智遊自在鹽田梓
Exploring YTT Nature ARchive

Sponsors:
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The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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香港科技大學
THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Division of Integrative Systems and Design
OWLHK
香港戶外生態教育協會
Outdoor Wildlife Learning Hong Kong
Salt+Light

Project Newsletter

Issue No. 4 | 31 Oct 2026



Highlights of This Issue

✨ Launch of YTT ARchive Web App!

✨ Enjoy YTT Fine Dining (Public Activities Highlights)

Upcoming Events Promotion



🆕 **YTT Nature ARchive Trail is coming soon!**
A Smart Eco-Trail combining animal exploration with AR interactivity is currently being planned for Yim Tin Tsai. Stay tuned!

🌿 **Smart Ecological Game-based Learning Station**
Open every weekend, no registration required, welcome walk in YTT!

🌿 **Day-and-night Ecological Workshops**
(to be held in January - February 2027)

🌿 **AR-based Guided Tours**
(to be held in January - March 2027)



Overview

The research project, **'Application Research on Augmented Models and Smart Experiential Engagement in Ecological Conservation of Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung'** (Project Number: EEB(EB) 27/24/11-48), successfully launched on 1 September 2024. For easy recognition, we have named the project ***Exploring YTT Nature ARchive***.

This project is funded by Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme (CCFS) and the Countryside Conservation Office (CCO) under the category of 'Research Activities on Countryside Conservation and Revitalisation'. It is in collaboration with the Division of Integrative Systems and Design at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Outdoor Wildlife Learning Hong Kong, Yim Tin Tsai Village Committee, and the Salt and Light Preservation Centre.

The project team is utilising **Augmented Reality (AR) technology to showcase the ecological richness of Yim Tin Tsai (YTT)**, creating an innovative, interactive, and engaging learning experience that attracts the participation of the community and the public, raise awareness and a sense of responsibility for nature conservation, and further promote the comprehensive and sustainable conservation of Yim Tin Tsai's natural and cultural values.

Throughout the three-year project period, a series of research activities and public events are planned, including ecological survey, day-and-night ecological workshop, smart ecological game-based learning station, and AR-based guided tours.

Whether you are a nature lover or a technology enthusiast, please stay tuned for updates on this project!

Instagram | Facebook | Website

Scan the QR codes to visit our website and social media platforms for latest event information and research findings updates!

Launch of YTT ARchive Web App!

For this issue of newsletter, we will introduce the newly launched YTT ARchive Web App.

YTT ARchive is an Augmented Reality (AR) application jointly developed by the Department of Geography and Resource Management at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Division of Integrative Systems and Design at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

With this online app, you can enjoy interacting and taking photos with Yim Tin Tsai's AR animals anytime and anywhere. Using AR technology, you'll discover the diverse species living across Yim Tin Tsai's habitats, explore fun facts about them, and capture photos with the AR animals.

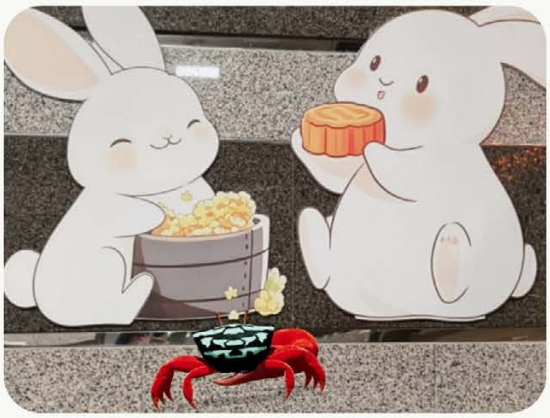






Interact with Yim Tin Tsai's AR animals anytime, anywhere

🔗 Start Exploring 👉 Wep App:
https://yttarchive.ust.hk/



Web App vs Mobile App

Feature	Web App	Full Mobile App
AR animal interaction & photos	✓	✓
Fun facts & ecological knowledge	✓	✓
GPS animal treasure hunt	X	✓
Interactive quizzes	X	✓
Collection Journal	X	✓

💡 The Web App is designed for users who are unable to download the mobile app, offering a taste of the AR experience. For full functionality, please download the full-featured mobile app.

Web App | iOS | Android

Public Programme Highlights





Time flies, and the "Exploring YTT Nature ARchive" project has now entered its third year. Over the past year, we have organised around **85 public activities** on Yim Tin Tsai, an island where Hakka culture, Catholic heritage, and natural ecology intertwine — welcoming around **3,000 participants**. Every smile, every curious question, and every moment of surprise when an AR animal came to life has been a driving force for us to keep moving forward.

