

Hong Kong
24 February – 30 March 2026
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I travelled to Hong Kong for work in March 2026, and stayed for 5 weeks. Even though it was a work trip I tried to spend my free time and evenings in the parks and natural areas searching for wildlife. My weekends were dedicated to travels further afield. Note that I did not have a thermal scope or bat detector, so my expectations of seeing a lot of mammal species was low. I was most interested in seeing the local herp species, with the white-lipped pit viper (*Trimeresurus albolabris*) being my top target (spoiler: they were super common).

I rented an Airbnb apartment near Hong Kong University (HKU) on the South Island for my stay. It was small, but within walking distance to HKU (where I was a visiting researcher) and Lung Fu Shan country park. The food in restaurants was super cheap so I only bought a few things for breakfasts and ate out for lunches and dinners during my entire stay. Travel around the city was also relatively cheap and easy to take the metro train and buses. Google maps does a good job of suggesting the necessary trains and buses to take. The trains ran quite late, with last trains at about midnight to 01h00, but the small green line buses stop earlier. Uber taxis (via the app) were what we took back to the train station if we were out late. Definitely get an Octopus card at the airport when you land because you will use it for transportation and dining pretty much everywhere. It can be topped up at 7-11s with cash only.

Since I'm writing this report months after my trip (and many nights I went out I didn't see any mammals) I will give a list of places I visited, how to get there and what I saw.

General city

I visited Kowloon Park once to see a **greater short-nosed fruit bat** (*Cynopterus sphinx*) day roost. I checked all the areas where they had been observed on iNat and found numerous palm fronds which showed bite marks making a tent, but only one group of bats was visible near the southern entrance to the park (22.2985868, 114.1708184, <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/341829513>).

I checked another record from iNaturalist at 22.279964, 114.138620, but did not see any bats in those palms. Also, surprisingly no fruit bats were seen in the palms around Victoria Peak when I went there one morning (only a few **Pallas squirrels** (*Callosciurus erythraeus thai*)).



One morning towards the end of my stay at about 05h50 (about 30 minutes before sunrise) I had a **masked palm civet** (*Paguma larvata*) walk down the stairs I took every day to HKU (roughly 22.284120, 114.135822 by the primary school), cross the path a few meters away from me and carry on its way (<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/344539404>). Rarely did I walk that way so early, so I don't know how often it uses the stairs.

Lung Fu Shan Country Park

This is the park I spent the most time at because it was within walking distance from my accommodation. It can easily be reached by the Island line, exiting at the Hong Kong University (HKU) stop, then walking behind the university to a steep set of stairs along what looks like a delivery



access road behind the HKU food court. Most nights after work I would walk the trails for a while (generally until 21h00 – 23h00 depending on how tired I was), and a few times in the mornings before work as well. Both **wild boar** (*Sus scrofa moupinensis*) and **Pallas squirrels** were very common and seen on almost all my visits. The boar seemed rather habituated to people, even walking down the trail within a few meters of other walkers. **Greater short-nosed fruit bats** were seen most nights flying by in the open spaces, generally easy to identify due to their very large size, but getting a good look at them at night is very difficult. **Asian porcupines** (*Hystrix brachyura*) were seen on roughly 1 in 4 of my night walks (times between 20h00 and 22h00), with one seen drinking from a leaking pipe at 22.28231543, 114.13450672. The best sighting during my walks there was a **small-toothed ferret badger** (*Melogale moschata*) at 22.27930441, 114.13538128. It was walking around in a rather open stand of bamboo at 20h30, and I was alerted to its presence by rustling in the leaves. One **Indian civet** (*Viverricula indica*) was also seen at 21h50 at 22.28036881, 114.13748422. **Collared Scops-Owls** were frequently heard on my walks, but only seen a few times (for example between 22.276560, 114.132870 and 22.276678, 114.136038). **White-lipped pit vipers** and **Hong Kong cascade frogs** (*Amolops hongkongensis*) (on the rocks around the stream) were relatively common, but not seen every night.

