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### To establish a butterfly database for protecting Yuen Tun Ha

Since 2008, 'Butterfly Surveyor Training Scheme' has conducted long term surveys in various butterfly hotspots. This year, The Scheme aims to recruit 70 qualified butterfly surveyors, with Yuen Tun Ha being added to the survey sites<sup>1</sup>. The goal of recording two rare species, Orange Awlet (*Bibasis oedipodea*) and Spotted Royal (*Tajuria maculate*), will be especially targeted. **Mr. Matthew Sin, Environmental Affairs Manager of Green Power**, claimed that, unlike other butterfly species, caterpillars of these 2 species only consume one species of plant. The former only fed on Hiptage (*Hiptage benghalensis*) and the latter only fed on Witches' Broom (*Scurrula parasitica*). They are narrowly distributed because their caterpillars feed on just one species of plant, which is sparsely found in Hong Kong. "Both species have been spotted at Yuen Tun Ha, yet no formal record has been made," said Mrs Sin, "As they are not powerful flyers, it is very likely that they shelter nearby. Our Butterfly Surveyors will carry out a survey for a year, it will be an important discovery and achievement if formal records of the two species are obtained."



Orange Awlet (*Bibasis oedipodea*) is narrowly distributed

Mr. Sin further suggested that among the more than 240 species of butterflies in Hong Kong, about 30 species of butterfly caterpillars are fed on only one species of plant. 11 of these are classified as 'rare', and 10 are classified as 'very rare'. Orange Awlet and Spotted Royal are two of them. Because of the rarity of the food plants, the two species are narrowly distributed. As caterpillars are only fed on one species of plant, conserving the habitats of these plants is significant to butterfly conservation.

#### Butterfly data critical for conservation in Yuen Tun Ha

In a recent, initial survey at Yuen Tun Ha, Mr. Sin and the Butterfly Surveyors already discovered two very rare species—Lesser Forest Blue (*Taraka hamada*) and Small Yellow Sailor (*Neptis miah*), as well as two rare species—Orange Punch (*Dodona egeon*) and Chestnut Tiger (*Parantica sita*). He so believed that Yuen Tun Ha's large butterfly population is to be expected. Although a known butterfly hotspot in the New Territories East, Yuen Tun Ha has received less

attention and protection than compared other hotspots in the region. There are about 10 butterfly hotspots in the eastern New Territories (refer to table 1), most of which are within country parks or are protected in other ways, such as listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Only Shan Liu, Ma Niu and Yuen Tun Ha lack legal protection. Shan Liu has nurtured many butterflies with the large piece of mixed woodland and grassland. Yet in recent years the woodland has been largely cleared, and butterfly populations have greatly declined. As this case shows, unprotected butterfly hotspots are all too readily harmed. “Butterfly hotspots near Yuen Tun Ha – such as Tai Po Kau, Fung Yuen and Sha Lo Tung – are protected fully or at least to a certain extent,” said Mr. Sin. “Yuen Tun Ha may require similar protection, to minimise the risk of damage. At present, the most important thing is to keep a record of the local butterflies, in order to support our campaign for its protection,”

Note 1: “Butterfly Surveyor” Surveying Sites: San Tau, Tung Chung; Luk Keng, Fanling; Wu Kau Tang, Tai Po; and Lam Tsuen (She Shan and Ng Tung Chai), Tai Po; Yuen Tun Ha, Tai Po (newly added surveying site in 2010)

Table 1: Statues of Protection of Butterfly Hotspots in Eastern New Territories

<b>Location</b>	<b>Protection Status</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Protection Status</b>
Yuen Tun Ha	None	Cloudy Hill	Country Park
Shan Liu	None	Fung Yuen	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
Ma Liu	None	She Shan	Parts of it are listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest
Wu Kau Tang	Parts of it are listed as Country Park	Ng Tung Chai	Parts of it are listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest
Sha Lo Tung	Parts of it are listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Tai Po Kau	Special Area