

Skaphion

The Platygastroidea PBI Newsletter

Visit to Taiwan, final

Collecting in Taiwan, by N. Johnson

After spending two work weeks sorting approximately 30,000 scelionid specimens to the level of genus, we tried to take advantage our final week in Taiwan to do a bit of collecting. Six of us - Norman, Luciana, Lubo & Marcela Masner, Chi-Feng Lee (former Ph.D. student in Norman's lab, and current Coleoptera specialist at the Taiwan Agricultural Research Institute) and Hsien-Tzung Shih (Auchenorrhyncha taxonomist at TARI) - left Wufeng on June 2. We caught the Taiwan High Speed Rail at the Taichung station and sped south to the city of Kaohsiung (also spelled Gaoxiong). From there we went by car on a two-hour drive into the central mountains to the Medium-Altitude Experimental Station of the Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute (yellow pin on map).

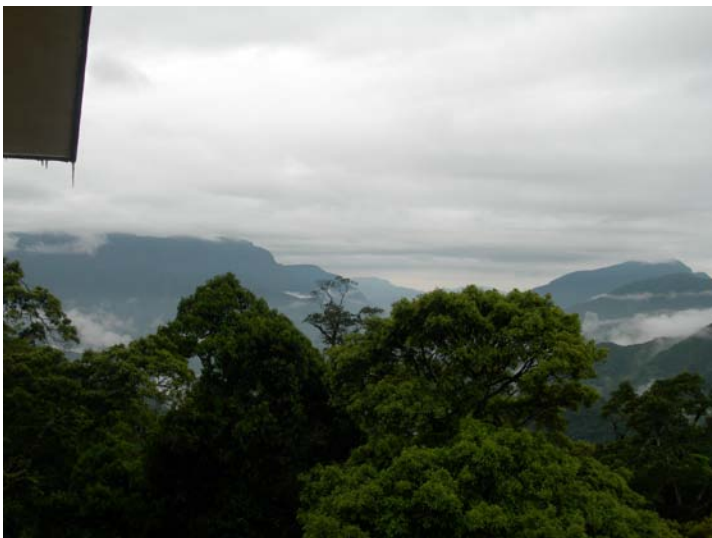


The reserve covers approximately 200 hectares of national forest. The mountainsides are extremely steep, with elevation ranging from 1100 to 2651 meters. We collected at ~1650 meters. The steep hillsides make it impossible to do much more than follow the forest road (asphalt up to the station building, beyond that a dirt road). We primarily used yellow pan traps, with a little sweeping of the aerial entomo-plankton by Lubo. We brought along with us two Townes-style Malaise traps, but these were impossible to use. The landscape was too steep, and the few relatively flat places along the side of the road had no trees on which the traps could be supported and the very shallow soil (less than a couple of centimeters deep), prevented us from setting up poles to which to tie the traps.



But while we were in Wufeng, we came across a Taiwanese company, Megaview, that produces their own take on Malaise traps. One style makes use of the plastic, jointed, flexible poles that are used in many camping tents. Two of these poles support the front and back panels of the trap, making it possible to set it up even in this difficult terrain. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate much during our brief 3-day stay. It rained almost all of the time, day and night, sometimes lightly, sometimes very heavily. And at that elevation, the temperatures were fairly cool, barely exceeding 20°C and dropping into the teens overnight. Despite these adverse conditions, insects were still flying. We can only imagine what it is like there in dry, sunny weather!

The facilities at the station are quite good: hot and cold running water, electricity, local cooks to take care of lunch and dinner (and doing so quite well!). The director, Cheng-Te Yao, was very friendly and helpful, making us feel quite at home. The road to the property is gated, so that we were able to set out traps without fear that they would be lost or vandalized. All in all, it was an excellent change-of-pace from the previous weeks' work, and gave us an opportunity to experience the natural, rural Taiwan.





Brunsvigia bosmaniae

the flower heads were rolling across the landscape dispersing their seeds.... (and then we rode into the sunset, tired but happy with *Nixonia* under our belts).

Welcome to Mmamotswa

by Simon van Noort

Mmamotswa Mosweu, a Tswana from North-West Province has joined the PBI team for a short stint. She recently completed an M.Sc. in animal health at North-West University and is doing a year-long internship at Iziko South African Museum.



Mmamotswa, Aisha and Nosiphiwo

Among other tasks Mmamotswa is assisting with processing material emanating from the long term survey running in the Nieuwoudtville Botanical Gardens 300 km north of Cape Town. Her salary is funded by the South African Government Department of Science and Technology.

Aisha, Nosiphiwo and Mmamotswa recently had a deserved break from peering down microscopes and accompanied Simon for the monthly servicing of traps at Nieuwoudtville.

We missed the spectacular display of the candelabra-like geophyte *Brunsvigia bosmaniae* flowering *en mass*, but it was comforting to know that the Malaise traps had been raking in the accompanying insect activity. *Brunsvigia* does not flower every year as it relies on a downpour of at least 15mm in February or March. If this happens it triggers simultaneous flowering of thousands of individual plants exactly 3 weeks later. A single late bloomer was all we were allowed to appreciate. The rest of the flowers had long since dried out and



Aisha and Mmamotswa servicing a Malaise trap while Nosiphiwo carries out essential repairs with needle and thread.

Skaphion is the weekly newsletter of the Platygastroidea PBI Project. The skaphion in Scelionidae is an anterior subdivision of the mesoscutum [Gr. skaphion: a small bowl or basin; a bowl shaped like a boat; a hemispherical vase.]

The Project

The Platygastroidea Planetary Biodiversity Inventory Project is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to Norman Johnson at The Ohio State University & Andrew Austin at the University of Adelaide, Australia. The 3 broad objectives of this project are:

- species description,
- collecting in areas where fauna of Platygastroidea is poorly known,
- and phylogenetic analysis of a monophyletic group.

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Credits for this Issue:

Editing & Design: Norman Johnson & Luciana Musetti

Images: Taiwan: Map generated by J. Cora using Google; photos by L. Musetti; South Africa: all photos by Simon van Noort



Calendar:

- 20th International Congress of Zoology, 26-29 August, 2008, Paris, France.
<http://icz2008.snv.jussieu.fr>
- International Congress of Entomology, 6-12 July, 2008, Durban, South Africa
<http://www.ice2008.org.za/>
- Entomological Society of America Annual Meetings, 16-19 November, 2008, Reno, NV
<http://www.entsoc.org/am/fm/2008/index.htm>

Share images or stories related to the Platy PBI Project with the group.

Skaphion will publish news from your lab, such as: recent publications, presentations, grants, travels, museum visits, collecting trips, student and staff achievement awards and recognitions, visitors to your lab, website updates, TV and newspaper interviews, etc. Pictures of lab activities and personnel, including those of your lab pets, are welcome.

Send it all, plus comments and suggestions to johnson.2@osu.edu

Please help keep our Calendar up-to-date by sending news of upcoming events.