

尋找烏頭種的故事

Catching Grey Mullet Fry

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每年農曆新年過後，水哥夫婦便開始到處尋找烏頭種——即在海裡誕生、剛孵化成稚魚的烏頭魚苗。烏頭屬於鱚的一種，相比其他鱚魚科的稚魚，較能適應於淡水魚塘飼養，所以也廣為本地淡水漁民喜愛，當然這也跟在市場上可以賣得較好價錢不無關係。這樣從沿海淺灘捕捉野生烏頭稚魚，然後放在元朗一帶（鹹淡水交界）魚塘飼養的方式，也可算是本地淡水漁業的一大特色。用今天流行的說法，也許就是我們華南地區的文化傳承。

水哥夫婦勤勞而且坦率，每天日出而作、日入而息，並以樂觀的態度看生活和周遭的一切。水哥生於香港、長於香港，不但是香港淡水養魚業的第二代傳承者，也是仍然堅持每年親自到海邊找烏頭種的表表者。只要到香港新界養魚協進會打聽一下，今時今日還有誰仍是自己找烏頭種的，必定非水哥莫屬。水哥在新田有五個魚塘，他自小跟隨父親到不同地方找烏頭種，記憶特別深刻的是西貢、沙頭角、青山灣一帶以至大嶼山等地。

根據水哥的經驗，烏頭苗大多在有肥水的沖口出沒，即是鹹淡水交界而且有點「有機」排污水的地方。水哥夫婦今年曾到沙田小瀝源、觀塘、啟德、火炭、大圍、西貢、東涌、大埔、粉嶺鹿頸、鯉魚門、深井等九龍及新界多處地方的小溪、明渠或淺灘搜索魚苗。魚苗的體形大小在不同位置亦不同，一般在渠尾的會較小，而近海的會較大，最大可至尾指般長。但今天這些地方有些因

Soon after Chinese New Year, Mr. And Mrs. Shui start looking for grey mullet fry - small grey mullets (*Mugil cephalus*) born in the sea. Grey mullets of the Mugilidae family adapt better to freshwater ponds, can be sold at a good price, and are welcomed by local freshwater fishermen. The method of catching wild small grey mullets from shallow coastal areas and rearing them in freshwater or brackish water fish ponds in Yuen Long is a characteristic of the local freshwater fish industry. It can be seen as part of the cultural heritage of the South China region.



在水道捕撈
Fishing in a river channel

The Shui couple is hardworking and frank, and optimistic. Mr. Shui is a local and also the second generation of the Hong Kong freshwater fish industry. He is one of those very few people who still search for their own fry nowadays and his determination is well-known in the Hong Kong New Territories Fish Culture Association. Mr. Shui, who owns five fish ponds in San Tin, followed his father as a child to look for grey mullet fry in different places like Sai Kung, Sha Tau Kok, Castle Peak Bay, Lantau Island, etc.

為填海消失了、有些改成明渠、有些因為水源改道而面目全非、更有些因為私人地產發展而不能踏足或成為「閒人免進」之地。總而言之，如果不是為了節省購買魚苗的成本，水哥夫婦也早就放棄了這份不能預計成果，有如「大海撈針」的工作。

我從去年開始研究香港的淡水漁業，一直希望了解未有外地烏頭魚苗進口以前（註：現在的烏頭魚苗大都從台灣或大陸進口，曾經也有一陣子從日本進口），漁民一直沿用的「野外捕捉」是怎樣的一回事。我對尋找烏頭種的認知，大部分從觀察水哥夫婦工作時得來。水哥夫婦主要視乎天氣而決定會否去找烏頭種，最理想的天氣是溫暖及有陽光的時候。假如遇上下雨天或陰天，影響了水中的能見度，當天的行程便要取消，而且他們一般會在一天到多個不同地方搜尋。除了憑記憶及經驗，水哥亦會事先上網瀏覽天文台的網頁，得知不同地方的潮汐情況後才決定目的地。元朗、西貢及東涌同一天的水深亦不同，水深太少或超過一呎深的水位，都不適合捕捉魚苗。水哥說找烏頭種最重要是懂得看水流，也就是潮汐漲退，因為只有潮漲的時候，幼魚才會乘勢游到近岸甚至河沖的下游出海位置找尋食物，這正是捕捉魚苗的好時機。

According to Mr. Shui, the fry are usually found in entries with fertile water where the sea water meets river water carrying “organic” drainage water accumulates from human settlements as well as local villages. This year, the couple has been looking around in small streams, nullahs and shallow coasts in Siu Lek Yuen in Shatin, Kwun Tong, Kai Tak, Fo Tan, Tai Wai, Sai Kung, Tung Chung, Tai Po, Luk Keng in Fan Ling, Lei Yue Mun and Shenzhen. The size of fry varies in different areas. Those found at the end of a nullah are generally small while those near the sea are big.

