



South China Morning Post 南華早報 19/09/1990

New airport — environmental well-being an important factor

I REFER to the article headlined, "Evacuation for wildlife planned" (*South China Morning Post*, September 14) and wish to correct a number of errors.

The article claims that at least nine species of mammals could be present on Chek Lap Kok, including both long-tailed and crab-eating macaques, which are one and the same species (not two) and are not native to Hongkong.

There is no evidence that any of the other mammals mentioned occur on the island at present — although it is possible that they once did before the native forest cover was removed, thus the impression given that Chek Lap Kok is a haven for Hongkong's larger mammals is misleading.

However, this is not to say that the island is without interest.

Romer's tree frog is one of three amphibians endemic to Hongkong — known from nowhere else in the world.

Hongkong thus has an international responsibility to protect this species.

It appears that Romer's tree frog is quite numerous on Chek Lap Kok and it will be advisable to try to translocate some of these animals.

The pitcher plants which grow on Chek Lap Kok do not "devour ... lizards and mice".

They do trap insects, which are then "digested" in the pitcher to

provide the plants with nutrients which are difficult to obtain from the very poor soil in which they grow.

These plants are of conservation interest and again it could be useful to attempt to translocate these.

The razing of Chek Lap Kok is only part of the environmental cost of the Port and Airport Development Strategy (PADS) — the coast of north Lantau, the Tung Chung and Ngau Kwu Long valleys, and other areas also will be destroyed.

Studies are currently being made to assess the extent of habitat loss and other impacts on wildlife (both flora and fauna).

There is scope for some major habitat restoration and creation works to compensate, at least in part, for the losses due to PADS projects.

One of the best ways for the Government to promote PADS worldwide would be to demonstrate a firm commitment to environmental well-being, not only for our human population, but also for our rich flora and fauna.

World Wide Fund for Nature Hongkong looks forward to working with the Government and other agencies to this end.

D.S. MELVILLE

Director of Conservation
World Wide Fund for Nature



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Environmental issues are being ignored

THE irony is so monstrous that, if the situation were not being treated with such gravity, it would simply be amusing.

John Major, who once passed through Hongkong, and Li Peng, who has never visited at all, and neither of whom has ever lived here, are meeting in Rio at a global conference on the environment to discuss how best to finance the destruction of Lantau Island.

Perhaps I exaggerate. They are meeting to discuss how best to finance the airport railway. They have largely agreed already on how to finance the rest of the project.

Sadly, the cynicism of their meeting is commensurate with that of local planners and the Hongkong Government.

The *South China Morning Post* itself has given a great deal of space to official accounts of the Chek Lap Kok development.

Secretary for Economic Services Anson Chan Fang On-san recently wrote a long guest column in the *Sunday Morning Post*, attempting to dispel the "myths and misconceptions" surrounding the airport.

Financial Secretary Hamish Macleod appeared in the same space shortly afterwards, offering explanations of the complex – and apparently ever-changing – costs and financing of the project.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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We reserve the right to edit all letters, for reasons of clarity, length, grammar, or for legal reasons. Correspondents who insist on unedited publication may have their letter rejected.

The second "quarterly update" section on the airport was inserted into the daily paper as recently as two weeks ago.

Not once in all of this, at any time, has the subject of the environment been mentioned. The consultants and the contractors, the planners and the policymakers may have answers, though, equally, they may not. In any case, the subject has been entirely ignored, while the damage that is being done by the project is both wholesale and ongoing.

The causes for concern at the policy level alone are ample. For example, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required from each contractor as he surveys the sites, and plans the work he is going to perform. However, because the airport project has been divided into sections, and therefore a series of single contracts,

each EIA pertains only to a single, particular contract.

The result is that each EIA is isolated from all the others. This prevents an overall damage assessment – and therefore remedy – from being considered.

The most disappointing feature of the EIAs, however, is that, whatever their results, they do not oblige contractors, policymakers or anyone else to mitigate any damage foreseen by the reports. It is, in the end, a matter of choice whether a contractor acts on the results of an EIA.

