

# Acarology Bulletin

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A Newsletter of the SYSTEMATIC AND APPLIED ACAROLOGY SOCIETY

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## Acarology and Member News

**The XIth International Congress of Acarology** will be held in Merida, Mexico during September 8-13, 2002, during which an updated Directory of Acarologists of the World will be released. The Directory 2002 will be available on the internet, and on computer disc, that will be free to the acarological community. If you want to be listed in the new directory, please supply the following information:

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**Mr. Ilya Smelansky** (P.O.Box 547 630090 Novosibirsk, Russia) is trying to find references concerning the fauna (including first descriptions of new taxons) and ecology of oribatids in arid and semi-arid areas of China (Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang-Uigur Autonomous Region) and would be happy to contact any person who explores oribatids in this region.

A colourful poster named "**Mites in the Rainforest**" is available free from The Community Information Unit of Environment Australia which can be reached by e-mail [ciu@ea.gov.au](mailto:ciu@ea.gov.au)

**The Central American Institute for Biological Research and Conservation** is a non-governmental, non-profit organization. Its purpose is to promote and to develop scientific research in the areas of Biology and Conservation in the Central American Isthmus. The organization is offering short training field courses on Biology and Conservation subjects which may be of interest to undergraduate and graduate students of Biology or related fields. The courses are: Phylogenetics (cladistic analysis)- 2001 Starting: Jan 21, 2001 Ending: Feb 4, 2001 Application Deadline: Nov 24, 2000 Multivariate Methods in Biology- 2000 Starting date: Oct 22 Ending date: Nov 5 Application Deadline: September 1 Place: Costa Rica

Field Ecology -2001

Starting: 15 April 2001

Ending: April 31, 2001

Application Deadline: Jan 30, 2001

More information including courses cost, application procedures, etc. could be found at <http://www.cibrc.freehosting.net> or email contact at [academics@cibrc.freehosting.net](mailto:academics@cibrc.freehosting.net)

**Dr. Xian-guo Guo** of Dali Medical College in Yunnan Province moved to Australia in the beginning of May, 2000 and will stay there for a full year as a visiting scholar. He did some work on Blue Oat Mites in his first month in Australia. Now he is doing some biochemical and immunological research on malaria. His current research involves the expression of the recombinant HRP-2 (a protein derived from malaria parasites) in *E. coli*, purification of HRP-2, and production of the specific antibody against HRP-2. He is also in charge of a project on the taxonomy and community ecology of ectoparasitic mites including mainly sand mites and gamasid mites of small mammals in China. The project is funded for leading scholars in Yunnan Province. He is still very interested in mites and insects of medical importance, especially their taxonomy and ecology. Dr. Guo can be contacted at School of Biochemistry, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3083 Australia.

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### **Merging of universities dominates current Chinese high education reform and affects acarological research in the country**

By Xiaoyue Hong

In the recent two or three years, there have been many merging of universities in China as part of high education system reform. In the past, many ministries in the central government had governed their own universities directly. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture governed fourteen agricultural and fishery universities through its Department (Bureau) of Education. These universities, whose presidents were usually appointed by the ministry, got their financial support directly from the Ministry of Agriculture. The pass of the High Education Law of the People's Republic of China two years ago guarantees that the Ministry of Education be in charge of the high education nationwide. However the High Education Law permits other ministries or agencies under the State Council such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Security, The State Ethnic Affairs Commission, and so on to be responsible for related high education, which aroused arguments among many scholars. The reform of the system, or the change of administration status and merging of universities are high on the agenda of Chinese high education reform plan.

