SYSTEMATIC and evolutionary botany and plant ecology were not official fields of study in China until the beginning of the last century. However, Chinese scholars in those fields have already made remarkable achievements.

The first batch of botanists to study plant taxonomy and ecology included overseas returnees like Hu Hsen-Hsu (1894-1968), Chien Sung-Su (1883-1965), Chien Woon-Yong (1890-1971) as well as homegrown scientists like Tsoong Kuan-Kuang (1868-1940).

Chinese taxonomists have made many remarkable achievements, including the discovery of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, known as "living fossils", compilations of "Iconographia Cormophytorum Sinicorum" and "Claves Famil iarum Generumque Cormophytorum Sinicorum", the publication of Ren-Chang Ching’s dissertation titled "The Chinese fern families and genera: systematic arrangement and historical origin" and particularly the compilation "Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicaceae" and its English version. The "Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicaceae", which contains contributions from over 400 scholars and was completed in 2004 after 45 years’ work, has 80 volumes and 126 books, making it the largest botanical masterpiece detailing 31,422 species belonging to 3,408 genera of 301 families.

At present, Chinese scholars in systematic and evolutionary botany are working on the major scientific questions of this field by taking advantage of unique Chinese geographical and environmental advantages.

De-Yuan Hong, a fellow of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, published a monograph titled, *Peonies of the World: Taxonomy and Phyto-geography*, which properly tackled the problems of the taxonomy and nomenclature of the genus *Paeonia*. The monograph has worked out a solution for the taxonomy and evolution-ary history of this genus based on the data from morphology, biogeography, cytotaxonomy and molecular phylo-geetics. In addition, the monograph extensively discusses species concepts and how to use them in studies, and the author presents a practical species concept. The monograph won high praise from both native and foreign scholars and has been recognized as an essential reference book on the study of *Paeonia* plants.

Chinese scientists have also made major breakthroughs concerning speciation and its mechanism, speciation by polyploidy, diversification and bio-geography of gymnosperms, species diversity and its formation mechanism in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the evolution of the angiosperm flower and its gene regulatory networks (GRNs), as well as the molecular mechanisms of some important domestic crop traits. All of these achievements have significantly promoted the reputation and academic level of systematic and evolutionary botanists from China.

INE IBC delegates joined a field trip between July 17 and 22 before the opening of the XIX International Botanical Congress. Led by guide Yan-Song Peng, members of the group conducted field research on Jinggang Mountain, the middle of the Luoxiao Mountains, Lushan Mountain and Poyang Lake. Luoxiao is a south-north range of tall mountains on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. The trip spanned three national nature reserves and a famous botanical garden.

At the first stop, in Jinggang Mountain, the group studied rare plants, a typical valley monsoon evergreen broad-leaf forest, characteristic conifer-broadleaf forests, vegetation landscapes, such as that of rhododendron, and some historical cultural sites.

The second stop on the trip was Lushan Mountain, which is a geopark listed as a UNESCO world cultural landscape heritage. The members studied the typical zone vegetation and Quaternary glacial relics on Lushan. The group visited Lushan Botanical Garden, which is the home of a large collection of exotic plant populations, a geological museum and China’s oldest existing school, Bailudong College.

During the group’s third stop in Wucheng Township, the botanists studied Poyang Lake Wetland, the largest fresh water lake wetland in China, and paid a visit to a bird specimen museum.

A bird’s-eye view of terraced rice fields in southwestern Guizhou Province.