

Green turtles returned to sea (with photo)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) released three green turtles in the southern waters of Hong Kong today (September 2).

Three green turtles were found in the waters near Tolo Harbour and Sai Kung earlier on by AFCD staff and members of public. Two of them were physically weak while the other one was trapped in a mini raft. Following rescue and initial check-ups by the AFCD, the green turtles were taken to Ocean Park Hong Kong (OPHK). They were examined in detail by veterinarians of OPHK and were kept under their monitoring and veterinary care.

An AFCD spokesman said, "The weights and carapace lengths of the three green turtles range from 10 to 26 kilograms and 43 to 57 centimetres respectively. All three green turtles were assessed by the veterinarians of OPHK as being in good condition and ready to return to the sea. The department is thankful to OPHK veterinarians and staff for taking good care of them."

Each of the green turtles was tagged with a microchip and an Inconel tag for future identification. A satellite transmitter was also attached to the carapace of each of the turtles. By tracking the movement and feeding grounds of green turtles in the sea, the AFCD can collect data for formulating appropriate conservation measures and will share its findings with other conservation authorities for better conservation of green turtles through concerted efforts.

The green turtle is a globally endangered species and is the only sea turtle species known to nest locally. In Hong Kong, all wild turtles (including sea turtles) are protected by the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170). No person shall hunt or wilfully disturb, possess, sell or export sea turtles. Otherwise, they will be liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year. The specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

In addition, all sea turtle species are listed in Appendix I to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and regulated under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) (the Ordinance) in Hong Kong. The import, introduction from the sea, export, re-export or possession of specimens of sea turtles not in accordance with the Ordinance is an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years, and the specimens will also be forfeited.

Members of the public are urged to report any sighting of sea turtles or suspected irregularities involving sea turtles to the AFCD on 1823.

