

**University Sponsorship Programme 2005-06:
Student's diary**

**Project : Baiji (Yangtze river dolphin) and Finless
Porpoise – Population Monitoring**

Date : 15 to 24 November 2005

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Day 6 (20 November)

We started our observation of porpoises in Poyang Lake today. Since Poyang Lake is the largest lake in China, we did not return Hukou and we stayed in a county in Poyang Lake, called 星子縣. Just like the few days before, we did not see many porpoises, just about twenty something. However, we saw something whose number is much more than porpoise in the lake, they are sand dredging ships! I have seen at least 150 today.

We did a zig-zag survey, from mouth toward centre of Poyang Lake.

Water level is decreasing now, so large ships which hold 4 tonnes sand could pass through the Poyang Lake Bridge now. In summer, the water level would be about 15 cm higher, then only smaller ships could be used for traveling sand from Poyang toward Yangtze.

The dredging work started about 4 years ago. As the industry grew, the turbidity decreased, from 1m to less than 10 cm now.

The development of another bridge called Hukow Railway Bridge is on the way now. This would intensify the negative effect on porpoise. Noise is transmitted to water when cars or trains are moving on the bridge. This fragmentation effect seriously the efficiency of echolocation of porpoise, making porpoises in Yangtze and Poyang Lake have less motive to pass through two bridges, leading to separation of population.

Wei talked about his idea of publishing his newly book in Hong Kong. I think it's a very good idea. Since most of us don't know much about the animals living in or next to Yangtze. However, the main problem is how to translate it. He suggested we two

cooperate, I do want to but as my English is not very good, I suggested to invite my supervisor or even friends to participate, i.e. Cynthia, Samuel, Anna etc. Of course, it is ideal to find a professional translator. Another problem is to find sponsor. This would be quite difficulty but I had already had a shortlist of candidates, WWF, OPCFHK, HSBC. This is really worthwhile because a Traditional Chinese and English edition would be able to raise the awareness people from different places toward the threats posing on endangered animals relying on Yangtze.

The weather was much better. The temperature is around 15 degree C, quite warm. There's a small mountain in Poyang Lake called Shoe Mountain (鞋山). It is very beautiful and with a tower on it.

Wei told me that all fixed-point survey were of sites set before the Poyang Lake Bridge. Wei had "leap" everyday.

On the way to Poyang Lake, we saw several large scale power plants (burning coal) on shores which are just next to an area where we found the porpoise. While in area far from shore, many dreading ships can be found. The no. is much higher than I expected. Boatman said most of the ships are held by people from other provinces and most of them are triad members. These triad members do not work on dredging, they just go and visit each ship and collect so called "tax". As there are many ships there, boatman said they can collect several ten thousand dollars per day. For the sand collected, coarse ones will be used for reclamation while fine ones will be used for building. This shows a serious loss-loss development problem. Both local environment and economy are destroyed.

We arrived 星子縣 around 1700. We took a mini-bus to get to the town to find hotel. When Wei and Cheng tried to find hotel nearby, the rest of us tasted the banana there. Although the bananas are quite thin, their taste is very sweet!

We were very delighted when we arrived our room. It was so beautiful, just like a four-star hotel in Hong Kong. We even took video of our room, ahh.... At night, we had dinner in a nearby restaurant, the dishes tasted good and are quite cheap. We ordered many but the bill is just 144 (We have 6 men and 2 ladies!). All of us became used to alcohol and we drank 1 bottle of red wine and 1 large bottle of Chinese medicinal wine (勁酒).

After dinner, we had a walk nearby. On the way, we played many games. I introduced

some black magic to them while they also gave us some riddles and jokes. We laughed loudly frequently. This is really a happy night that I would not forget!