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NATURE WATCH

PLANET | PEOPLE | PARTNERS

GOING FOR A SONG

What would it take
to break Asia's
caged bird trade?

Learn how 'crane rice' is good for birds and farmers

Nature Stewards step up to turn passion into action

What can Singaporeans do to save more sharks?

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MESSAGE

Conservation succeeds when people care enough to act, and ground their advocacy in evidence

Huang Ningxin

Executive Director, Nature Society Singapore Secretariat

IN THE PAST FEW DECADES, NSS has contributed to some of the following conservation outcomes: the gazetting of Sungei Buloh as a nature reserve; the retention of Lower Peirce Reservoir Park as a mature forest, instead of being cleared away for a golf course; the retention of the Green Corridor as a continuous green space; and the restoration of the Kranji Marshes as a cooperative wildlife habitat.

What these four cases have in common is that the people who had experienced these places already believed they mattered, long before any campaign told them so. That distinction matters, because it points to what actually sustains conservation action. Awareness may change what people know, but it doesn't compel anyone to act. What compels action is the feeling that you have a stake in the place, a feeling built up from years of walking through the space, caring for it, and growing with it.

In recent months, it has been heartening to see the deep feelings that people have for Maju Forest and Gillman Barracks. The next step is to plan for the best outcomes for both places, based on the facts.

Conservation succeeds when there are people who care enough to act, while also advocating for outcomes grounded in evidence. That's why when NSS advocates for a site, our position rests on species records, habitat surveys, and ecological connectivity — evidence that is measurable and verifiable.

In the meantime, we aim to strengthen Singaporeans' emotional stake in every nature site, be they close to home, or in the remote corners of the island. We do this through our "Reconnect" programmes like Nature Stewards training, which you can read about in this issue. We're also bringing up the plight of caged birds once again, as this will be the key theme of the 42nd Singapore Bird Race that NSS will be holding in November. We believe that, through such activities, we can continue to build the relationships our participants have with nature.



NSS Executive Director Huang Ningxin (centre) engaging with participants of the NSS Nature Stewards training programme. Photo: NSS

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ON THE COVER The White-rumped Shama is native to Singapore, and it's very popular among local bird-keepers. But the species is also targeted by poachers and it's heavily trafficked, and so it is strictly protected by law. Photo: Mark Sng

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Official Magazine of Nature Society Singapore

EDITOR

Mr John Yip

DESIGNER

Mr S.T. Leng

CONTRIBUTORS

Mr Nick Measures,

Ms Juliette Yu-Ming Lizeray,

Ms TR Sammyukta

Mr Mark Sng

CONTRIBUTING TO NATURE WATCH

We welcome your articles, surveys, studies, observations, artworks and photo essays on biodiversity, natural history, conservation and related fields. Please email your story proposal to contact@nss.org.sg. Do include samples of your photographs (maximum 20 images per submission). We require high resolution JPEG images (ideally uncropped) in the largest size available, labelled with a descriptive file name.

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GOING FOR A SONG

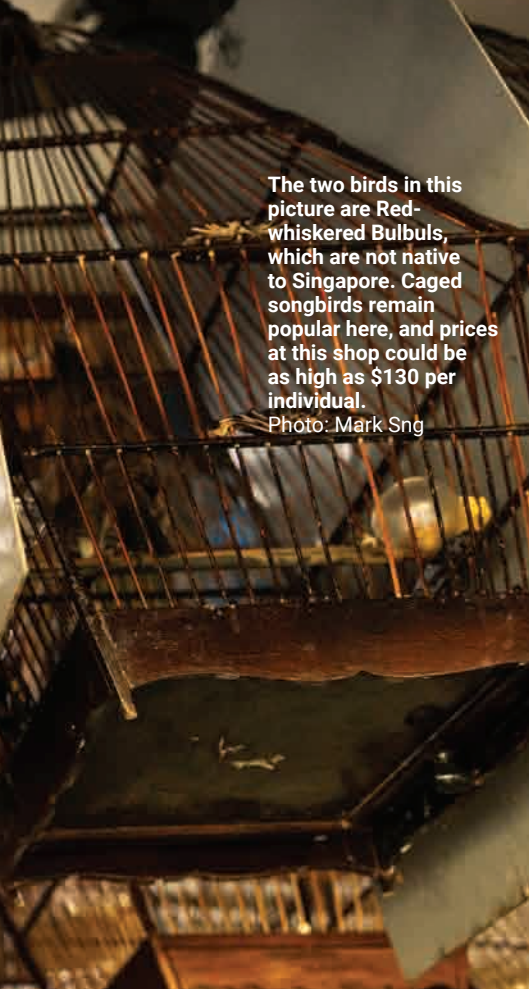
The caged-bird trade has a devastating impact on the wild populations of songbirds in Southeast Asia, but addressing the issue is not straightforward.

Text by **NICK MEASURES**

Rich and bubbly, melodious yet strident, the musical call of the Straw-headed Bulbul is both beautiful and arresting. Despite their distinctive yellow-orange caps, black striped faces and speckled breasts, they are more often heard than seen in Singapore's nature parks and forests.

Like the Smooth-coated Otter and Oriental Pied-Hornbill, the Straw-headed Bulbul is a conservation success story for Singapore. Its numbers here are at a relatively healthy level and possibly even on the rise. Unfortunately, this is in stark contrast to large parts of the bird's native range across Southeast Asia.

Wild populations of the Straw-headed Bulbul have dropped drastically since the 1950s. Classified as critically endangered



The two birds in this picture are Red-whiskered Bulbuls, which are not native to Singapore. Caged songbirds remain popular here, and prices at this shop could be as high as \$130 per individual.
Photo: Mark Sng

on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, the species is already deemed extinct in parts of Thailand and Indonesia.

Unfortunately for the Straw-headed Bulbul, its delightful song makes it a favourite target of poachers and bird collectors. The species is hugely popular as a pet and as a competitor in bird-singing contests, and because the species is difficult to breed in captivity, there is strong demand for individuals that have been trapped and taken from the wild.

The fate of the Straw-headed Bulbul is emblematic of the devastating impact of the caged-bird trade on Southeast Asia's bird populations, to the point where some forests have become eerily quiet because of the disappearance of wild songbirds.

“Indonesian bird-keeping circles are massive. I would assume that at any point in time there must be at least 20 million people who are into bird-keeping.”

Dr Yong Ding Li

Conservation Biologist;
Regional Coordinator,
BirdLife International



Caged birds for sale in Singapore are supposed to be captive-bred but a buyer should always check with the shop before purchasing one. Pet shops here must be licensed to sell wildlife. Photo: Mark Sng

Big demand for birds

The regional epicentre of the caged-bird trade is Indonesia — predominantly Java, the most densely populated island in the archipelago — where bird-keeping is deeply rooted in the local culture. The country is home to huge songbird hobby groups that participate in competitions, own a wide variety of birds, and actively share information on what species are currently available and which are trending in popularity.

“Indonesian bird-keeping circles are massive,” says Dr Yong Ding Li, Conservation Biologist and Regional Coordinator at BirdLife International. “I would assume that at any point in time there must be at least 20 million people who are into bird-keeping.”

The scale is staggering, with a 2020 study estimating that one-third of all homes in Java owns at least one songbird. It is even possible that there are now more songbirds in captivity in Java than in the island’s forests.

