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# Mai Po Wetland Habitats

## Fact sheet

### Fishpond

#### Introduction

Fish farming has been continually practiced in the Deep Bay area since the 1930s and at present, the total area of fish pond in the Deep Bay Area is around 800ha. Most are polyculture, raising both herbivorous and omnivorous fish, mainly Grey Mullet *Mugil cephalus*, and the two Chinese Carps *Ctenopharyngodon idellus* and *Aristichthys nobilis* for the Hong Kong markets.

The Hong Kong freshwater fishing industry was at its prime in the 1980s, but with ever increasing competition from Mainland Chinese fish suppliers, the prosperous times were short lived and many operators were eventually forced out of business and either abandoned their ponds or sold them. A large area (~50% of those ponds being operated in the 1980s) was bought up and converted into housing development or storage container areas. The large-scale land development at Tin Shui Wai is a prime example. Today's remaining fish ponds are mostly located in the "Wetland Conservation Area" and "Wetland Buffer Area" where development is restricted. Some commercial fish ponds are still being operated within the Ramsar Site.



Aerial view of managed fishponds at Fung Lok Wai  
© Bena Smith/ WWF HK



When fishponds are drained for harvesting they provide good feeding opportunities for waterbirds  
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#### Ecological Value

Research in the 1990s highlighted the important contribution these fish ponds made to local wildlife, particularly to piscivorous (fish-eating) waterbirds such as herons, egrets and kingfishers. In winter, a drained fishpond can attract hundreds of these waterbirds including the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*, which feed on the small unmarketable fish in the shallow water after harvesting. The exposed muddy area is often utilized by small waders such as the Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, and other wetland dependant birds species, such as the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and Red-billed Starling *Sturnus sericeus*.

Besides waterbirds, the vast numbers of Chironomous (non-biting midges) at fish ponds attract wildlife which "feed on the wing" such as swallows, dragonflies, and at dusk bats. Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*, which feed mainly on fish, has also been recorded around fish pond areas.

#### Our Management

WWF Hong Kong does not operate any fish pond for commercial gain, however it has set up a number of partnership agreements with fish pond operators to encourage the use of traditional management methods, which are more beneficial to the ecology of Deep Bay than intensive ones. One such scheme is the "Green Fish Farm Project".



Fish cultured from the "Green Fish Farm Project" scheme have been promoted to the public in local supermarkets  
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