The Government has spent – and will continue to spend – millions of dollars on consultants, advising on the selection of contractors, the design of the various phases of construction and the alignment and assembly of roads, bridges, tunnels, buildings, runways, railways, new communities

and myriad other phases of the airport project.

For all of this, however, not a single environmental consultant has been employed. Why not?

The argument will be made that many consulting firms such as Greiner Maunsell are multi-disciplined, employing their own environmental specialists who ensure that any construction is as safe, clean and minimally destructive as possible.

The job of Greiner Maunsell, however, and of others employed to offer expertise, is to build an airport: they are paid to select contractors and ensure the completion, both on time and within budget, of roads, bridges, tunnels, buildings, runways, railways, new communities and myriad other phases of the airport project. They are not employed to offer consistent, comprehensive and dedicated environmental critiques of these plans.

If Mr Major and Mr Li cannot come to an agreement in Rio, it is likely their representatives will hammer out some kind of arrangement sooner or later, and the airport project will proceed apace. It is simply painful and sad that it will be done in ignorance of a cost that no one has deemed worth calculating.

TAD STONER
Peng Chau



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NOV 1993

ENVIRONMENT

change needed

By SUSIE WELDON

IF you want to learn more about a tiny frog the size of your thumb nail or discover whether noise pollution has damaged your hearing, the Environment Pavilion is the place to go.

The miniscule Romer's tree frog, which has been threatened with extinction by work on the new airport, will be the star of the exhibit.

Hong Kong University scientists have put together a display that shows the tree frog in its natural habitat.

But the visitors peering intently at motionless frogs sitting on leaves may not realise initially that they are looking at models, rather than the real thing.

Dr John Hodgkiss, convenor of the environment pavilion and dean of Hong Kong University's Faculty of Science, said models were being used to help preserve the frogs.

"The Romer's tree frogs like dark, damp places," Dr Hodgkiss said. "If we put the frogs into those conditions — under bright lights with people possibly moving the box — they'll die, which we certainly don't want."

However, he said he would not be surprised if some people mistook the life-like models for real frogs. After all, they would be doing exactly what Romer's tree frogs liked doing best — sitting absolutely still.

Visitors to the environment pavilion will be able to check whether their hearing has been damaged by living in noisy Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf, which is one of the many organisations taking part in the expo, will

bring in sophisticated hearing equipment for on-site testing.

The equipment could pick up very small hearing impairments that could be caused by being exposed to high levels of traffic noise, Dr Hodgkiss said.

Apart from alerting some people to the early signs of hearing damage, "what we're using it for is just to make people aware of the fact that general environmental noise can lead to hearing impairment", he said.

Like all the other pavilions, the environment exhibit features displays by various government departments and private-sector

organisations, as well as Hong Kong University.

Dr Hodgkiss said the university had divided its section into four areas: care of the seas; the land environment; air and noise pollution; and a display that focused on how to protect the environment and sustain economic development at the same time.

"The big message of the environment pavilion is sustainable development," Dr Hodgkiss said.

"That is, how we go on living in balance with our environment. If we destroy it, we go too because we're part of it."

While visitors can expect to learn about some of the

more pressing threats to Hong Kong's environment, such as the problem of container dumping in rural areas, Dr Hodgkiss said the main emphasis would be positive.

"We're not just looking at pollution but looking at what can be done to rectify it," he said.

The pavilion will also look at different ways of dealing with problems, such as sewage disposal or plastic bags.

"You can recycle plastic bags, or find alternative things to use," Dr Hodgkiss said.

As for sewage, it was "an enormous waste of an enormously rich product just to throw it into the sea or land".

Other countries had found ways of treating sewage so it could be used as a soil builder, he said.

And while the pavilion will not go so far in its attempt to bring problems home to visitors as to include a bucket of sewage in the exhibit, it will feature a computerised assessment of how much sewage the territory is producing during the expo.

Visitors will also be able to sample the various "smellies" on offer. This will help them identify the various components that make up air pollution, such as sulphur dioxide.



Natural habitat... the slender fingers of a featherstar dances among soft coral.



