

# Prayer Animal Release: An Overlooked Pathway for Introduction of Invasive Aquatic Species

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# Prayer Release

- Religious practice of Buddhists, Daoists, etc
- Captive wildlife are released as a demonstration of compassion and kindness to receive merit or good karma
- Individual/mass release
- aka mercy release, merit release, lucky release  
Chinese: *fang sheng*  
Japanese: *ho jo -e*  
Tibetan: *tshe thar*

<http://conbio.org/policy/prayer-animal-release-can-embody-conservation-principles-a-call-to-action>



# Prayer Release

2 million animals per year

US\$6 million

90% mortality

25,000 lbs sea creatures over 13 years

688,675 of 57 species

12,751 golden weavers

III: US\$7 trillion

Prayer Release



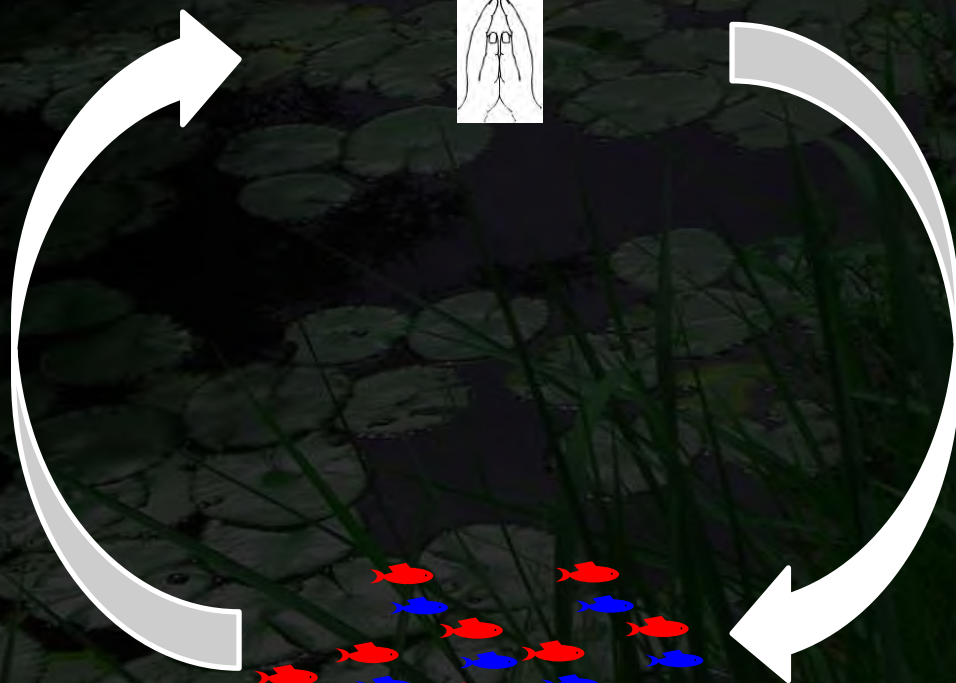