### *1. Reforms of national universities*

In China, there are now more than one thousand government-funded universities and colleges, either at the national or provincial levels. Previously, about 345 universities and colleges were administered by various ministries & agencies under the central government. By adopting the policy of Joint Construction, Cooperative Administration, Transference of Jurisdiction, and Amalgamation by the State Council, more than 200 universities and colleges had been transferred from the central government to local governments by March 2000. There are currently less than one hundred national universities under the direct administration of the Ministry of Education and several related ministries of the central government. They recruit students nationwide. The enrollment at these universities are very competitive. People often call them key or important universities. Among the national universities, some are prestigious and considered by almost every Chinese people the best ones. The Ministry of Education has invested and will continue to invest more money into these best ones to establish their reputations in the world. In the mean time, some universities have been merged with these famous universities in a bid to have comprehensive university model and to compete with world famous universities in the United States, Europe and Japan. One of the largest and the most important mergers ever in modern China's high education took place between Zhejiang University and Zhejiang Agricultural University, Hangzhou University and

Zhejiang Medical University two years ago, and sent a strong message to China and the world that China's high education is reshuffling. Some famous universities may take small universities or colleges to develop new fields, e.g. Shanghai Jiaotong University, the alma mater of China's President Jiang Zemin, a typically strong university in transportation, shipbuilding and industry took Shanghai Agricultural College last year, hoping to develop in the fields of agriculture and life science. The latter is a small college administrated by Shanghai Municipality. The University of Science and Technology of China (USTC), a cradle of science talents annexed Hefei Economy and Technology College, a not famous but rich college under The Tobacco General Company of China and this also shows USTC's ambition to develop in agriculture and life science and to make use of the resources of the latter. In the same way, Tsinghua University took The Central Industrial Arts College last year and this reflected that Tsinghua will have a real comprehensive model and the merger accords with the development trend of combining the science and art. Tsinghua is also negotiating a merger with Peking Union Medical College, a very strong medical school in research in China and is willing to be on the top one hundred world-class university list. According to professor Chen Jia-Er, former president of Peking University, it will take at least 20 years for some China's universities to become world first-class ones. The latest strong to strong mergers

between Peking University and Beijing Medical University, between Xi'an Jiaotong University and Xi'an Medical University and Shaanxi Finance and Economy College, between Fudan University and Shanghai Medical University, between Jilin University and Jilin University of Technology, Norman Bethune Medical University, Changchun University of Science & Technology and Changchun Posts and Telecommunications College will definitely bring about super universities and reflect the Chinese government's strong will to have world first-class universities in China. In today's China, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Nanjing University, Fudan University, University of Science and Technology of China, Zhejiang University, Nankai University and Shanghai Jiaotong University are at the top of the pyramid of China's universities and will become even stronger with the help from the central government as well as the local governments who may feel pride in having prestigious universities in their areas and would invest money in these universities.

## *2. Reshuffles in provincial level universities*

However many more universities and colleges are administrated by the Department of Education or Education Commission in provinces, regions and municipalities. They are around 900 in number. They are local universities and colleges recruiting students from the province or region or municipality, and make contribution to the economic

development of each area. Many local universities have also reshuffled in recent years. Shanghai University is the merger of former Shanghai University, Shanghai Industrial University, Shanghai Science and Technology University and Shanghai Science and Technology Institute. Yangzhou University, a provincial university in Jiangsu is a merger of Jiangsu Agricultural College, Yangzhou Normal College, Yangzhou Medical College, and some other institutions in the same city. Formerly known as Dongwu University and Jiangsu Normal College, respectively, Suzhou University is one of the biggest provincial universities in Jiangsu and has wider disciplines than many provincial universities after merging several colleges in Suzhou. Local universities in remote underdeveloped regions are also eager to develop and reform, and wish to become comprehensive universities. In its merger with Guizhou Agricultural College, and some other smaller colleges, Guizhou University has produced the biggest and also strongest university in Guizhou province and won firm support from the local government. Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region government instructed the merger of Guangxi University with Guangxi Agricultural University. In Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Shihezi Agricultural College and Shihezi Medical College, both belonging to the agricultural lands reclaiming administration merged into Shihezi University.