Balancing act... a sure-footed yellow caterpillar crawls on the edge of its meal.





Battle to save rare frog turns to science

By ALISON WISEMAN

THE tiny, rare Romer's tree frog is still with us – but only just. The fight is on to protect the creature from extinction.

The Romer's tree frog population is at Chek Lap Kok, where the construction of the new airport is destroying its habitat.

At the University of Hong Kong, senior lecturer in zoology Dr David Dudgeon is overseeing a three-year study of the tiny nocturnal frog, its ecology and its wetland habitats.

The \$470,000 study was called for by the World Wide Fund for Nature when the bulldozers moved in and threatened the rare species.

But Dr Dudgeon was realistic about the past: "Would you really expect an animal like Romer's frog to stop the Government building an airport?"

"There was no biological consideration in establishing an airport on Chek Lap Kok, and nothing was going to stop them – least of all a few frogs."

Two years ago bush fires threatened the frog, but fire breaks were built on the south side of the island to rescue the population from extinction.

The amphibian has lived in Hong Kong since the ice age, when the sea level rose and flooded the sub-tropical plain the frog lived on, forcing it to seek refuge on the islands of Lamma, Lantau and Chek Lap Kok – its only three known habitats.

Michael Lau Wai-neng, a PhD student at the University of Hong Kong and a self-appointed guardian of the frog, has led research teams to the islands to rescue Romer's during its breeding season and move it somewhere safe.

The frog is unique to Hong Kong. It is almost invisible at two centimetres in length, and can only be found by the mating call of the male between February and September.

Romer's was discovered in 1952 by an amateur herpetologist, John Romer, and has rarely been spotted since.

Little is known about the frog other than it inhabited fresh-water wetlands, had a long breeding season, ate insects and produced tadpoles that lived in water.

Recently, researchers discovered the frogs were picky eaters, and were food for many other creatures.

"There is some possibility that the frog's larvae is being preyed upon by introduced exotic fish as well as native fish, although this theory is very much in its infancy," Dr Dudgeon said.

While research into the diminutive creature continues in laboratories, students and professors are waiting to see whether relocating it has been successful.

Earlier this year the final batch of test tadpoles was released into the wetlands of Tsui Hang and Tai Po Kau in the New Territories.

This should bring the number released to 650 tadpoles and 60 adult frogs.

Although many tadpoles matured into young frogs, Dr Dudgeon said researchers would not be able to say even a year from now whether the resettlement was a success.

"There is not much evidence in biological literature of successful translocation," he said.

"It's really unpredictable. Even if they survive the first year they may not make it through the second



Little battler . . . Romer's tree frog fighting extinction.



Hong Kong Commercial Daily 香港經濟日報

30/05/1992

大嶼山北沿海地區 建紅木樹林防污染

【本報訊】新機場環境評估報告的顧問公司建議，在大嶼山北部海堤或沿海地區，建造一個紅木樹區，相信保護全港的自然生態有利。

負責進行赤鱘角新機場環境影響研究的佳拿國際有限公司，在大嶼山區進行了為期十八個月的環境研究工作，研究小組發言人易智達說，首先他們建議受機場發展影響的林地和野生動物聚居地，面積比原來估計大三倍，故認為當局可在大嶼山北部之海堤或已受污染之沿海地方，如大嶼已荒廢的鹽田上建造一個新的紅木樹區，為局限移山削土之範圍，重建山坡和種植樹木，以及建議保留郊野公園內的沼澤區，因對保護全港自然生態有利。

在改善區內水流之問題，報告建議在海底興建暗渠，維持現有水流通度，因暗渠可避免東涌灣被淤泥充塞，和加速浮游生物的增長速度。至於機場規劃階段預計噪音水平，報告建議應興建一幅十米高，三千三百米長的護土牆，以保護鄰近的五百名村民免受噪音的滋擾。

