

Guana Island Science Research Status

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In early July we headed back to China and settled in northwest of Guangzhou, where four species of frogs were chorusing and breeding right around the house, and continued our work with SCNU on biogeography and DNA phylogenetics of lizards, frogs, and fishes. Wenhua caught a live caecilian at Dinghu Shan while butterflying with Richard Lutman and the SCNU team, another first time for us. In August we headed down to Hong Kong and settled in on Lantau Island. We went over to the little island of Shek Kwu Chau (SKC), in the South China Sea. Here Skip has a long history of work on the reptiles, including finding two new kinds of snakes. This year we concentrated on frogs and butterflies with Richard, both long-time colleagues. Wenhua turned out to be the champion frog-catcher, getting four species. Richard, who had previously worked on SKC butterflies, added several species, bringing the new total to 76. There are 240 butterfly species known from all Hong Kong, so that is almost one third on this tiny island! A week long workshop on beetle systematics in Beijing ended our summer field season through early September.

Guana Science month, October 2011, featured not only heavy entomology but a big effort, directed by our great colleague Dr. Gad Perry, to quantify data on Guana's rare and endangered Stout Iguana (known only today from a few of the British V.I.). We caught, sexed, measured, weighed, pit-tagged, and number-painted 185 iguanas. The analysis is not yet complete, but a mark-resight estimate indicates nearly a thousand iguanas total on the Island! This is probably the largest surviving population of this species (not closely related to the abundant Green Iguana of the pet trade). A special treat on Guana this year was the presence and work of world authority on Antillean roaches Dr Esteban Gutierrez from Cuba