If we were to liken the Yim Tin Tsai public programme experience to a fine dining journey, then what follows is a complete and satisfying sensory feast:

Appetizer: **Smart Ecological Game-based Learning Station**, where children and adults alike immerse themselves in playful discovery

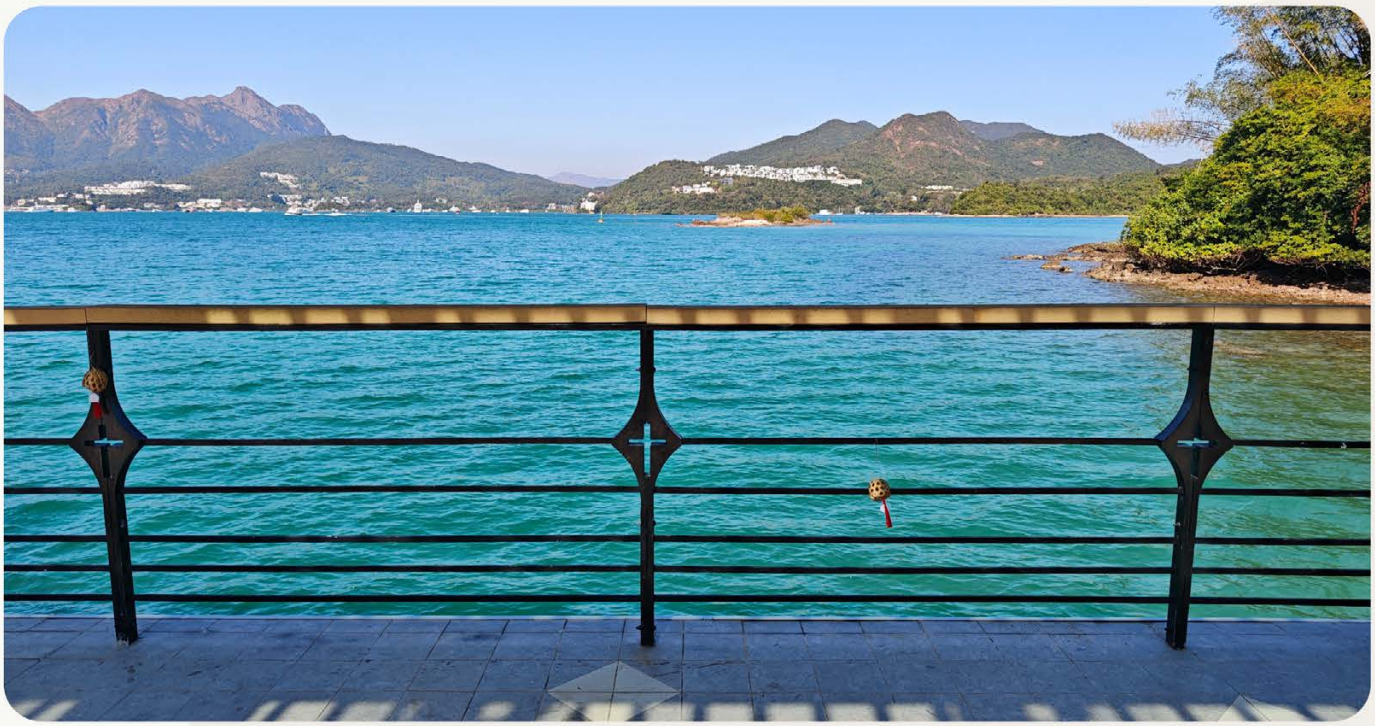
Soup: **Smart Ecological Game-based Learning Station (Kat O Session)**, spreading the warmth of Sea Salt to neighbouring villages

Main Course: **Yim Tin Tsai AR-based Guided Tour**, weaving through historic buildings, salt pans, and diverse habitats

Dessert: **Day-and-Night Ecological Workshop**, an immersive experience that stretches from day to night

Each "course" reflects our commitment to integrating ecological knowledge, technological innovation, and community engagement, inviting participants to savour the biodiversity and cultural richness of Yim Tin Tsai through meaningful outdoor experiences.

This issue of our newsletter brings you a retrospective of the most memorable moments from our public activities over the past year. We hope it offers you a deeper insight into our work and the beauty of Hong Kong's countryside. We also warmly invite you to visit Yim Tin Tsai in person, and experience for yourself the living heritage where nature and culture intertwine.



