**BIRDWOOD’S MUCUNA**

**Scientific name**: Mucuna birdwoodiana  
**Family**: Fabaceae (bean family)  
**Habit** : Climbing on trees or shrubs  
**Distribution**: Hong Kong and South China

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**LEAF**  
- Pinnately 3-foliate  
- Leathery  
- Leaflets rectangular, elliptic or ovate elliptic  
- Each leaflet is 7.5-16 cm long

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**PALLAS’S SQUIRREL**  
**Callosciurus erythraeus styani**  
- Effective explosive opener  
- Frequently destroys flowers and rob nectar  
- Diurnally active

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**FULVOUS FRUIT BAT**  
**Rousettus leschenaulti**  
- Unable to open the flowers  
- May serve as an occasional pollinator  
- Feeds primarily on the nectar of opened flowers

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**MASKED PALM CIVET**  
**Paguma larvata**  
- Effective explosive opener  
- Major pollinator of Birdwood’s Mucuna  
- Opens the flowers more frequently than the squirrel and without causing damage  
- Nocturnally active

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**FLOWER**  
- Long inflorescences up to 20-40 cm long, each with 12-40 flowers  
- Each flower is 7.5-9 cm tall  
- The arrangement of the different types of petals lends the flowers the appearance of a butterfly  
- The species’ Chinese name, which translates as ‘rice bird flower’, is a reference to the critically endangered yellow-breasted bunting, owing to the colour and shape of the flowers

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**FRUIT**  
- A woody, leathery legume up to 30-45 cm long  
- Covered in fine, reddish brown irritant hairs  
- Each pod contains 5-15 purple-black seeds, each one measuring about 2.8 cm in length

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**WHERE CAN YOU FIND IT IN KFBG?**  
A giant Birdwood’s Mucuna is located behind the Art House in the Lower Area

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**Relationships with its Neighbours**  
- While most plants rely on insects for pollination, Birdwood’s Mucuna depends on mammals  
- Fruit bats, squirrels and civets visit the flowers, but only the latter two are effective pollinators  
- Upon visiting a flower, these mammals press down on the wing petals with their forelimbs and push the banner petals upward, so that they can insert their snouts through the gap  
- This rapidly releases the stamens and pistil, and catapults the pollen grains onto the animal’s face, earning these pollinating mammals the title ‘explosive openers’

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**All Organisms are Interconnected**  
- Nearly 90% of flowering plants are pollinated by animals, with each species exhibiting adaptive features to fit its pollinator’s needs  
- Any ecological interaction between two species is termed a SYMBIOSIS  
- The intimate and mutually beneficial relationship between M. birdwoodiana and its mammal pollinators is called a MUTUALISM

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**Reference**  