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SINGAPORE

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Celebrating

70 YEARS OF CONSERVATION



Capturing Nature in Art
Wild Echoes: Fun with Feathered Tales & Songs
Cyprus: Birding Road Trip



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NATURE SOCIETY SINGAPORE started life as the Singapore Branch of the Malayan Nature Society. The first meeting was held in 1954. This is why we are celebrating our 70th anniversary this year. In 1991, it was decided that we should separate from the Malayan Nature Society and become independent. This was 26 years after Singapore and Malaysia had separated in 1965.

I have been the Patron of NSS since 1990. In the past 34 years, I have seen a period when the relations between the Society and the government were acrimonious. That period ended when Dr Geh Min became the President of NSS, when Tan Yong Soon became the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and when Dr Kiat W Tan became the CEO of the National Parks Board. They succeeded in making a paradigm change to the relationship. Since then, the Society and the government do not see each other as adversaries but as partners.

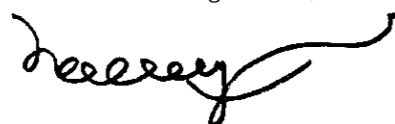
I am very proud of the Society's achievements since 1991. These include the conservation of Sungei Buloh as a bird sanctuary; the successful campaign to stop the government from cutting down the tress of Lower Pierce Reservoir to make way for a golf course; the submission to the government of a Masterplan for the conservation of nature in Singapore; the conservation of the Kranji Marshes; and the proposal to keep the Rail Corridor as a green corridor for the enjoyment of the people.

The happy development is that today, the Society and the government have the same objective. That objective is to conserve biodiversity and to make Singapore a City in Nature. The other happy development is that there are more and more Singaporeans, especially the young, who have become nature lovers. They have embraced the campaign to plant a million trees. They will not harm wildlife and they celebrate the fact that Singapore has become a city famous for its trees, birds, otters and junglefowls.

Education has always been the cornerstone of NSS's work. For decades, our volunteer-led walks organised by Special Interest Groups were the primary means of sharing our knowledge and love for nature with the public. These walks have introduced countless individuals to the beauty of our green spaces. In recent years, we have taken significant steps to professionalise our educational efforts by expanding our secretariat. Our flagship Every Singaporean a Naturalist programme has brought our message to schools across the island, inspiring the next generation of nature stewards. Likewise, our rewilding projects, corporate engagement efforts, and active presence on social media have broadened our reach, ensuring that our message resonates with diverse audiences.

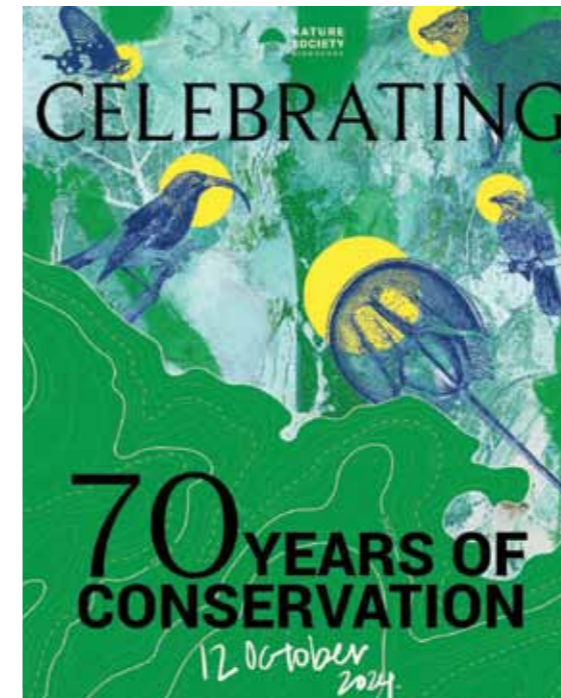
Looking ahead, I am heartened that the NSS leadership is focused on our renewed vision and mission. The recent strategic plan, developed with inputs from members and volunteers, charts a clear course for our Society in the years ahead. On this momentous occasion, I am filled with hope and confidence that NSS will continue to thrive, driven by the passion and dedication of our members and supporters. Together, we carry forward the legacy of those who came before us, and continue to cultivate the next generation of conservation leaders to ensure that Singapore remains a vibrant, green, and sustainable home for all.

