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### Sham Chung & Yung Shue O Butterfly Study

Sham Chung and Yung Shue O are located in Sai Kung. Sham Chung is an ecological hotspot. The endemic Hong Kong Paradise Fish (*Macropodus hongkongensis*) and some rare dragonflies including the narrowly distributed Sapphire Flutterer (*Rhyothemis triangularis*) can be found here. However, the butterfly ecology is less well known, though preliminary surveys conducted by Green Power in early 2011 recorded at least 68 butterfly species, including four rare and one very rare species. In addition, the special thing about Sham Chung and Yung Shue O is that some rare and even very rare species can be found easily, indicating the unique value of the local butterfly ecology. Pigmy Scrub Hopper (*Aeromachus pygmaeus*), the smallest butterfly of Hong Kong, is a rare species. Its sister species *Aeromachus jhora* was first recorded in Hong Kong at Yung Shue O in 2008. Together with the very rare Commander (*Moduza procris*) and rare Broadtail Royal (*Creon cleobis*), they are easily found at Sham Chung and Yung Shue O. These species might have already built up stable populations in the area. If this is true, Sham Chung and Yung Shue O will be irreplaceable butterfly hotspots.

In 1999, Sham Chung was exploited by a developer. A large area of freshwater wetland was reclaimed, threatening the survival of Hong Kong Paradise Fish. To save the endemic species, environmental group relocated 200 Hong Kong Paradise Fish. Later, proposals to build a golf course and spa resort were submitted by the developer. Although the applications were turned down, development at Sham Chung may continue. Early this year the developer suggested restoring Sham Chung in phases, but the proposal included only a small piece of wetland at southernmost Sham Chung and not the whole wetland. It is worrying that the so-called restoration is only to lay the groundwork for future development plans. In fact, the government has listed Sham Chung as one of the 12 Most Ecologically Valued Conservation Sites in 2004. Unfortunately this failed to safeguard the area from the destruction of development.

Apart from large-scale development, as on other New Territories land - Sham Chung and Yung Shue O are vulnerable to small-scale illegal developments. One example is the war game area by the small road from Yung Shue O to the coast. The area was a butterfly habitat, but after the site was built butterfly population plummeted. These small-scale works cause ongoing damage to local butterfly habitats. Compared to large-scale development, they are more difficult to monitor. But the ecological impacts are substantial. Green Power will carry out detailed surveys at Sham Chung and Yung Shue O in the coming year, with a survey team of around 20 members helping safeguard the area from further damage.

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