



Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong University Student Sponsorship Programme 2007-08

Backgrounder

- Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong (OPCFHK) enables university students to contribute to the conservation of endangered animals by working “in the field” on OPCFHK-sponsored research projects across Asia.
- Organised by the OPCFHK, the Programme is a joint-effort between OPCFHK and four local Universities:
 The City University of Hong Kong (**City U**) - Department of Biology and Chemistry
 The Chinese University of Hong Kong (**CUHK**) - Department of Biology
 The University of Hong Kong (**HKU**) – Swire Institute of Marine Science, Division of Ecology & Biodiversity
 The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (**HKUST**) - School of Science
- Selected students have the chance to work with world-leading scientists on conservation field-research projects.

Overview of OPCFHK University Sponsorship Programme since 2004/05

Financial year	No. of projects	Participating Universities	No. of student participants
2007/08	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HKU • HKUST • CUHK • City U 	27
2006/07	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HKU • HKUST 	12
2005/06	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HKU 	8
2004/05	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HKU 	6

▪ **Recommendations on conservation in Hong Kong from students participating in the University Sponsorship Programme 2007/08**

Sustainable development as the fundamental rule: From the findings of the scientific research, or from field trip observation, the various projects aim at developing a long term and sustainable eco-tourism or conservation projects.

- ✓ **Jennifer Siu and Michael Yuen (#5, Irrawaddy Dolphin project, Thailand):** While developing the economy, Hong Kong government should consider to closely monitor in detail potential impacts from economic activities on local ecology by conducting routine assessment.

Education and promotion: Students recommend the government and conservation organizations should use various promotion channels to educate the public on the importance of conservation.

- ✓ **Sharon Wu and Chole Chan (#8, Freshwater Turtles project, Guangdong):** Hong Kong government and conservation organizations should organize more seminars and exhibitions to promote the importance of conservation.
- ✓ **William Cheng and Christina Kwong (#7, Dolphin-watching Tourism project, Bali):** Promotion materials should be produced with different languages so that conservation messages can be delivered to more people.
- ✓ **Sha Yuen Yu and Rachel Cheung (#12, Elephant project, Indonesia):** Local people were taught to live peacefully with the surrounding wildlife and were educated not to kill or capture the endangered animals through community education. This project effectiveness could be evaluated upon reviewing the situation after implementation.
- ✓ **J Wan and Cindy Yuen (#3, Tiger and Prey project, Northern Lao):** Hong Kong is more developed than some of the areas where the projects are implemented, so the government should allocate more resources for wildlife conservation.

Community engagement: Collaboration between research organizations, the government and the community to strengthen conservation efforts.

- ✓ **Roger Lee; Charmaine Yung and Jo Zhou (#4, Dolphin watching projects, the Philippines):** Every drop counts! People should each start with small individual efforts which, when all combined, grow to be a great communal effort and can make a large positive contribution to the environment and conservation.
- ✓ **Jennifer Siu and Michael Yuen (#5, Irrawaddy Dolphin project, Thailand):** The Hong Kong government should support conservation organizations by developing and implementing proper conservation strategies. This will help us further understand our local ecology and wildlife habitat and ensure effective measures could be implemented to protect the local wildlife.

Scientific research:

- ✓ **Connie Lau and Grace Leung (#9, Seahorse project, the Philippines):** Scientific research is important to wildlife conservation. For instance, the results of the seahorse project in the Danajon Double Barrier Reef accelerated the set-up of the MPA (*Marine Protection Area*). Currently, there is a lack of long-term biological monitoring studies in some of the local MPAs. Hong Kong can learn from the Philippines by conducting a more systematic and long-term study on the reserves. When the government sets up more MPAs in the future, it should develop studies in the pre- and post- establishment period. This will help further understand and evaluate the effectiveness of the MPAs.
- ✓ **Sharon Wu and Chole Chan (#8, Freshwater Turtles project, Guangdong):** Baseline studies (species, quantities and habitat) and sustainable artificial breeding have a strong positive impact on the conservation of freshwater turtles. Currently, the Hong Kong government and its local universities are working on studies with focus on endangered species. The information gained from these studies will play a crucial role in attaining success in future conservation.

