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## **Butterflies and Rare Species Surged in Record-breaking Numbers Sha Tau Kok Tops the List of Butterfly Hotspots**

**Green Power** has announced the latest report of Butterfly Survey for the half-yearly period from June to December 2019—an encouraging one which documented a general rising of butterfly population across different survey sites in Hong Kong, some even broke the record in terms of the number of rare and other butterfly species.

Green Power's Butterfly Survey covers 11 butterfly hotspots. Over 300 trained Butterfly Surveyors carry out routine surveys in the hotspots starting from June of each year. By the end of 2019, the seven months of survey recorded a total of 183 butterfly species, which accounted for about 70% of the total in Hong Kong. Among them, 57 were rare and very rare species. Sha Tau Kok, Sham Chung and Yung Shue O, and Luk Keng were the top three in butterfly diversity, recording 149, 129 and 125 species respectively. Sha Tau Kok ranked first in rare butterfly species, recording 33 in total—12 very rare and 21 rare species.

**Matthew Sin, Senior Environmental Affairs Manager of Green Power**, pointed out that Sha Tau Kok proved itself to be the most important butterfly reserve by breaking several records since the first survey carried out in 2008, hitting the highest number of butterfly species and rare butterfly species in a single hotspot.

**Sin** remarked that the 500-hectare Robin's Nest Country Park, the 25th country park in Hong Kong to be set up by year end of 2020, excludes the lowland of Sha Tau Kok. With the opening of Liantang Boundary Control Point, the now butterfly-rich locality will face enormous development pressure. "Since the previous opening of the Frontier Closed Area of Sha Tau Kok, we have seen the development of village housing cohorts, open air parking garages and leisure farms, etc. From past experience, green spaces in rural Hong Kong are easily turned into brownfield sites with damaged environment and ecology." **Sin** hoped that the Hong Kong government would accept the green groups' proposal to extend the Robin's Nest Country Park to the lowland of Sha Tau Kok, covering a total of 1,120 hectares to protect the local ecology.

Apart from Sha Tau Kok, Luk Keng, Wu Kau Tang and Lung Kwu Tan also reported record-breaking number of butterfly species, observing 125, 121 and 101 butterfly species respectively. As for rare butterfly species, Wu Kau Tang, Sham Chung and Yung Shue O, and Tai Lam Country Park (Kam Tin) ranked the top three sites, each breaking the record with 25, 27, and 26 species respectively.

**Sin** said the result was a surprise as it was only seven months passed and the survey had surmounted numerous records. In recent years the butterfly hotspots in general have evaded large-scale damage or development, observing steady figures in butterfly populations. He believed that butterfly populations are slowly growing under a stable condition. For example, Common Archduke (*Lexias pardalis*) and Tailless Line Blue (*Prosotasdubiosa*), first recorded in 2008 and 2010 in Hong Kong and are yet to be graded, were reported in several sites in the latest survey. In fact, Common Archduke was reported in every survey site. The two species are likely to have established stable populations in Hong Kong.

At present, two of the survey sites are located in South Lantau: Mui Wo and Shui Hau & Tong Fuk. A total of 156 species have been observed at the two sites. Shui Hau & Tong Fuk is the only site that record the very rare Southern Chinese Peacock, *Papiliodialis* consistently, revealing that the site is an important habitat with special conservation value. **Sin** restated Green Power's opposition to Lantau Tomorrow which includes the grand plan to connect road network from the artificial islands to South Lantau. Once the closed road of South Lantau is opened up, crowds, vehicles and development plans will follow and there is no way to protect the now bio-diversity rich South Lantau.

Butterfly Surveyors are now open for recruitment. After completing the training, new members will join the survey team beginning the second season of this year. **Sin** called for all who are dedicated to butterfly conservation to join and help collect data to protect butterflies in Hong Kong. For more details on Butterfly Surveyor programme, please click into [www.greenpower.org.hk/butterflysurveyor2020](http://www.greenpower.org.hk/butterflysurveyor2020) or call 3961 0200.