The rocketing population resulted in an increasing demand on resources and revolutionary changes in food production, and the development of freshwater fish farming is in fact an important part of the post-war socio-economic history of Hong Kong.

The biggest ones are up to the size of a small finger. Nowadays, some places are reclaimed, some had been turned into nullahs, some are diverted and some are prohibited from entry because of private property development. The couple said that they would have given up this non-guaranteed and extremely difficult job if not for the need to cut costs; they could not afford to import fry, which would have been much easier.

Last year, I started looking into the local freshwater fish industry and longed to learn about the “wild catching” method used by local fishermen when there were no imported grey mullet fry in the old days. (Most of the fry are now imported from Taiwan and the Mainland; some were imported from Japan a while ago.) My knowledge of grey mullet species comes from observing the couple. Whether they go to search for fry depends on the weather; warm and sunny days are best. A rainy or cloudy day affects the water visibility and the search has to be cancelled. Usually they go to

many places in a day. Apart from relying on memory and experience, Mr. Shui also checks the tides on the Hong Kong Observatory website before deciding on destinations. Depths of water in Yuen Long, Sai Kung and Tung Chung vary on the same day. Shallow water or water over one foot is not suitable for catching fry. Mr. Shui said one must know how to read the water flow, as small fish forage for food in close shores or downstream near the sea at high tide, which is the best time to catch them.

布袋澳村 Po Toi O Village



烏頭種 Grey mullet fry





點數烏頭種
Counting the collected fry

一般來說，每年從農曆小寒開始，成熟的烏頭都會游到近岸水域產卵（漁民稱之為「散春」），持續到立春前後為止，為期兩至四個月。漁民把期間找到的烏頭種，分別以其大概出生時間命名為小寒、大寒、交春和翻花等。同樣是烏頭魚苗，這些名稱對一般消費者來說沒有太大意義，但對漁民來說，這些不同時候出生的稚魚，將會為往後一年的工作和收入帶來莫大影響。首先，從養殖的角度來看，較早出生的稚魚比較強壯，存活率高，加上較早開始養殖，在市場上的競爭力相對較高。其次，對於需要購買烏頭種的漁民來說，當然希望早一點有足夠的魚種數量，保證魚塘空間得以充分利用，所以漁民也願意以較高的價錢購入早出生的烏頭種。

水哥還會留意氣候變化，特別是風向和季節的變化。香港位處亞熱帶地區，每年冬天都有東北季候風帶來寒冷和乾燥的天氣，亦有西南季候風帶來和暖 and 潮濕的天氣。但在兩者的交接期，間接製造了相對安靜的環境，這對海裡的魚類來說，正是生產和養育的好時機。正如漁民的經驗之談：「西風吹起的話，就再沒有魚種收，又要等到明年北風再起的時候了。」

過去半個世紀，香港社會經歷了巨大的城市發展和經濟改變，理所當然，移民問題不能忽視。戰後的香港曾經歷兩次大規模的移民潮，人口也由1945年60萬增加到1955年234萬。這些移民

Starting from the last month of the lunar calendar, mature grey mullets lay eggs in water near the shore for two to four months. The fry that are caught by fishermen during this period will be named according to their time of birth, such as Little Chill, Big Chill, Jiaochun and Fanhua. These names may sound strange to consumers, but for fishermen the income of the coming year depends on the birthday of the small fish. Those which are born earlier are usually stronger and have a higher survival rate so that fishermen are often willing to buy at a high price for these early-born fry. Fishermen are also willing to pay more in order to make sure they have an adequate number of fry to utilize fish ponds.