Appetizer: Smart Ecological Game based Learning Station

Light-hearted Interaction to Begin Your Ecological Journey

Every great feast begins with a delicate appetizer! At Yim Tin Tsai, our "Smart Ecological Game-based Learning Station" plays exactly that role.

Since December 2025, the Learning Station has been open every weekend (11:30 AM – 4:30 PM) outside the Salt and Light Preservation Centre, with no prior booking required. All visitors are welcome to drop by at any time.

Inside the exhibition room, a projection-augmented model brings Yim Tin Tsai's ecosystems to life in 3D. Visitors can also download the "YTT ARchive" mobile app on the spot and embark on an island-wide animal treasure hunt!

The station is jointly operated by the project team and project ambassadors. Here, you can learn about Yim Tin Tsai's rich biodiversity and get, upon completing certain missions, earn exclusive Yim Tin Tsai souvenirs! Currently, we are giving away species postcards, but we will be rolling out a new batch of gifts soon. Stay tuned!



We're waiting for you at Yim Tin Tsai!





Each session is run by different ambassadors, supporting our students!



Daily Highlights at the Learning Station

The projection-augmented island model





Come and win your exclusive Yim Tin Tsai souvenirs!

🧧 Lunar New Year Special 🎊

During the Chinese New Year season, the Learning Station introduced a "Lunar New Year Lucky Wheel" 🍖. Visitors could give it a spin and take part in a Yim Tin Tsai quiz game, and no matter which segment the wheel landed on, everyone walked away with a little luck for the new year. The cheerful atmosphere drew many passers-by, all eager to try their fortune!







Lunar New Year Lucky Wheel

Soup: Smart Ecological Game-based Learning Station (Kat O Special Edition)

Carrying Salt and Warmth from Yim Tin Tsai to Nearby Villages

A good soup warms the soul and awakens the palate. This time, our Learning Station ventured beyond Yim Tin Tsai, crossing the sea to join the Tin Hau Festival celebration in Kat O.



In May 2026, we were invited to participate in the "Rural Food Carnival & Kat O Tin Hau Festival Celebration," hosted by MeGoOut, another CCFS project led by CUHK, bringing our Learning Station to the Kat O Fishermen's Square.



The booth was bustling throughout the day. Visitors explored the AR application, also appreciated the illustrations of Yim Tin Tsai's village stories, and took on fun eco-quiz challenges. We are truly grateful to everyone who stopped by, your smiles and curiosity meant the world to us! 😘



As part of the Department of Geography and Resource Management at CUHK, we also took the opportunity to join the department's field trip for the International Conference on Sustainable Tourism, immersing ourselves in Kat O's local culture and the vibrant Tin Hau Festival celebrations. This trip to Kat O not only spread the conservation story of Yim Tin Tsai further afield but also allowed us to experience the rich cultural traditions of rural communities.



Just as a warm soup leaves a lasting impression, we hope to carry this warmth infused with the salt of our island to more villages and communities in the future.

A Nutrient-Rich Main Course: Yim Tin Tsai AR-based Guided Tour

An Ecological and Cultural Exploration

Editor Cherry (Project Manager)'s top pick? Yim Tin Tsai AR-based Guided Tour!

It's a relaxed and enjoyable experience, perfect for first-time visitors, or for anyone looking for a comprehensive cultural and ecological experience all in one go.

This 1.5 to 2-hour tour condenses the most memorable sights of Yim Tin Tsai, from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation-winning St. Joseph's Chapel and the salt pan, to the cluster of Hakka village houses; from the intertidal ecology of the mangroves, to the diverse wildlife encounters along the way. Each stop, like the high-quality protein and diverse nutrients of a main course, offers participants a solid and well-rounded experience.

Participants don't just observe with their eyes, they also interact and take photos with virtual animals through the YTT ARchive mobile app, turning ecological knowledge into an engaging experience that satisfies every curiosity about this remarkable island.

Two Key Highlights: The Most Comprehensive Itinerary & Led by Student Ambassadors

Highlight 1:
The Most Comprehensive Itinerary!

The tour design integrates our ecological survey findings from Yim Tin Tsai, along with village stories gathered from oral histories of local villagers. Participants not only learn about the ecological functions of mangroves and the operational principles of the salt pans, but also gain insights into the unique history and architectural stories of this Catholic Hakka village. The itinerary caters to people with different interests and backgrounds, satisfying curiosity about both ecology and culture.