Aberdeen County Park

I visited this park once at night with colleagues from HKU. You can walk all the way from Lung Fu Shan to Victoria Peak and then down into Aberdeen park, but it's a long walk. So I opted to take the metro from HKU to Admiralty and then the yellow bus 15 to Wan Chai Gap road stop (22.267878, 114.169786). We then walked around the reservoir until about 23h00. We had great views of a **small-toothed ferret badger** which was walking around an open area when first spotted. Then it fled into a burrow at the base of a small stone wall (22.25765479, 114.16864823). On the way back to the bus stop, at about 22h45 we saw an **Asian porcupine** near the apartment complexes (22.2664407177, 114.1677382216). For herps we saw a **common wolf snake** (*Lycodon capucinus*) and a **Chinese water skink** (*Tropidophorus sinicus*). The latter under rocks at the stream (22.2660258792, 114.1687604785).

Shing Mun catchwater

I meet up with local herpers to walk this catchwater (a large concrete drainage canal) for snakes one night. Walking catchwaters is the best way to find snakes in Hong Kong, walking the forests at night is not very productive (unless you want to see the white-lip vipers). This catchwater is on the mainland and runs from roughly 22.389752, 114.104655 east towards the Shing Mun reservoir. It can be a bit of a mission to get to, depending on where you start. We started on the western side (at the coordinates) and walked nearly to the Shing Mun reservoir. Where I started, it can be reached by the Tseun Wan line to Tsuen Wan station, then the red bus 51 or green bus 80. You can also reach the eastern end of the catchwater by taking green bus 82 from Tsuen Wan station to Pineapple Dam and walking to the catchwater here 22.385052, 114.140966. The catchwater has a nice paved path along the side and there are numerous covered sections of the canal which looked good for bat roosting spots. I did not see any roosting, but quite a few small and medium sized bats were flying over the catchwater. The larger bat (but not as large as a fruit bat) I assumed to be **Great Himalayan roundleaf bat** (*Hipposideros*

armiger). A few arboreal mammals were seen too briefly in the dense canopy to confidently identify. At one point I swear I saw a **slow loris** (I have worked with them in a zoo, so I'm pretty familiar with them) but it was sadly too obscured by a tangle of branches to get a good look. One pit viper was seen and a **common four-clawed gecko** (*Gehyra mutilata*). The gecko I did not realize was something special until later because they look almost identical to a house gecko (*Hemidactylus*). Despite my efforts to find another to photograph I could not relocate this species. I also did walk the Pineapple Dam trails (around Shing Mun reservoir) one night with colleagues from HKU, but it rained the entire time and was a complete waste of a night (it was about then I started looking for other locals to get intel).

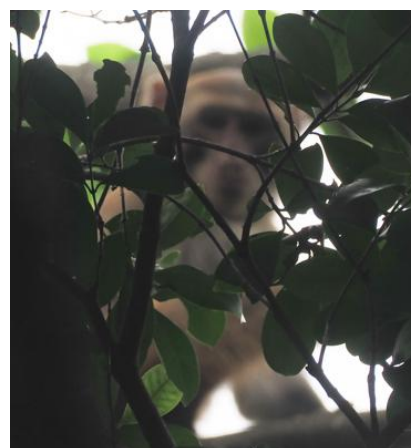
Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve

This park is on the mainland near Tai Po Mei. To reach it from the South Island take the Island line train to Admiralty station, transfer to East Rail line and depart at Tai Po Market. Then take the 28K green mini bus a short walk from the train station, which stops right in front of the reserve.

I visited this park twice during my stay. Once on 21 March during the day for birding and again on 24 March after dark for snakes and nocturnal mammals. During both trips, I checked the large drain culvert (22.428439, 114.180359) for bats mentioned by Vladimir Dinets

(<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/VD-Hong-Kong-2019.pdf>), but did not see

any. On my first visit, almost right away (about 09h15) I saw a group of **rhesus macaques** (*Macaca mulatta*) on the opposite side of the valley while walking up the main paved path towards the start of the trails. They were too far for pictures, but could clearly be seen and heard climbing in the trees. I saw them again later that day at the edge of the small garden area (22.42940699, 114.18215377). This time they were close enough for pictures, but weary of me. No other mammals were seen during the day. The birding was spectacular, not high numbers (only 23 species), but many species I didn't see anywhere else: **Scarlet and Grey-chinned Minivet, Crested Serpent Eagle, Great Barbet, Mountain Bulbul, Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Fork-tailed Sunbird.**