The trend is not just limited to Indonesia, but also across all of Southeast Asia, and the reasons for the popularity of bird-keeping are as varied as the birds themselves. “(The hobby) is very dynamic. It is shaped by forces that sometimes we ecologists do not fully understand,” says Ding Li.

“A man in Saigon will have different motivations compared with a man in Yogyakarta or Jakarta, probably keeping totally different species of birds.”

Ding Li’s colleague, Shelby Wee, Asia Conservation Officer at BirdLife, agrees. “Although we share similar cultures in Southeast Asia, the drivers of poaching are quite different,” she says. For example, the current trend in Malaysia and Thailand is for bird collectors to focus on a few popular species like the White-rumped Shama, the Zebra Dove, and the Red-whiskered Bulbul. In Cambodia, where there is less interest in keeping songbirds, birds are still poached from the wild to cater for merit releases and export to other countries.

In Vietnam, there is a vibrant culture of bird-keeping

Bird-keeping Trends in Southeast Asia

 INDONESIA Epicentre of the region’s caged-bird trade: Java. Bird-keeping is rooted in the culture with huge songbird hobby groups.	 SINGAPORE Primarily songbirds and parrots. Popular: Red-whiskered Bulbul, Swinhoe’s White-eye, Chinese Hwamei, and White-rumped Shama.	 MALAYSIA THAILAND Bird collectors focus on a few popular species — the White-rumped Shama, the Zebra Dove, and the Red-whiskered Bulbul.	 CAMBODIA Less interest in keeping songbirds, but birds are poached to cater for merit releases and export to other countries.	 VIETNAM A vibrant culture of bird-keeping and songbird competitions; preferences for the Chinese Hwamei and Laughingthrushes.
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The demand for songbirds caught from the wild is rising. This is reflected in the 2025 edition of Asian Songbird Trade priority taxon list, which identified over 70 bird species whose wild populations are threatened by the songbird trade.

and songbird competitions, and collectors there have preferences similar to those in China. This means that species like the Chinese Hwamei and Laughingthrushes are more popular and commonly found in local markets, and the wild populations of these species have correspondingly plummeted.

Meanwhile, the demand for songbirds caught from the wild is rising. This is reflected in the 2025 edition of Asian Songbird Trade priority taxon list, which identified over 70 bird species whose wild populations are directly threatened by the songbird trade. As the hobby grows, so too does the demand for novelty. A research paper published in 2024 identified a significant rise in the trafficking and keeping of sunbirds in Indonesia, while exotic species like the Pitohuis, a small group of birds endemic to New Guinea, are starting to show up in bird markets.

“It’s all about making money, and all about fashion,” says Ding Li. “Bird trappers will capture anything they think would sell, and people who buy the birds from the market go on to set fashion trends.”

The trade in songbirds can

also be very lucrative. A songbird like the Straw-headed Bulbul could be sold for a few hundred dollars in Indonesia. Given that many people in Southeast Asia’s rural communities do not have stable incomes, it is easy to understand why they would go on to trap and sell wild animals. “Poaching and selling a bird is one of the easiest ways for them to earn fast money,” says Shelby.

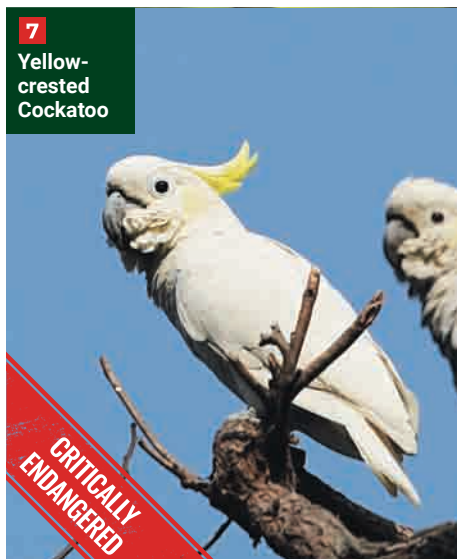
Tackling the trade

Conservationists are pushing hard to find solutions, such as by lobbying for tougher laws and enforcement to deter poachers. International agreements against the trafficking of wildlife do exist, most notably the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or CITES. The convention regulates the international trade of animals and plants, and CITES permits must be obtained before consignments are allowed to leave or enter a country.

However, songbirds are drastically under-represented in the CITES appendices of species that require protection from over-exploitation, and it is up to individual countries to lobby for

Asian birds impacted by the wildlife trade

The following are some of the species mentioned in the article. The Straw-headed Bulbul (No. 2) may be relatively safe here, but it is critically endangered in other parts of Southeast Asia. Parrots and parakeets (No. 6 to 9) are popular as pets, but none of those shown here are native to Singapore and one of them, the Yellow-crested Cockatoo (No. 7), is critically endangered — a fact that many local owners aren't aware of.



Photos: Mark Sng (1,3,4), Lim Kim Chuah (2), James A. Eaton (5), Anuj Jain (6), Michelle and Peter Wong (7), Jessica Lee (8,9)

the addition of more species. For example, in 2023, Singapore and Malaysia successfully lobbied for the listing of the Straw-headed Bulbul (Appendix I, for species threatened with extinction that are or may be affected by trade) and the White-rumped Shama (Appendix II, for species not currently threatened with extinction, but that may become so without trade controls).

A listing is only one part of the solution, though. CITES may be an international agreement, but for it to be put into practice, each country that is party to the convention must create its own national laws to implement and enforce the mandated protections. This can lead to situations where different countries have very different rules and policies relating to the protection of species, and this makes cross-border collaboration on monitoring the songbird trade even more difficult.

“Southeast Asia is not Europe. Europe as a continent, has got very harmonised rules and policies,” says Ding Li. “A policy that applies to Germany applies to the Netherlands, applies to Cyprus, and everywhere else (in the European Union), but Southeast Asia’s laws are a bit complicated and they come from different colonial legacies.”

But even where strong legislation exists, bird traders can exploit loopholes or push for changes to policies. For example, Thailand has some of the best wildlife laws in Southeast Asia, with the Thai Wildlife Conservation Act offering basic protection for all bird species. However, earlier this year, bird traders in Thailand successfully lobbied the Thai government to remove a subset of birds including the Red-whiskered Bulbul from that protected list. Similar exemptions have also taken place in Indonesia, which removed similar protection for songbirds like the Straw-headed Bulbul and White-rumped Shama in 2018.

Engaging communities

While better laws, policing and frameworks can all help, ultimately, it is important to address the under-



Red-whiskered Bulbuls may have been brought here as pets as long ago as the early 1900s.
Photo: Mark Sng

While better laws, policing and frameworks can all help, ultimately, it is important to address the underlying cultural drivers fuelling the desire to keep birds. Crucially, it is important for conservationists to keep an open-mind and avoid being judgmental.

lying cultural drivers fuelling the desire to keep birds. Crucially, it is important for conservationists to keep an open-mind and avoid being judgmental. “I think the most dangerous thing we could do is to write off someone else’s culture and say, ‘Oh, that’s backwards,’” says Shelby. “You just shut down the conversation immediately.”

For example, in Indonesia, and especially in Javanese culture, owning a bird is more than just a hobby — it is also one of the five things believed to be necessary for a fulfilling life, on a par with important goals like having a life partner, personal transport, and a home. BirdLife is working with local communities to promote hobbies such as bird-watching as an alternative to bird-keeping.