"I never knew an eco-tour could be this interesting! I learned so much about plants and animals!" – Participant feedback

Highlight 2:
Led by Student Ambassadors – A Fresh Perspective on Guiding

To nurture a new generation of rural heritage guides, we began recruiting project ambassadors from various departments at CUHK in October 2025, providing them with comprehensive training covering Yim Tin Tsai's ecology, cultural history, storytelling techniques, and AR applications. The first cohort of trained ambassadors officially started leading tours in January 2026, guiding participants through Yim Tin Tsai's natural and cultural world with engaging storytelling.

📸 Event Highlights

2026-01-04 (Morning Session)

A new year, a new beginning – "Exploring YTT Nature ARchive" successfully launched the first session of AR tours.

Starting from the village, we strolled to the salt pans and mangrove. Through the interactive mobile game, they observed and explored the rich biodiversity of Yim Tin Tsai.





2026-01-04 (Afternoon Session)

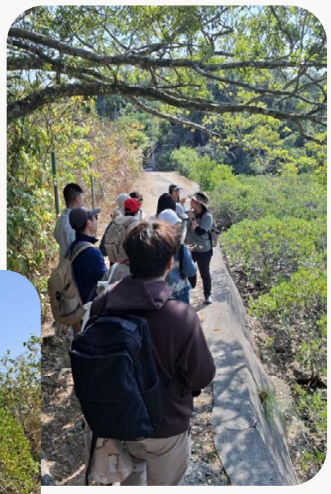
For the second session of the AR-based guided tour, we explored shrubland and woodland habitats uphill. Along the path, we not only discovered a variety of species but also brought virtual animals to life through AR technology, making for a highly rewarding experience for all participants!





2026-01-18 (Morning Session)

Participants observed plant ecology up close and discovered the wonders of nature!







Don't miss the mosaic staircase mural in front of the chapel!





2026-01-18 (Afternoon Session)

This tour held special significance – it was the first to be led by our newly trained project ambassadors Jasmine, Amy, and Mandy. Through engaging storytelling and AR technology, they shared the Hakka culture of Yim Tin Tsai, allowing everyone to feel the vitality of this unique place together!



Can you guess what tree this leaf belongs to?



Ambassador Amy was introducing Hakka tea cakes!



Everyone was trying out the AR app, it's time to summon the animals!



Heading home with souvenirs for everyone 🎁



2026-06-20 (Morning Session)
Catholic Built Heritage Themed Tour

As one of the few Catholic Hakka villages in Hong Kong, Yim Tin Tsai bears traces of religious and Hakka cultural fusion everywhere from the architectural style of the chapel to the everyday customs of the villagers, each element has a story to tell. Participants not only gained ecological knowledge but also deepened their understanding of the village's religious traditions and architectural conservation journey.



Bronze Statue of the 2025 Jubilee Pilgrimage

2026-06-20 (Afternoon Session)

The afternoon tour was led by project ambassadors Yoey and Katy, who shared the ecological stories of Yim Tin Tsai from a lively and engaging perspective.



Ambassador Katy was introducing the island's environment



Grateful for the beautiful weather 😇





The "Pork Belly Clay Pot" has a story to tell!



Group photo outside the chapel



2026-08-23 (National Ecology Day)

To celebrate National Ecology Day (15 August), the project team organised a special session " National Ecology Day: Yim Tin Tsai AR-based Guided Tour" during the summer holiday.

Unlike the regular version, this extended tour allowed participants more time to explore Yim Tin Tsai's natural ecology in depth. Along the way, they learned about the properties of various plants and ventured into the mangroves, where they were fortunate enough to spot the elusive Great Blue Mudskipper and witness the courtship of fiddler crabs.



Ambassador Jasmine delivered a confident and fluent guiding session



Project Assistant Jenny who grew up in a rural village, seemed to see her own childhood reflected in Heritage Exhibition Centre.





Everyone was eager to see the locally produced salt!



Lucky to see the Great Blue Mudskipper!

Nourishing Dessert: Day-and-Night Ecological Workshop

A Deep Ecological Feast from Dawn to Dusk

If the AR Guided Tour is a well-balanced main course, then the Day-and-Night Ecological Workshop is a richly layered, nourishing dessert that invites you to slow down and savour every bite.