For the night walk, I got there about an hour before sunset and was joined by colleagues from HKU at sunset. Some bats were flying around at dusk near the dam and the stream behind it. Near some benches by the start of the trails I heard and saw a **Collared Scops-Owl** (others were heard calling through the night as we walked). We then started along the red and blue trails, walking until about 23h30 or so. We saw at least 3 different **red muntjac** (*Muntiacus vaginalis*) along the blue trail (roughly 22.4280163502, 114.1774313897, 400m accuracy), from 21h00 to about 23h00. Others were heard barking at various times during the night. One arboreal rat was seen way up in a tree, and sadly my flash was not strong enough to get a good picture. It was overall brownish (not red/rufous) with a clean white belly. Therefore, I suspect it was an **Indochinese forest rat** (*Rattus andamanensis*) due to the brown color and higher frequency of sightings compared to chestnut white-bellied rat (*Niviventer fulvescens*). No snakes were seen that night, but we found a **Hong Kong warty newt** (*Paramesotriton hongkongensis*), an **Indian forest skink** (*Sphenomorphus indicus*), and few frogs.

Lantau Island

I went on a boat trip with Hong Kong Dolphin Watch (<http://www.hkdolphinwatch.com/>) to see the pink morph of the **Indochinese Humpback Dolphin** (*Sousa chinensis*). They have a meeting point near the Kowloon Hotel, which was a short train ride from my accommodation. After a 30 minute or

so drive we reached the boat dock on Lantau Island and headed out towards Tai O searching for dolphins. There was a fishing boat which was in the process of pulling in a big net and surrounded by a group of 3-5 dolphins. We had great views of them and watched them for about 40 minutes before heading back to the dock.



Relying on public transport to travel to Lantau really limits the time you can spend on the island since it's a bit far from anywhere else. I was only able to do a second visit thanks to going with HKU colleagues who borrowed a departmental car. We were searching the catchwater at Lantau Shek Pik Country park for king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*) which seem to be most frequently encountered there. But the whole day was a bust, no reptiles, very few birds, and only one new mammal (**water buffalo *Bubalus bubalis***) seen the entire day. The buffalos were seen in the road while passing through the villages on the way to the country park.

Tai Mo Shan

I visited this place twice at night to search for the rare mountain pit viper (*Ovophis tonkinensis*). You can just walk the roads back and forth. There are some trails which should be scouted during the day to avoid getting lost, and I would have been hopelessly lost without my local guide. Lots of **Hong Kong newts** were seen and a few **striped stream snakes (*Ophisthotropis kuatunensis*)**. But no vipers and no mammals. Though the local who joined me had seen **masked palm civets** there.

Mai Po Nature Reserve

This large nature reserve on the far northwest corner of mainland Hong Kong is the premier birding location. You need a permit to visit, which must be applied for about 5 days before your visit. You will need a Type B permit to access the floating bird hides and mangrove section, see https://www.wwf.org.hk/en/resources/electronic_resources/fca_permit_application_form/. Or contact publicvisit@wwf.org.hk. There is a HK200 fee and a deposit of HK300 (refunded when you return your permit and documents). For birders: 1) You will definitely need a spotting scope, 2) time your trip so you can be at the hides at high tide. If you get there at low tide the majority of the birds will be too far out to see even with a 60x scope. It is also a bit of a mission to get to and I opted to just take a taxi so I could get there as early as possible. Returning to South Island I walked back to the red 76K bus stop (22.493018, 114.061574) to Yuen Long stop for the Tuen Ma Line, changed to Tung Chung line, and finally Island Line.

