

ANNUAL REPORT

2018 – 2019

BLOOM ASSOCIATION HONG KONG



Vision and Mission

To resist the fate of an overfished, barren ocean in the future, by proving that dedicated action can reverse the course of environmental and human tragedy. Giving a voice to the voiceless; ensuring that humanity has a future where children have food and fishermen have jobs, by restoring ocean ecosystems to their full biological capacity.

What We Do at BLOOM HK

ONE. SHARING WHAT WE KNOW

Bringing knowledge of the many problems and solutions to ocean conservation issues, both local and global, to people, both local and global.

TWO. RESEARCH

Creating new information and filling knowledge gaps about ocean conservation and the marine world by carrying out scientifically rigorous research.

THREE. ADVOCACY

Assisting Hong Kong's progression towards a future of sustainable oceans and fisheries by working with governments in establishing and enforcing marine policies.

FOUR. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Engaging the public through creative media to spread the word about our work, and restoring a sense of personal responsibility to marine conservation in all levels of the general public.

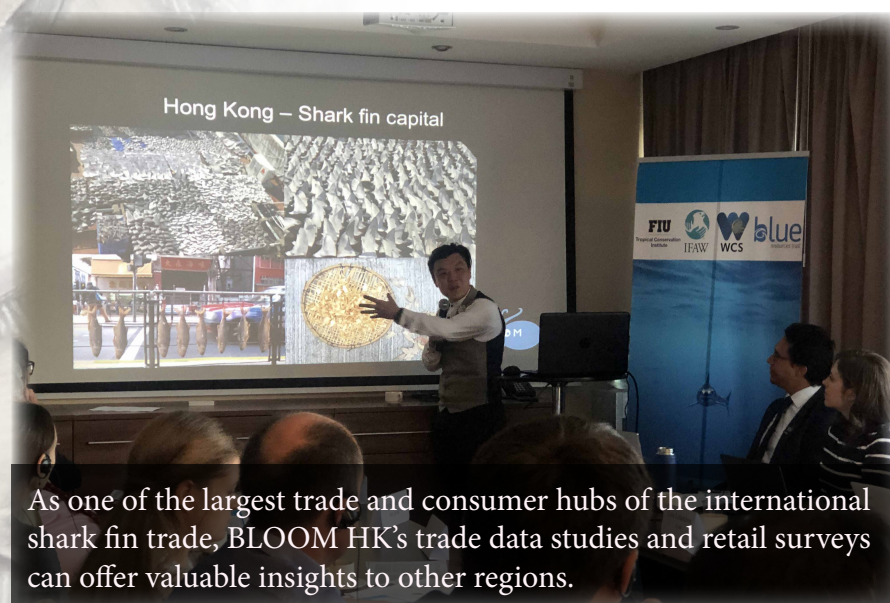
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SHARKS

The 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is scheduled to take place on 17-28 August 2019, in Geneva, Switzerland.

This year, marine species proposed for CITES Appendix II include Mako sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus* and *Isurus paucus*), Giant guitarfishes (Family *Glaucostegidae*) and Wedgefishes (Family *Rhinidae*).

Notably, apart from sharks, Teatfishes (*Holothuria fuscogilva*, *H. nobilis* and *H. whitmaei*) were proposed for listing for the first time. Teatfishes are also commonly found in Hong Kong's dried seafood trade.



As one of the largest trade and consumer hubs of the international shark fin trade, BLOOM HK's trade data studies and retail surveys can offer valuable insights to other regions.



The 70th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in Sochi, Russia



CITES Livelihoods workshop in Guangzhou, China



To showcase the work of the mainland China and Hong Kong SAR governments in CITES implementation, BLOOM HK created a booklet, "Protecting Sharks through CITES". The booklet will be distributed to CITES delegates at CoP18.

"Shark-Like Rays"

Giant guitarfishes and Wedgefishes, while found to be used as shark fin, are in fact types of rays. They belong to a group of rays sometimes referred to as "shark-like batoids", and are found in Hong Kong and mainland China's retail markets under the category name "Qun Chi" (「群翅」). Four out of five existing families of these shark-like batoids are among the top sharks and rays most at risk of extinction, but the trade of their related products are to date not regulated.

In 2018, BLOOM HK completed a survey in Hong Kong and Guangzhou's dried seafood retail markets, and found that more than one tenth of the stores surveyed sold Qun Chi. The successful listing of Giant guitarfishes and Wedgefishes onto CITES App II in CITES CoP18 will be an important step for the regulation of their trade and long term conservation.

