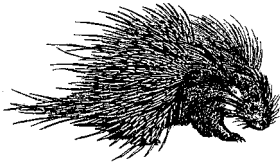


Porcupine!



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Editorial

Colour coding – have you noticed that when an unpalatable or difficult conservation viewpoint is expressed, the apparent offender is often glibly dismissed as being a ‘green’ (or even a greenie)? This is becoming a rather convenient retort to dodge what are generally rather complex issues, ones that typically require informed responses, creative thinking and pose real and important challenges to government and society. This easy let-out ignores the fact that there are many shades of ‘green’, from the rather extreme ‘environment above all else’ to the wholly practical, and very real, need to balance man and nature for the benefit of both. It is time, maybe, to assign a colour to those who do not want to address core issues, who procrastinate, are uninformed maybe, or who, all in all, continue to contribute to the environmental problems that surround us simply by lack of action and obfuscation. In mulling this over, I concluded that ‘grey’ was rather fitting. The lack of colour reflects the absence of action, the distorting (sometimes) of truth, apathy and general unwillingness to consider changing the *status quo* or meeting challenges. While there are shades of grey, few give much hope that things will improve substantially in the near term. We could do with more colour.

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News from DEB

As we embark upon yet another academic year at the University of Hong Kong, we encounter many new faces: new first-year undergraduates in the classroom, and new research postgraduates in the laboratories. In the case of DEB, we are lucky enough also to have some new teaching colleagues. Dr Cynthia Yau joined as Assistant Professor this September, and an article introducing her will feature in the next issue of *Porcupine!* And, while not new to exactly DEB, Dr Kenny Leung takes up a new position as Assistant Professor, also from September. For anyone who missed it, Kenny’s (revealing) personal profile is in *Porcupine!* 25. “And, finally, congratulations to Gray Williams who has been appointed Honorary Director of the Swire Marine Laboratory for the next three years. Gray is not, of course, new to DEB but this appointment will see him taking on an additional, important role on behalf of the department. We wish him luck.”

More newness: DEB, AFCD and Friends of the Country Park have just published a series of four field guides to local habitats. First off the block was *Rocky Shores* and *Hillstreams*, and by the time you read this, *Hillsides* and *Sandy Shores* will have joined them on the shelves of Hong Kong bookshops. All four volumes are bilingual, well-illustrated, and contain gazetteers for sites of interest. We hope they will be of value to secondary school students, teachers, biology undergraduates, and members of the public who want to find out a bit more about Hong Kong’s rich biodiversity.

Finally, new from Government is recently released and very long awaited Consultation Document entitled *Nature Outlook: A Review of Nature Conservation Policy* (<http://www.etwb.gov.hk>). It sets out conservation efforts and achievements of Government, describes their limitations, and makes some proposals for improvement that include the introduction of a scoring system for assessing ecological value of sites, and options for conserving ecologically important sites under private ownership. The sharp-eyed reader may note that this brief description of the contents of *Nature Outlook* doesn’t seem to include anything on actual policy (see pp.16 & 17), and the marine environment also gets short shrift. However, Government has invited comments on the document, and I urge everyone with an interest in the protection of the Hong Kong environment to read the document and send their views by October 18 2003 to the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau. They can be reached at nature_views@etwb.gov.hk, 2138 3221 (fax) or 2150 7144 (phone). There now an important opportunity to have an input into conservation initiatives in Hong Kong, and we should make the most of it.

David Dudgeon