

積福 Good fortune?

還是作孽 or misfortune?

積福還是作孽? 放生動物的誤解

在香港，不少人相信放生可以救助受苦的動物，亦能藉此招來好運與健康，一些宗教人士更認為它可消除罪孽。看見動物從籠中被釋放出來的一刻，許多人都因牠們獲得自由而感到光榮。可是，他們不知道，這些動物為何失去自由。另外，牠們可能經已染病或受傷，放生並不能讓牠們真正重獲自由。本小冊子會探討有關放生動物及買賣的若干議題，並提出建議，以緩和這個表面讓被囚禁動物重回自由、實質擾亂大自然秩序的行為。



Good Fortune or Misfortune?

In Hong Kong, many people believe releasing animals from captivity not only helps to save them from the suffering of captive life, but also brings good luck, health and fortune to the person who releases them. Some religions believe that such animal releases help to atone for sins.

Many people feel a sense of satisfaction when a cage is opened to "free" an animal. However, most people are ignorant of the reasons why these animals were captured in the first place, their fate after the release, and how other wildlife are affected?

In this leaflet, we highlight some issues associated with the trade and release of animals. We also recommend reducing this practice, which seems to provide freedom but, in fact, results in unnecessary suffering, cruelty and may also threaten local wildlife.

議題 — 受苦受難與麻木不仁

放生象徵給動物一個生機，但很諷刺地，原本自由自在的動物，卻因為一些喜愛透過放生去幫助動物的善心人士，而被捕捉及關入籠中以供放生之用。另外，有些動物會在捕捉期間受傷或死亡，或在運送時因缺水缺糧而死。

一些被放生的動物，原是人工繁殖作寵物用的，牠們不懂在野外求生，放生後的存活率也非常低。

香港的冬季氣溫較低，像非洲鳥類或南亞龜類等熱帶動物，不一定適合在這裏生活。一些較為強壯的外來動物亦會跟本地野生動物競爭食物和築巢地方，對本地生物構成威脅。

The issue—Cruelty and Suffering

The release of animals may symbolize a second chance for freedom. However, it is a sad irony that many wild animals are captured specifically to be released later. Many animals are injured or die during capture, and during transportation, due to stress and shortage of food and water. Thus, many are already sick and very weak, with minimal chance of survival, by the time they are once again released into the wild.

Some released animals were originally bred for the pet trade. They are used to receiving human care and lack the skills to live in the wild, therefore their survival rate is likely to be low. Hong Kong may not be the natural home for some animals, such as African bird species and South Asian turtles. The winter is too cold for tropical species, and those that do survive may compete with local species for nesting resources. Even releasing native species to suitable habitats may upset the ecological balance and adversely affect the food supply of the original inhabitants.

疾病傳播

運送方法有欠衛生，可使動物染病。放生活動更能把疾病傳播給本地動物甚或是人類。較早時爆發的禽流感及非典型肺炎，便令市民意識到動物傳播疾病的問題。另外，染病的動物本身已非常虛弱，能在野外生存的機會亦不大。

不理想的存活率

放生鳥類的死亡率可以高達75%。2005年1月底，有人於船灣淡水湖放生了28隻麻雀。五天後，在放生地點發現20隻死去的麻雀及一隻奄奄一息的生還者，這隻生還雀鳥送抵嘉道理農場野生動物拯救中心進行急救後，最終亦告不治。牠們的死亡原因可能是因為不適合的放生地點、不理想的天氣環境與及健康狀況。

無論如何，這件事絕對不能與行善積德或慈悲為懷混為一談吧！

Spread of Disease

Animals may also carry disease and harbour parasites as a result of unhygienic transportation methods. Release risks spreading the disease to native animals and even humans. Recent outbreaks of avian influenza and SARS have made us more aware of this issue.

Low Survival and Death

The death rate of released birds can be as high as 75%. In one recorded case, 28 Tree Sparrows were released at Plover Cove in late January 2005. Five days later, 20 dead birds and one very weak survivor were discovered at the site. The survivor died shortly after being admitted to the KFBG Wild Animal Rescue Centre for emergency treatment. The high mortality was related to the poor health condition of birds and inappropriate habitat at the release site. Such events are all too common. Are these really acts of goodwill by caring humans or cruelty through ignorance?

