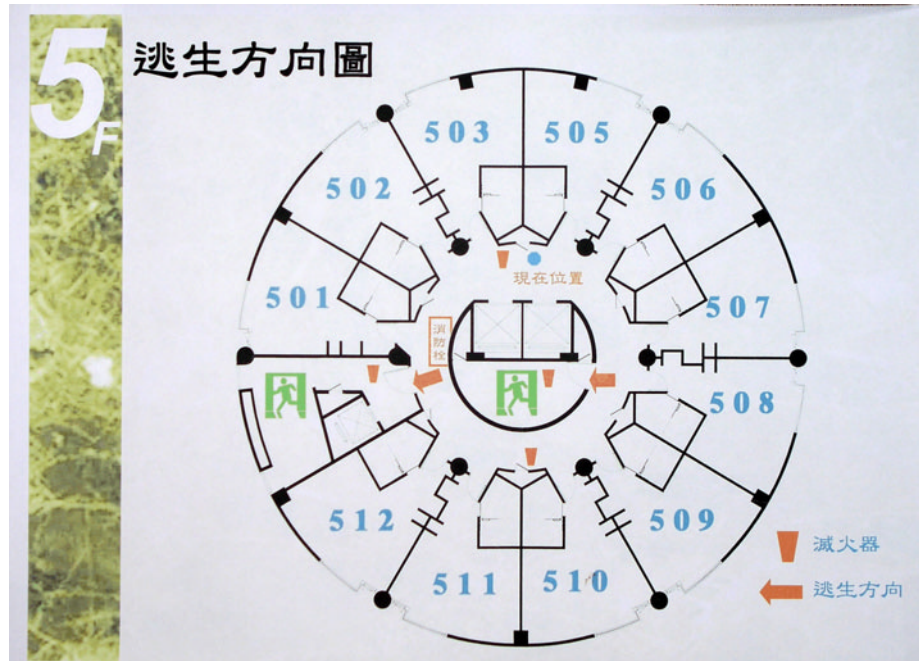
We got to Taipei just in time for traffic. Although, there is heavy traffic just about any time here. Not being used to the scooters, I got a picture to show the throng we

were in. There is a box painted in the intersection in front of stop lights about a car length deep that is reserved for scooters. So when you approach a red light you stop about a car length back, and scooters file through the traffic, slowly congregating at the front until you get



Scooters, scooters all around and not a bit of space

a green. The odd thing is the symbol painted in the box to denote scooter drivers. Its not a profile of a person on a scooter like we would have, but a stylized image meant to symbolize a head on view of a person riding a scooter.



Floor plan and escape route of a circular hotel

After showers we headed to the Ponderosa Steak House immediately next to the hotel. Apparently there are hunter/gatherer cultures that have two words for hungry, one is general absence of food hungry, the other is hungry for protein. It had been a harrowing week on the diet front and many of us wanted some sort of giant piece of meat. Matt got ribs, Erin and I got a steak. Chris got a steak but no salad bar. Victoria would ferry bits of bread to him. It was possibly the worst steak I have ever eaten. I don't know where you go on the cow to get meat like that, but I think you would have to work hard at it. Luckily they had a ripping chicken thing on the salad bar and Matt and I put a dent in the dragon fruit stocks. This is wonderful fruit from cacti. Its bright red on the outside, with a bright green inner liner and a pure white central pulp dotted with tiny black seeds. It has a very soft slightly sweet flavor, and is perhaps the lightest food I have ever eaten. It seems like you could eat 20 of them and not get full.

We made it back to the Leader Hotel. We're staying the night and heading to another research station in the south tomorrow. We got checked in, everyone on the 5th floor. Unfortunately our key (really a card) didn't work. And the management couldn't get the door unlocked either. So we ended up moving to the 7th floor. Oh well.

