

Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Project

ECF Project:	ECF 2021-33
Project Title:	Mercy release or extermination? A study of the unregulated mercy release of wildlife in Hong Kong
Principal Investigator:	Dr Wong Wing Yee Rebecca, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, City University of Hong Kong
Total Approved Grant:	\$396,000
Duration:	1/7/2022 to 30/6/2024
Project Status/Remarks:	On-going
Project Scope:	<p>Releasing captured animals into the wild is a ritual that generates merit and good karma. This process, known as mercy release, a ritual practiced all over the world. However, mercy release can have implications for the environment and ecosystems that are far from beneficial. In addition to problems related to the trade in wildlife and animal welfare, many animal species released into the wild are not native, posing significant threats to local and regional ecosystems.</p> <p>The project team proposes a study on the demographics and motivations of those who participate in mercy release; such research is imperative if lasting and sustainable solutions are to be found. The main research questions are: why, despite warnings and campaigns from the government and environmental protection groups, do believers still perform the ritual of mercy release? What conditions have enabled mercy release to persist? What are the social and demographic characteristics of practitioners and what are their reasons for participating in mercy release? What kind of campaigns and policies would most effectively curtail this practice? To answer these questions, the project team will employ a multi-pronged approach, including an online survey, ethnographic fieldwork, observation and qualitative interviews.</p>
Summary of the Findings/Outcomes:	To be available upon completion of the project