“They would still be practising their culture, but in a more conservation-friendly way,” says Shelby. “We want to think about how we can preserve a people’s culture, while also saving these birds.”

Another line of approach is to work with communities to improve their livelihoods and embrace conservation. For example, in Java’s Menoreh Hills, BirdLife is

helping farmers by showing them how to process and market their own tea rather than just selling the unprocessed leaves.

The farmers also gain awareness of the benefits of protecting their local environment. They learn, for example, that if they stopped poaching birds, there would be more birds around to feed on insect pests. This means they do not have to use pesticides to protect their crops, and they can then market their food at a premium as organic produce.

“It’s really about how we build on what they are already doing to give them more income, and for us to incorporate the biodiversity message along with it,” says Shelby. 🌿



Originally from the UK but now a resident of Singapore, **Nick Measures** has written on everything from Michelin-starred

restaurants to the future of space travel but his real passion is covering stories that spotlight indigenous communities, conservation projects, and the preservation of the natural world.

How does Singapore fare?

SINGAPORE is in a unique position compared to its regional neighbours. While bird-keeping is also a popular hobby here, it operates on a much smaller scale. Together with the country's strong legal protections and enforcement, popular songbirds like the Straw-headed Bulbul have found a safe haven here.

However, it is important not to be complacent. While infrequent, there have been cases of illegal trapping of wild birds in Singapore. If you spot any suspicious signs — such as individuals placing cages in trees, or applying glue to branches — collect what evidence you can of these activities and report them to NParks.

If you want to be a bird-keeper, then it is really important that you do your research, and avoid contributing to the problem. Most pet birds in Singapore are bred in captivity but, wherever possible, you should try to find out where the bird came from and how it was reared. You should also look up its conservation status — a 2021 study on parrot ownership in Singapore

72%

of respondents reported that they were "very concerned about the illegal hunting of parrots for commercial trade".



67%

of respondents did not know the conservation status of their pets.

Source: Study on parrot ownership in Singapore (2021)

found that two-thirds of owners (67%) did not know the conservation status of their pets. This was even though a majority of the respondents (72%) reported that they were "very concerned about the illegal hunting of parrots for commercial trade".

Of course, the best thing that we can all do is to simply appreciate birds in the wild, where they belong. The upcoming **42nd Singapore Bird Race** organised by NSS, from 14 to 15 Nov 2026, is the perfect opportunity to do this. Find out how you can be a participant by visiting www.nss.org.sg/singapore-bird-race



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Every grain of rice a treasure for conservation

Two protected landscapes in Cambodia that are critical for wetland birds like the Sarus Crane also include rice fields that are vital to local communities. Innovative initiatives like “crane rice” are therefore needed to ensure that conservation succeeds here.

Text by **JOHN YIP**

Photos by **MICHELLE HARRIFF**

When I was a small child, I went to the rice fields and saw a big bird eating my family's rice. I disturbed them and they flew away. I didn't know it was a Sarus Crane,” said Cheng Euy, a farmer in Cambodia's Kampot province, in the southeastern corner of the country, close to the border with Vietnam.

Cheng Euy didn't mean any harm to the crane and, in fact, she loves the red-headed bird. If it were full-grown at the time, the crane would have towered over her so, unsurprisingly, Cheng Euy described the close encounter as a “special moment from her childhood”.

NatureLife Cambodia's “crane rice” is grown amid the vast wetlands of Anlung Pring, a protected landscape in southeastern Cambodia (third and fourth picture from left). Under the initiative, the farmers do not use pesticides nor chemical fertilisers, making the rice safe for the Sarus Cranes (first picture from left), which feed on small animals and leftover grains in the fields. The harvested rice is carefully sorted and packed (second picture), and sold at a premium.



Photo: NLC



Sadly, Sarus Cranes (*Antigone antigone*) are a rarer sight in Cambodia today. The species occurs in India, Nepal, Southeast Asia, and northern Australia, but the ones found in Cambodia are classified as a sub-species (*Antigone antigone sharpii*), making the country a stronghold for this unique “eastern population”.

During the wet season from May to October, Cambodia’s Sarus Cranes breed in the flooded grasslands and wetlands of the northern and northeastern parts of the country. When the dry season arrives, the birds — along with their newly fledged young — fly south to places like Kampot province to feed and spend the winter.

Sarus Cranes have a surprisingly broad diet that includes the tubers and roots of aquatic plants, frogs, insects and crustaceans and, interestingly, rice and other cereal grains. They forage in shallow waters, probing the mud and wet soil with their long beaks and, crucially, the birds have also adapted to feeding in rice

fields, which have become a part of their natural habitat.

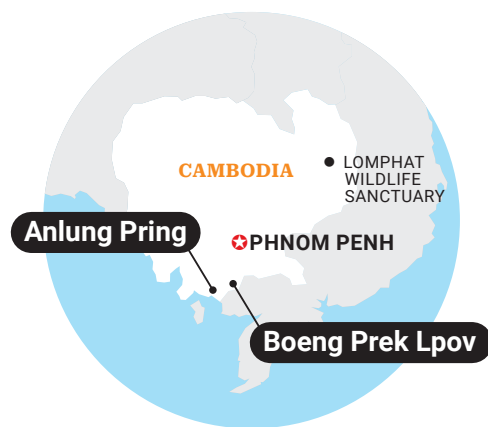
Unfortunately, rice farmers in Cambodia tend to rely heavily on chemical fertilisers and pesticides to improve their yields. This has had an adverse impact on Sarus Cranes, and it is a major driver of the birds’ declining population, from almost 1,000 in 2005, to only about 160 individuals in 2020.

NatureLife Cambodia

Bou Vorsak, CEO of NatureLife Cambodia (NLC), has made it his mission to save the distinctive birds. Co-founded by Vorsak in 2017, NLC is a non-governmental organisation. It has also been the official partner of BirdLife International in Cambodia since 2020. As part of its efforts to stabilise and restore the population of Sarus Cranes, NLC has been working with local communities in two of the country’s protected landscapes: Anlung Pring and Boeng Prek Lpov in southern Cambodia. “We are also in Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary, in the northeastern plains, working to

Protected Landscapes

Cambodia’s Sarus Cranes nest in the north and northeast during the wet season, but fly south in the dry season to feed in the wetlands and rice fields. That’s why protected areas like Anlung Pring and BPL are vital for the birds.



protect the cranes’ nesting sites,” said Vorsak.

Anlung Pring encompasses 217ha in Kampot province, while Boeng Prek Lpov — located about 100km northeast of Anlung Pring



Photo: John Yip



— is much larger, covering an area of more than 8,300ha in Takeo province. By comparison, Singapore’s Bukit Timah Nature Reserve is about 163ha, while our largest nature reserve, the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, is just over 3,000ha in area.

As protected landscapes, Anlung Pring and Boeng Prek Lpov fit the definition of what’s known as “area-based conservation”, the primary approach used globally to tackle biodiversity decline. However, unlike traditional nature reserves that are set aside exclusively for conserving biodiversity, there are farming communities located within the boundaries of Anlung Pring and Boeng Prek Lpov. The rice fields in both landscapes are seasonally inundated by the swelling of the Mekong River during the wet season, bringing the fresh water and nutrients that are critical for growing the crop.

