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Preliminary Results of Butterfly Survey at Pak Sha O and Lai Chi Chong in Sai Kung, and Lok Ma Chau Frontier Closed Area

Green Power conducted preliminary butterfly surveys at Pak Sha O, Lai Chi Chong and Lok Ma Chau in early 2013. The initial survey results at Pak Sha O and Lai Chi Chong, Sai Kung recorded 97 species of butterflies, representing 37% of the total number of butterfly species in Hong Kong. They include 8 rare species and 3 very rare species such as Small Yellow Sailer (*Neptis miah*), Albocaerulean (*Udara albocaerulea*) and Indian Awl King (*Choaspes benjamini*). 39 species were recorded in the Frontier Closed Area at Lok Ma Chau, featuring 3 rare species including Pale Palm Dart (*Telicota colon*) and Dark Swift (*Caltoris cahira*). Green Power has included Pak Sha O and Lai Chi Chong, Sai Kung as one of the "Butterfly Surveyor" long-term monitoring sites. Butterfly Surveyors will carry out regular butterfly surveys in the area.

Pak Sha O and Lai Chi Chong

Pak Sha O is a country park enclave. It was revealed in October 2012 that about 3000 m² of Pak Sha O wetlands have experienced massive destruction by invasion of bulldozers. Following the exposure of the incident, a draft Pak Sha O Development Permission Area Plan (draft DPA Plan) was released by the Town Planning Board (TPB) in December last year. The draft DPA plan covers 33 hectares, including about 32 hectares of "Unspecified Use" area and 1 hectare of "Village Type Development". Without the permission of TPB, no diversion of streams, filling of land/ponds or excavation of land can be carried out or continued. This largely reduces the possibilities of unauthorized development. As the authority normally needs three years to replace Draft Development Permission Area Plan by Outline Zoning Plan, we hope that public power will get as much ecological data of local butterflies as possible. Thus, we decide to appoint about 20 Butterfly Surveyors to conduct butterfly survey in Pak Sha O and the nearby Lai Chi Chong. We hope that the authority will consider the ecology of butterflies more in that area when proposing planning draft in the future.

Lai Chi Chong, with an area of 16 hectare, is also a country park enclave but has not been included in official zoning plan. Lai Chi Chong and Pak Sha O are only 3km apart and are both surrounded by the Sai Kung West Country Park. Conservation of both environments benefits the commuting of species so it is good for ecology. Since both locations are at the remote fringe of Sai Kung and development has been lacking behind villages near Sai Kung Town, natural ecological environment is preserved in a relatively intact manner. There are extensive areas of mature woodland and shrubland, as well as abandoned agricultural land from Hakka

villagers, mainly in Pak Sha O. Flooded farmland has turned to freshwater wetlands which become breeding ground for larval food plants, creating impressive resources of butterfly.

Although there has not been any development, we should not underestimate the pressure of development here as there is a pier which provides convenient sea transportation. Green Power will consistently monitor the butterfly ecologies at Pak Sha O and Lai Chi Chong for a year in order to provide ecological data to support local conservation.

Lok Ma Chau Frontier Closed Area

Lok Ma Chau Frontier Closed Area was established in 1950s. Apart from fish ponds and low-density houses, the area has remained basically undeveloped. The area was open to public in June 2013. 710 hectares of land from the closed area of Lok Ma Chau, corresponding to the size of over 37 Victoria Parks, from the west of Lok Ma Chau Boundary Control Point to the east of River Indus, was released as a result of the opening-up. Six villages were opened to the public, including Tak Yuet Lau Village, Liu Pok Village, Shun Yee San Tsuen, Ma Tso Lung Village, Lok Ma Chau Village and Ha Wan Village. It is anticipated that development and economic activities will become popular.

Sha Tau Kok Frontier Closed Area has been opened up in 2012. Green Power was the first organization that conducted a butterfly ecological survey there. 97 species had been recorded at Sha Tau Kok, representing 35% of the total in Hong Kong. Among these, 9 are rare species and 4 are very rare. It is confirmed that the released area is a butterfly hot spot in Hong Kong. The situation in Lok Ma Chau is similar to that of Sha Tau Kok. As these areas had always been located in frontier closed area, the corresponding ecological record was not sufficient. Lok Ma Chau is connected to Tai Shek Mo and Ho Sheung Heung. There are a lot of hill-topping butterflies at Tai Shek Mo, whereas Ho Sheung Heung is a butterfly hotspot in Northern district. The linkage between three places is bound to create prosperous butterfly diversity. Therefore, we believe that there are affluent butterfly resources to be explored. At this moment, Green Power has conducted two butterfly surveys in that area. It is hoped that there will be surprising butterfly findings in future. This will also improve the butterfly record in Hong Kong.