

University Sponsorship Programme 2005-06: Student's diary

**Project : Chinese White Dolphin–
Population Monitoring**

Date : 5 to 15 February 2006

Student: Vivian Lam



7th February, 2006 (Tuesday)

Dear Diary,

Couldn't wake up on time and both of us felt very bad. Realized everyone was waiting for us and our alarm clock failed on us. Had a quick breakfast and went out as we were following the villagers out to sea today. We rode a typical vehicle to the pier. Their aim is to mark the wooden poles in the sea to avoid boat accidents during high tide when the poles aren't



visible. We waited on the boat while men took extra long bamboo sticks with red warning flags attached at the top. The poles were there to hang nets to catch fish as well as for locating their positions.

Had lunch then went out to the rocky shores to see children picking little oysters. They had a special chisel which can open shells easily and they can scoop out the tiny flesh. Tried talking to them but they were a bit shy – must work on my children communication skills! (no one succeeded though, not even Qin lao shi)

We went out to the pier again afterwards and met a couple on the way. They

are tourists and found that Sanniang Bay is not as exciting as Bei Hai, they did however mention it might be because that this place is newly developed. Walked around the temple as we waited for our boat. Found this pretty little rock staircase which leads to an empty house. It looks exactly like a path leading to the Secret Garden. I couldn't resist and bounded up the stairs to have a look, then Qin lao shi said that he also really liked this place and would have turned it into the new headquarters if freshwater was available.

The 2nd boat trip was very exciting. We had 2 large boats and a huge net in between them to catch fish and lure dolphins. However, black headed gulls fell for the trap instead. In the end, we saw around 4 dolphins which were found by a speedboat. The most amazing thing is to see how they actually haul the fish net



onboard. After that, the whole boat family seems to fall into place and know exactly who's doing what – quickly sorting the fish into plastic trays.

After that, Qin lao shi's friend Pei lao ban treated us to dinner and at one of the "dai pai dongs". Food was absolutely amazing and I got real lucky – found 2 tiny pearls while eating "Pearl conch"!

As dinner was really early, we had plenty of time to rest tonight. Went down to have a chat with the Yeung's and it turned out to be so much fun. It was indeed nice to talk to them, they are such kind and friendly people and they kept saying they are very happy to have us here. Also gave us so much to eat, always stuffing us with all sorts of food. Fruits are delicious, seemed much more natural than those we get in Hong Kong. We've also learnt about their lifestyles. They've been married for 21 years and have 2 sons (1985, 1989). Mr. Yeung makes boats and it takes around a month each and costs around \$9000. They are quite well off and own a speedboat as well. The village is very close to Vietnam. They also say we can see the Milky Way in the summer.

Thought for today: it is very important to be on friendly terms with the locals,

they are very willing to help in many ways. This is an important part in conservation. Locals also care a lot about being polite, so be careful to say your Ps and Qs. Both of us are very impressed by the amazing communication skills of Qin lao shi and the good relationships he has with the villagers. Another insight on research is that it involves a lot of monotonous routine jobs, so I need persistence to be a good ecologist.