放生方法

根據世界自然保護聯盟(IUCN)的重新引入指引，這些要點均需要詳細考慮：

- 應進行動物放生的可行性研究；
- 重新引入地點的評估及疾病檢查；
- 選擇健康個體來放生，與及進行適當的遺傳監測；
- 如情況許可，應監察放生後的動物存活率。

嚴格執行這些程序，才可確保放生是在專業的情況下進行。另外，我們必須有明確的保育目的，及對被放生動物與及周邊環境有認識，才可放生動物。

Release Methods

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) proposes the following re-introduction guidelines:

- A scientific and technical feasibility study,
- Evaluation of the re-introduction site for suitability,
- Pre-release screening for healthy and genetically correct individuals,
- If possible, a post-release monitoring programme to determine survival.

These procedures will help to ensure that the release has clear conservation aims and is performed in a professional manner. Such releases should only be undertaken by those with knowledge of the needs of the species, and of the release environment.

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我們可以做甚麼？

- 購買動物放生前，不要只考慮放生動物時的短暫喜悅，應從保育及動物權益作慎重考慮。就算我們充分認識該種動物、包括其來源地、健康狀況或生存條件，也不應隨意購買來放生。因為一些沒有保育意義的放生會對大自然造成傷害。
- 宗教上的放生活動，可以用象徵性的放生儀式，或植樹活動代替。善信可從培育樹苗到成長的過程中分享生命的喜悅，而締造新的樹林更可提供更多地方給野生動物攝食、棲息及繁衍，善信亦可在有空時探望親手種植的樹木。植樹培養出的感情和成功感，可以讓善信終生回味，比傳統的動物放生來得更恆久。
- 若想進一步救助動物脫離水深火熱的境況，可以捐款予國際及本地具有豐富的拯救動物及保護生境經驗的環境團體，或參與義務工作。

What can we do?

- Look beyond the short-term satisfaction gained from animal release. Consider the wider conservation and animal welfare issues before you buy animals for release. Even if you are familiar with the animal, where it has come from, its health status and its habitat requirements, releasing it could upset nature's natural balance.
- Animal release for religious ceremonies could be replaced with symbolic worship, or tree planting events. Understanding the growing process of a tree from a seedling could encourage deeper appreciation of life. Later, animals will feed, rest and breed in and around the new forest you have helped nurture. The trees can be visited, providing a sense of achievement and compassion, which lasts longer than a traditional animal release.
- If you want to rescue animals, you could donate funds to animal rescue programmes or volunteer to help an environmental group to protect disappearing habitats.

欲認識更多動物復康資訊，可瀏覽以下網站：

If you want to know more about animal rehabilitation and reintroduction, please visit these websites:

世界自然保護聯盟/IUCN re-introduction guidelines

<http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/pubs/policy/reinte.htm>

野生動物復康資訊指南/The wildlife rehabilitation information directory

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/#ij> (英文/English)

北京猛禽拯救中心/The Beijing Raptor Rescue Centre

<http://www.brcc.org.cn> (簡體中文/Simplified Chinese)

嘉道理農場暨植物園/The Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden

<http://www.kfbg.org/> (雙語/English and Chinese)

亞洲動物基金/Animals Asia Foundation

<http://www.animalsasia.org/> (雙語/English and Chinese)

In Taiwan, many religious groups stopped releasing animals after considering the cruelty, suffering and death caused by their activities. For further information, please visit this website -

<http://e-info.org.tw/news/taiwan/2001/news-ef01082001.htm>

放生動物的常見問題及誤解

1. 一般購買動物放生的活動有助牠們逃出生天？

完全是誤導！難道我們想嘗嘗救人經驗，而先去插人一刀，再去救人嗎？很多動物都是從野外捕捉，然後出售作放生用途的。若不是市場需求，牠們絕不會關在籠中及喪失自由。反之，牠們在野外是百分百自由的！

2. 動物在放生過程中受苦或死亡，其實是命運的安排，並非人類所願。我們仍可以禱告來救贖牠們的亡靈？

從保育角度出發，無節制的野生動物貿易會使牠們的自然種群減退到一個很低的水平，最終可能從此消失在這個世界。要是不用擔心因放生需求出現的捕獵活動的威脅，牠們會享有最佳的生存機會。我們不清楚禱告能否救贖牠們的亡靈，但這些活動肯定無助於拯救在絕種邊緣掙扎的動物。我們需要實際行動，去減少對野生動物的需求，例如不去購買動物放生。



Frequently Asked Questions and Misconceptions attached to the release of animals

1. Can buying and releasing animals help to save them?

A misleading concept! Do we hurt someone first just to be able to administer medical care later? Many animals are caught specifically to be sold for release. They would not lose their freedom, or their lives, if there was no demand. They would remain in their original condition — wild and free!

