

Changing Bad Habits to Save Biodiversity

Speaker: Ms. Sharon Kwok

(A) Over-Fishing

In the 1950's, fishing in Hong Kong was carried out with fishing junks with fishing nets. Today this is done with large motorized trawlers with fishing nets stretching over long distances. All living creatures in the sea all caught with 40-60% useless biocatch discarded. Large coral fish like humpheaded wrasse (蘇眉) are caught with cyanide poured down into the coral reefs and catching the paralyzed fish floating up on the surface. The dead ones are discarded or sold as "salted fish". The fish served in restaurants is usually 7 years old female fish. This fish starts to reproduce at 9 years old. This type of fish used to be plentiful in Hong Kong waters – now they are extinct. The trawlers must go as far as Indonesia to catch the fish. Since 2013, trawler fishing was banned in Hong Kong.

(B) Shark Fins

In Japan, the entire shark is eaten and there is no wastage. In China, only the shark fins are eaten and the cut-up shark is thrown back into the sea. Shark fins can get \$700.00 per catty, and shark meat only \$7.00 per catty, so the fishermen will not waste precious space to store the shark meat in their fishing trawlers. Fishing sharks is done with fishing lines (with floats) stretching 4 km long, with individual lines with sinkers spaced at intervals. Even whale sharks are caught as their fins are most precious ("bean-curd fins"). Only the pectoral fins are used.

- (C) Garbage and Plastic Bags in seas and on beaches cause great harm to nature. Dolphins and turtles are caught in these discarded waste. Turtles often feed on plastic garbage mistaking them for jelly fish and are poisoned. Conservation of turtles is very successful in Mexico and SriLanka.

(D) Chinese White Dolphins

These used to be commonly seen around Hong Kong waters. They are now almost extinct.

(E) Pangolins (穿山甲)

There are eight varieties of Pangolins and their scales are considered to have special medicinal value by the Chinese. Besides being killed in large numbers, their natural environment is also under threat.

(F) Elephants

These are killed for their tusks (ivory). Even immature animals are hunted down. These are very intelligent animals with a special sense of perception. The book "The Elephant Whisper" records how the elephants remember their benefactor and return to mourn him every year.