Chapter V

Intermission Drive South Lunch Drive South (more) Blacklighting

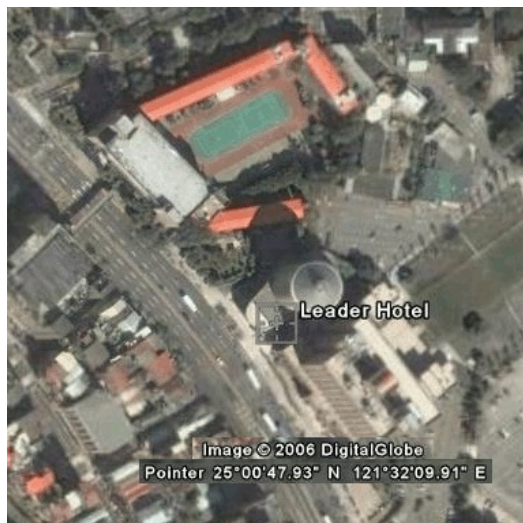
Every once in a while I think up some utterly fantastic thing. That it is clearly impossible given today's technology or social customs, I pay no heed. And almost always the mouth attached to the ear that was forced to listen to my childish skylarkings will comment that what I have proposed is utterly fantastic and clearly impossible given today's technology or social customs. They will go on to add that it is foolish and certainly will never be.



Fu-Shan from Google Earth

They are absolutely correct, of course. Consider if you had told Jason, Odysseus, Columbus, or Magellan that someday there would be stars in the sky that would take high-resolution digital images of the earth and you would be able to download these on a laptop and scroll around and look down from the heavens at a map of the world giving the locations of not only rivers, lakes, and cities, but also elementary schools and Chinese restaurants. They would have said, "Why yes, that's absolutely imaginable. Seems perfectly reasonable."

If, after the plane touched down 120 feet from where it had taken off, you had explained to



Leader Hotel from Google Earth.
My first room overlooked the red and green sports arena.

the Wright Brothers that in just 99 years the Denver airport would cover 53 square miles, or that the Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson airport would handle 76.7 million passengers in one year, their countenance would remain unaffected. You would be



Liukuei (sp?). Note the large river to the West.

brushed aside with the 1903 equivalent of “Duh” .

These people would have clearly understood that the massive infrastructure and gains in technology above and beyond shanties and pottery were reasonable and obtainable. However, they would have also known that it was pure folly to, even for an instant, imagine that a device could be concocted that could sequence a genome remotely; aim a beam at a bird and get its DNA!? NEVER! Or that perhaps someday a device could be made to mimic the workings of the brain. IMPOSSIBLE!

As I bow to those that know so much more than I, I feel that I would be remiss if I didn't show you satellite photos of where we are, where we have been, and where we are going.

We have a 7 hour drive. Almost the longest drive one can take in Taiwan. Longest in miles I mean. We're driving from almost the top of the island, to almost the bottom. We packed into the van. The driver (Jack) and Arno up front and the three kids in the back seat, Little Erin in the middle.

Chris had warned us about a HUGE golden Buddha on the left. How far away is it? Not sure, but it is on the left. So we kept an eye out and I was able to get three pitiful shots as



Big Buddha



A rare photo of a roadside call box almost obscured by the megalopolis stretching from horizon to horizon.

we blasted by. Here we're on four lane highways that rival American interstates. About 65-75 mph is the average. This is the island's main highway that connects the large cities built on the flats of the northern shore. We passed megalopolises that stretched from the highway to the sea and from right horizon to left horizon. It was an urban desert of low earth tone buildings, factories, and roads.

About lunch time we stopped at a travel plaza. It was huge. Giant parking lot, industrial sized bathroom facilities out and away from the main building. Matt found a dead dragonfly - *Tholymus tillarga* a species I collected in Thailand, but haven't gotten here yet! It was already quite flat, so I put it in my note book for safe keeping. Inside the main building are trinket shops, a rather large grocery store (where I got a delectable chocolate drink and Victoria continued on her quest for coffee), and a wide variety of restaurants.

Also I was enamored by a block of very smart looking vending machines, the kind that children put 50 cents in, turn the

knob and a toy in a hard plastic bubble comes out. There were about 15 choices and I couldn't resist a cube within a cube toy for NT \$50 (about \$1.50 US). That's all it was really. A



Travel Plaza

white plastic cube, with a smiley face painted on it. When you opened it up, there was another cube inside. It probably appealed to my sense of order. It came with a little piece of paper inside, all written in Chinese, but the pictures indicated that there were nearly a dozen varieties! All looked exactly alike, excepting the expression on the face. Some with frowny faces, others with, or without rosy cheeks, etc. These are manufactured in Japan, and one can't help but wonder if the



Geedan

designer was 1) having a very unimaginative day, 2) interested to see just how little effort could be put into a product and still get a return, 3) involved in some sort of wager with another employee, friend, or family member, or 4) the type of person that finds cubes within cubes appealing to their sense of order.