Spread the joy





# Prayer Release

Release Animal



Animals in the natural environment

# Prayer Release

Release Animal



Animals in the natural environment



# Prayer Release

Release Animal



Capture



Animals in the natural environment

# Prayer Release

Release Animal



Capture



Animals in the natural environment





# Prayer Release

Release Animal

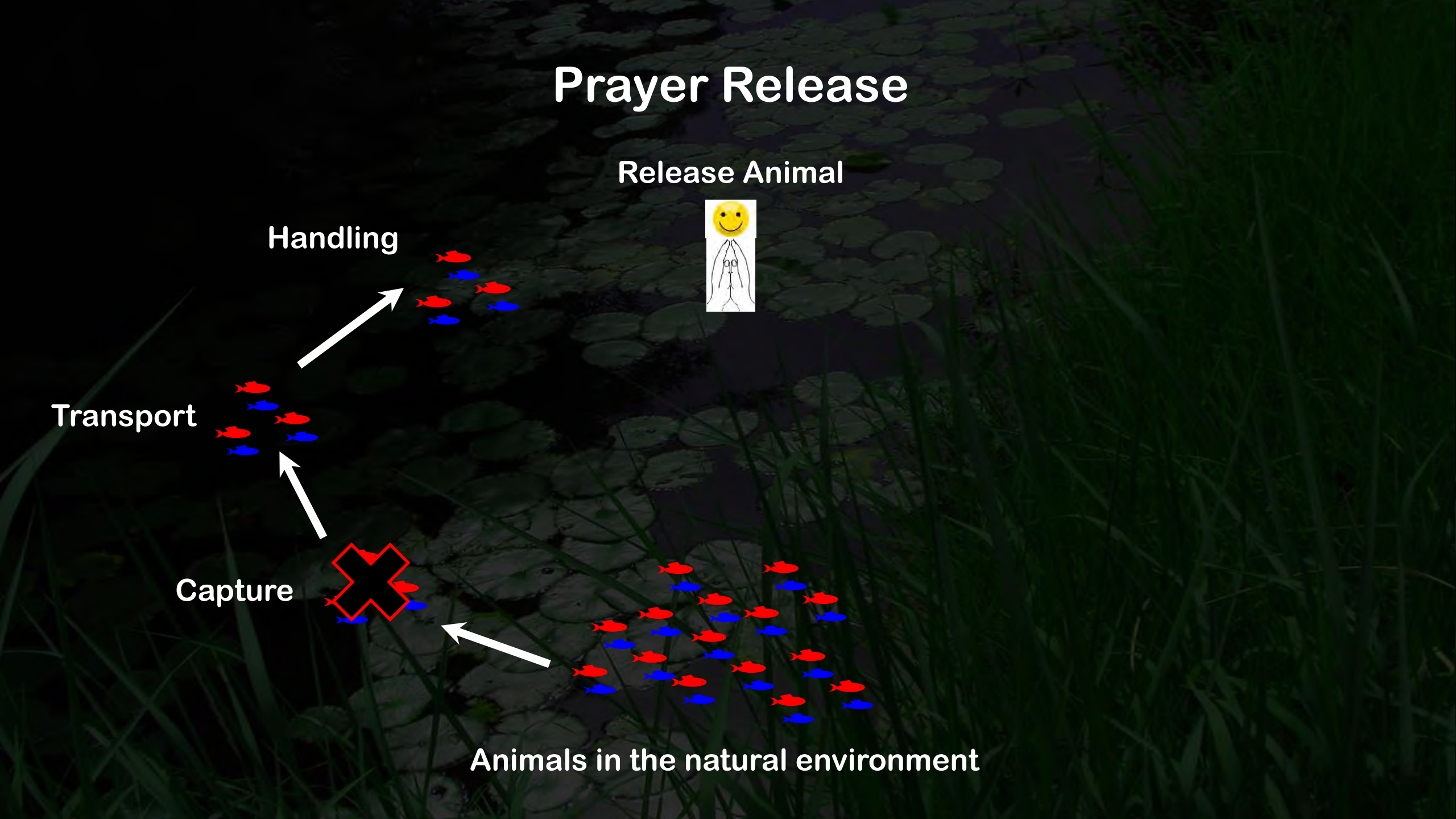


Handling

Transport

Capture

Animals in the natural environment



# Mercy Release

Release Animal



Handling



Transport



Capture

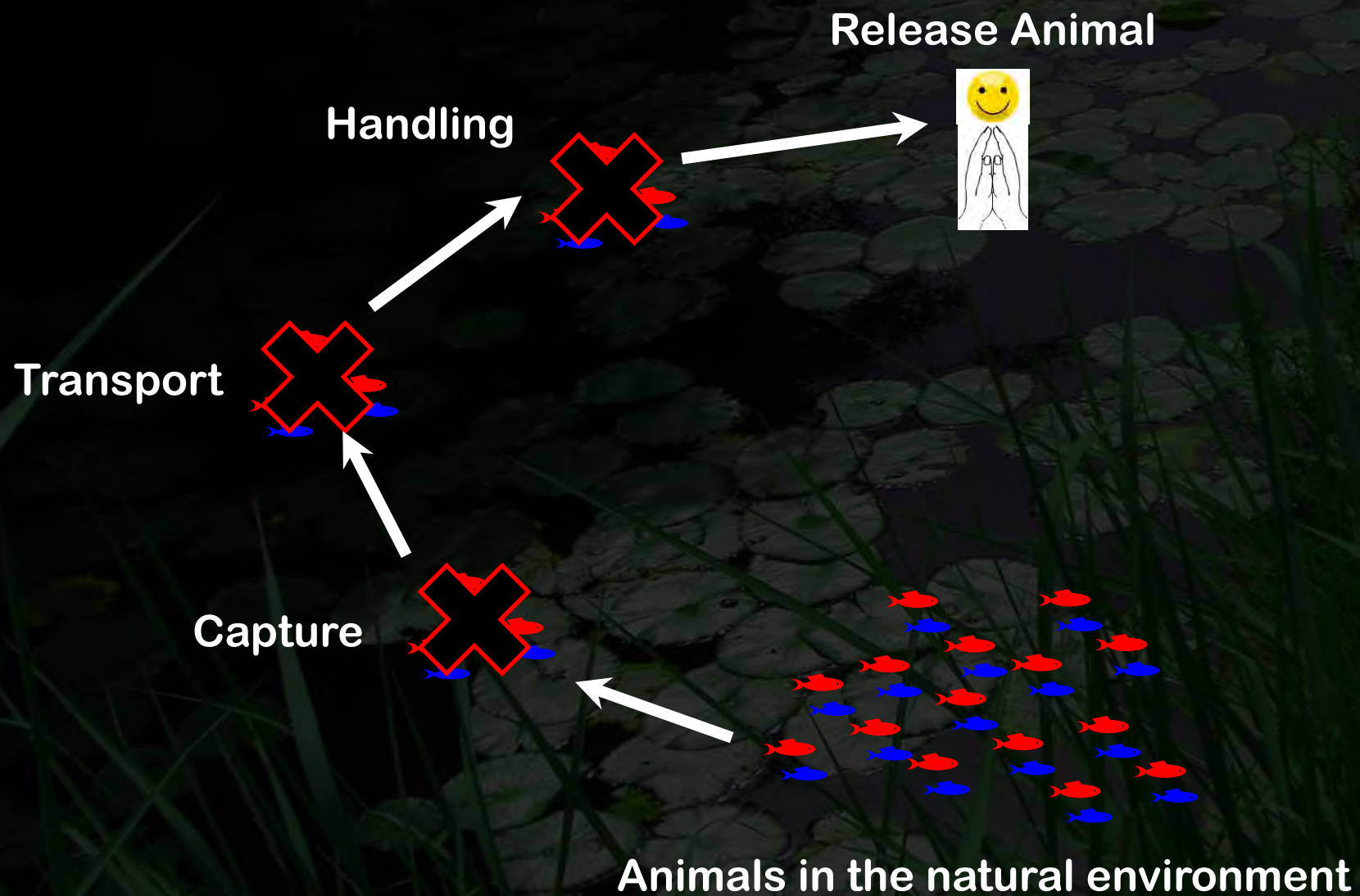


Animals in the natural environment





# Prayer Release





# Prayer Release





# Prayer Release





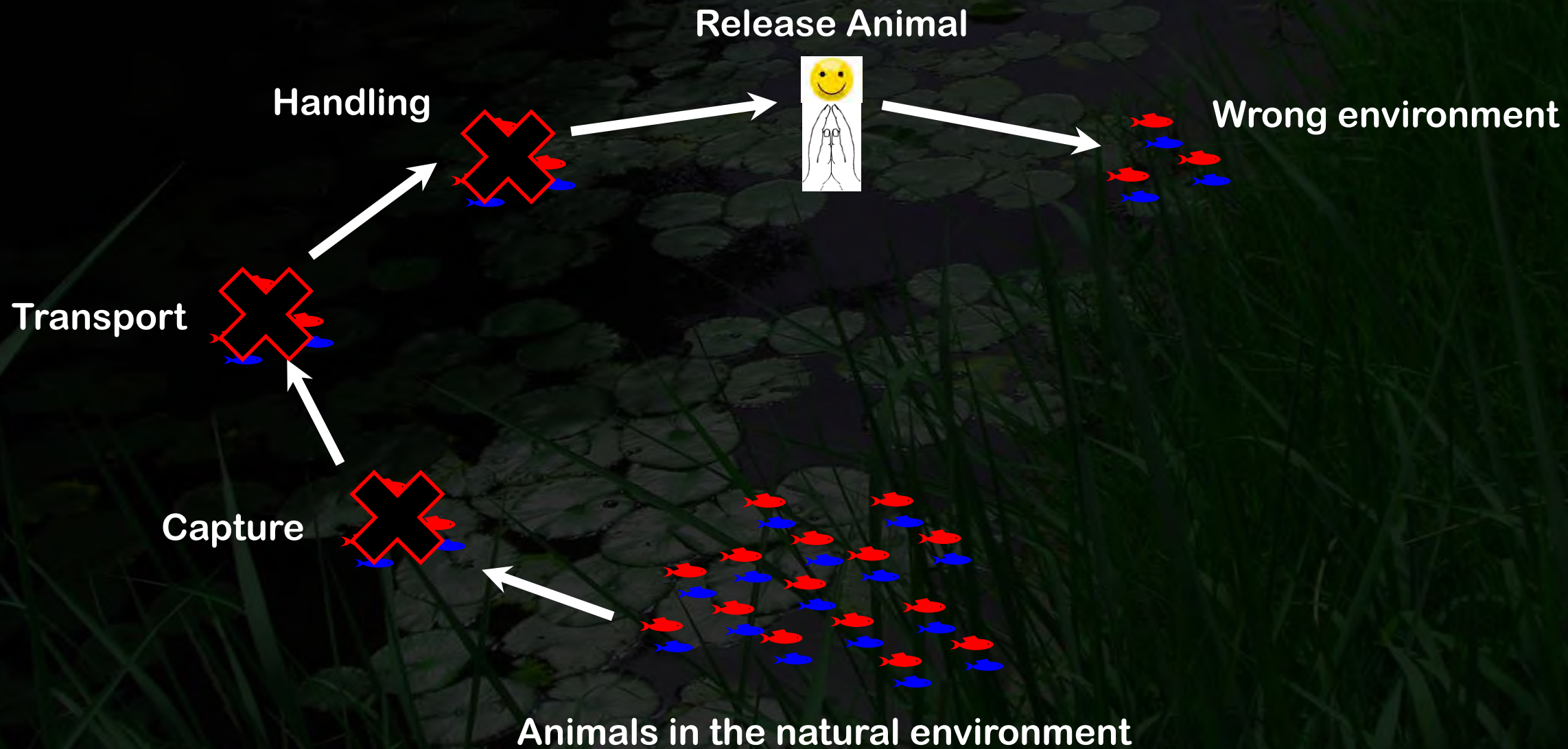
# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