What makes dessert so delightful is its gradual unfolding: the surprise of the first taste, the satisfaction of the middle, and the lingering aftertaste that stays with you. The Day-and-Night Ecological Workshop follows the same rhythm, from morning lectures that whet the appetite, to afternoon field visit that deepens the flavour, and finally, the evening discoveries that leave a lasting impression, much like the finest dessert's final note.

This "dessert" is by no means light! Participants join us from daytime into the night, with each session lasting approximately 7 to 10 hours, which seems like a true ecological marathon. The workshops are co-organised and led by our project team and Outdoor Wildlife Learning Hong Kong (OWLHK), combining lectures, guided field walks, BioBlitz surveys, and group discussions. They guide participants from knowledge acquisition to hands-on practice, step by step into Yim Tin Tsai's ecological world.

Three Core Sessions: A Complete Learning Journey from Theory to Practice

Session 1: Lectures

Laying the Groundwork for the Ecological Journey

The workshop begins with a series of content-rich lectures. Our project team starts by introducing Yim Tin Tsai's historical background, from the story of its Hakka settlement and the roots of its Catholic religion to the operation and restoration of the salt pans.

Following this, the HKUST technical team explains the functionality of the "YTT ARchive" mobile application, and arranges an AR interactive experience for participants to try it on the spot. Everyone can understand how augmented reality technology can be applied to ecological recording and education.

Finally, instructors from Outdoor Wildlife Learning Hong Kong (OWLHK) share an overview of Yim Tin Tsai's ecology, highlight key species for observation, offer knowledge on species identification, and introduce the citizen science tool "iNaturalist". These three lectures are closely interlinked from culture to technology to ecology. We are preparing thoroughly for the site visit ahead.



Project Leader Prof. Johnson Chan and Project Manager Cherry Lau start the workshop by introducing the island's culture and history









Session 2: Guided Field Walks and BioBlitz

Stepping into Outdoor Nature Museum

After the lectures, participants venture into the field under the guidance of instructors for hands-on ecological observation. Unlike standard guided tours, each workshop session is unique, because every season, every day brings a different face of nature.

Observation focuses vary depending on the **season and weather**. During the wet season, amphibians and insects are most active; under the dry season sun, butterflies and dragonflies flit among the grass; at dawn and dusk, the calls and sightings of birds take centre stage. We also adapt our routes and commentary flexibly based on real-time discoveries. Some sessions offer a "day-to-night" experience. After dark, torches light up and frogs begin to chorus. Participants listen carefully and observe quietly, experiencing the island's distinctly different vitality after sunset.

Beyond learning to identify species and understand their habitats, participants are introduced to the citizen science tool **iNaturalist**, uploading their observations in real time and contributing their findings to a broader ecological database. Many participants remarked that it was the first time they had ever studied a leaf's texture so closely. Discovering the same island across seasons and times of day, you can reveal entirely different faces!

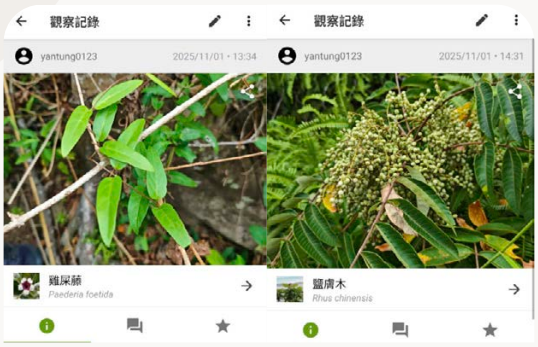




A quill of East Asian porcupine was found on the hillside



One of Hong Kong's "four poisonous plants" – Goat's Horn



Citizen science in action: since learning to use iNaturalist, I often photograph and record plants



Ecological maps created by different groups of participants

Session 3: Group Activity

Creating an Ecological Map, Sharing Observations and Reflections

After the field exploration, participants sit together in groups to create an **ecological map of Yim Tin Tsai**. They recall the species they encountered, and the most memorable scenes, such as a distinctive plant, an intriguing insect, then jot them down or sketch them out, placing each observation onto its corresponding location on the map. As stickers and notes accumulate, the map grows increasingly rich and colourful. Each finished map is completely unique, not just a review of the day's observations, but a process of transforming individual experiences into a collective memory.

Each group then share their creations and discoveries. Some share their sighting of a mudskipper in the mangroves, others recall the frog calls they heard at night, while others begin with a fallen leaf and weave a story about the relationship between plants and the seasons. Through sharing and listening, we gradually weave into a coherent and vivid ecological narrative.

