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**Sha Tau Kok Topped the Ranking in Butterfly Ecology  
South Lantau with Rare Species Needs Immediate Protection  
“Butterfly x STEM EXPO” takes public into the butterfly world**

Shell Nature Watch – Butterfly Explorer, co-effort of Green Power and Shell HK Ltd, has come to the 16<sup>th</sup> year of operation. Through a variety of activities, the project aims to promote local butterfly watching culture and encourage the Hong Kong public to take part in butterfly conservation. One major feature of the project is the setting up of a qualified butterfly surveyor team to monitor environmental changes in local butterfly hotspots. A cross-disciplinary Butterfly x STEM activity was also organized for primary school pupils. The latest results from the 2018-19 Butterfly Survey were announced today. Butterfly x STEM EXPO—with exhibitions and workshops of different themes—will also be held in 13 – 14 July for the public to appreciate the diverse world of butterflies.

**Sha Tau Kok ranked top in overall and rare butterflies**

Butterfly Surveyor is one of the key activities of Shell Nature Watch – Butterfly Explorer. Since 2008, over 300 Butterfly Surveyors have been successfully trained and routinely carried out surveys in different butterfly hotspots to record butterfly species and number to monitor environmental changes in these sites.

This year a total of 178 butterfly species, which accounts for 65% of total in Hong Kong, had been recorded in the 12 survey sites. Among them, 55 were Rare and Very Rare species. Sha Tau Kok, Tai Lam Country Park, and Park Sha O and Lai Chi Chong were the top three in butterfly species, respectively recorded 135, 124 and 109 species. Sha Tau Kok also topped the rank in Very Rare and Rare butterfly species, revealing its significance in butterfly ecology.

**Matthew Sin, Senior Environmental Affairs Manager of Green Power**, explained that the rich butterfly ecology of Sha Tau Kok might be due to its unique geographical location. Sha Tau Kok neighbours Robin's Nest which is connected to Pat Sin Leng in Hong Kong and Wutong Mountain National Forest Park in mainland China. The large piece of woodlands forms an ecological corridor which allows butterflies to thrive. Early in 1993, the Hong Kong government had proposed to set up the Robin's Nest Country Park. The proposal was finally confirmed in the Policy Report of 2017. However, two years have passed and we have yet to see any concrete schedule. **Sin** hoped that the government would start working on the proposal soon and consider the suggestion from green groups to increase the area of Robin's Nest Country Park to 1,120 hectares to fully protect the local ecology.

No drastic changes were observed in the various survey sites in comparing the overall butterfly species number to past figures. **Sin** pointed out that butterfly is biological indicator which can reflect environmental change and ecological value of a site. The stable number of butterfly species in the 12 survey sites showed that in the past year the ecological environment had not experienced much damage. **Sin** remarked that Common Line Blue, (*Prosotas nora*), which was first discovered in 2015 and was still unassessed as there were little records afterwards, was spotted in Wu Kau Tang and Pak Sha O this year, showing that the species might have established a local population.

### **Special butterflies recorded in Tong Fuk and Shui Hau**

Each year, a new survey site is added to the Butterfly Survey programme. This year in response to the government's Lantau Tomorrow proposal, we added Tong Fuk and Shui Hau of South Lantau as the 2919-20 new survey site. Four initial surveys were carried out from April to June which reported 74 butterfly species, including 5 Very Rare, 4 Rare and 2 Unassessed species. Among them, Common Yeoman (*Cirrochroa tyche*) recorded in Tong Fuk deserves special attention.

Common Yeoman (*Cirrochroa tyche*) is a tropical butterfly species that is widely distributed in South Asia and South East Asia areas. However, it is a Very Rare species in Hong Kong. According to data from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, there were only two records of the species in Hong Kong before 2005. The new record at Tong Fuk provides more evidence for its local population and distribution.