For the farmers, their rice fields are their livelihoods. For the Sarus Cranes wintering in southern Cambodia, they are also a source of food and shelter. “So, to conserve the Sarus Crane, it’s really important to get support from the community. That’s why we introduced the crane rice initiative,” said Vorsak.

Crane rice

“Crane rice” is NLC’s ambitious community livelihood initiative, developed with Cambodia’s Ministry of Environment, BirdLife International, and other partners. Centred in Anlung Pring, the initiative seeks to make rice farming more economically attractive by encouraging the farmers to adopt sustainable practices, such as abstaining from chemical pesticides and using organic rather than chemical fertilisers.

“The people who join the initiative get training in sustainable agriculture. They are able to get subsidised seeds and organic fertiliser, and if they follow the criteria for producing crane rice, the farmers can get premium prices when selling the rice,” Vorsak explained.



Getting to a bird observation post in Boeng Prek Lpov requires a boat journey through a wetland. In wet season, though, this area would be totally flooded.



‘Crane rice’ seeks to encourage farmers to adopt sustainable practices, allowing them to sell their crop at a premium. Photo: John Yip



A concrete collection point for farmers to dispose of their agricultural and plastic waste to prevent contamination of their rice fields.

The farmers who join the “crane rice” initiative get training in sustainable agriculture. They get access to subsidised seeds and organic fertiliser, and if they follow the criteria for producing the rice, they can fetch premium prices when selling it.

More importantly, sustainable farming practices can also turn the rice fields in Anlung Pring into a safe habitat for wild birds. “The Sarus Cranes benefit because we also leave rice in the rice field, providing them with safe food to eat while they winter here,” said Vorsak.

The initiative began in 2021, with NLC leasing rice fields from local farmers to test its methods for growing crane-friendly rice. By 2022, as many 100 farming households in Anlung Pring participated in the initiative, and about 100ha of farmland was planted with crane rice. And, as of 2025, the number of participating households had increased to about 140, and the

cultivated area grew to 185ha.

The more heartening news, however, is that the number of Sarus Cranes appear to have stabilised. “In the last three years, the birds started to come back and we recorded 214 birds in the national census in 2024 (up from 160 in 2020). So, that’s a good sign,” said Vorsak. “But I’m also very proud that the crane rice initiative was supported by the community and the local government. That tells me we are on the right trend.”

Restoring wetlands

NLC faces a different challenge, however, in Boeng Prek Lpov (BPL). For one thing, it is a much larger

PHOTO ESSAY

The NSS Secretariat visited Anlung Pring and Boeng Prek Lpov earlier in 2026 to perform a dry run of the Eco-Journey: Anlung Pring itinerary. Here are some snippets of our experience.

Anlung Pring

CRANE RICE

WE VISITED DURING THE DRY SEASON in February. The crane rice grown by the villagers had already been harvested and stockpiled in a granary, where the rice was also sieved and sorted. This is traditionally done by hand (it's much harder than it looks!), but NLC has also leased a machine to do it faster, if need be.

NLC CEO, Bou Vorsak (top photo, left), showed us the rice grains up close. Two types are actually grown as part of the crane rice initiative: the red jasmine variety from Thailand which is sold to buyers in Phnom Penh, and a local variety which is typically sold to Vietnamese buyers, who use it to produce pho noodles.

We then visited a protected plot in Anlung Pring that is directly managed by NLC. During the wet season, this area would look more like a shallow sea. Along the way, the villagers showed us the concrete collection points where they would dispose of their agricultural and plastic waste, to prevent contamination of their rice fields.

The following day, we met the members of a farmers' committee in another village, including Cheung Euy (second photo from top, extreme right, wearing purple jacket), and heard about their hopes and challenges in cultivating crane rice. We also met the rangers employed by the Ministry of Environment (third photo from top), who are important partners in the management of Anlung Pring.



Boeng Prek Lpov

WETLAND RESTORATION

IT TOOK A FULL DAY OF TRAVELLING TO get to BPL from Anlung Pring. The scale of conservation here is far bigger, as were the size of the rice fields. The farmers here are able to harvest rice twice a year here, compared to just once a year in Anlung Pring.

Getting to the bird observation post in BPL (above) required us to first travel along an irrigation canal, and then switch to even shallower boats at the ranger station, so as to navigate the still flooded wetland.

In the wet season, the entire area would become a huge lake stretching all the way to the horizon. But intensive farming has left several plots of land dried out and in danger of being colonised by the invasive Giant Mimosa (below), which could turn the fields into unproductive shrubland. NLC project coordinator Ly Samphors explained how other NGO partners are helping to restore such plots by building bunds and gradually refilling them with fresh water.

And, finally, we got to the observation post, deep in BPL. Unfortunately, we were not in luck: huge flocks of Asian Openbills would sometimes roost in the bushes closer to the tower, but on this day, they were about 100m away, so we couldn't get a closer look.





“We run an education programme in BPL to improve the knowledge of local children and villagers, so that they will know why the wetland is very important.”

Ly Samphors

Project coordinator
Boeng Prek Lpov Protected Landscape
NatureLife Cambodia

landscape, and there are also many more farming communities here (about 5,000 households spread across 22 villages) than in Anlung Pring. Secondly, the rice fields in Boeng Prek Lpov are more productive than Anlung Pring's and the communities here have less incentive to adopt organic farming practices.

As such, NLC needed a different strategy to win over the local communities of Boeng Prek Lpov. Here, the approach is to raise awareness among the farmers that intensive rice cultivation can quickly exhaust their fields, and destroy the wetland ecosystems on which their livelihoods depend.

“We run an education programme in BPL to improve the knowledge of local children and villagers, so that they will know why the wetland is very important,” said Ly Samphors, NLC's project coordinator in the Boeng Prek Lpov Protected Landscape.

“We also engage with the local communities and get them to help control and remove invasive species like the Giant Mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*),” said Ly. These invasive plants are capable of spreading aggressively across a wetland and gradually turn it into drier, less productive shrubland. This not only harms rice farmers, but also the Sarus Cranes which feed and winter in Boeng Prek Lpov.

Despite the enormity of NLC's projects in Boeng Prek Lpov, Ly has

reasons to feel hopeful. “In recent years, we noticed that the area has attracted more birds like the critically endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*). We have records of them in BPL previously, but they then disappeared for many years. Then suddenly, from 2020, we started to record sightings of them again, and the population has increased every year.”

There are other successes, too. “It used to be that there were no waterbird colonies in BPL,” said Ly. “But now, we have the Asian Openbill (*Anastomus oscitans*) and the Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) building nests and feeding in BPL throughout the year.”

Friends from afar matter too

The long-term challenge is for NLC's conservation initiatives to become self-sustaining. “My biggest hope is that people will learn to love seeing birds in the wild, rather than keeping them in cages,” said Ly. “I also hope that every Protected Landscape can provide ecotourism activities or earn money from selling local produce, so we can depend less on donations.”

Ideally, that should also be the case for crane rice. “I want crane rice to become commercially self-sustaining,” said NLC CEO Vorsak. “I want to scale up the initiative, so that it's not just Cambodians but also our friends outside Cambodia who are happy to eat the rice and pay to save the Sarus Crane.”

As for Cheung Euy, she enjoys seeing more visitors coming to Anlung Pring. Her village in a remote corner of Cambodia has come a long way. “We have many tourists now who come to visit our community, and visit our wildlife. I hope that when they come here, they can see how we grow and harvest our rice, hear our stories and share them with their friends when they go home.” 🌿

Join us!