Training and Capacity Building

In line with supporting CITES CoP18 shark and ray listings, BLOOM HK continues to partner with local and international organisations and experts to conduct training workshops for customs and government

departments of shark fin-trading regions as capacity building for implementation. Notably, a workshop was held for Taiwan for the first time this year, in which Taiwan introduced their latest DNA identification tool.



Post-listings implementation workshops with customs and government officials for key shark-trading regions.

Sharks and Wildlife Crime

Since establishment in 2009, BLOOM HK has operated with most of our key projects in sharks. After 10 years, it is encouraging to see how far we have come to raise awareness and help stakeholders take action towards shark conservation. However, sharks and shark fin are only one of the many marine and wildlife resources traded and consumed in Hong Kong, and the problems faced by sharks are easily found among the countless species in the wildlife trade.

Between 2013 to 2017, the sheer volume of illegally traded wildlife products seized at Hong Kong's ports amounted to 1,400 metric tonnes, and valued at HKD 560 million. Wildlife crimes have also been estimated

as one of the world's most lucrative crimes, with global illegal trades reaching USD 20 billion annually in value.

In the coming years, BLOOM HK will be joining forces with local NGOs in the fight against illegal trades and wildlife crimes. With a focus on sharks, we will be launching projects to help the public understand the true scale of the illegality behind the international wildlife trade, in which Hong Kong has a key role to play, and recognise wildlife crimes as organised and serious crimes. This will include research studies, public engagement activities and liaison with stakeholders.

SEAFOOD TRADE

Live Reef Food Fish (LRFF) are one of the most intensely traded forms of seafood in Hong Kong. More than 90% of the LRFF found in Hong Kong's markets and restaurants are imported from countries around the world. While local wild stocks have long been depleted, Hong Kong's appetite for LRFF has remained unchanged.

Despite the love for seafood, Hong Kong's awareness for sustainable consumption is low and local regulations are insufficient to ensure a well-managed trade. In addition, research and documentation of consumption is scarce. Even basic information, such as the percentage of seafood consumed in Hong Kong belonging to endangered species, is found wanted.

Sustainable seafood

Sustainable seafood refers to seafood products that are sourced with the survival of the species in mind. While sustainable seafood can be found in some high-end restaurants in Hong Kong, most of the seafood consumed in traditional restaurants and wet markets are not sourced with sustainability as a consideration.

BLOOM HK maintains close relationships with other organisations and experts working towards the popularization of sustainable seafood options. Notably, BLOOM HK was invited this year to WWF-Hong Kong's stakeholders engagement events to speak to audiences from the general public, food and beverage industry and seafood suppliers.



BLOOM HK speaks at WWF-Hong Kong's Sustainable Seafood Festival



Know Your Fish

Live reef food fish (LRFF) are a staple of every dinner table in Hong Kong, but how well do we know the fish we eat? A survey conducted by BLOOM HK has found that several reef fish species found in Hong Kong's wet markets are threatened with extinction, but to a consumer who wishes to avoid these threatened species and make sustainable choices, identifying between species can be a challenge.

BLOOM HK was invited to partner with ADM Capital Foundation and ChooseRightToday.org to produce the "Identification Guide to Live Reef Food Fish in Hong Kong's Wet Markets". The guide features more than 30

species of LRFF commonly found in Hong Kong's wet markets and offers information on the identification features of each species, as well as the IUCN Red List conservation status, and guidance on how to choose the sustainable fish.

As a sustainable consumer, the ability to know what fish you are eating is key. In the future, we hope that more tools can become available to help consumers shift towards a more sustainable diet in seafood.

"The Identification Guide to Live Reef Food Fish in Hong Kong's Wet Markets" can be found on: www.chooserrighttoday.org

Mislabelling is a common problem for Live Reef Food Fish, whether in wet markets or supermarkets. Distinctions between similar looking species can be difficult for consumers. For instance, the pictured Spotted coralgrouper (*Plectropomus maculatus*), identified by the elongated spots present towards the head, is mislabelled as a Leopard coralgrouper (*Plectropomus leopardus*), which has rounded spots throughout (except on the belly).



LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

The 114°E Hong Kong Reef Fish Survey (114°E Survey) is one of BLOOM HK's most important projects, promoting the conservation of Hong Kong's marine life through citizen science surveys.

What's This Fish?

For decades, overfishing has been one of the key threats to Hong Kong's marine life. It is no wonder that, to the average Hongkonger, Hong Kong's waters seem to have little to no conservation value. The 114°E Survey was created by BLOOM HK in 2014, with the objectives of creating an up-to-date database of reef fish species appearing in local waters, and using this database to showcase the vast diversity of Hong Kong's marine life.