In addition, another Very Rare species Brown Awl (*Badamia exclamationis*) was also recorded in Tong Fuk. Three other Very Rare species Southern Chinese Peacock, (*Papilio dialis*), Tiny Grass Blue (*Zizula hylax*) and Metallic Cerulean (*Jamides alecto*) were recorded both at Tong Fuk and Shui Hau. The two sites, having complex ecological habitats such as dense woodlands behind villages and large area of abandoned farmlands turned wetlands, provide ideal feeding and breeding grounds for butterflies. “It is indeed quite amazing that several Very Rare species were recorded in the four initial surveys! I believe there will be more new discovery in later surveys at the site!” **Sin** remarked.

### **Lantau Tomorrow poses threat to South Lantau ecology**

Tong Fuk and Shui Hau situate at South Lantau, where access is largely limited as the two main roads Tung Chung Road and South Lantau Road are both closed road. South Lantau is hence protected from large scale development and maintains a rich ecological landscape. South Lantau, starting from Mui Wo, Pui O, Cheung Sha, Tong Fuk, Shui Hau, Lo Kei Wan to Fan Lau, is home to a great many butterflies. Mui Wo is traditionally a butterfly hotspot. Since 2014 when our survey team began work at the site, a total of 145 butterfly species have been recorded. Among the various butterfly hotspots, only Lo Kei Wan is within country park area, meaning that the other sites might be threatened by human damage easily.

The ambitious plan of Lantau Tomorrow was officially released in the Chief Executive’s Policy Address in 2018, which immediately attracted wide criticism particularly from conservation groups. The government asserted to follow the principle of “Development in the North, Conservation for the South” for Lantau. However, the large-scale artificial islands proposal has revealed that main roads from the islands would connect to South Lantau. It is inevitable that Lantau Tomorrow would bring crowds of vehicles and people and rapid development to South Lantau. “Considering economic and development factors, the artificial islands proposed in Lantau Tomorrow will connect to other parts of Hong Kong via Lantau. At present, over 70% of Lantau area are still in natural state, and South Lantau has so far been saved from large scale development due to the closed road. Once the artificial island and future traffic network is set up across South Lantau, all the promising statements of the government for ‘Development in the North, Conservation for the South’ will only become empty words.” **Sin** said.

**Sin** pointed out that funding for preliminary study of Lantau Tomorrow has been approved in the Public Works Subcommittee of the Legislative Council. Green Power will lose no time in collecting butterfly ecology information to provide baseline data for the conservation of South Lantau. Over 60 Butterfly Surveyors have begun routine surveys at Tong Fuk, Shui Hau and Mui Wo. In the past, Green Power had launched butterfly survey in response to the government's proposal to develop fringe area of Tai La Country Park. The survey reported over 140 butterfly species including several rare species which proved the high ecological value of the fringe area and eventually made the government shelve the development plan. **Sin** expected the baseline ecological survey at Shui Hau, Tong Fuk and Mui Wo would provide similarly important evidence for the protection of South Lantau. With these objective and scientific arguments at hand, Green Power will continue to work with other green groups to voice out opposition to Lantau Tomorrow.

#### **7.14 We Love Butterflies Day**

Green Power has designated July 14 of each year as We Love Butterflies Day to raise public awareness on butterfly conservation. This year, the theme of STEM was chosen to match local education trend. Ten primary schools were invited to participate in Butterfly x STEM primary education activities, which integrated elements from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Pupils got to explore nature through the diverse, cross-disciplinary learning experiences, including the design and setting up of butterfly gardens, rearing butterflies and conducting a variety of experiments and explorations.

Butterfly x STEM EXPO will be held in 13 – 14 July (Sat – Sun) at iSQUARE of Tsim Sha Tsui. The event is open to public. A range of experimental activities, workshops and interactive exhibitions will be organized. The public can explore the magical change of butterflies in their life cycle through experiments and take a microscopic look at the interesting features of the butterfly such as its scales on the wings. Participants will learn about ecological conservation through new perspectives. In addition, pupils from 10 primary schools participated in Butterfly x STEM educational activity will share their learning outcomes with the public too.

Green Power has also invited the renowned local creative duo Stickyline to put up a large installation art of a 2-meter Golden Birdwing made of waste paper. The public can also participate in paper folding workshop conducted by Stickyline at the Expo.