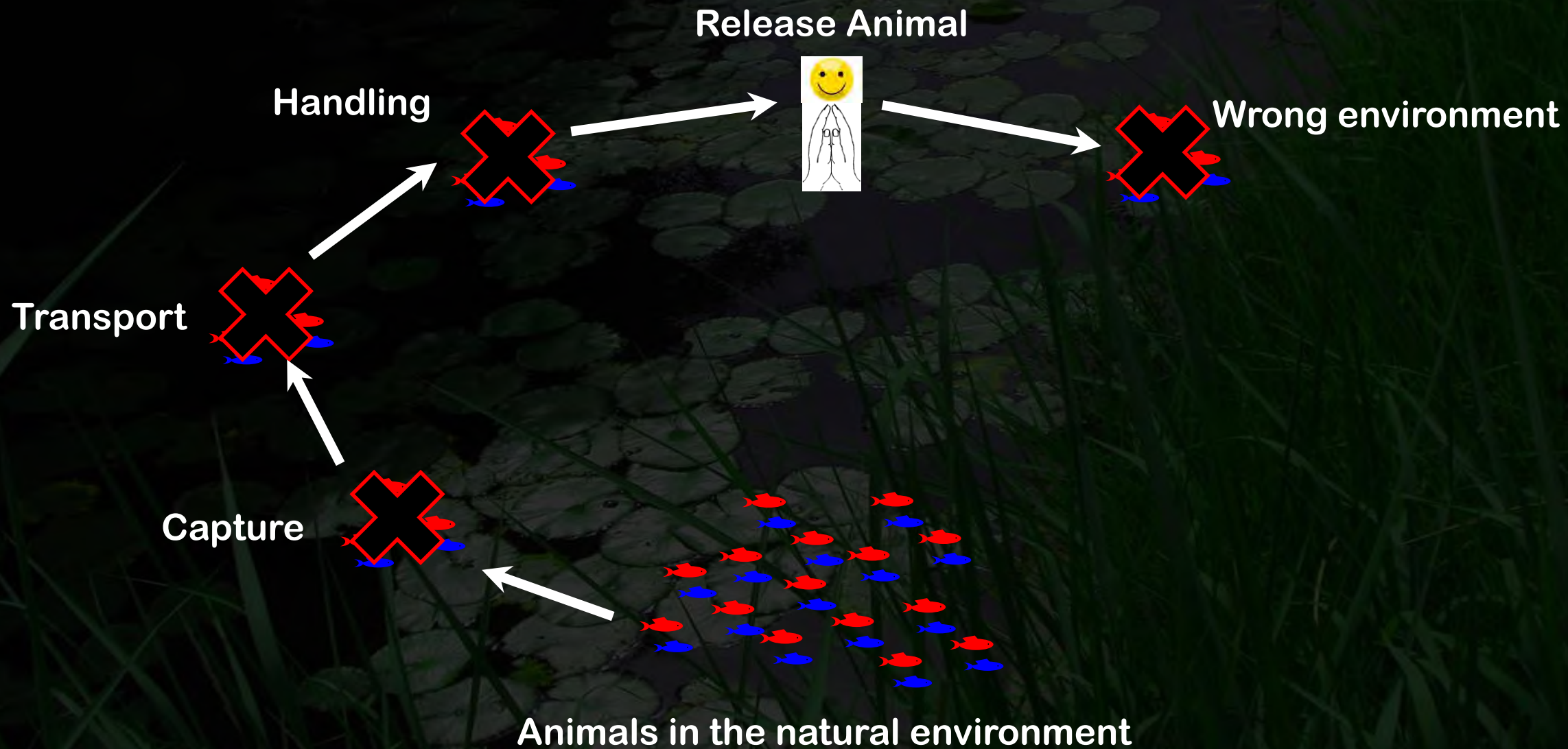




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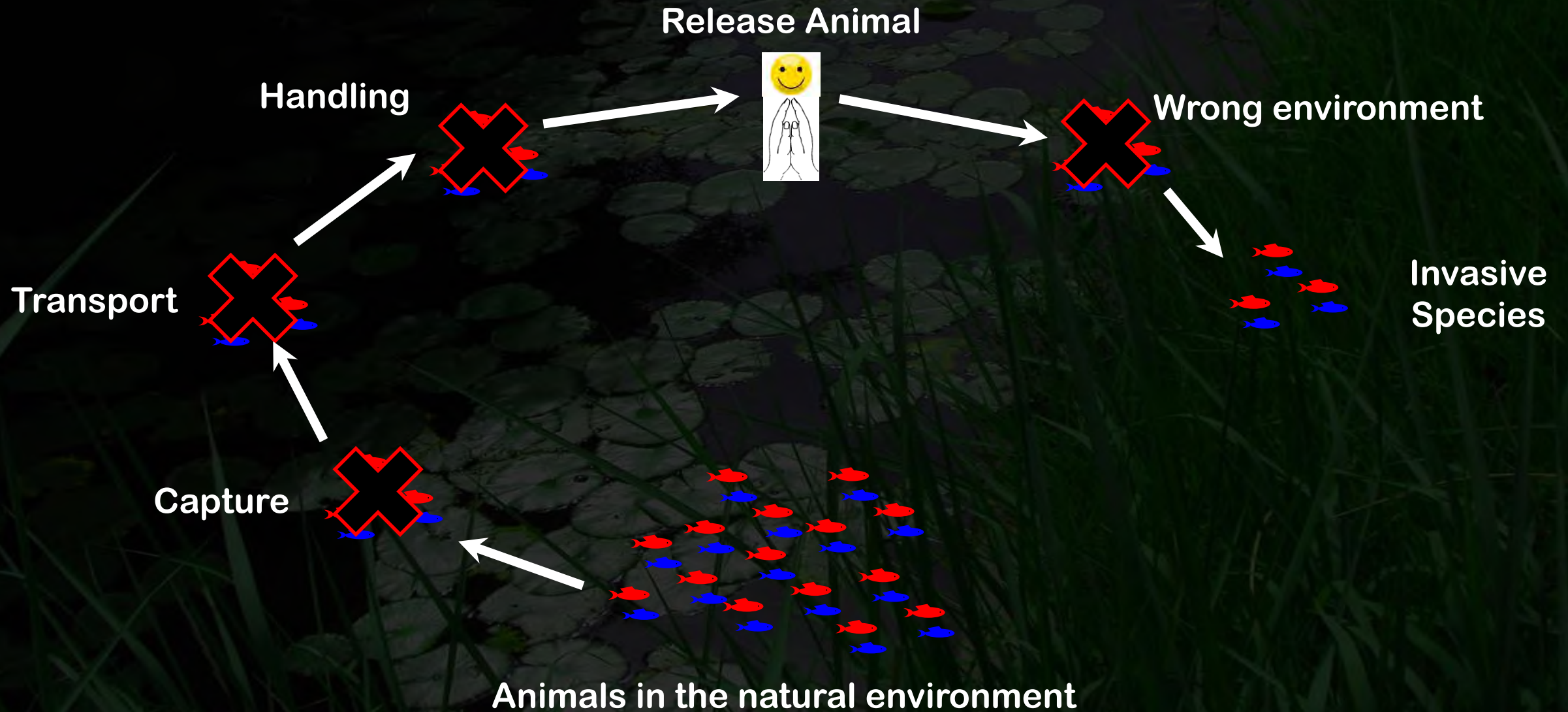