With utmost gratitude,



Professor Tommy Koh

Patron



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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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CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF NSS

GOOD STORIES



POIGNANT MEMORIES



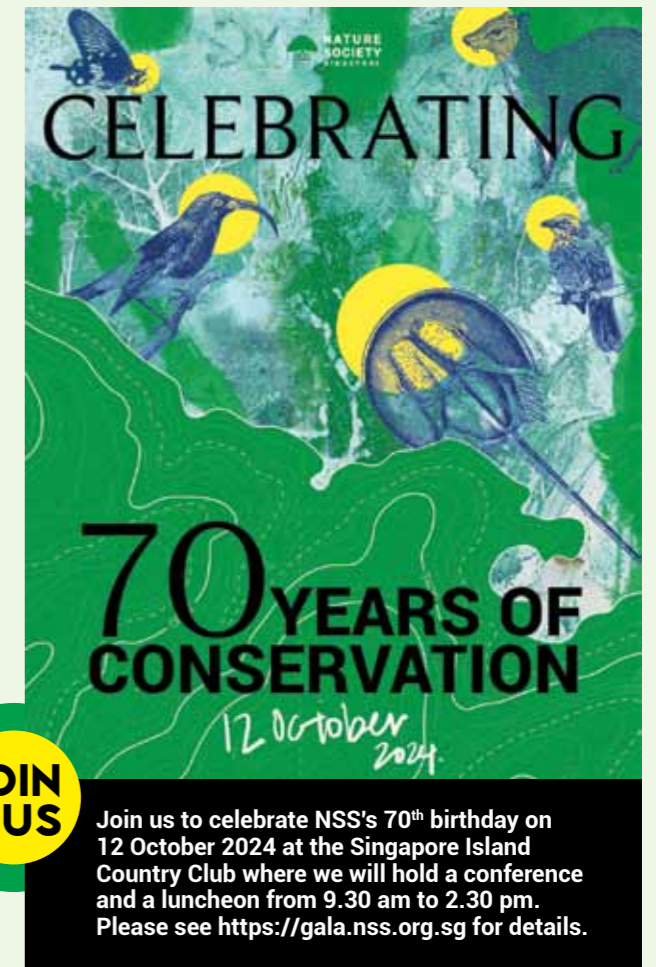
Nature Society Singapore turns 70 this year. The Society and several organisations, along with 30 prominent individuals, were lauded by the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (APCEL) for taking good care of the environment – the life sources of Land, Air and Water (the LAW of Life). Nature Watch features here APCEL's citations (good stories) of NSS and 13 of these honoured individuals who have had a hand in the Society's good works. This piece also captures the poignant memories of long-time members.

Nature Society Singapore has many contributions in saving and protecting Singapore's precious biodiversity and ecosystems. NSS's roots date back to the 1920s as an amateur naturalist group, the Singapore Natural History Society, focussing on research and nature rambles. This evolved into the Malayan Nature Society in 1940, with the Singapore branch established in 1954. In 1991, the Singapore branch broke off to form NSS. It is NSS's 70th anniversary this year and there is much to be proud of.

Since the 1970s, NSS has fought hard for nature conservation, seeking to persuade and convince the government to protect and preserve ecologically sensitive areas. Some of its success stories include the establishment of the Sungei Buloh Wetlands Reserve; stopping the building of a golf course on Lower Peirce Reservoir; saving Chek Jawa from proposed reclamation; protecting the Mandai Mangroves and Mudflats, now declared a Nature Park.