Training to related industries :

- ✓ **Sha Yuen Yu and Rachel Cheung (#12, Elephant project, Indonesia):** Training can be effective, their project was a good example which trained the local farmers to deal with human animal conflict. Through training, the project was able to successfully mitigate the HEC (*Human elephant conflict*) and minimize the negative impact of human interaction to the elephant species there. This proved that training can help related industries adapt to a more ecologically friendly alternative.
- ✓ **Connie Lau and Grace Leung (#9, Seahorse project, the Philippines):** The Hong Kong fisheries industry should learn from the counterparts in the Philippines who became more caring for their marine environment after being educated about the importance of marine ecology. Hong Kong government and conservation organizations should cooperate and explore more solutions to protect the ecology. For example, they can collaborate to help the industries migrate to operation models which are more ecologically friendly. This will ultimately allow the industries maintain their revenues while at the same time help conserve our planet.

Eco-conservation areas: Students believe the set-up of eco-conservation areas is an effective measure to protect endangered species, and suggest Hong Kong government to extend the scale of the current areas and increase the no. of such areas.

- ✓ **Connie Lau and Grace Leung (#9, Seahorse project, the Philippines) Sarah Mak and Ivy Mak (#2 Humpback Whales and other Cetaceans project, the Philippines):** Through their studies and observation in the Philippines, the students recognized the sustainable development of their conservation projects alongside the local fisheries industry by setting up a MPA (*Marine Protected Area*). Hong Kong government recently completed a consultation about setting up new Fisheries Protection Areas in Tolo Harbour and Port Shelter. They believe that more MPAs can help rehabilitate the marine environment, which in the long run, would be favourable to fisheries industry.
- ✓ **Amy Lau, Kenneth Wong, Nick Ho and Crane Jiang (#6, Endangered Philippine Eagle project, the Philippines):** Setting up nature reserves is a good way to protect endangered animals. At present, the Mai Po nature reserve and Long Yuen wetland are excellent examples of this in Hong Kong.

Professional conservation monitoring: Students suggest the government and conservation organizations to develop long term monitoring mechanism.

- ✓ **William Cheng and Christina Kwong (#7, Dolphin-watching Tourism project, Bali):** There is a need for a long-term ecological monitoring mechanism.
- ✓ **Sharon Wu and Chole Chan (#8, Freshwater Turtles project, Guangdong):** There should be conservation centres to take care of turtles that are injured or confiscated. Currently there are similar types of centres in Hong Kong and Guangdong, however their insufficient resources are not enough to handle the large amount of confiscated turtles. Therefore, more allocation of resources is needed.
- ✓ **Amy Lau, Kenneth Wong, Nick Ho and Crane Jiang (#6, Endangered Philippine Eagle project, the Philippines):** Regular monitoring of birds and their habitat should be maintained to ensure their habitats are at a good state.

Eco-tourism marketing strategy:

- ✓ **William Cheng and Christina Kwong (#7, Dolphin-watching Tourism project, Bali):** In Hong Kong, tourism organizations or conservation organizations are mainly responsible for conducting eco-tours. It is important that they recognize their impact on the ecology by conducting these tours. They should execute the navigation routes in local water in a way not disturbing the dolphins. They should also plan various types of tours to cater to different needs. To maintain sustainability, the government should set up registration and application mechanisms for dolphin-watching activities.

Government monitoring: Students recommend the HK government to develop a guideline to ensure eco-tourism is conducted without harming the natural habitat and to enforce regulations to combat illegal actions against conservation.

- ✓ **William Cheng and Christina Kwong (#7, Dolphin-watching Tourism project, Bali):** The government should strictly require the industries to register and apply for licences, they should also set up guidelines and conduct regular patrols enforcing regulations to ensure eco-tourism operators do not breach the regulations.
- ✓ **Sarah Mak and Ivy Mak (#2 Humpback Whales and Cetaceans project, the Philippines):** The government should strengthen efforts to combat illegal fishing.