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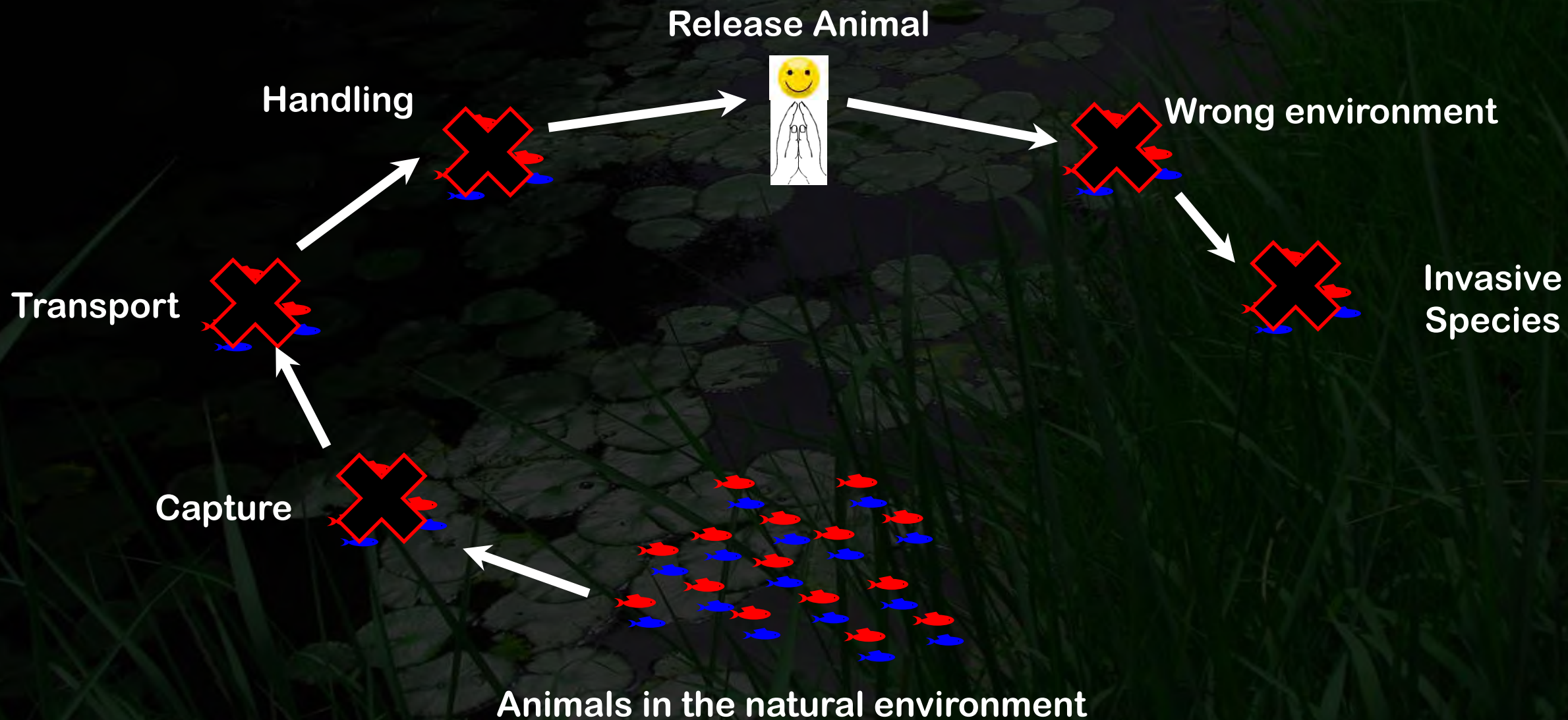




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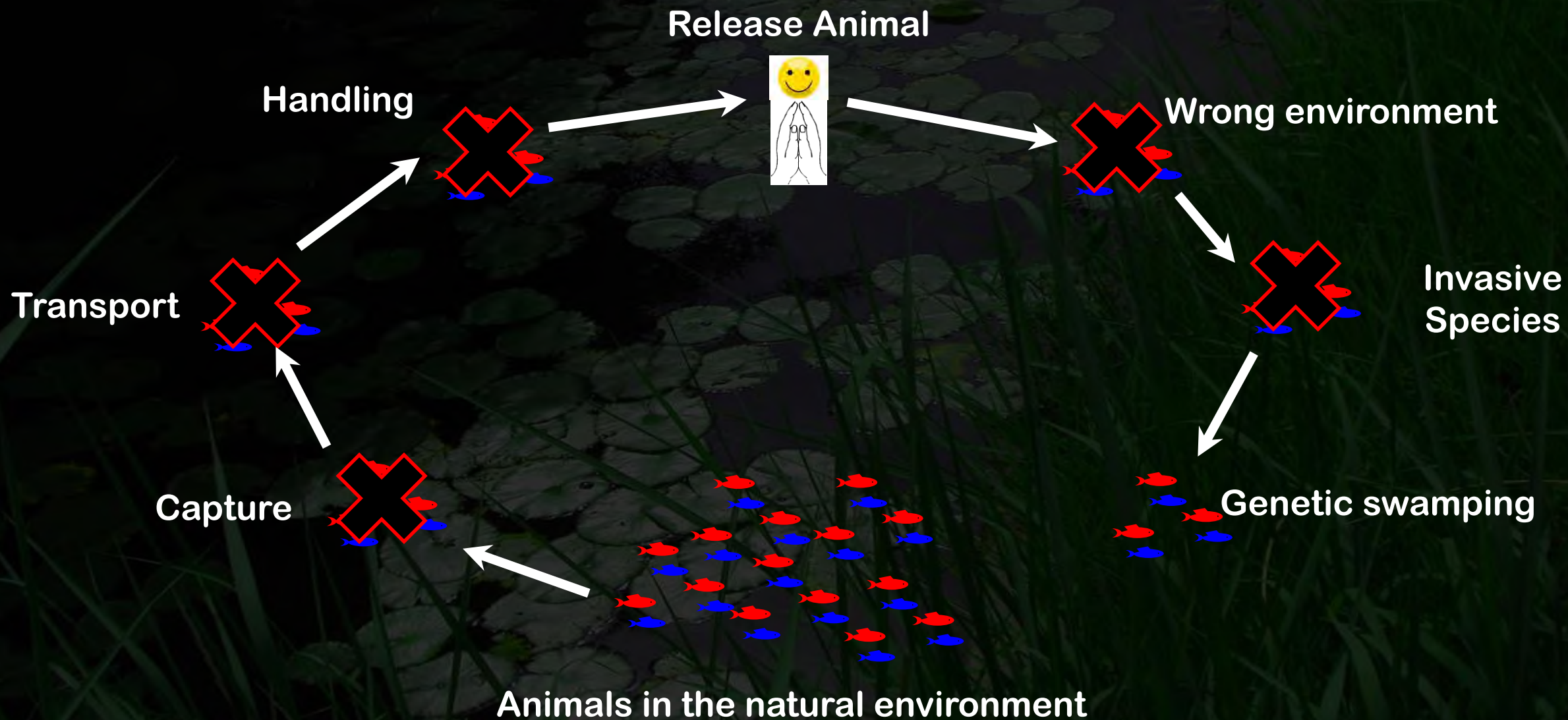


