

Lantau Conservation Fund

Research Project

Project Number	RE-2024-07
Recipient Organisation	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Project Title	Establishing a Pilot Captive-Breeding and Stocking Programme for the Conservation of Yellow Seahorses (<i>Hippocampus kuda</i>) in Lantau Waters
Project Description*	<p>Lantau is renowned for its diverse habitats and rich biodiversity, serving as a critical habitat for threatened marine species such as seahorses and pipefish, particularly within its estuarine waters. Global populations of these species are experiencing rapid declines due to habitat degradation, bycatch from trawling fisheries, and overexploitation for traditional Chinese medicine. As vital predators of benthic organisms, seahorses and pipefish play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem stability, highlighting the urgent need for effective conservation measures. This project aims to establish a pilot captive-breeding programme using adult yellow seahorses (<i>Hippocampus kuda</i>) sourced from the coastal areas of Lantau as brood stock. Before initiating the captive breeding efforts, a comprehensive survey will be conducted in Lantau waters to assess the potential presence of seahorse and pipefish species using environmental DNA methods (eDNA) methods and underwater visual census (UVC). This survey will provide baseline data on their abundance and distribution. The juvenile seahorses bred in captivity will be released into their natural habitat at the sites where the breeders were collected. A monthly post-release monitoring programme will be carried out for 12</p>

	months to evaluate the success of the conservation stocking initiative. This project is expected to contribute significantly to the recovery of the local yellow seahorse population.
Project Period	36 months
Approved Grant	\$2,401,488

*The project description is provided by the project proponent