ECO-JOURNEY

Anlung Pring



ARE you interested in seeing Sarus Cranes in the wild, and experiencing at first hand whether rice farming can remain profitable while also serving conservation goals? You can do so by joining the NSS Eco-Journey to Anlung Pring. We will be conducting two trips in 2027, one for the public from 19 to 24 January, and the other from 22 to 27 February, for professional development.

Visit <https://nss.org.sg/anlung-pring-eco-journey/> for detailed itineraries of both trips, or to register your interest.



Scan for details



John Yip is a Senior Executive for the NSS Secretariat. A former journalist, he is also the editor of *Nature Watch* magazine. He enjoys hiking, cycling, and outdoor adventures. He also wishes he had enough time to catch up on his reading.



R E C O N N E C T

Life's Detours

THAT LED ME

Back to Nature



Conservation can't be done by scientists alone. It also needs storytellers, educators, urban planners, and people from all fields to come together. Learn how this writer embarked on a journey of her own, to gather the tools and insights that allow her to be of service to nature.

Text and Photos by **JULIETTE YU-MING LIZERAY**



One of my first memories is of the sea. I picked a little shell from the surf and saw the spindly limbs of a tiny creature emerge from its depths. I placed it back on the sand and let the waves carry it away.

My parents exposed me to nature from an early age. They took me down jungle trails in MacRitchie, showed me blooming Talipot Palms at the Botanic Gardens, let me befriend rogue hens and stray cats. I loved animals so much I declared that when I grew up, I'd be a veterinarian. That changed to being an animal behaviourist when I became obsessed with wildlife documentaries.

Somewhere along the way, I got distracted by bipedal mammals: humans. I studied cultural anthropology and international development, and spent years trying to understand the conditions of human life. But nature was always close to my heart.

In 2010, while traveling in Bolivia, I attended the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Cochabamba. It was the first time I'd heard of the concept of Pachamama, or Mother Earth. The planet is not a resource to be exploited but a living entity with inherent rights. This worldview did not place humans front and centre, but within a wider web of life, to which we owe care and responsibility. I saw the humility and the wisdom of this outlook.

Later, I relocated to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the most biodiverse country in the world. While Bolivia taught me about ecological jurisprudence, my years in Brazil allowed me to observe how nature intertwined with culture. The people I met understood the restorative power of the wild and sought it out for their own well-being. Friends took me to bathe in waterfalls nestled in the city's forests, introduced me to permaculture and casually named the flora and fauna growing in their neighborhoods. Nature there was expansive, something to traverse and immerse oneself in.

Returning to Singapore after years away felt disorienting. I became acutely aware of how little untamed wild spaces remained and how distant my life now felt from nature. Every time I read about forests being cleared for development or noticed the large stump of a felled rain tree, a pang of grief and anger would rise within me.

Yet what use are my feelings? They signal what I care about, yes. But for all the love I have for nature, and the healing I derive from being in its presence, what am I doing to help it? How could I channel my sense of loss into something productive?

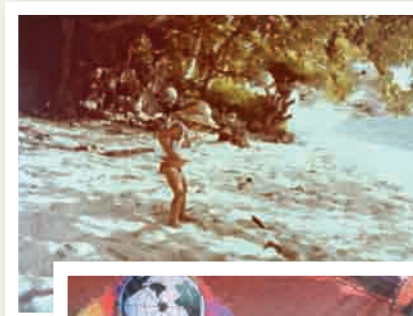
It might seem harder to protect natural ecosystems in a small country without vast swathes of uninhabited land. But that doesn't mean we cannot try. In a place as densely biodiverse as Singapore, we have so much to protect. Every remaining wild patch is home to so many living things. Conservation feels especially urgent.

I learnt about the Nature Stewards programme at a time when I had been searching for ways to volunteer. Not a sporadic one-off activity, but something longer and more sustaining.

I was not entirely sure what a nature steward would do. I imagined it involved helping others see the world differently. I had led museum tours in the past and I had always loved finding ways to transform information into something fun and memorable. Learning to be a nature guide seemed like an extension of this instinct.

Through the training, I began to see stewardship not simply as the accumulation of ecological knowledge, but as the practice of interpretation. Translating what we see, smell, hear and feel into stories that help others cultivate curiosity and wonder. Facts matter, of course, but facts alone rarely move people. What moves people is connection.

Together with fellow Nature Stewards, I have been on walks across Singapore and guided one through the Pasir Ris mangroves. I am becoming more attuned to the unseen lives of plants and



My love for nature grew from adventures on the beach as a small girl (top), and culminated in an epiphany at the World's People's Conference on Climate Change in Bolivia in 2010.

While Bolivia taught me about ecological jurisprudence, my years in Brazil allowed me to observe how nature intertwined with culture. The people I met understood the restorative power of the wild and sought it out for their own well-being.

animals around me. That attention seeped beyond the mudflats and the forests, and into my every day. I listen to bird calls, look up at treetops, stoop to peer at bugs. It gives me great joy to recognise species around me, like old friends. This newfound awareness has given me something unexpected, too: a deeper sense of place, and with it, a stronger feeling of belonging to the land.

The programme introduced me to a community of passionate people dedicating themselves to conservation work, motivated less by ego than by conviction. Being among them made me realise that meaningful change is often sustained by people doing difficult, invisible work.

Because nature advocacy is multi-disciplinary, this community is made up of individuals from different backgrounds and walks of life. Conservation can't be done by scientists alone. It needs storytellers, educators, urban planners, people from all fields to come together. My journey through anthropology, international development and the arts has not been a detour but allowed me to gather the tools and ways of seeing that I can now use in the service of nature.

What will stay with me too are the glimpses I got into the long history of environmental advocacy in Singapore. Learning how naturalists from Nature Society Singapore and other groups helped protect places like Pulau Ubin, Sungei Buloh, and the Rail Corridor has been inspiring.

It's not enough to say, "Please don't deforest!" and leave it at that. The community showed up equipped with surveys of species present in the areas, and proposals for alternative land use. They mobilised public support and helped policymakers see the value of preserving these critical habitats.

Their efforts reminded me of a quote by the environmentalist Robert Swan: "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."

For years, I've carried feelings of doom and despair alongside a small spark of hope that somehow humanity would eventually change course. But

that is a passive stance, where change is worked out somewhere abstract and far away, in board rooms and government offices I have no access to.

I now understand that effective conservation work does not happen in isolation. The people negotiating to protect nature need a public that understands why these spaces matter in the first place. Nature Stewards can help foster that care.

I do not expect everyone who joins my future walks to become an environmental activist. My own journey began with something much smaller: a child by the sea, turning over a shell and discovering that another world was living beside mine. If, through guiding, I can awaken that same sense of wonder in even one person and help them find their own way back to nature, then I know I am exactly where I need to be. 🌿



As an NSS Nature Steward, I guided a group on a walk through the Pasir Ris mangroves earlier this year. That's me, all the way on the right!

I now understand that effective conservation work does not happen in isolation. The people negotiating to protect nature need a public that understands why these spaces matter in the first place. Nature Stewards can help foster that care.

