

rate for released birds below 30% to be very poor. However, numerous studies have shown a survival rate for wild birds as low as 30% in their first year of life and these birds are in their natural habitat and have the advantage of parental support. Suddenly a 30% survival rate for rescue centre releases is looking good. We presently have a survival and release of close to 60%. Post release monitoring is the only way to convert this release figure into meaningful survival data (Figs. 1 and 2).



Fig. 2. Radio-tracking monitoring after bird release.

At KFBG we have reserved radio-tracking for special cases that may need post release support. Three large raptors have been tracked, 2 white-bellied sea eagles and 1 brown fish owl. It has been very encouraging for us that all 3 of these birds appeared to adapt to life in the wild and that all 3 were alive and well at the completion of their respective tracking studies.

Ringling and tagging is a less time consuming form of post-release monitoring. KFBG WARC uses clearly identifiable rings or tags on nearly all released birds. If released animals are found again, whether in good health or not, then information about that animal can be passed back to us and help us determine if our rehabilitation work is successful or not. The percentage of animals that are found after release is very low but every bit of information helps.

Of the approximately 400 birds released from the WARC between 1994 and 2004, we have received information concerning 4 as a result of rings. Amazingly, the information was positive in all 4 cases and even included photographic evidence of activities such as hunting and breeding.

The WARC could be considered a successful wild animal rescue centre based on the present rehabilitation and release successes, and the centre has managed to maintain a high level of expertise and innovation through experience, continued contact and collaboration with international rehabilitation organisations, and by maintaining the focus on reaching the highest standards of animal care. Our recently produced 60-page operational guidelines, that includes lengthy pre-release preparation techniques, is evidence of this.

* including local confiscations the total number of animals received is close to 10,000!



“In the News”

by Jacqueline Weir and Jasmine Ng

China and International News can be accessed on the web version of *Porcupine* !

The installation of desulphurisation devices to Guangdong's biggest cluster of power plants is anticipated to improve Hong Kong's air quality by the end of the year. Significant improvements should be achieved by 2007 when all oil-fired and coal-fired power plants with a capacity over 125 megawatts in Guangdong are installed with such devices. Although Guangdong generated 80 % of the air pollution and Hong Kong only accounted for the remaining 20 %, the government has started to persuade China Light & Power and Hongkong Electric to reduce emissions. **(SCMP, 24.2.04)**

A study on live reef fish trade by nine independent marine scientists has shown that such trade is often unsustainable and could damage coral reefs and fish communities. To meet the market demand not only a larger volume of fish is harvested, fishing has also extended far into the Pacific and Indian oceans since previous fishing grounds are depleted. Authors of the study urged the Hong Kong government to educate consumers not to choose species that are threatened and turn to farmed fish (ie. hatchery-reared). **(SCMP, 1.3.04)**

Three hundred and seven India Star tortoises wrapped in newspapers and clothes were found in two unclaimed suitcases of passengers at Chek Lap Kok airport. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said the reptiles would probably be supplied to local pet shops. **(SCMP, 4.3.04)**

Profits on compact discs of a 'green' second-hand book and CD shop have gone down since the spread of music and visual entertainment piracy. Book stock is being increased instead. The shop, 'Flow', was set up with the vision of reducing waste and targeting Hong Kong's disposable culture. **(SCMP, 21.3.04)**

Unlicensed glass-bottom boats were found operating in the Hoi Ha Marine Park, which raised safety concerns for coral-watching tourists in the area. While the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department could not do anything to stop such operators as long as they did not violate the marine park

regulations, a spokesman of the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong urged the government to enforce both safety and conservation measures to protect the fragile environment. **(SCMP, 29.3.04)**

The Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society is planning a skin sample study for the Chinese white dolphin in Hong Kong. A dart-like device which extracts a small amount of skin tissue is shot towards a swimming dolphin, and such biopsies should reveal the sex, feeding habits, levels of contaminants in the dolphin and its genetic relationship to other dolphins in the region. The study is anticipated to commence by the end of the year. **(SCMP, 8.4.04)**