In particular, in 1990, NSS produced its Master Plan for the Conservation of Nature in Singapore. In 2010, it contributed to the publication of the Singapore Blue Plan which resulted in a comprehensive survey of marine biodiversity, and the conservation of Sisters Island as our first marine park. NSS also helped restore the Kranji Marshes into a freshwater habitat designated as a Nature Park in 2014, and helped preserve the Green-Rail Corridor as a biodiversity connector.

In 2010, NSS created the Butterfly Trail@Orchard, a route of hotspots for butterflies to visit stretching from the Singapore Botanic Gardens to Fort Canning Park. NSS initiated campaigns for Singapore's National Bird (the Crimson Sunbird, in 2002) and for our National Butterfly (the Common Rose, in 2015). NSS helped in strengthening our laws to protect wildlife. Most importantly, NSS plays an important role in education, organising nature appreciation activities including guided walks, talks, bird and butterfly watching, and eco-trips abroad. It collaborates with schools and community groups to promote nature appreciation and education. NSS also publishes a quarterly magazine Nature Watch. NSS has played and continues to play an extremely important role in nature conservation in Singapore, closely collaborating with government agencies as partners to protect nature in the face of many challenges.



Join us to celebrate NSS's 70th birthday on 12 October 2024 at the Singapore Island Country Club where we will hold a conference and a luncheon from 9.30 am to 2.30 pm. Please see <https://gala.nss.org.sg> for details.

APCEL HONOREES

■ PROF TOMMY KOH

Prof Tommy Koh is a Champion of the Environment. Notably, he was Chair of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which led to Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, key to advancing sustainable development and solutions to climate change. He



Prof Tommy Koh has been the Patron of Nature Society Singapore for over 30 years.

has contributed greatly to environmental research and education, as Co-Chair, Advisory Committee of APCEL, and Founding Chairman, Advisory Committee of the NUS multi-disciplinary graduate programme in environmental management, the Masters in Environmental Management (MEM). He is also Founding Chairman of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, and Patron of Nature Society Singapore for over 30 years.

■ DR WEE YEOW CHIN

Dr Wee Yeow Chin has a long history with Nature Society Singapore, first as Secretary of the Malayan Nature Society (Singapore Branch) from 1978 to 1990, and then as Founding President of Nature



From left: Leong Kwok Peng, Dr Wee Yeow Chin and Dr Geh Min at the APCEL Good Stories Movement event.

Society Singapore from 1990 to 1995. He worked hard to stop the removal of ferns and orchids from our roadside trees, and the clearing of the legally protected forest at Lower Peirce Reservoir for a golf course. He has served in various

nature committees. From 2005 to 2019, he ran the Bird Ecology Study Group's website, documenting bird behaviour for reference by students, bird-watchers and researchers.

■ PROF NG SOON CHYE

Prof Ng Soon Chye served as President of Nature Society Singapore from 1995 to 1997, and is now on its Advisory Committee. He jointly initiated the Singapore Hornbill Project with Mr Marc Cremades, which led to the successful re-introduction of Oriental Pied Hornbills to Singapore. Together



Dr Ho Hua Chew (left) and Prof Ng Soon Chye at the APCEL Good Stories Movement event.

with Mr Cremades, he published an excellent book, *Hornbills In The City: A Conservation Approach To Hornbill Study In Singapore*, contributing to our knowledge of hornbills and their conservation.

■ DR GEH MIN

Dr Geh Min has been an excellent advocate for nature, as President of Nature Society Singapore for eight years from 2000 to 2008, and the first Nominated Member of Parliament speaking for nature. She helped secure the protection of the Chek Jawa wetlands off Pulau Ubin, pushed for Singapore's accession to the Kyoto Protocol and spoke extensively on issues related to climate change, alternative energy sources, nature conservation and the need for a strong civil society and mandatory environmental impact assessments.

