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Green Power's Latest Butterfly Survey recorded High Species Number in 3 Hotspots First Breeding Record of Dark Himalayan Oak Blue in Yuen Tun Ha, Tai Po

Green Power announced the latest results from the Butterfly Survey 2021-2022. The survey was carried out from June 2021 to May 2022 by 137 butterfly surveyors, covering four butterfly hotspots including Luk Keng of North District, Yuen Tun Ha of Tai Po, Mui Wo and Shui Hau/Tong Fuk of Lantau Island. A total of 176 butterfly species were recorded, accounting for over 65% of the total species in Hong Kong. Among them, 52 were “Very Rare” and “Rare” butterfly species (Details are listed in Table 1). The species number hit record high in Luk Keng, Yuen Tun Ha and Mui Wo, respectively reaching 153, 146 and 124 species. In Yuen Tun Ha, Dark Himalayan Oak Blue (*Arhopala rama*), which have yet to be classified for its rarity, was spotted and the first breeding record of the species was made.

Helen Yau, Education and Project Manager of Green Power, was delighted about the fruitful results. Apart from the three record-breaking sites, Shui Hau/Tong Fuk also recorded a high level of butterfly diversity with 108 butterfly species. The results showed that butterfly ecology and overall countryside environment were basically healthy. However, **Yau** also expressed concern on the potential impacts of future development on the countryside in Lantau and the New Territories North.

In June 2022, the government announced the report on the “Study on Traffic, Transport and Capacity to Receive Visitors for Lantau”, among the recommendations was the construction of a new road to connect North Lantau and Mui Wo. **Yau** pointed out that at present the rather pristine landscape of South Lantau that harboured various butterfly hotspots was mainly protected by the restriction of vehicles on South Lantau Road and hence large scale development in the area. Once the new road was to open up, the rural areas in Mui Wo and South Lantau Road would be prone to greater pressure of development. The new road proposal would contradict with the official principle of "Development in the North; Conservation for the South".

Luk Keng, another butterfly hotspot with diverse ecology, was included in the “Northern Metropolis Development Strategy” and, together with Sha Tau Kok, enlisted in the Eco-recreation/tourism Circle. **Yau** highlighted the needs to consider the environment’s carrying capacity for the sustainable development of eco-tourism. Related monitoring measures must be put in place to restrict tourist crowd and vehicles in order to protect the precious rural landscape and ecology.

First breeding record of Dark Himalayan Oak Blue in Yuen Tun Ha, Tai Po

In Yuen Tun Ha, our surveyors recorded the first sighting of Dark Himalayan Oak Blue (*Arhopala rama*), a species not yet classified for rarity in Hong Kong as there were only sporadic records previously in the northern border of the New Territories, southern district of Hong Kong Island and Lantau North. The record, including the egg-laying behaviour of the species, was the first of its kind in central New Territories.

Unfortunately, the spot where we found the butterfly did not belong to country park or protected area. There was an existing “Outline Zoning Plan” but for years the area had been threatened by illegal use of the land, tree logging and pond filling. Population at Yuen Tun Ha and Tai Tit Yan nearby had also increased in recent years. Dark Himalayan Oak Blue would be easily affected by human activities as the species favors habitats at the middle and lower level of woodlands. **Yau** called for the government to strengthen law enforcement at the black spot areas and better still to change the land use zoning to stop the damage to the environment as soon as possible.

Table 1: Results of Green Power’s Butterfly Survey 2021 -2022

Butterfly Hotspot	No. of Butterfly Species	Total No. of “Very Rare” and “Rare” Species (“Very Rare” / “Rare”)	Some of the “Very Rare” and “Rare” Species
Luk Keng, North District	153	42 (15/27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commander, <i>Moduza procris</i> (Very Rare) • Common Rose, <i>Pachliopta aristolochiae</i> (Rare) • Common Leopard, <i>Phalanta phalantha</i> (Very Rare)
Yuen Tun Ha, Tai Po	146	36 (13/23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark Himalayan Oak Blue, <i>Arhopala rama</i> (Unclassified) • Spotted Royal, <i>Tajuria maculata</i> (Very Rare) • Orange Awlet, <i>Bibasis oedipodea</i> (Very Rare)
Mui Wo, Lantau Island	124	18 (8/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Quaker, <i>Pithecopus corvus</i> (Very Rare) • Golden Birdwing, <i>Troides aeacus</i> (Rare) • Orange Awlet, <i>Bibasis oedipodea</i> (Very Rare)
Shui Hau/ Tong Fuk, Lantau Island	108	13 (6/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Grass Yellow, <i>Eurema brigitta</i> (Rare) • Spotted Sawtooth, <i>Prioneris thestylis</i> (Rare) • Conjoined Swift, <i>Pelopidas conjunctus</i> (Rare)
Total (Repeated species excluded)	176	52 (20/32)	

[Remark] Butterfly Surveyor Scheme

Launched in 2008 by Green Power, the scheme trains members of the public to become qualified Butterfly Surveyors. The surveys begin in June/July each year and end in May/June the following year. Three butterfly hotspots were covered in 2008, with added number of hotspots each year totaling a maximum of 11 before the pandemic. Butterfly species number and environmental changes were monitored over the years. During the pandemic, we have scaled down the survey by reducing the number of surveyed sites as well as surveyors.

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