

Environmental Research, Technology Demonstration and Conference Project

ECF Project:	ECF 2022-118
Project Title:	Environment and Conservation Fund - A mammoth task: creating a reliable and cheap test to distinguish mammoth and elephant ivories to prevent trafficking and laundering of elephant ivory
Principal Investigator:	Dr Baker David, School of Biological Sciences, The University of Hong Kong
Total Approved Grant:	\$890,800
Duration:	1/9/2023 to 31/8/2025
Project Status/Remarks:	On-going
Project Scope:	<p>There are less than half a million wild elephants left in the wild and every year 20,000 are killed for their ivory (World Wildlife Fund, 2022). Mainland China banned ivory sales in 2017 and Hong Kong in 2021, but a loophole exists that can enable traffickers to continue with their trade. Mammoth ivory, mined in large quantities in Siberia, is legal to sell and import, and trade in it is unregulated. Conservationists are raising the alarm that elephant ivory is becoming laundered under the guise of legal mammoth ivory. To non-experts, mammoth and elephant ivories are indistinguishable, and even specialists are often unable to tell the two apart. There is now an urgent need for a reliable, fast and cheap scientific test to distinguish between the two ivories. Using stable isotope analysis, HKU's Conservation Forensics Laboratory (CFL) is on track to create such a test for Hong Kong's law enforcement. Hong Kong SAR is one of the world's main trade hubs for both illegal elephant ivory and mammoth ivory, and such a test will allow Hong Kong to close a loophole that threatens the survival of one of the planet's most iconic species.</p>
Summary of the Findings/ Outcomes:	To be available upon completion of the project