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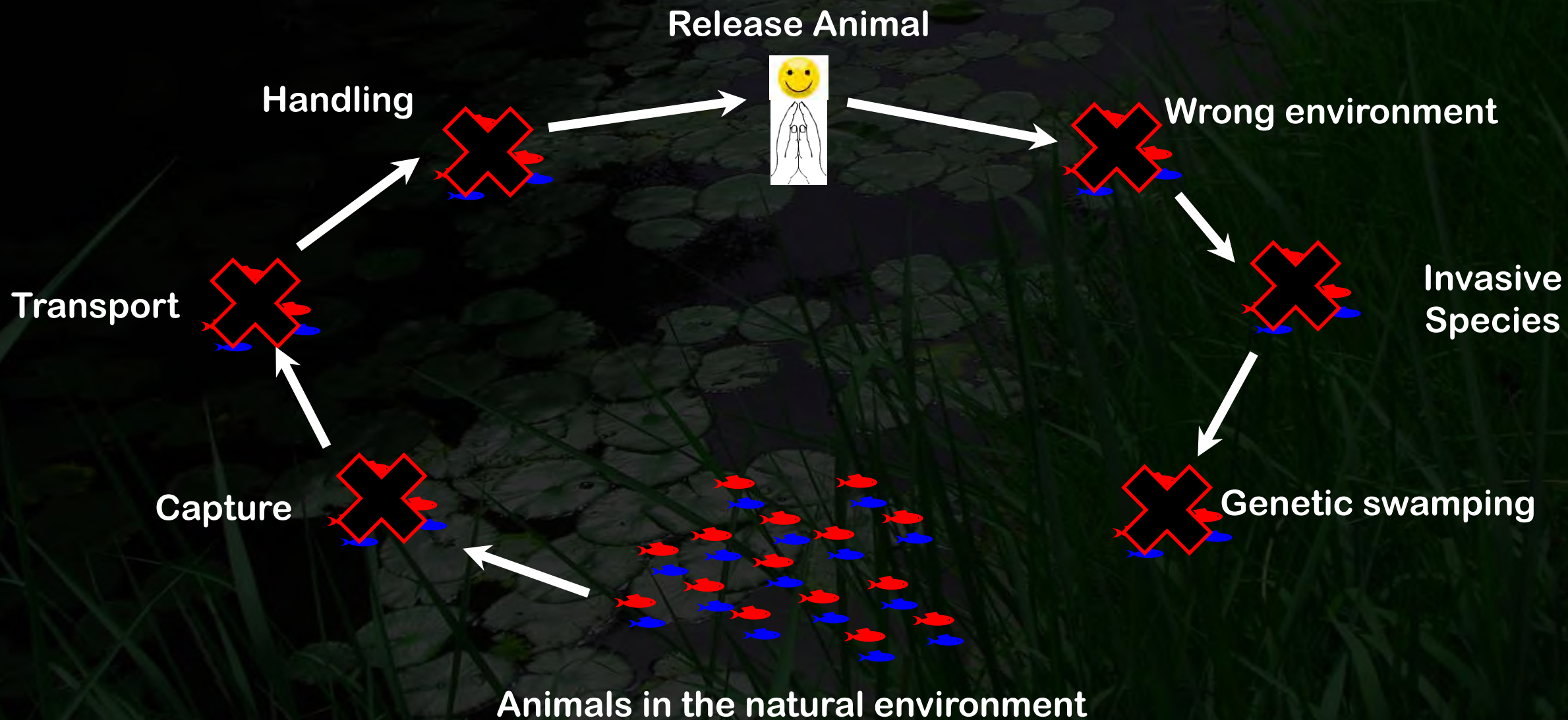


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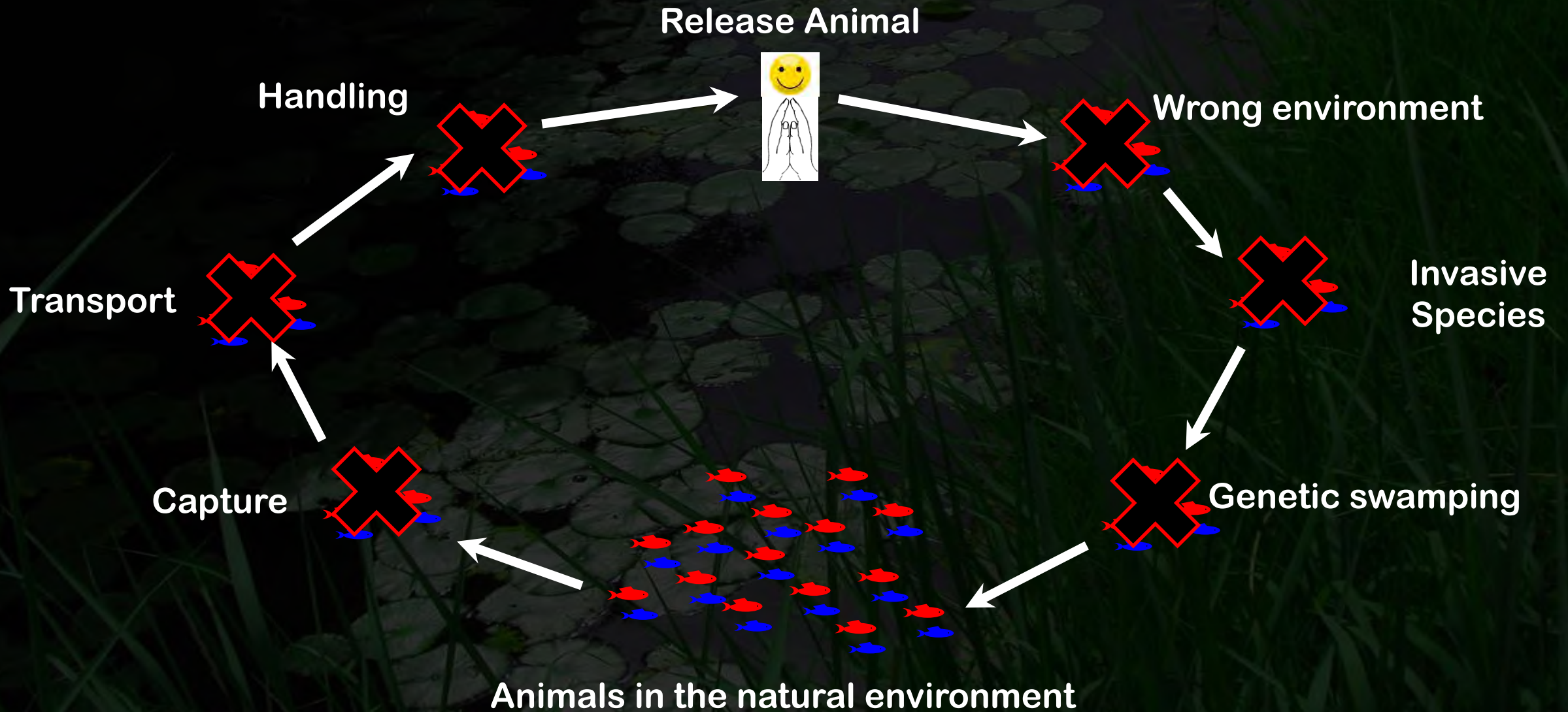