More about NSS Nature Stewards

THERE are many people in Singapore who are interested in nature, but only a few have the knowledge, practical experience, and confidence to help others understand and appreciate our biodiversity. The **NSS Nature Stewards Programme** helps bridge this gap by developing a community of volunteers who can turn their interest in nature into meaningful public engagement and environmental stewardship.

Supported by the SG Eco Fund, NSS recruited two cohorts of participants this year. Through our training, the volunteers built up their knowledge of local birds, butterflies, plants, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. They were also trained to use the iNaturalist platform to record their observations, and how to communicate clearly and make nature education engaging and relatable. If this sounds like something you'd like to do, look out for the next recruitment window in 2027!



Juliette Yu-Ming Lizeray is the author of *Snakes of Singapore: A Slightly Unhinged Field Guide*

(Epigram, 2026) and the creator of COMMUNION, a comic zine about ADHD that was shortlisted for the 2024 Graphic Medicine Award. Connect with her @JulietteYML.

NSS lays out its plans for the year ahead

At its Annual General Meeting, NSS reaffirmed its aspiration to be a leading expert in local conservation and outlined its strategic plans for achieving this mission.

Text by **TR SAMMYUKTA**

Photos by **MICHELLE HARIFF**

Nature Society Singapore marked a successful 2025 at its Annual General Meeting on 23 May 2026. Among the key achievements noted by President Leong Kwok Peng are the successful organisation of the 41st Singapore Bird Race 2025, as well as the signing of a three-way Memorandum of Understanding between NSS, BirdLife International, and Mapletree Investments, to strengthen collaboration in conservation and nature education.

Indeed, 2025 brought a packed calendar of NSS events, such as the 2nd Swallowtail Race, the Every Singaporean a Naturalist (ESN) Biodiversity Race, as well as a slew of rewilding activities and outreach initiatives. At the same time, NSS members participated in ongoing engagement with government agencies on conservation matters, including discussions relating to coastal protection.

Looking ahead, NSS reaffirmed its strategic priorities for the rest of 2026 and 2027, building on its existing five-year strategic plan and vision for the Society to be Singapore's leading advocate for biodiversity and habitats.

Five strategic focus areas were presented at the AGM:

1

Aspirations: The overarching goal is to position NSS as a leading expert in conservation, while also building a strong base of volunteers, strengthening the NSS brand, and increasing regional collaboration. NSS leadership and stakeholders are exploring how the Society can contribute to future iterations of the Singapore Green Plan through the upcoming publication of *Watching Over the Wild*, a comprehensive compilation of NSS' recommendations for local conservation.

2

Role in the region: NSS will leverage on initiatives like Eco-Journeys to build awareness of regional conservation, while also prioritising opportunities to support nature education and engagement objectives.

3

Fundraising: NSS will explore short-term opportunities through government grants and corporate CSR partnerships, while also developing longer-term revenue-generating programmes to diversify its sources of income.

4

Communications and outreach: NSS will strengthen its media visibility, while also stepping up its engagement with members, volunteers, and the wider public.

5

Volunteer management: NSS will outline clearer roles and responsibilities for volunteers, while also providing them with training and support.

The next phase of strategic planning will involve further discussion on how to refine and prioritise initiatives for implementation.

NSS Annual Report

The NSS Secretariat published and circulated the Annual Report to members ahead of the AGM, and Executive Director Huang Ningxin highlighted the Society's three-pillar approach: to Reconnect, Restore, and Protect.

A

Reconnect people with nature:

The Secretariat is planning to expand the Society's educational outreach through school CCA programmes and teacher-training initiatives. It will continue to grow participation in flagship NSS events such as the Singapore Bird Race and the Swallowtail Race, while also exploring partnerships with



other organisations to extend the Singapore Biodiversity Race beyond schools and to the wider public.

B

Restore habitats and ecological connectivity: Through its collaboration with NParks, the NSS Rewilding programme has increased its tree-planting efforts and habitat-restoration initiatives. NSS also expanded its invasive species management efforts, including the removal of Zanzibar yam from Windsor Nature Park.

C

Protect biodiversity and remaining wild spaces: The Secretariat aims to expose more Singaporeans to regional conservation efforts through the NSS Eco-Journey programme, and inspire them to become more involved in local conservation.

Alongside the three pillars, the Secretariat is also focused on strengthening NSS' partnerships with corporates, while also

improving volunteer and membership management through the Membership Management System.

Steps are being taken to enhance engagement with volunteers, such as through welcome sessions, induction programmes, and training opportunities. For example, the Secretariat has conducted a pilot of the NSS Nature Guide Level 1 training programme.

On a more cautious note, Ningxin noted that individual donations to NSS declined in 2025, following the conclusion of fundraising from the 70th Anniversary Gala. However, NSS also recorded increases in grant funding and corporate donations, which reflected the Society's success in building support from institutional and corporate partners.

Overall, NSS' financial position has improved, with a narrower deficit in 2025 compared to previous years. The audited statement of accounts for the period from 1 Jan 2025 to 31 Dec 2025 was unanimously adopted by the AGM.

Members old and new

As there was no contest for the available positions, the following members were elected to serve on the Executive Committee for the 2026/2027 terms:

● PRESIDENT

Leong Kwok Peng

● VICE-PRESIDENT

Joel Leong

● HONORARY TREASURER

Wong Yi Fong

● HONORARY SECRETARY

Sumitha Poonia Murthy

● EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Jamie Chan

● EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dr Shawn Lum

● EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Goh Si Guim

Kwok Peng had opened the AGM with a tribute to long-serving NSS members who passed away in the past year — namely S. Rajamanickam, Prof Avadhani, Yap Kim Fatt, and Evelyn Ng — and acknowledged their significant contributions to the Society and Singapore's nature conservation movement.

Similarly, he closed the AGM by thanking members for their continued support and contributions to NSS, and encouraged them to remain actively involved in advancing the Society's conservation mission. 🌿



TR Sammyukta is a multidisciplinary creative who tells stories through writing, film, and design. She covers

conservation and profile stories for *Nature Watch*, discovering the people who make a difference and why they choose to do so.

Quit the Fins, Save the Sharks



Singapore continues to be the world's second-largest trader of shark fins by value, second only to Hong Kong. What can ordinary individuals do to ensure that sharks have a future?

Text and Photos by **MARK SNG**

When people think of shark conservation, Singapore is probably not the first place that comes to mind. We have no large-scale shark fisheries, no dramatic images of sharks being landed on our shores, and few opportunities for people to encounter these animals in the wild. Yet despite this, Singapore occupies an outsized role in the global shark fin trade, making the conservation of sharks a surprisingly relevant local issue.

This year, I had the opportunity to attend Sharks International 2026 in Sri Lanka—the world's largest

conference dedicated entirely to sharks, rays and chimaeras (commonly known as “ghost sharks”, they are related to true sharks). Held once every four years, Sharks International brings together scientists, conservationists, fisheries managers, policymakers and educators from around the world to share the latest research and discuss some of the most pressing challenges facing sharks today. The 2026 edition welcomed over 850 participants and featured more than 600 presentations spanning ecology, fisheries, genetics, policy and public engagement. The next conference will be held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, in 2030.

While the conference covered an incredible diversity of topics, I attended to present research on the shark fin trade in Singapore, a reminder that conservation issues often begin much closer to home than we realise. The research, which began during my time at the late Yale-NUS College and was subsequently published in a peer-reviewed journal, forms part of a long-term monitoring effort to track changes in the species composition of shark fins entering Singapore's markets.

