

HKDCS PAST ACTIVITIES – DOLPHIN AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

In June 2004, the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society (HKDCS) and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) jointly launched a brand-new programme, the "Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme". The Programme aimed to train tertiary students and members of the public to become Dolphin Ambassadors, in order to promote AFCD's code-of-conduct in dolphin watching to dolphin watching operators, as well as the public, so as to minimize disturbances to the wild dolphins.



After the training session, around 100 participants have finally become our dolphin ambassadors. In August, they guided a number of dolphin-watching tours, on which they helped search for dolphins and conveyed accurate knowledge of the Chinese white dolphin to the tourists.

This year dolphin researchers started to get aware of the speed boats around Tai O waters, which carried tourists out to the sea to search for Chinese white dolphins. All these boats set off at the fishing village of Tai O, each of which could carry around 10 people. The boat fee was low. Unfortunately, skippers of these boats did not know much about the dolphins,

and they would speed toward the dolphins once they spotted them. To understand more about the effect of these boats to the dolphins, the dolphin ambassadors also conducted survey of dolphin watching industry and code-of-conduct. There were three kinds of questionnaires for different target interviewees, including dolphin watching tour participants, tour guides and vessel captains. Some other ambassadors conducted surveys at Tung Chung pier and Tai O pier.

From August through mid-September 2004, dolphin ambassadors helped guide 22 dolphin watching tours, in which they had successfully conducted questionnaires with 162 participants of dolphin watching tours, 15 tour guides and 13 boat captains. Some other ambassadors carried out surveys at Tung Chung Pier, Tai O pier and Tai O market on public holidays, and interviewed 122 dolphin watchers.



The survey reveals that members of the public do have some basic knowledge about Chinese white dolphin, but they still do not know them well enough and even have some misconceptions about them. For instance, 93% of respondents do not know the scientific name of Chinese white dolphin, while 64% believe that Chinese white dolphin is an

endangered species, which is not the real case.



Besides, over half of the interviewed dolphin watchers have never heard of the code-of-conduct in dolphin watching, while tour guides and boat captains in general are more aware of the code. This indicates that more promotion on the code-of-conduct would be necessary to reduce the disturbances caused by the

dolphin watching boats to the wild dolphins.

Detailed results of the survey were publicized on the exhibition panels for the roving exhibition.

Chinese White Dolphin Carnival

The Chinese white dolphin carnival, which was co-organized by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society (HKDCS), ended with great success. The carnival is one of the key parts of the promotional activities for code-of-conduct in dolphin watching .

At the carnival, qualified dolphin ambassadors were presented with certificates.

Exhibition panels and game booths were also set up at the venue for members of the public.



The carnival was held on 26 Sept 2004 from 2 to 6 pm at Discovery Park of Tsuen Wan. Before the game booths started to operate, AFCD and HKDCS presented certificates to those ambassadors who had completed the training sessions and provided dolphin watching guiding service to the tour operators during the

Dolphin Conservation Month. Mr. Thomas Chan, J.P., the Director of AFCD, Professor

Kwai-cheong Chau, the Chairman of the Country and Marine Parks Board, and Professor Paul Lam, our Honorary Advisor, , were invited to be our Guests of Honor.

The carnival commenced when some 100 dolphin balloons rose from the stage! The game booths were the most popular part of the carnival with many long queues. With a certain amount of scores, participants could get a variety of souvenirs. Of those, dolphin balloons were the best-liked by kids - these were their dream souvenirs!

The carnival ended at around 6 pm. It was estimated that around 3,000 people had attended the carnival. We all felt very excited about this as this number was much higher than expected!



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