We converged on a eatery called "GEEDAN broiled food on potteries". They displayed a mockup of their dishes

beside the counter. Unfortunately when you point and grunt like an ignorant monkey the girl at the register can't see what you are pointing at, so she came around and looked. Chris, Matt, and I ordered all the same thing. A beautiful whole squid cut into



Could have used a little more salt.

rings, on a bed of something with a brown sauce, vegetables including very hard corn, and a boiled egg. Plus a very weak soup- the drink analog. For dessert we wandered by the dessert bar and I got tiramisu. Of course I didn't know that at the time. Its Italian, Erin informed me.



Dessert

We left the comfort of the plaza, walked through the boiling heat of the parking lot, and regained the boiling, but soon, comfortable car. A few more hours transpired and we presently found



Whole chickens and Squid, just like home!



Matt enjoying a pudding pop

ourselves dropped off at an ice cream parlor within walking distance of a little shop. Erin needed more dead beasts to use as bait. Back in the car we drove on and stopped again at an even bigger store where I loaded up on fizzy drinks, cold coffee drinks, and apple juice boxes. Not to mention many forms of candy. Once in Texas I met a rather robust East German who seemed to be eating all the time. He grabbed his belly and said, "I have many thousands of Euro's invested in this!" One must not allow oneself to waste away.



A very formal affair

We crossed a great river that, to the trained eye, appeared lifeless. The rock I can only assume is slate, and flakes with such ease that not even the aquatic slimes of bacteria and fungi can grow before the rock is chipped and tumbled along. Whether this river has been this way always or this is a more recent occurrence due to the actions of man, I cannot say. I can say that a very many people were thoroughly enjoying the river as they whizzed down it in rubber rafts. Stereotypes are a curious thing, as one does not usually think of Asians as being overly aquatic, although from where I would get this impression I can't really say.

We left the big highway and began to climb into the mountains. The roads here are barely 2 cars wide, steep, and VERY curvy. This, in and of itself, is not much of a problem, however this is the first time in a long time that I have been in the back of a vehicle while being flung about willy nilly. Turns out its

best to sometimes close your eyes and breath deeply to keep the headaches away. At least a half dozen times we passed road construction crews as they attempted to repair a collapsed roadway. Once we saw the best road sign of the trip- in the upper left a cliff jutted out into space, while a car hung nose down in mid air in the lower right.



Chris pointing out a frog

that magical mystical item, the refrigerator. We stuffed it to the gills with drinks, beer



Rolling, rolling, rolling down the river

Finally we came to the Station. There was a three story building, white, with a circular drive. It looked suspiciously like a hotel, which it was. Past the reception desk, which was never manned, there was a dual stairway which swept to the left and right up and around to the second floor. Tucked in past the stairway was a bar and behind it resided

for Chris and Erin, fizzy drinks, creamy drinks, and appley drinks for me.

We unloaded the vehicles, although there was some discussion as to where we would be staying. A long wooden stairway lead to unknown buildings up and away to the right, and Chris was certain we'd be trucking our stuff to someplace up there. However others were certain that we would be staying in the main building. These little quandaries happen the world over and I would love to dissect the situation down to the bones and study how they form. So we just kind of stood around for a half hour. Finally we found out that we were supposed to head up the hill, so we headed up the stairs, around a corner and up a long slope, then down a short path and to the cabin.



A very comfortable room

It's a three part cabin, with bedrooms and baths on each side and a large sitting room, complete with TV and a couch, in the middle. Matt and I were on the left, Chris on the couch in the middle, and Erin and Victoria on the right. We tossed our stuff down and headed to scout a place to set up the blacklight.

Below the main hotel is a path through an abandoned open air building where they brunt and boiled sugarcane. There is a nice sized stream nearby and the building overlooked some good vegetation. In the interest of avoiding any possible rain we set



One of two tables

up the sheet across one end of the building, stretched the cord from the main hotel down, and set up the light.

Supper was in the main dining hall. Same routine as before, but these tables lacked the lazy Susans. How quickly one misses them! After supper we headed down to the light and set about collecting all we could. A good number of beetles came in and some to the more interesting moths. We had a

couple big longhorn beetles and were visited by a few stag beetles too. By and large the strangest insect we saw was an elongate beetle with enormous hind legs. The master and the students were equally stumped by that one!



Blacklight in action