I saw some more **greater short-nosed fruit bats** in the palm trees near the office (22.49561288, 114.04854594). I kept a sharp eye out for mammals while walking around, especially on the boardwalks through the mangroves, but did not see any others. There were some cleared trails in the mangrove, but hard to say if they were made by people or other mammals. I didn't notice any mammal tracks in the mud. A nice surprise was two species of mudskipper: ***Periophthalmus magnuspinnatus*** found in the mangroves and **great blue-spotted mudskipper (*Boleophthalmus pectinirostris*)** on the

mudflats around the two bird hides. I'm not often excited to see fish, but mudskippers are pretty unique so I was happy to sit and watch their behaviour for a while. I saw 70 bird species, with 19 lifers. Highlights include: **Falcated duck**, **greater coucal**, **Pacific golden plover**, **Oriental pratincole**, **black-tailed gull**, **gull-billed tern**, **Eurasian** and **black-faced spoonbills**, **Imperial eagle**, **Eastern buzzard**, **hen harrier** (regional rarity), **black drongo**, **white-throated kingfisher**, and **collared crow**. I missed a few species (like Vega gull, godwits, dowitchers, and other small plovers) because I got to the hides a bit late and had to wait for some people to leave to get a seat to view the mudflats.

Long Valley Nature Park

No mammals were seen here, but it was excellent for birding (46 species seen)! There was a rare **Watercock** (female) which was currently there when I visited. **Common Snipes** were stupidly common, with almost 30 individuals seen, and **Greater Painted Snipe** easily seen, but less common (5 individuals seen). Other bird highlights include: a female **Bluethroat**, **Red-throated Pipit**, **Eastern yellow wagtail**, **White-breasted waterhen**, and **greater coucal**. Reptiles seen were a few **long-tailed mabuya** (*Mabuya longicauda*) and a **yellow-spotted keelback** (*Fowlea flavipunctata*) which was swimming through one of the ponds.

Honourable Mention: Tai Lam Chung catchwater

I really wanted to see the **Leschenault's Rousette** (*Rousettus leschenaulti*) while in Hong Kong. But sadly could not find anyone who could show me a roost. The couple of people I contacted on iNaturalist did not respond. All iNat records were obscured, but I found a website which showed records of bats in Hong Kong (I can't find this site now!) and comparing that to iNat records I suspect this catchwater may be a potential roost location to visit. But I never got around to visiting there. Maybe someone can go try it out...

Species List

Mammals

14 species (12 lifers)

Rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*)

Malayan porcupine (*Hystrix brachyura*)

Pallas' squirrel (*Callosciurus erythraeus thai*)

Indochinese forest rat (*Rattus adamanensis*)

Greater short-nosed fruit bat (*Cynopterus sphinx*)

Greater Himalayan roundleaf bat (*Hipposideros armiger*)

Small-toothed ferret badger (*Melogale moschata*)

Masked palm civet (*Paguma larvata*)

Small Indian civet (*Viverricula indica*)

Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis chinensis*)

Water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*)

Domestic cattle (*Bos taurus*)

Northern red muntjac (*Muntiacus vaginalis*)

South China boar (*Sus scrofa moupinensis*)

Birds

125 species (80 lifers)

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/570883>

Reptiles & Amphibians

21 species (20 lifers)

Striped stream snake (*Ophisthotropis kuatunensis*)

Common wolf snake (*Lycodon capucinus*)

Yellow-spotted keelback (*Fowlea flavipunctata*)

White-lipped viper (*Trimeresurus albolabris*)

Wang's garden lizard (*Calotes wangi*)

Chinese water dragon (*Physignathus cocincinus*)

Indo-Pacific house gecko (*Hemidactylus garnotti*)

Chinese narrow-disked gecko (*Gekko chinensis*)

Common four-clawed gecko (*Gehyra mutilate*)

Chinese water skink (*Tropidophorus sinicus*)

Indian forest skink (*Sphenomorphus indicus*)

Longtail Mabuya (*Eutropis longicaudata*)

American pond slider (*Trachemys scripta*)

Big-headed turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*)

Asian common toad (*Duttaphrynus melanostictus*)

Hong Kong cascade frog (*Amolops hongkongensis*)

Longtoushan large odorous frog (*Odorrana leporipes*)

Spot-legged tree frog (*Polypedates megacephalus*)

Fujian large-headed frog (*Limnonectes fujianensis*)

Lesser spiny frog (*Quasipaa exilispinosa*)

Hong Kong warty newt (*Paramesotriton hongkongensis*)

