



Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong University Student Sponsorship Programme 2008-09

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.
- OPCFHK aims to encourage more students to consider a career in conservation by giving them a chance to experience real-life conservation work.
- Organized by the OPCFHK, the Programme is a joint-effort between OPCFHK and four local universities:
 The University of Hong Kong (HKU) - The Swire Institute of Marine Science (SWIMS)
 The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) - The School of Science
 The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) - Department of Biology
 The City University of Hong Kong (City U) - Department of Biology and Chemistry
- Selected students have the chance to work with world-leading scientists on conservation field-research projects.
- Since the launch of the Programme, OPCFHK has increased the number of projects significantly, from 3 to 13 in five years, which allows more universities and students to participate in.

Overview of OPCFHK University Student Sponsorship Programme since 2004-05

Financial year	No. of projects	Participating Universities	No. of student participants
2008-09	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HKU • HKUST • CUHK • City U 	31
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

University Student Sponsorship Programme 2008-09 Projects:

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) - The Swire Institute of Marine Science (SWIMS)			
	#1 (Case Study at Press Briefing)	#2	#3
Project	Investigation of the population status and fisheries interactions of coastal and deep-sea canyon cetaceans in Bangladesh, and incorporation of the results into a Cetacean Diversity Conservation Plan	Project fieldwork during the spawning season of both artificial and natural breeding of Chinese Sturgeons	Baseline survey of red panda distribution, abundance and population status in the Eastern Himalaya
Date	18 Jan 09 - 1 Feb 09	26 Dec 08 – 8 Jan 09	3 Mar 09 – 17 Mar 09
Location	Khulna, Bangladesh	Yichang, China	Nepal
Principal Investigator	Mr. Brian D. Smith	Prof. Qiwei Wei	Mr. Brian Williams
Students	Benny Wong Simon Wong	Ginny Chan Michelle Law	Carol Law Bond Shum
Description/ Key Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 species of cetaceans were encountered in the Sundarban mangrove area and Swatch of No Ground, including a group of near 80 Spinner Dolphins - Counted and identified different species of dolphins, recorded environmental data like the sea salinity at different points, temperature and turbidity - Education on how to fish in a sustainable or eco-friendly way is essential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tasks include distinguish weak and small larvae from large and strong ones for separate nursery - Understand the effort and resources put behind reintroduction programmes - Exchanged conservation ideas with researchers and postgraduate students met at the hatchery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sighted 2 wild red pandas - Realized conservation is not solely based on science, but also of social and economic importance - A concept of "Community Forest" is adopted to enhance the effectiveness of management - Appreciated local peoples' willingness to develop a career in conservation though the salary is not high

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

	#4	#5	#6
Project	Impact of bamboo shoots collection on the growth and renewal of giant pandas' edible bamboo species	Research and training programme on conservation of endangered turtles in Vietnam	Monitoring the movement towards the recovery of the Philippine crocodile (<i>Crocodylus mindorensis</i>) in the wild
Date	4 Apr 09 – 19 Apr 09	5 Apr 09 – 19 Apr 09	31 Jan 09 – 8 Feb 09
Location	Daxiangling, Sichuan, China	Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam	San Mariano, Philippines
Principal Investigator	Dr. Jianghong Ran	Mr. Timothy McCormack	Mr. Merlijn van Weerd
Students	Sharen Che Tommy Lo Tam Kin Chung	Nelson Ho Yves Wong Leo Yeung	Jessica Zhang Richard Tian CK Yeung
Description/Key Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Villagers highly depend on logging for living, which severely affects the bamboo growth in the region - Estimated the activities of giant pandas by tracing the bamboo situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A quiz was given to the students after the intensive training course on turtle ecology and turtle identification. All students scored over 80% - Great egg-digging experience in the wild for incubation and saw a baby turtle hatched in the incubation room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Red List Endangered, estimated population in the wild is 100 adults - Nests destroyed by fallen rock caused by erosion which might be due to excess reclamation. - A nest with egg shells was discovered in Narra Lake where no crocodiles were ever discovered before