# Prayer Release



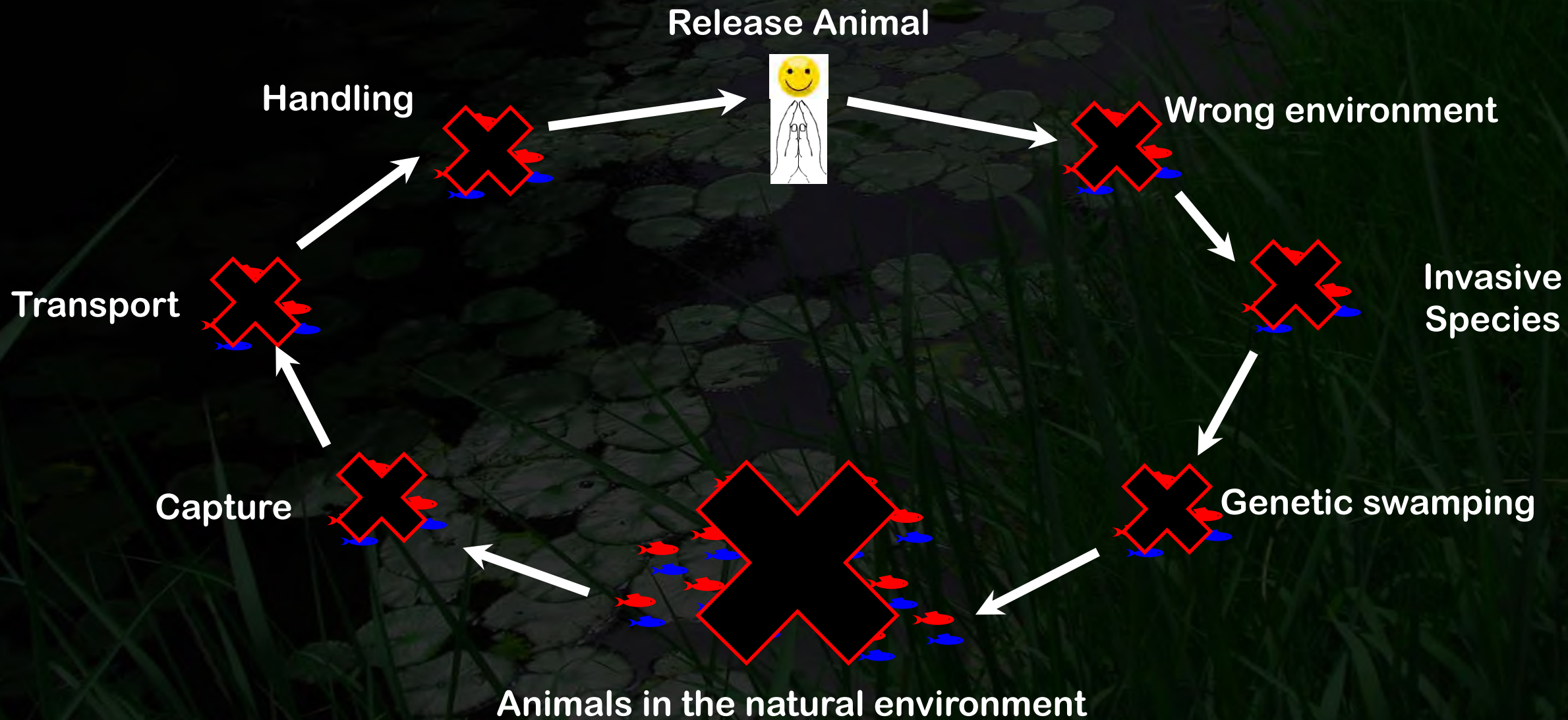


# Prayer Release





# Prayer Release





# Prayer Release



IUCN 100 worst



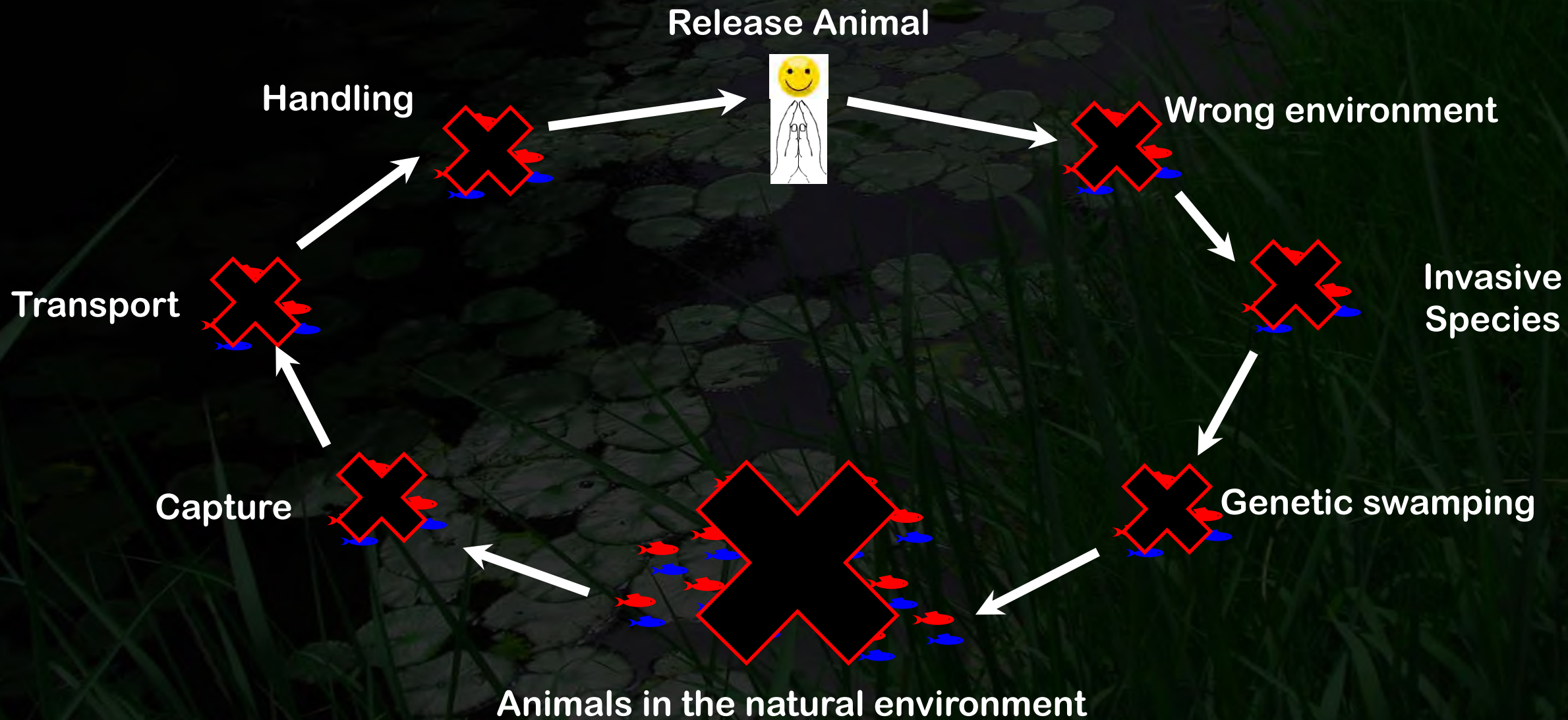


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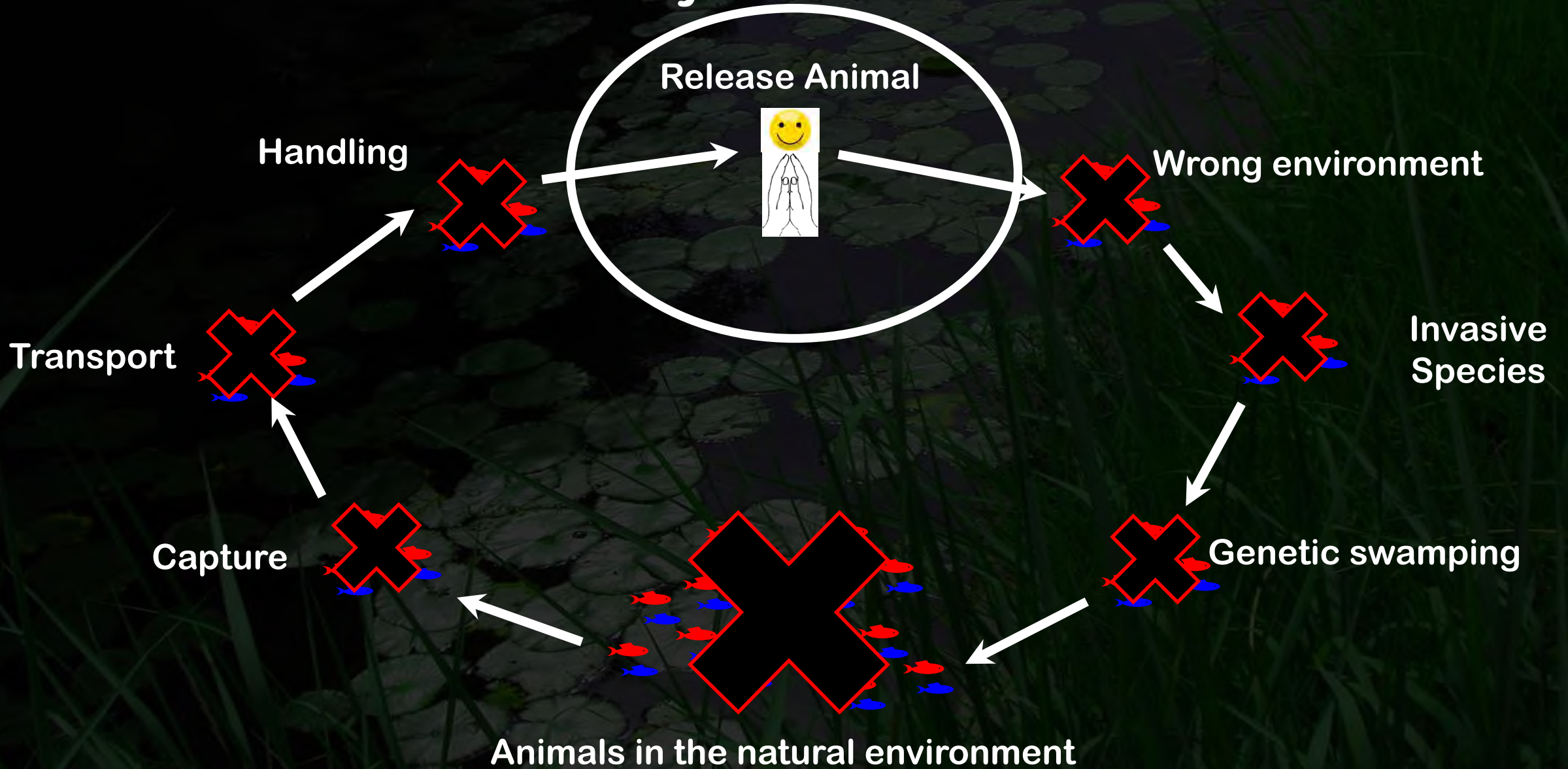




# Prayer Release



# Prayer Release





# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam





# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

Conservation and Mercy  
Release Asia Network



Say Seyla



Toek Vanna



Chantal Elkin

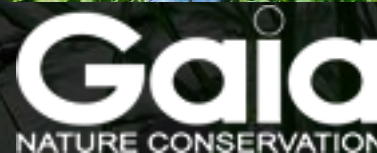


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## Full Circle Foundation



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Questionnaire Surveys

- Extent and prevalence of Mercy Release
- Views towards Mercy Release
- Animals and ecosystems used
- Demographic parameters
- Ecological and environmental knowledge

Where?





# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you release animals? Y/N



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you release animals? Y/N

Yes = ???

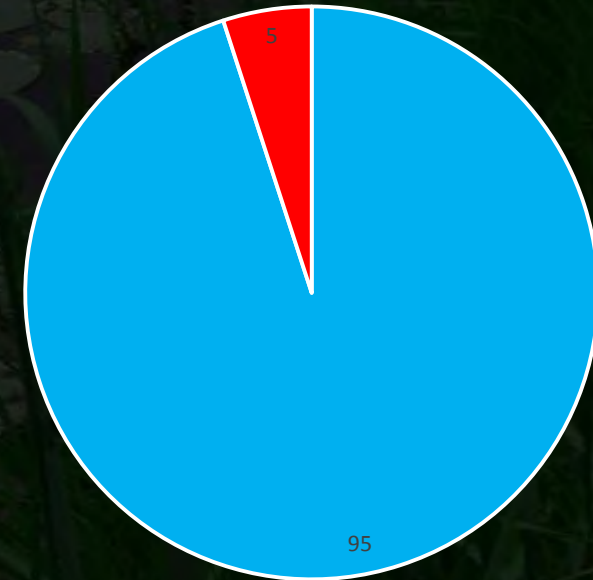


# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you release animals? Y/N

**Yes = 95%**  
(based on 407 respondents)



■ Yes ■ No

# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

### Animals Released





# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

### Animals Released

- Mainly birds, fish, turtles
- Most from local vendors
- Includes invasive and endangered species

# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

### Ecological/Environmental knowledge

- Plastic pollution; Invasive species; Climate change; Animal trafficking; Agricultural pollution



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

### Ecological/Environmental knowledge

- Plastic pollution; Invasive species; Climate change; Animal trafficking; Agricultural pollution
- Awareness good

# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

### Ecological/Environmental knowledge

- Plastic pollution; Invasive species; Climate change; Animal trafficking; Agricultural pollution
- Awareness good
- Most see it as a problem



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

### Ecological/Environmental knowledge

- Plastic pollution; Invasive species; Climate change; Animal trafficking; Agricultural pollution
- Awareness good
- Most see it as a problem
- Deeper knowledge lacking

# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you think releasing animals benefits:



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you think releasing animals benefits:

- You/family?
- The animal?
- The environment?

# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you think releasing animals benefits:

- You/family? **Yes = 100%**
- The animal?
- The environment?



# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you think releasing animals benefits:

- You/family? **Yes = 100%**
- The animal? **Yes =**
- The environment? **Yes =**

# Mercy Release in Cambodia and Vietnam

## Results

Do you think releasing animals benefits:

- You/family? **Yes = 100%**
- The animal? **Yes = 100%**
- The environment? **Yes = 100%**







**Mercy Release**

**What can we do?**





# Mercy Release

**What can we do?**

**Research on extent and impacts**

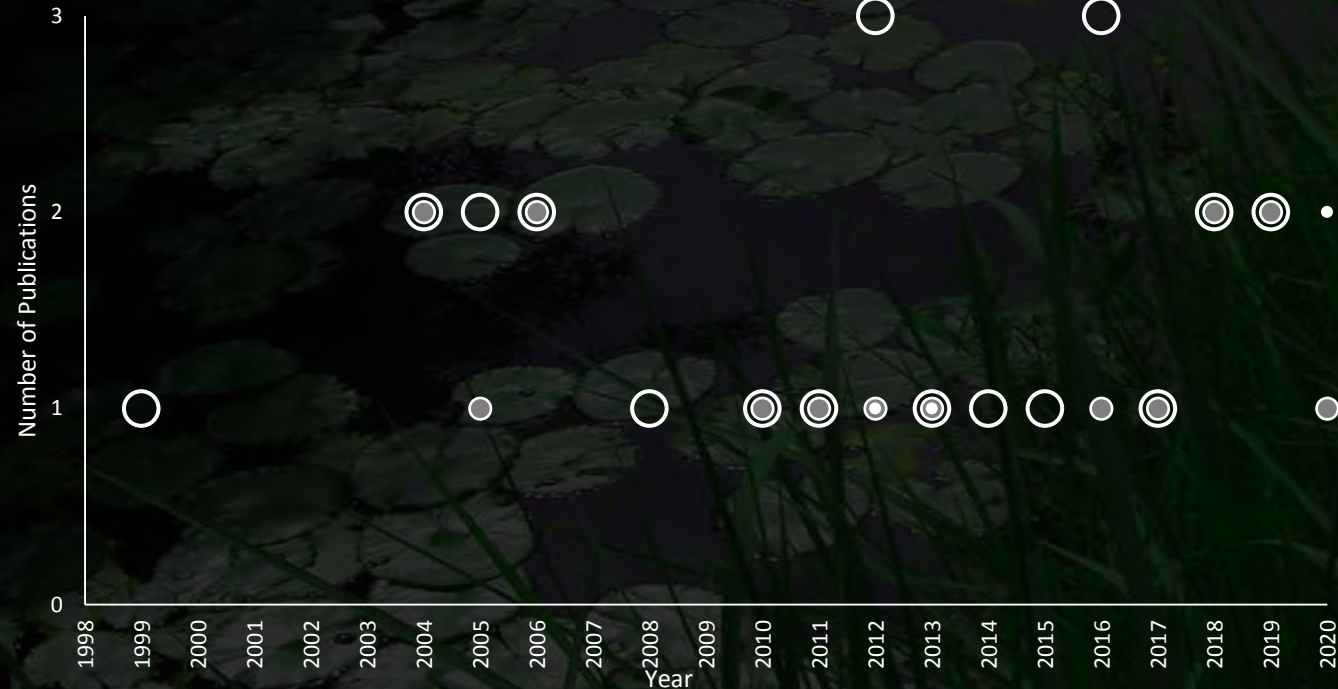


**Mercy Release**

**What problem?**



# Mercy Release



**Magellan K (in press) Prayer Animal Release: An understudied pathway for introduction of invasive aquatic species. Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management**

# Mercy Release

What can we do?

Research on extent and impacts

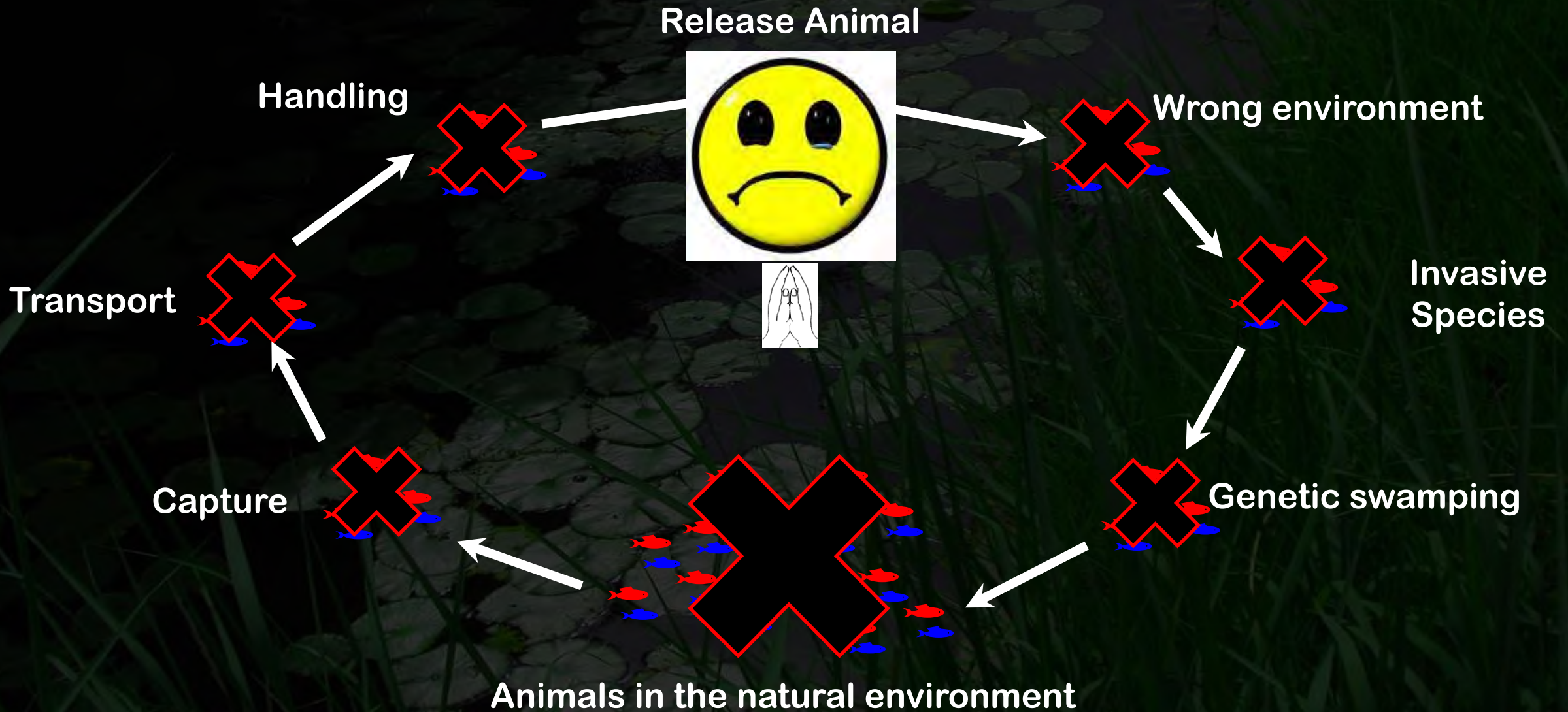
Engage with faith based groups

Encourage alteration of the practice

Promote ecological responsibility



# Prayer Release



# Mercy Release

What can we do?

Research on extent and impacts

Engage with faith based groups

Encourage alteration of the practice

Promote ecological responsibility

Recognize prayer release as a major pathway  
for the introduction of invasive species



# Mercy Release

What can we do?

## CAMRAN: Conservation and Mercy Release Asia Network

- Establish a knowledge sharing network
- Facilitate discussion/coordinate actions
- Develop region-wide research projects

# Mercy Release

What can we do?

**CAMRAN**

[mercyreleasenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:mercyreleasenetwork@gmail.com)





**Thanks**