



[PRESS RELEASE]

**Local University Students Propose the Government
to Improve Hong Kong Conservation**

**HKU and OPCFHK commit to a 6-year inaugural Professorship Program on
marine mammal research**

(19 June 2008, Hong Kong) – Having their heads filled with new insights and a sense of empowerment, 27 students gathered today to propose recommendations for Hong Kong on how to improve local wildlife conservation and develop sustainable eco-tourism. These recommendations come after having participated in the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong (**OPCFHK**) University Student Sponsorship Program (**USSP**) on wildlife conservation, a program designed to give practical conservation experiences abroad to local Hong Kong students. Building on the outstanding success of the USSP, OPCFHK today announced its agreement with The University of Hong Kong (HKU) to establish a 6-year collaboration to support local academia related to marine mammal conservation.

Established in 2004, the University Student Sponsorship Program sent 27 students from four universities into the field this year, an increase of 50% over the year before. The four local universities include The University of Hong Kong (**HKU**) and The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (**HKUST**) for their third and second year respectively, whilst The Chinese University of Hong Kong (**CUHK**) and The City University of Hong Kong (**CityU**) are new to the program. All research projects are funded by OPCFHK.

Pairs of students traveling to different destinations throughout Asia took part in 12 scientific research projects. The students revealed their exciting experiences of working alongside conservation professionals to study several endangered species and their habitats before giving recommendations to Hong Kong on how to enhance conservation efforts.

Students who participated in this year's programs came back with a fresh take on the importance of community involvement in wildlife conservation. The Marine Cetacean projects in the Philippines and Indonesia showed students how to develop better Dolphin Watching tours in Hong Kong; whereas the Endangered Philippine Eagle research in Luzon, Philippines and the Tiger & Prey research project in Northern Laos gave the students insight on how to develop conservation projects and eco-tours within Hong Kong.

As **Foundation Chair Ms. Judy Chen** proudly shares, "We are excited to see the growing scale of the USSP. In face of the shortage of young professionals in the field, our Foundation tries to inspire the students to take up careers in conservation through real-life encounters while working alongside principal investigators."

To further inspire students, OPCFHK announced a joint project with HKU on a new Professorship Program. The project will allow HKU to recruit an Associate grade professor to support the University and OPCFHK with marine mammal conservation.

The successful candidate will not only develop university courses but also handle crucial conservation tasks such as, conducting research, assisting in raising public awareness and education, supporting fundraising initiatives, supporting other local and regional conservation management programs.

Dean of the Faculty of Science Prof. Sun Kwok from HKU states, "Experts and professors in this generation, therefore, would be the ideal mentors to nurture the next. It is with this reasoning that the OPCFHK and Hong Kong University have worked together to create the Professorship Program. Being a leading academia on marine conservation in Hong Kong, we believe this collaboration would be of great benefit to our students and bring greater public awareness to marine mammal conservation to our city."

Deputy Director of OPCFHK Timothy Ng added, "It is our aim to champion Hong Kong's conservation cause by raising public awareness and knowledge. To do so, we will need to inspire more people to become involved, this includes sharing our experiences and empowering them with the necessary knowledge and skills. OPCFHK began the program with 6 students from HKU joining 3 projects in 2004. This year, in 2008, we collaborated with 4 universities with a total of 27 participating students in 12 projects. Furthering our work with the students, we are excited to begin our joint Professorship Program with HKU later this year. The inaugural Professorship Program and our ongoing flagship University Student Sponsorship Program signify OPCFHK's dual approach in promoting conservation through research and education.

For details about the projects under 2007/08 University Student Sponsorship Program, please refer to the fact sheet.

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About Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong

Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong (OPCFHK) is a charitable organization established by Ocean Park in 1993, adopting its current name since July, 2005. As the conservation arm of Ocean Park, it advocates, facilitates and participates in the conservation of Asian wildlife and habitats through research and education. Its vision is to ensure the sustainability of wildlife and biodiversity. Since July 2005, Ocean Park has enhanced its support to donate part of the year-long gate admission on top of the full day revenue on Conservation Day on the second Saturday of January every year. While supported by Ocean Park, the Foundation is also reliant on other caring corporations and donors in order to make a real difference to conservation efforts in Asia. For more information about OPCFHK, please visit their website www.opcf.org.hk or contact their Foundation's Development Officer at 2873-8690.