

Green turtles returned to sea (with photos)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) released three green turtles in the southern waters of Hong Kong today (July 27).

One of the green turtles was seized by the AFCD in an earlier enforcement operation, while the other two were rescued in the waters near Sha Tau Kok and Siu Sai Wan respectively. The three green turtles were then accommodated temporarily at Ocean Park Hong Kong (OPHK). They were assessed by veterinarians of OPHK and were under constant monitoring and veterinary care.

An AFCD spokesman said, "The three green turtles released today weighed 10 kg, 11 kg and 93kg respectively, and their carapace length measured about 43 cm, 45 cm and 92 cm. All of them were assessed by veterinarians of OPHK as being in good condition and ready to be returned to the sea. The department is thankful to the veterinarians and staff of OPHK for taking care of them."

Before the green turtles were released to the sea, the AFCD had tagged each of them with a microchip and Inconel tags for future identification. Satellite transmitters were also attached to the carapaces 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 the better conservation of green turtles through concerted efforts.

The green turtle is a globally endangered species and is to date 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, except in accordance with a special permit, hunt or wilfully disturb, sell or export, possess or control sea turtles (including nests and eggs). 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) in Hong Kong. The import, export, re-export or possession of specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance is an offence. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years, and the specimens will also be forfeited upon conviction.

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