Over 350 species of reef fish were documented in this project, many of which were new to Hong Kong's official records. These astonishing discoveries are made by 114°E Survey team volunteers, who are recreational divers sharing a passion for scuba diving, fish-appreciation and marine conservation.

With so many species in our waters,

one of the greatest challenges for volunteers is fish identification; and after years of surveys many are emerging as experts in the matter! More importantly, they are ambassadors for Hong Kong's rich and colourful marine diversity, joining together to spread the message of our ocean's wealth.

114°E Web-Portal

In June 2019, BLOOM HK will be officially launching the 114°E Hong Kong Reef Fish Web-Portal (114°E Web-Portal). This website will be the first publicly accessible online database for Hong Kong's reef fishes, complete with each species' description on morphology, behaviour, fun facts and photographs taken from Hong Kong waters. Stay tuned!

The Next Tide

Today, the data collected on Hong Kong's reef fishes, including their geographical distribution and qualitative abundance as well as photographs, have already been used by the AFCD, IUCN Red List assessments, Xiamen University and WWF-HK's Marine Biodiversity Hotspot Map. It has also enabled the creation of at least 3 reference books on Hong Kong's reef fish identification and diversity. In the coming years, the 114°E Survey will continue to monitor Hong Kong's waters and utilise the knowledge generated from these surveys towards the effective conservation of our marine environments.

New To Hong Kong This Year:

Photo by: Kamy Yeung



Photo by: Kamy Yeung



Photo by: Stan Shea

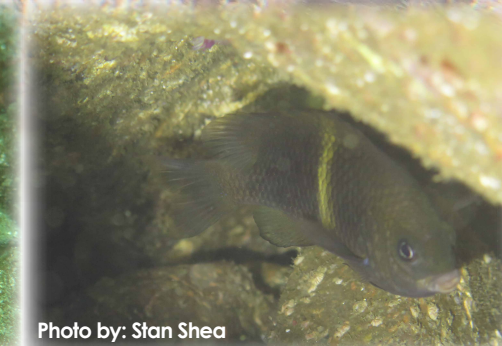


Photo by: Stan Shea



Photo by: Kathleen Ho



Photo by: Stan Shea



Photo by: Dr. Allen To

Seven species new to Hong Kong official records were documented in this year's survey. Pictured from left to right: Blacktail goby (*Ptereleotris heteroptera*), Reticulated sandperch (*Parapercis tetraacantha*), Singlebar devil (*Plectroglyphidodon leucozonus*), Valentin's sharpnose puffer (*Canthigaster valentini*), Spot-fin porcupinefish (*Diodon hystrix*), Orangefin wrasse (*Halichoeres melanochir*), and Duskyfin wrasse (*Halichoeres marginatus*). More than 20 of such discovered have been made since 2014.

Implications for these discoveries are currently unknown and will be an important area of study in the upcoming project years.



Photo by: Dr. Allen To



Volunteers form small groups of 2-4 divers to conduct reef fish surveys.



After each dive, volunteers log each species encountered.

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the Swire Group Charitable Trust for supporting the continued development of the 114°E Hong Kong Reef Fish Survey, and to our growing volunteer team for their dedication to the project!



@114EHKREEFFISH



114EHKREEFFISH.ORG

EDUCATION & MEDIA

Education and knowledge sharing has always been one of the core areas of work for BLOOM HK. By sharing our research, insights and experiences, we hope to inspire more people to appreciate the marine environment, and understand the challenges to conservation as we fight against the many threats to the survival of marine species.

BLOOM HK treasures every opportunity to share our work and what we know with the community. In this past year, we have had the privilege of connecting with audiences from all walks of life and around the world, through seminars, radio broadcast programmes, television programmes, podcasts and more.

Some notable collaborations include with WWF-HK, AFCD of the government of HKSAR, Harrow International School, South China Diving Club, Earth.org, and National Geographic Society.

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The image is a composite. The left half shows a rugged, rocky coastline with a large cave entrance at the water's edge. The right half features a portrait of a man, Stan, sitting on a stool and speaking into a microphone. Overlaid on the top right is the text 'THE HONG KONG TEAM' in a large, blue, serif font. At the bottom left, the word 'PUBLICATIONS' is written in a black, sans-serif font.

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Funds & Donations

This year, BLOOM HK was received funding from, in alphabetical order, ADM Capital Foundation, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Blue Resources Trust, Diving Adventure Hong Kong, Hong Kong Shark Foundation, Humane Society International, IUCN Grouper & Wrasse Specialist Group, Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden, LUSH Asia Limited, National Geographic Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Research Foundation of SUNY, Shark Conservation Fund of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Swire Group Charitable Trust, The Pew Charitable Trust, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF-Hong Kong, and other one-off donations.

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