By building this dataset over time, we hope to better understand trends in the trade and provide evi-

dence that can inform conservation and policy decisions.

Singapore is the world's second-largest trader of shark fins by value, second only to Hong Kong. Although there are no major commercial fisheries in Singapore that specifically target sharks, the country plays an important role as both an importer and exporter of shark fins. The challenge for researchers is that by the time these fins arrive in Singapore, they have already been dried, trimmed, and processed to such an extent that identifying the shark species through visual characteristics alone becomes nearly impossible.

This is where genetics becomes an invaluable conservation tool. By using DNA barcoding, researchers are able to identify the species from small tissue samples taken from processed fins sold in local markets. This allows us to better understand which species are entering the trade and whether threatened sharks continue to be harvested despite increasing international protections.

Our research identified fins from the Scalloped Hammerhead Shark (*Sphyrna lewini*), a species listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and protected under CITES Appendix II, meaning international trade is regulated, to ensure it does not threaten the species' survival. More notably, we documented the first recorded occurrence of the Blackchin Guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculus*) in Singapore's fin markets. This species is also listed as critically endangered and protected under CITES Appendix II. Most importantly, the Blackchin Guitarfish can only be found primarily in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, making its presence in local trade both scientifically significant and concerning.

Presenting this work alongside researchers from every corner of the globe highlighted something that became a recurring theme throughout the conference: shark conservation is far too complex for any one country or discipline to solve alone.

Many shark species migrate across international boundaries. Supply chains stretch across continents. Fisheries support millions



Sharks International brings together stakeholders from around the world every four years to discuss pressing challenges faced by sharks.



Although there are no major commercial fisheries in Singapore that specifically target sharks, the country plays an important role as both an importer and exporter of shark fins.



I began my research into Singapore's shark-fin trade during my time at Yale-NUS College. It was published in a peer-reviewed journal, and I presented it at the conference.

of livelihoods, while consumer demand is shaped by deeply rooted cultural traditions. Conservation therefore cannot simply focus on protecting sharks in one place, it requires cooperation between scientists, governments, fishing communities, businesses, and consumers throughout the entire supply chain.

That message feels particularly relevant for Singapore. As a global trading hub, Singapore sits at the intersection of importing, exporting,

and consumer demand. This unique position also gives us an opportunity to contribute meaningfully towards solutions. While enforcement, fisheries management, and international agreements remain essential, consumer choices also play an important role in shaping the future of the trade.

In an ideal world, the consumption of shark fins would no longer exist. However, conservation rarely operates in an ideal world.

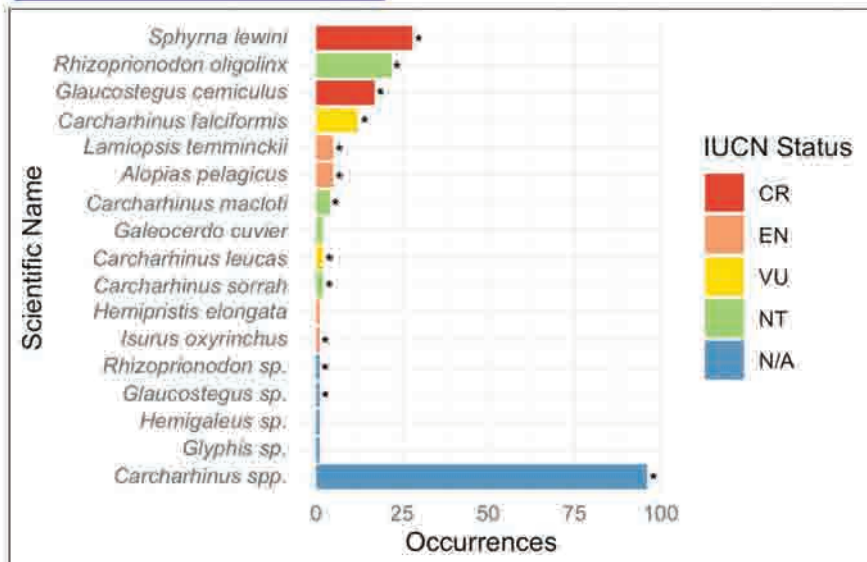
In troubled Waters: Applying DNA Barcoding to Monitor Singapore's Shark Fin Trade

Anya Ramanan, Kimberly H. Quek, Nicole Chung Mae Sze, Nicole Isabel Oo Xinyen, David Kim Hyun Soe, Changjun Sung, Vivian Dimitrov, Rebekah P. Nix, Ming Han Mark Sng, Pei Xuan Jody Lim, Elisa X. Y. Lim, Benjamin J. Wainwright

Introduction

This study by Ramanan et al. (2025) forms part of a long-term monitoring effort examining the species composition of shark fins sold in Singapore's markets over a five-year period from 2021 to 2025, with the aim of establishing baselines and identifying trends in the species composition of the trade using DNA barcoding.

Results from 2025 study



Sphyrna lewini (CR), was the most commonly identified species at 28%.

Rhizoprionodon oligolinx (NT) was the second most commonly identified species at 22%.

Glaucostegus cemiculus (CR) was the third most commonly identified species at 17%.

A significant proportion of the samples were identified only to the genus *Carcharhinus* and could not be resolved to species level. However, since 2023, the entire *Carcharhinidae* family (including genus *Carcharhinus*) was listed under Appendix II.

(*) indicates a CITES Appendix II listed species; an (*) next to a genus-level identification indicates that all the species in the genus are listed under Appendix II.

Overall results 2021-2025

Table showing the five species with the highest occurrences in Singapore markets each year from 2021 to 2025

	2021 ^[a]	2022 ^[a]	2023 ^[a]	2024 ^[a]	2025
1	<i>Carcharhinus melanopterus</i>	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	<i>Rhizoprionodon acutus</i>	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>
2	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	<i>Rhizoprionodon oligolinx</i>	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	<i>Rhizoprionodon oligolinx</i>
3	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	<i>Rhizoprionodon oligolinx</i>	<i>Glaucostegus cemiculus</i>
4	<i>Carcharhinus amboinensis</i>	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>
5	<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	<i>Carcharhinus sorrah</i>	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	<i>Rhizoprionodon acutus</i>	<i>Alopias pelagicus</i> & <i>Lamiopsis temminckii</i>

Discussion & conclusions

Across all the studies, the repeated identification of several species stands out as particularly concerning.

Carcharhinus falciformis

- Listed as VU by the IUCN and Appendix II by CITES.
- Consistently identified within the top five occurrences for four years.

Sphyrna lewini

- Listed as NT by IUCN and Appendix II by CITES.
- Consistently been in the top two spots in three out of five studies.

Rhizoprionodon oligolinx

- Listed as NT by IUCN and Appendix II by CITES.
- Consistently been in the top two spots in three out of five studies.

Galeorhinus galeus

- Listed as CR by IUCN but not was not listed on CITES till 2025 where it was listed as Appendix II.
- Consistently been in the top five occurrences for three years.

Glaucostegus cemiculus

- Listed as CR by IUCN and Appendix II by CITES.
- First ever occurrence of giant guitarfish fins being sold in Singapore and already in the top three occurrences.

Presented at Sharks International 2026, the above research by me and my teammates is part of a long-term monitoring effort to track changes in the species composition of shark fins entering Singapore's markets.