Mr. Shui is also aware of the weather changes, especially the wind direction and seasons. As Hong Kong is located in a sub-tropical area, the northeasterly monsoon brings cold and dry weather in winter while the southwesterly monsoon brings warm and humid weather to the territory. The calm atmosphere in between the two periods is the time when fish in the sea reproduce and are born, and, as fishermen say, "No fish fry when the west winds blow. We have to wait for the north wind to come next year."

In the last five decades, Hong Kong has undergone tremendous city development, economic change and influx of population. Two large-scale migrations occurred after 1945 and the population rose from 600,000 in 1945 to 2,340,000 in 1955. The number includes those who had left Hong Kong during the Japanese invasion and then returned, and those who left the Mainland in 1949 for political reasons. The rocketing population resulted in an increasing demand on resources and revolutionary changes in food production, and the development of freshwater fish farming is in fact an important part of the post-war socio-economic history of Hong Kong.

Before the 1940s, Hong Kong had about 100 hectares of fish ponds with a few sea water fish ponds. For several decades after the 1940s, Deep Bay was a major area for rearing geiwei shrimps, grey mullets, Spotted Snakehead (*Channa maculate*) and other freshwater fish. In the late 1960s, fish ponds replaced paddy fields in Tai Seng Wai and Seng Wai. Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s were a prime period in Hong Kong's freshwater fishery industry, with various kinds of fry being exported to Taiwan and Southeast Asia. In the late 1970s, exports started to decline but local



demand for freshwater fish was on the increase. The fish industry continued to develop until the 1980s while the area of fish ponds extended from 186 hectares in 1954 to 2,130 hectares in 1986. Today grey mullets comprise 40 to 50% of local freshwater fish and it is a common dish on the dining table. Nowadays, the price of local grey mullets has dropped from \$35 per catty (the highest wholesale price in the history) to \$12 to \$14 per catty in the wholesale market, of which \$1 is the cost of the fry and about \$10 is the cost of the feed. Local freshwater fishermen do not have promising incomes yet they work hard every day to provide locally-reared grey mullets to the people of Hong Kong. Apart from offering the market low-priced and safe fish, they also help to preserve the extensive coastal wetland for migratory birds and contribute to the protection of our natural environment. ❄

包括了日治時期離開香港而暫避到中國內地的香港居民，以及基於政治原因在1949年解放後離開中國內地的一群。人口急劇上升令社會資源在分配上出現種種求過於供的現象，特別在食物生產模式上，更出現了革命性的變化。

四十年代前，香港魚塘的總面積約為100公頃，而海水魚塘的面積則相當小；四十年代開始，后海灣成為飼養基圍蝦、烏頭、生魚及其他淡水魚的地方。數十年來，新界后海灣是香港食用淡水魚的主要來源地，直至六十年代後期，才有大生圍及和生圍等由水稻田改成的魚塘。六十年代至七十年代，香港淡水漁業踏入另一個重要階段，把各類型的魚苗出口到台灣及東南亞等國家。到了七十年代後期，雖然出口魚苗行業風光不再，但本地對淡水魚的需求日增。直至八十年代，養漁業仍不斷發展；魚塘的面積亦由1954年186公頃，增加到1986年最高峰時期的2,130公頃。同時，在本地淡水魚中，烏頭約佔魚塘養殖比率40至50%，更是宴會及節慶活動席上經常食用的魚類。不過，今天本地烏頭的價錢已從漁民口中35元一斤的批發「天價」，下跌至12至14元一斤。若把那一元的魚苗和十元的飼料

成本價計算在內，試問漁民的基本收入如何得到保障。然而，本地淡水漁民還是每天營營役役、不辭勞苦地飼養本地烏頭供應給香港人，為我們提供廉價和安全的選擇之餘，更為停留香港棲息的候鳥提供了大片沿海濕地，為環境保育作出了非常重要的貢獻。❄



按：本故事是作者繼較早前《當小烏頭遇上海烏頭》（明報17/04/2006）和《小烏頭尋親記》《野外動向》第36期之後，為「小烏頭三部曲」寫的第一部份。

Note: This is the first episode of "The Little Grey Mullet". Two other stories are "Meeting Wise Grey Mullet", Mingpao 14/04/2006 and "The Adventure of Grey Mullet", Vol 36 Hong Kong Discovery.