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

	#7	#8 (Case Study at Press Briefing)	#9 (Case Study at Press Briefing)
Project	Enriching and utilising our knowledge of local seahorse populations to scale up community-based initiatives for seahorse conservation in the Danajon Double Barrier Reef	Capacity-building programme for wildlife rescue in the Shaanxi Province	Population ecology and conservation of the Komodo Dragon (<i>Varanus komodoensis</i>)
Date	7 May 09 – 20 May 09	7 May 09 – 20 May 09	26 Apr 09 – 17 May 09
Location	Bohol, Philippines	Qinling Mountains, Shaanxi, China	Komodo National Park, Indonesia
Principal Investigator	Dr. Amanda C.J. Vincent Mr. Amado P. Blanco	Dr. Jin Xuelin	Dr. Claudio Ciofi
Students	Michelle Lee Patrick Yeung	Jacky Kwok Joseph Tong	Mandy Wong Eddie Woo
Description/Key Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realized that not only biological conservation is essential in conserving seahorses, but also effective community work - Excellent research training provided by Project Seahorse Foundation (PSF) - Learned how to distinguish seahorses species - Wildlife consumption awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Took care and closely encountered more than 10 animal species at the rescue centre, including giant pandas, red pandas, golden monkeys and takins, etc. - Joined the opening ceremony of the new library sponsored by OPCFHK - Training course on wildlife rescue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close encounter with more than 20 individual komodo dragons - Stayed on a remote island with komodo dragons, and had no electricity and tap water supply for 12 days - Helped researchers catch komodo dragons by cages for measurement and record

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

	#10	#11	#12
Project	Investigate the seasonal and annual changing pattern of distribution and population size of the Yangtze finless porpoise in its main distribution range by passive acoustical survey	Observation on the sustainable dolphin-watching tourism in Bali, Indonesia	Action for the critically endangered Chinese crested-tern
Date	10 Jan 09 – 21 Jan 09	7 Feb 09 – 15 Feb 09	13 May 09 – 23 May 09
Location	Po Yang Lake, Jiangxi China	Bali, Indonesia	Fuzhou, China
Principal Investigator	Dr. Songhai Li	Ms. Putu Liza Kusuma Mustika	Mr. Simba Chan
Students	Kracer Chow Iding Chung	Mabel Tung Alexson Lau	Skylar Tang William Wu
Description /Key Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great training on acoustic research, developed data analysis and sighting skills - Analyzed wave patterns to estimate the finless porpoises' activities - Realized how inappropriate fishing methods affect the food web - Developed great relationship with researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realized the importance of balancing benefits between wildlife and eco-tourism - Conducted surveys with tourists to gather views on dolphin-watching activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Bird of legend', thought to be extinct but was rediscovered in 2000. Less than 50 individuals on earth - Sighted 15 individuals of the Chinese crested-tern. This broke the previous record of sighting 7-8 individuals at the same spot - Fascinated by the passion of bird-lovers who took care of them during the trip

Joint-universities (HKU, HKUST, CUHK, City U)**#13 (Case Study at Press Briefing)**

Project	Patrolling Programme to Stop Poaching and Illegal Collection at Wanglang Nature Reserve
Date	1 Jun 09 – 14 Jun 09
Location	Wanglang, Sichuan, China
Principal Investigator	Mr. Chen Youping
Students	Gabriella Li (HKU) Olivia Li (HKUST) Pinky Li (City U) Zhang Hao (CUHK)
Description /Key Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- First project ever in USSP that involves 4 students from 4 different universities- Investigated the damage of the 5.12 earthquake done to the Wanglang Nature Reserves- Patrolled the natural reserve with researchers to monitor poaching and illegal collection activities- With the number of tourists dropped due to the earthquake, the demand for Chinese medicine has also decreased. This indirectly reduced poaching and illegal collection activities