

1st December, 2021

New Overwintering Site at Lamma with Butterfly Population Highest in Recent Years

Green Power and **Living Lamma** have found a new overwintering site of Danaids in Lamma, with a large population reaching 2,000 to 3,000 butterflies. This is the third island in Hong Kong—after Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island—that overwintering site of Danaids is discovered.

Matthew Sin, Senior Environmental Affairs Manager of Green Power highlights the importance of the discovery—there have been brief citizen reports of Danaids cluster on Lamma Island, but so far there is no official record or photograph or literature proving the overwintering site.

The new overwintering site was reported in late November 2021. The area is a mix forest habitat that covers about 1,000 square metres. Around 2,000 to 3,000 Danaids, similar to the number found in late November, are still staying in the area to date (1st December). Among them, 80% are Blue-spotted Crow (*Euploea midamus*), the others include Common Indian Crow (*Euploea core*) and a smaller number of Ceylon Blue Glassy Tiger (*Ideopsis similis*), Blue Tiger (*Tirumala limniace*), Dark Blue Tiger (*Tirumala septentrionis*) and Common Tiger (*Danaus genutia*).

“Most of the butterflies there have stopped feeding themselves—getting ready to overwinter by reducing activities and avoiding wastage of stored energy. They are staying in the bushes a few metres above ground. Judging from the phenomenon, the site is very likely to be a new overwintering site for Danaids,” Sin remarks. Green Power has been conducting survey of overwintering Danaids in Hong Kong. The recent discovery in Lamma is a large cluster and indicates that ecology in outlying islands in Hong Kong should not be overlooked.

Sin points out that the numbers of Danaids have been fluctuating in recent years. The addition of two new overwintering sites reported in 2015 and 2020 also shows that Danaids coming to Hong Kong may no longer concentrate in a few sites but spread out in smaller groups. The new pattern of cluster and overwintering presents challenge for conservation and research.

It is the peak time of Danaids visit in Hong Kong. Green Power and Living Lamma urges the public to keep away from the overwintering Danaids cluster and do not disturb the area. Any report of cluster location, time and number of Danaids from the public is highly welcome and can be sent via email to butterfly@greenpower.org.hk. The data collected will contribute to study of overwintering pattern of Danaids and help provide suggestion on conservation measures to the government.

Overwintering Danaids Survey

The survey was launched by Green Power in 2009 with new sites adding to the survey in phases. At present, four sites are covered: Deep Water Bay of Hong Kong Island, Siu Lang Shui of Tuen Mun, Fan Lau and Shui Hau of Lantau. The survey begins in October and ends in January of the next year. The number, species and habits of overwintering danaids are recorded. There are 13 danaid species found in Hong Kong, most having the habit of overwintering in groups. Every year in autumn and winter, thousands of danaids come to Hong Kong from the chilly regions in the north. Their migratory routes are not yet clear. Apart from Hong Kong, overwintering danaids are also found in Japan, Taiwan and Hainan. It is likely that the various regions are on the same migratory route of danaid butterflies.

Note: This is a joint press release by Green Power and Living Lamma.

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