Participants also discuss nature conservation and rural revitalisation together, allowing knowledge and emotions to settle through exchange. Sowing seeds for a lasting commitment to ecological stewardship.



📸 Event Highlights

2025-09-13

The first Day-and-Night Ecological Workshop



2025-10-11

Though the island was bustling with a performing arts festival that day, we carried on with our day and night ecological experience under the instructors' guidance. Rich rewards all around!



2025-11-01

As autumn deepens, the island's ecological landscape begins to quietly change... Entering the dry season, the theme of this workshop focused on exploring the island's rich vegetation 🌳, allowing participants to experience the resilience and thriving coexistence of plant life!



2026-04-15

In late spring and early summer, the island was brimming with life. Participants explored salt pans, mangroves, and shrublands to discover a variety of plant species. Many were most impressed by the Sterculia lanceolata, whose appearance changes dramatically throughout its growth cycle!



2025-10-18

Day and Night in Yim Tin Tsai—We observed insects 🐞, amphibians and reptiles up close 🐸, learning about their unique living habits!



2026-04-26

This session focused on daytime observation of plants and insects





Opening the YTT ARchive App to take a photo with the Black-capped Kingfisher!

2026-05-30

Participants witnessed the two faces of Yim Tin Tsai: day and night





During the day, we observed dragonflies, spiders, lanternflies, and other insects around the shrublands and village edges.



A shimmering spider's web!



The sparkling golden tortoise beetle (*Cassida circumdata*)



Unlike a typical village visit, participants enjoyed a night-time ecological adventure full of surprises.

Special Feature: Villager version Day & Night Ecological Workshop

Let the Seeds of Conservation Spread from the Island

In addition to our public programmes, we also organised **2 day-and-night ecological workshops exclusively for villagers**, inviting Yim Tin Tsai residents and island staff to participate.

The content of these workshops followed the same approach as the public sessions, but placed greater emphasis on **dialogue with villagers' lived experiences**. They share a deep affection for this land and possess a wealth of local knowledge that outsiders cannot easily replace.

During the workshops, the villagers not only learned about ecology, but also enthusiastically shared their own nature-related stories and work experiences on Yim Tin Tsai. These invaluable oral memories added warmth and depth to our ecological records. Through this exchange, we hope that the villagers and the staff can translate their learning into everyday actions, forge deeper connections with their rural environment, and further contribute to the island's nature conservation and rural revitalisation efforts.

2025-08-09



2026-03-15



A Sweet Ending, with More to Come

As the four courses come to an end, the feast may be over, but the natural flavours of Yim Tin Tsai will linger in every participant's heart. From the playful starter, the warm soup, the hearty main course, to the profound dessert. Each dish is a token of our care, an invitation for you to step into Yim Tin Tsai, feel the land with your feet, discover wonders with your senses, and conserve this island's unique vitality with your actions.

And this feast is far from over. **Our activities will continue through to 2027**, with more public guided tours, ecological workshops, and learning station experiences already in the pipeline. **Please stay tuned for our latest updates!** We look forward to meeting you again, amidst the sea breeze of Yim Tin Tsai. 🌿

Project Ambassador Sharing



Now, let's hear what our project ambassadors have gained and have to share!

I remember once helping the public workshop, I got a chance to see different spiders and cobweb. The one called The Hello Kitty spider (black-and-white spiny spider) with special patterns attract me a lot. At night, we headed out onto the dark roads and into the fields, guided by the chorus of frogs and cicadas. We are lucky to observe wide variety of frog species.

Experiencing Yim Tin Tsai in both daylight and after dark, and knowing that all these creatures continue to live undisturbed on this little patch of land make me feel at ease.

— Amy Lam (Geography and Resources Management, CUHK)



Becoming an ambassador in Yim Tin Tsai has been a deeply meaningful and enriching journey. With a longstanding passion for sharing local culture, I first set foot on this island during a docent training program outside of school. Joining this CUHK initiative allowed me to delve much deeper into Yim Tin Tsai's Hakka history and salt field culture, while actively putting ecological conservation into practice. Through hands-on guiding services, I truly felt the warmth of community connection. Walking through the village alleys, sharing stories of the salt pans and the pier, or showcasing artwork created by dedicated contributors inspired me to reflect deeply on the relationships between people, and between humanity and the land. This experience has not only broadened my horizons but also rewarded me with a profound sense of achievement and cherished friendships.

— Katy Lee (Social Work, CUHK)



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