There are a few city universities. They are funded by city governments and a few rich Hong Kong and Macau tycoons. For example, Ningbo University, a local university in Zhejiang province, was funded by Hong Kong businessman Bao Yugang, Shao Yifu and the local government; Shantou University in Guangdong province was financially supported by the famous Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing who donated 1.17 billion HK dollar in total to this university. Another local university also in Guangdong province, Wuyi University received great concern and support from overseas Chinese and compatriots of Hong Kong and Macau. These universities are usually located in the coastal regions where economies are well developed and have close relations with overseas Chinese people. They are more open in the process of education. Their teaching facilities are very good, and what they need most are the high level teachers and therefore use high-pay policy to recruit many talents from around the country.

### *3. What do education reforms in China mean to Acarological research?*

3.1 Acarology remains a small discipline under the current reforms.

Basically the education reshuffles in China aims at upgrading the research level, building up strong famous universities, reducing administrative staff members and decreasing fees in administration. The central government as well as the local governments have already invested and will still invest the

limited money in the most needed fields such as the molecular biology, genetic engineering and biological pharmacy, and by doing so they can compete with other developed countries. The last several years witnessed great development in modern molecular biological fields in mainland China. Acarology has never been and will not be paid much attention from governments at any level in China. As a small discipline in either national universities or local universities, acarology is facing a difficult situation. In fact, many non-professional acarologists in local universities are short of research funds and spend much time on teaching activities and other applied research such as the insecticides and IPM, and many of them use small money saved from other applied research programs for the study of mites. The acarologists in national universities are not optimistic either. They also face stronger pressure from colleagues in other promising fields in the same university. They do not have students coming in or have a few students because the majority of students are realistic and choose the modern and promising fields, which could lead them to good jobs in the future market.

3.2 Economic-oriented reform makes acarologists with little money find research more difficult

Many universities are now reforming internal administration system, which gives research staff right to get some rewards from getting funds and in the mean time requires them to pay the water, electricity and even housing from

the research funds. Some experts say that they use more or less one-third research money for non-research items. The majority of Chinese scientists pay money for copying, surfing on Internet and mailing reprints. Due to the limited acarological research funds (about 2-3 items for acarology every year) from the China's National Natural Science Foundation (NNSF), the only money resource from the national government for acarology, it is quite clear that many acarologists will live on non-NNSF funds. The provincial science funds are almost exclusively for applied research. For example, the natural science foundation in developed eastern Jiangsu province has supported entomological research for quite a few years and all the money go to the cotton bollworm, the brown planthopper and other important pests in the province. It is impossible for a professional acarologist in the province to get the money from the provincial research funds. Other provinces have similar stories.

Almost every province, municipality or region has entomologists working on mites or ticks-this is inevitable given the importance of mites and ticks in agriculture, animal husbandry and natural systems. However only a few municipalities, provinces or regions have professional acarologists. If the present situation continues, China will face the shortage of trained professional acarologists for identifying specific groups and handling acarological problems.

3.3 Relationship plays an important role in getting funds for acarology

Many acarologists feel that it is quite difficult to get funds from either the central government or local governments because money is limited and the Guanxi (relationship) plays an important role in getting money in current China. The Chinese research funding system is not well established and acarologists cut no figures in China's entomological arena, it is therefore that many acarologists know nobody in the government or research funding administrations who may not realize the importance of Acarology. If you become an official of the university, or if you know some individuals in the administrative offices, you will have more chances to brief the government officials on how important the acarology is, and have more chances to get the money for research. I do not blame this phenomenon. In fact, I agree with Dr. Vikram Prasad that working with politicians is an important effort and we got to do something for the development of acarology.

I agree with Dr. Dave E. Walter and Dr. Zhi-Qiang Zhang in the forum of *For the Survival of Acarology* that the acarology situation in Australia is not an isolated one. The practical solutions to the difficult acarology situation in China may include the co-operation with experts in other disciplines such as genetics, molecular biology, and ecology; make use of some mite problems such as the citrus mite damage and introduce the seriousness of mites to government officials and win their support; try to use

modern techniques in the study of mites and let students and other scientists know that acarology is cutting-edge too. We cannot change the situation of acarology overnight, we have to work hard together, help each other and pray for a bright future.

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**New members**

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