A joint study by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Chinese University of Hong Kong revealed a total of 84 hard coral species in Hong Kong waters, of which 65 species can be found in Tung Ping Chau. **(Oriental Daily, 13.4.04)**

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department officers have been satellite tracking one green turtle per year from Sham Wan beach on southern Lamma, where they nest, since 2000. This year more may be tracked, depending on how many come to the beach. A WWF officer called for the Sham Wan area – which is currently protected between June and October – to be upgraded to a marine park. The species faces threats from increasing pollution and marine traffic. **(SCMP, 13.4.04)**

10 new bird species have been recorded in Hong Kong over the last 3 years, giving a total of 465 confirmed bird species in Hong Kong. **(SCMP, 19.4.04)**

Members of the Green Lantau Association and other Lantau environmental groups are worried about the impact on the island of a proposed super-prison on Hei Ling Chau Island, that would be linked to Lantau by a complex road and bridge network. Lantau's green organisations have numerous ideas for developing eco-tourism facilities and scenic improvements to the island, but complain they are not consulted about government plans until they are already finalised. **(SCMP, 26.4.04)**

Ocean Park has asked the Home Affairs Bureau for help to secure a gift of two baby pandas from the mainland. The pandas donated to Hong Kong by Beijing after the handover are reaching old-age (26 and 17 years) and have not bred. **(SCMP, 26.4.04)**

A city-wide signature campaign called 'Stop Greed and Waste' is being launched by the Hong Kong People's Council for Sustainable Development and the Conservancy Association, to ask New World Development and Sun Hung Kai Properties to abandon a plan to tear down the Hung Hom Peninsula. The new residential estate was built for the government but left unsold to help stabilise property prices. It has been bought back by the developers, who plan to demolish it. **(SCMP, 26.4.04)**

Another Lantau stream, the Ngong Ping stream, is channelized for MTRC's cable car development. The diversion destroyed 101 trees in the Lantau country park, and

the Democratic Party has urged the government to introduce a bill to protect natural streams from development. **(SCMP, 29.4.04)**

The restricted area on the border with mainland China is a sanctuary for a significant number of valuable species of plants and animals, according to a study done by the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden. While the development of the area seems inevitable, the executive director of the Kadoorie Farm, Manab Chakraborty, hopes that thorough ecological assessment can be done prior to the development to minimize the impact on the species in the area, recommending different measures to protect selected regions for conservation. **(SCMP, 8.5.04)**

A wild boar has been roaming a slope at a public housing estate in Lai King. One resident claims to have seen it eating a puppy. An AFCD spokesman said there were no plans to catch the boar unless it posed a threat to residents. **(SCMP, 20.5.04)**

A male rough-toothed dolphin was found stranded on Lamma Island. These dolphins are not commonly found in this region, but mainly in equatorial waters close to the Philippines. In the last year other unusual beachings have included a sperm whale, Bryde's whale and false killer whales. It is possible that changes in the climate and ocean currents are to blame. **(SCMP, 20.5.04)**

Local schools held a one-day 'No Air-conditioning Day' campaign, organised by Footprint, a non-profit local environmental group. The hope was to raise awareness of the impact of air-conditioning on global warming. **(SCMP, 22.5.04)**

To conserve stocks and promote sustainable development of the fishing industry, the annual temporary fishing ban in the South China Sea, which lasts from 1 June to 1 August every year, is affecting about 1400 local fishing vessels this year. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department has offered low-interest loans and training courses to help alleviate the negative effect of the closure on the livelihoods of fishermen. Fish prices are expected to rise up to 10 % as a result of the ban. **(SCMP, 1.6.04)**

An international study on the threatened Napoleon Humphead Wrasse by scientists from Hong Kong, Senegal, France, Papua New Guinea and the United States has concluded the species is disappearing, possibly due to the strong market demand. Dr Yvonne Sadovy, a co-author of the study and the chairperson of the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong's conservation projects committee, said that the species is biologically vulnerable to heavy fishing pressure, and with a population that is slow to replenish more young fish are now being marketed. The group proposed to regulate the international trade of the fish, but such proposal is not welcomed by fish traders. **(SCMP, 21.6.04)**