2. It is the destiny of the animals that die or suffer when released. We can save the soul of these animals by praying.

From a conservation point of view, uncontrolled trade in wild animals for release could reduce natural populations, and they may even disappear completely. Therefore, one would actually be contributing to the animal's extinction. They have a better chance of survival if there is no such trapping to meet the demand of those who want to release them — which is just a human desire — wild animals which are wild and free originally do not need to be captured to become wild and free, again!

3. 我們不事先通知販賣動物的商家、在放生前一段日子才購買動物，避免他們額外存貨。另外，我們選擇一處環境優美又沒有人捕獵的地點放生。這樣，是否就可以避免放生引起的問題？

只要有需求動物作放生，無論商販收到訂單與否，他們都會有一定的「存貨」，去滿足人們對放生的需求。而人類認為「優美」的地點，亦不代表它能夠為動物提供足夠食物和容身之所。其實，動物常被放在錯誤的生境。樹林鳥類如桂林相思鳥，便常常被帶到海邊風景優美的地方放生。這與在沙漠釋放監犯送死沒有兩樣！

4. 放生後只有少量個體死亡，犧牲牠們可以成全更多動物得到自由嗎？

根據觀察顯示，高達75%的鳥類可能會在放生五天後死亡。這個數據還未包括在捕捉及運送期間死去的雀鳥。台灣在2004年的動物貿易報告中更指出：每放生一隻雀鳥，最少有10隻鳥已在捕捉及運輸途中死亡。所以，不是很多動物在放生後得到自由。相反，可以肯定的是，如果沒有放生祈福，就沒有捕獵，這些動物將可以在大自然無拘無束地生活。



(From left) The tree sparrow, white-eye and munia. They are very common resident birds in Hong Kong and so it is unnecessary to release more into the wild. (由左至右) 麻雀、相思及文鳥(俗稱觀音雀)。這些鳥類是本港普遍易見的「原居民」，根本不需要在野外額外放生。

3. We would not inform the traders in advance and we would purchase animals earlier than the day of release. Also, we choose beautiful places, with no hunters as release sites. Will these considerations reduce the problems caused to the animals and nature?

Traders will stock wild animals as long as there is a demand for release, regardless of whether they are specifically ordered or not. A beautiful landscape may not provide enough food and shelter for wild animals. In fact, animals are often released in the wrong habitat, e.g., forest birds like Pekin Robins are released at wetlands, or freshwater turtles released into the sea.

4. Only a few individuals die after release. Will the sacrifice of a few save many more?

Our observation shows that up to 75% of birds could die within five days of release. This figure does not include fatalities during capture and transportation to Hong Kong. According to a 2004 report on the animal trade for release in Taiwan (see previous section), for every bird ready for release, at least 10 birds died during capture and transportation! The practice of release is usually a death penalty for wildlife.

惡性循環

5. 放生動物是雙贏的一動物可以重獲自由、我們又可以積福、同時獵人又可以賺錢。對嗎？

當然不對。從動物權益的角度看來，現時所謂的動物放生根本就是屠殺。此外，雜亂無章的放生活動可能會傳播疾病和引起野生動物間的競爭，最終令更多動物喪生。全世界其中一種只在台灣找到的鳥類台灣鴨，就是因為與被放生的、非本土的親戚白頭鴨競爭，令到數目下降，從而變成瀕危物種。事實上，獵人就是殘忍、麻木不仁的惡性循環中的既得利益者。

6. 放得生多自有神庇佑？

放生得越多，就意味著有更多動物因你而受苦受害！



A vicious cycle!

5. Animal release is a win win situation — the animal regains its freedom, we receive good luck and the hunters get money. Is this true?

No! From an animal welfare point of view, current release activities result in many unnecessary and cruel deaths. Release spreads disease and increases competition for food and shelter, an unseen death penalty for the native wildlife!

In Taiwan, the endemic Taiwan Bulbul is threatened due to competition from non-native, released Chinese Bulbuls. The endemic species has declined dramatically. In fact, the only “beneficiaries” are the wildlife traders who get monetary benefit from the cruel trade and release cycle of wildlife.

6. The more wild animals I am able to release, the more fortunate I can become?

The reality is: ‘the more wild animals you release, the more animals DIE or suffer because of you’!