Sharks International Sri Lanka 2026 drew over 850 participants, but we understood that lasting conservation will depend on us keeping conversations alive beyond conference halls.



“The goal of shark conservation should not be to erase culture or remove people’s livelihoods. Rather, it is to ensure that both people and sharks have a future.”

Shark-fin soup remains culturally significant for many communities, particularly during weddings and important celebrations. At the same time, countless fishers and traders around the world depend on fisheries to support themselves and their families.

The goal of shark conservation should therefore not be to erase culture or remove people’s livelihoods. Rather, it is to ensure that both people and sharks have a future. This shifts the question from how do we stop the shark-fin trade, to how do we make it more sustainable?

Ultimately, success means ensuring that sharks are not fished to extinction, while also ensuring that fishing communities do not fish themselves out of a livelihood.

As individuals, there are practical ways we can contribute. The most effective action is simply to avoid consuming shark-fin soup altogether. Lower consumer demand reduces the pressure on shark fishing, particularly the harvesting of threatened species that reproduce slowly and recover poorly from overfishing.

For those who continue to consume shark fin, another option is to

choose restaurants or caterers that source their products responsibly. Sustainable sourcing means fins come from well-managed fisheries that avoid threatened species and utilise the entire shark rather than discarding the body after removing only the fins.

Admittedly, asking whether a restaurant serves sustainably sourced shark fin will probably result in puzzled looks from staff who have never been asked the question before. Yet perhaps that is precisely why it matters. Every question signals to businesses that consumers are beginning to care about where their seafood comes from. Every conversation encourages suppliers to think more carefully about sourcing. And every discussion helps keep shark conservation visible, not just among scientists and policymakers, but also within the wider public.

One of the greatest takeaways I brought home from Sharks International was that conservation is ultimately about people as much as wildlife. Scientific research provides the evidence, policy creates the framework, but lasting conservation depends on keeping

these conversations alive beyond conference halls and into our homes, businesses and communities.

For a small island nation, Singapore has an unexpectedly important role to play in the future of shark conservation. Whether through research, responsible trade, informed consumer choices or international collaboration, each of us has an opportunity to contribute towards ensuring that sharks continue to swim our oceans for generations to come. 🌱

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Mark Sng is a Singaporean nature photographer and filmmaker whose work bridges science, visual storytelling,

and conservation. Trained in photojournalism and the life sciences, he has worked as both a researcher and visual storyteller, documenting wildlife, ecosystems, and conservation efforts through photography and film. Mark is currently pursuing an MA in Wildlife Filmmaking at the University of the West of England, in partnership with the BBC Natural History Unit.



Snapshots of Past NSS Events

Join us!

We organise a variety of events that are open to NSS members and the public, from educational talks to birdwatching and rewilding activities. You can go to <https://nss.org.sg/events/> for more information.



Nature walk in Gillman Barracks and forest

25 Jul 2026

NSS member Tan Han Chong led about 20 participants on an exploration of Gillman Barracks and forest, and showcased its environmental and heritage value. HDB recently announced plans to redevelop the site for public housing.



Birdwatching at Jurong Lake Gardens

26 Jul 2026

About 20 participants joined veteran NSS birder Yap Wee Jin and explored the gardens' southern shore, which boasts a freshwater swamp, naturalised streams, and grassland.



Nature walk in Windsor Nature Park

1 Aug 2026

Led by newly trained NSS Nature Stewards, participants were led around the secondary forest that had reclaimed an area once occupied by a kampung.



iNaturalist practice walk

1 Aug 2026

This walk was part of the lead up to the Singapore Biodiversity Race organised by Sentosa Development Corporation and hosted by NSS, and it gave participants a chance to test their biodiversity monitoring skills.



Butterfly walk at Lornie Road

16 Aug 2026

A total of 25 people took a stroll along the Lornie Park Connector. A downpour earlier in the morning failed to stir up insects, but with some persistence, the participants sighted stingless bees, Grass Demons, and even a Grey Sailor, the highlight of the day.



Snapshots of Past NSS Events (Con't)



Nature walk in HortPark

23 Aug 2026

It was a bright and sunny morning that greeted participants as they gathered to discover the colourful plants and biodiversity of HortPark, a vital link in the ecological corridor spanning the Southern Ridges.



Birdwatching for beginners at BAMK Park

29 Aug 2026

Novice birders were guided along by long-time NSS Bird Group member Lee Ee Ling and former NSS president Yeo Seng Beng. Together, they spotted 32 species in Bishan Ang Mo Kio Park, including the Purple Heron, the Asian Openbill, and an unexpected Banded Woodpecker.



PLANET | PEOPLE | PARTNERS

VISION To be Singapore's leading advocate for biodiversity and habitats.

MISSION Through engagement, education, advocacy, and research, we inspire and enable people to take action towards a sustainable and biodiverse planet.

NSS Membership Categories

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

S\$40	Ordinary Member Age 18 and above
S\$18	Junior & Student Members Age 12-18 & Full-time Students Age 18-35 enrolled in a Singapore-based institution
S\$1,000	Life Member Applicable to Ordinary Members who have joined for 10 years or more

Introducing Friends of NSS

We are excited to launch Friends of NSS, a free account with NSS to take part in our activities.

An NSS account (as a Friend of NSS or NSS Member) will be required to register for activities listed on our Events and Calendar page on the NSS website (nss.org.sg/events/).

We encourage all individuals who are interested in joining NSS activities to create a **free Friends of NSS account** ahead of time, for a smoother registration experience.

To find out more and sign up, go to:
<https://nss.org.sg/join-us/>

Why Join NSS?

We organise guided walks, nature surveys, clean-ups, talks, exhibitions, and overseas nature trips. To find out more, scan the QR code to download the NSS Programme Catalogue.



FAQs about NSS Membership

Can I use a physical form to sign up as an NSS Member or Friend of NSS?

We no longer accept physical membership forms. All NSS memberships and Friends of NSS registrations are conducted online to ensure secure record-keeping.

Can I be an NSS member but not have an NSS account?

Yes, you can remain an NSS Member without creating an NSS account on our website (nss.org.sg). However, you will not be able to register for NSS events and activities.

Can I pay for NSS membership in cash?

We no longer accept cash payments. All membership payments must be made through available online payment methods.

I wish to donate to NSS when I renew my membership. How do I do so?

Donations can be made via the donation page on the NSS website (<https://nss.org.sg/donation/>).

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NSS works to protect the habitats of creatures, including the Common Rose (*Pachliopta aristolochiae asteris*), a threatened butterfly whose caterpillar food plant remains scarce in Singapore.
Photos: Yi-Kai Tea (main photo) and Amy Tsang

Let Singapore's Abundant Biodiversity Be Your Legacy

Have you loved nature all your life? Please consider helping our conservation work with a gift to Nature Society Singapore in your will.

How to make a gift to the Society in your will

Please ensure that you seek professional advice for the drafting of your will. If you are considering including NSS in your will, we suggest the following phrases be used:

*I give to Nature Society Singapore (hereinafter called NSS), **Unique Entity Number S61SS0142H**, _____ % of the residue of my estate*

OR

a specific gift of _____

and I direct that (i) the proceeds may be used for the general purposes of NSS and (ii) a receipt signed by a person for the time being authorised by the Executive Committee of NSS shall be a good and sufficient discharge to my executors.



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