2007-08 Projects:

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) - Swire Institute of Marine Science, Division of Ecology & Biodiversity			
	#1 (Case Study at Press Briefing)	#2	#3
Project	Sulawesi Sea Cetacean Project 2007-08: Conservation and Diversity of Marine Cetaceans	Science and Community-Based Conservation of Humpback Whales and other Cetaceans	Abundance and Distribution of Tiger and Prey, and Prey Selection by Large Carnivores
Date	30 March - 14 April 2008	5 - 18 March 2008	14 - 27 February 2008
Location	Berau Archipelago, East Kalimantan, Indonesia	Babuyan Islands, Philippines	Northern Lao PDR
Principal Investigator	Dr. Danielle Krieb Yayasan Konservasi RASI	Mr. Rasmus Klocker Larsen Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	Mr. Chanthavy Vongkhamheng The Wildlife Conservation Society-Lao Program
Students	But Lok Wai, William; Fu Cheuk Chi, Molly	Mak Siu Tze, Sarah; Mak Tsz Wai, Ivy	Wan Pak Ho, J; Yuen Pui Yu, Cindy
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By conducting a series of cetacean surveys, this project aims to obtain information on: cetacean diversity, relative abundance, threats and core dolphin population areas - Draft conservation recommendations: define areas within, seasons where, and when strict conservation rules should apply within the recently (2006) established Marine Protected Area; and define where, and in which way sustainable ecotourism activities are allowed to take place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor the current habitat, distribution and population of Humpback Whales in the Babuyan Islands. - Identify threats and harms to the habitat of humpback whales and other cetaceans caused by human activities - Evaluate the mutual impact of whales/ cetaceans and fisheries industry - Provide scientific data for the use of designing a suitable biodiversity plan to conserve Humpback whales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the abundance and distribution of tigers and their prey using the systematic camera traps - Examine the prey selection patterns by tigers using <i>scat analysis</i> in the national protected areas in northern Laos. - Results provide both basic data to the government of Laos to design the effective wildlife conservation strategies that ensure the survival of tigers in the long-term and will allow a test of the hypothesis that tiger density is a function of prey abundance.

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) - The School of Science

	#4	#5	#6
Project	Ecology and Conservation of Two Coastal Cetacean Species: Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin and Spinner Dolphin	Irrawaddy Dolphins along the Eastern Gulf Coast of Thailand: Assessment of Population and Conservation Issues	Saving the Haring Ibon: Research, Local Capacity-building and Education Campaign on the Endangered Philippine Eagle
Date	18 - 30 April 2008	18 - 29 February 2008	Group 1: 20 March - 27 March 2008 Group 2: 20 March - 4 April 2008
Location	Balabac, Palawan, Philippines	Along the Eastern Gulf Coast of Thailand	The Southern Sierra Madre Protected Landscape, Luzon
Principal Investigator	Dr. Ma. Louella Dolar Tropical Marine Research for Conservation, LLC	Dr. Ellen Hines San Francisco State University	Mr. J.C. Ibanez Philippine Eagle Foundation
Students	Lee Ho, Roger; Yung Cheuk Man, Charmaine; Zhou Muzh, Jo	Siu Sze Man, Jennifer; Yuen Yat Fai, Michael	Group 1: Lau Ngo Mui, Amy; Wong Tsz Kin, Kenneth Group 2: Ho Lok Hin, Nick; Jiang He, Crane
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study the distributional range and abundance of the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops aduncus</i>) and the Spinner dolphin (<i>Stenella longirostris roseiventris</i>) - Skin samples for DNA analysis will be collected using biopsy darts and from strandings and fisheries' by-catch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate the spatial distribution and habitat use of Irrawaddy dolphins in the Trat province of Thailand by studying their behaviour, group dynamics, and movement patterns. - Estimate the relative abundance of Irrawaddy dolphins in the Trat province - It will also investigate the potential threat that local fishing practices pose to the Irrawaddy dolphin population - The program also aims to train Thai scientists in research methods so that this work can be continued throughout the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the long-term survival of the Philippine Eagle by conducting research on the biology and ecology of the species. - The research will focus on: identification of nesting sites within the Northeastern Sierra Madre Mountain Range, nest site selection, prey items, breeding biology and telemetry studies.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) - Department of Biology

