



Photographs: Paul Hilton, Earth Tree Images. Further Press Materials Available [here](#):

Hong Kong Government urged to improve and enhance regulation of its exotic pet trade amid environmental, welfare and safety concerns

Hong Kong, October 5th, 2022 – As efforts to combat biodiversity loss continue globally, local wildlife experts, academics, legal scholars and NGOs urge Hong Kong’s government to improve regulation of its exotic pet trade and address longstanding loopholes and gaps in its laws.

In the run up to the 19th Conference of the Parties of CITES, members of the Hong Kong Wildlife Trade Working Group today released a joint [position paper](#) highlighting concerns about the city’s trade in live exotics. As Hong Kong has grown to become one of the world’s largest importers of live CITES-regulated reptiles, so too have concerns about the scale, sustainability, suitability and safety of Hong Kong’s trade.

The Working Group indicates that annual imports of exotics (including reptiles, small mammals, birds, amphibians and arthropods) have increased five-fold – from 85,000 in 2006 to 454,000 in 2019. And these are just the species regulated under Hong Kong’s Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586). Millions more have been traded outside of such regulations, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

The city’s animal trading and welfare laws have been reviewed by legal scholars and academics several times in recent decades. Nevertheless, the same weaknesses and loopholes that have repeatedly been identified in relation to the trade in exotic animals and have effectively worsened as the demand has grown.

With the trade involving millions of animals, drawn from hundreds of species, originating from dozens of nations, Hong Kong’s demand for exotics is inevitably exerting extreme and highly-targeted pressure on ecosystems around the world. With so many diverse creatures arriving in the city, there are concerns around the ability of traders and private individuals to cater to their complex needs, spurring worries about the wellbeing of these exotic animals, which mostly originate from the wild. The scale and stresses of such trade also presents potential risks to animal and public health, if insufficient safeguards are in place.

Hong Kong is a global trade hub with a long-established and well-earned reputation for all manner of trade. In recent decades, the local market for exotic pets has grown, as has the city’s role as a gateway to other significant demand centres. Hong Kong is perfectly situated to effect positive changes in the management

and oversight of the exotic pet trade, which would not only benefit animals within the city, but could also elevate the standards of sustainability, health, welfare, suitability and more in markets near and far.

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