Wah Kiu Yat Po 華僑日報 30/05/1992

Wah Kiu Yat Po

新機場環境影響報告 提倡自然生態建議 受噪音影響居民不足十五名

個新的紅木樹區。

同時，報告又建議局限移山削土的範圍，重建山坡和種植樹木，並在郊野公園內保留沼澤區。

負責研究的專家小組更會對稀有樹蛙進行廣泛研究，包括實地考察及試驗室繁殖研究等。此外，報告亦建議在海底興建暗渠，以便維持現有東涌灣的水流通度，避免出現淤泥充塞及浮游生物急速增長的問題。

【本報專訊】赤鱘角新機場環境影響報告提出多項保護自然生態的建議，以盡量將興建新機場對天然環境的破壞降至最低。

此外，報告又估計，新機場啟用後，只的少於五十名居住於赤鱘角附近的人士，會感受到飛機噪音的影響。

報告建議重建受機場發展影響的林地及野生動物聚居地，面積比原來的大三倍，又建議在大嶼山北部之海堤或已受污染的沿海地方，如大嶼已荒廢的鹽田上建造一個新的紅木樹區。



Wen Wei Po 文匯報 03/03/1992

佔地千二公頃 較啓德大三倍

機場島設有客運中心商業設施綠化地帶等

總綱為機場設計與施工提供清楚長遠概念

【本報訊】臨時機場管理局昨日正式公佈赤鱗角新機場總綱計劃，該局行政總監艾偉程說這份報告著重有效的土地利用和環保措施而勾劃出新機場的面貌和設施。昨日公佈的主要是工作科目策劃、土木工程、環境影響評估。

艾偉程昨日表示這份報告可以為機場設計與施工提供一個清楚、長遠的概念，他又強調總綱計劃有高度的靈活性和機會，可以在策劃和設計兩方面作出修改，以配合未來的空運活動和特性。

新機場位於赤鱗角島上，佔地一千二百四十八公頃，是啟德機場的四倍，也相等於九龍半島面積，其中四分之三土地填海所得，其餘四分之一是現有赤鱗角與環洲的土地，填海所需的填料數量約為一億七千六百萬平方米。

機場島上包括飛行場、綜合客運中心、航空公司、客運大樓支援設施、機場維修設施、商業設施、運輸公用設施與綠化帶及預留空地。

機場將有兩條跑道，距離為一千五百二十五米，交通控制中心和機場綜合客運中心將同時位於兩跑道之間，新機場客運大樓共有四個，最初只開兩個，每個大樓每年可處理二千二百萬旅客，而離境、入境櫃位及商業中心也設在大樓內。

新機場的設計會把旅客的步行距離盡可能縮短，理想的步行距離設定為三百米，若超過這距離，會有行人捷運列車（或稱穿梭火車）、自動行人道和自動樓梯連接，穿梭火車更可把乘客帶至登機閣。

總綱計劃亦定出支援與輔助的預計需求，包括空運貨物、飛機維修、機上膳食與燃料儲存設備等。

臨時機場管理局會盡量提高私人參與機會，客運中心內的出租店舖，以及與機場有關的工商業計劃，提高機場的商業活力。另外機場島亦有一些土地會撥作發展貨運村、工業園區和商業園區，包括寫字樓、消閒設施和酒店等。

艾偉程說機場啟用時，會有鐵路、道路及渡輪等交通工具接駁機場，按預計，九七年時，來往機場的旅程人次有百分之四十三使用鐵路，但把機場鐵路能在九七建成最好，但若延遲，機場也可運作，陸上有足夠交通工具。

艾偉程被問及赤鱗角新機場的最新估計財務預算，他說這部分數字現交由政府考慮和決定，暫時不宜公佈，他估計幾個月後會有公佈。

至於有關超支問題，他表示任何人也不能絕對保證，但他肯定臨時機場局會盡力密切監察支出，不會出現超支。

又訊：機場委員會薛鳳旋質疑新機場的規劃比八九年預計的大，但機場啟用後的噪音影響為什麼少了，八九年預計有一萬五千人直接受噪音影響，而現時的總綱則指出只有五十個人會受直接影響。艾偉程說他們估計飛機設計和技術會日新月異，故噪音預期會不大。他又答應再給予委員會書面解釋噪音的問題。