	#7 (Case Study at Press Briefing)	#8	#9 (Case Study at Press Briefing)
Project	Towards Sustainable Dolphin-watching Tourism	Distribution, Natural Habitats, and Exploitation of Freshwater Turtles	Enriching and Utilizing our Knowledge of Local Seahorse Populations to Scale Up Community-based Initiatives for Seahorse Conservation
Date	31 May - 14 June 2008	31 May – 6 June 2008	15 May - 12 Jun 2008
Location	Bali, Indonesia	Guangdong Province, South China	Danajon Double Barrier Reef
Principal Investigator	Putu Liza Kusuma Mustika James Cook University	Dr. Alex T. Chow South China University of Technology	Dr. Amanda C.J. Vincent Project Seahorse
Students	Cheng Wai Wa, William; Kwong Yuen Yee, Christina	Wu Tse Huen, Sharon; Chan Yuk Wa, Chole	Lau Pui Ling, Connie; Leung Sin Man, Grace
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the social constructions of dolphin-watching stakeholders in Bali to help the development of dolphin-watching protocols - Provide the science base and develop indicators for the sustainable management of dolphin tourism in Bali - Develop a network of sustainable cetacean watching operators in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect quantitative data on the population, distribution, and habitat requirements of endangered freshwater turtles to evaluate the impact of illegal activities on the wild population and to provide recommendations and suitable management method for conservation. - Utilize the study to initiate an ecotourism boost and provide education and training opportunities to implement a long-term conservation plan for reptiles in the Guangdong Province. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A project to help secure a future for the wild seahorse population in the central Philippines, by studying the population dynamics and life histories of seahorses in the Danajon Bank after years of local overfishing - Further evaluate the life history and population consequences for seahorses of the marine reserves and fisheries ban. This is meant to provide supporting research for similar projects elsewhere and to lay the groundwork for management plans should seahorse fishing resume.

The City University of Hong Kong (City U) - Department of Biology and Chemistry

	#10	#11	#12
Project	Assessment of Dugong Population and its Habitat	Continuation of Community Based In-situ Marine Turtle Nest Protection and Community Outreach Programme	Capacity Building in Mitigation of Human – elephant Conflict to Reduce the Negative Impact to the Elephant and to the Community
Date	1 – 6 April, 2008	30 January - 14 February 2008	20 - 30 March 2008
Location	Davao Gulf, Southern Mindanao, Philippines	Rekawa, Sri Lanka	Gunung Leuser National Park, Indonesia
Principal Investigator	Dr. Hilconida P. Calumpong Silliman University Marine Laboratory	Mr. K.A.D.T.J. Kapurusinghe Turtle Conservation Project	Dr. Wahdi Azmi Fauna & Flora International
Students	Wong Man Chung; Fang Kar Hei, James	Ng Pun Tung; Chan Sze Man	Cheung Wing Yu, Rachel; Sha Yuen Yu
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A study to map the actual Dugong routes since sightings have been reported over a vast area (including two small islands, Balut and Sarangani) of Jose Abad Santos, and measure the size and locations of seagrass beds within these areas - Threats to the existing dugong population also need to be identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turtle Conservation Project (TCP) has initiated community based turtle conservation efforts in Kosgoda and Rekawa by employing egg collectors as nest protectors. - TCP community projects were heavily destroyed and disturbed by the 2004 tsunami event. TCP is now in the process of recovering and looking for support to continue its marine and coastal conservation efforts in Sri Lanka. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement a comprehensive assessment on site-specific potential solutions by conducting a community based project to mitigate the HEC (Human elephant conflict). - Educate local citizens on appropriate agricultural techniques - Educate the local community on alternate methods aside from killing or capturing in order to solve local animal interference issues. - Teach local communities how to live peacefully with the surrounding wildlife and increase their awareness on the importance of conserving the Sumatran elephant and its habitat - Assist in developing local ecotourism