■ PROF IRENE LYE LIN-HENG

Prof Irene Lye Lin-Heng has been deeply involved in environmental education in Singapore and the region, teaching and writing on environmental law. She was the Director of the Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (APCEL) and initiated the multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary M.Sc. (Environmental Management) programme in NUS. She has been an active contributor to governmental and non-governmental environmental initiatives, serving as Legal Advisor and Vice President of NSS for many years, and serving on various government committees on Environmental Education, the Singapore Green Plan, and Drinking Water Quality

Standards. She contributed at the international level to the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, as a member of its Board of Governors and as chair of its Teaching and Capacity-Building Committee.

■ RICHARD HALE

Richard Hale pushed strongly for the protection of Sungei Buloh – a haven for migratory birds – by preparing a proposal to the government, which then set aside 85 hectares of land as a nature sanctuary. He also set up the Sungei Buloh Nature Education Fund and the Young Naturalists Programme with HSBC to promote greater awareness of nature among local children.

■ DR HO HUA CHEW

Dr Ho Hua Chew served as the Chair of NSS's Conservation Committee for many years, and is a leading member of its Bird Group. He coordinated conservation proposals for various nature areas including the Master Plan for the Conservation of Nature in Singapore (1990) and on Sungei Buloh. He initiated and coordinated the management of NSS's adoption of part of the Kranji Marshes (2008-2014) under PUB's ABC Waters Programme. He continues to contribute valuable feedback to the government on land use plans, development plans, biodiversity surveys etc.

■ LEONG KWOK PENG

Leong Kwok Peng has been serving in NSS in various roles, as Vice President, Chair of the Marine Conservation Group and now Chair of the Conservation Committee. He has been protecting our coral reefs, marine and terrestrial habitats, by publishing books and engaging with the government and developers. Notably, he coordinated the Reef Rescue Project in the 1990s, which was the largest known coral relocation project worldwide at that time.



From left: Joseph Koh, Tony Oposa and Leong Kwok Peng at the APCEL Good Stories Movement event.

■ JOSEPH KOH

Joseph Koh has left an indelible legacy not only with his study of Southeast Asian spiders, but also with

his energetic efforts in growing a greater appreciation of our rich natural heritage in Singapore. We thank him for inspiring a community of young advocates and stewards of our nature reserves and nature parks, and for building a bridge of mutual respect between government agencies and the nature community.

■ N SIVASOTHI



N Sivasothi (third from left), Dr Andie Ang (third from right), and Leong Kwok Peng (first from right) with friends from the Singapore nature community.

N Sivasothi is a biological scientist and teacher at the NUS Department of Biological Sciences and is well known as our 'Otterman'. He is the founder and coordinator for NUS Toddycats, which continues to promote youth development, public education and environmental stewardship. He has contributed greatly to our coastal clean-ups and protection of our precious otters in OtterWatch. He contin-

ues to play a leading role in the conservation of our biodiversity, including initiation and participation in reforestation projects in Singapore.

■ DR ANDIE ANG

Dr Andie Ang has been a leader in nature conservation through her work in studying wild primates in Southeast Asia. She has been serving as the President of the Jane Goodall Institute (Singapore) since 2018, and also serves as the Head of Primate Conservation and Singapore Programmes at Mandai Nature. She has made valuable contributions as Scientist and Deputy Chair in the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group and founder of the Primate Watching online resource.

■ MR MORTEN STRANGE AND MRS BEE CHOO STRANGE

Both Mr and Mrs Strange have contributed to the love for nature and its conservation. Morten has written and published books on the birds of Southeast Asia. He served as editor-in-chief of NSS's publication *Nature Watch*. Bee Choo has been serving as International Coordinator of the Hornbill Research Foundation and Programme Manager of the IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group.

REMEMBERING THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Dr Wee Yeow Chin

FORMER PRESIDENT (1990 TO 1995)

“ I was secretary of the Malayan Nature Society (Singapore Branch) from 1978-1990. The main activities were nature walks and talks. Literature on local nature was scarce until the Singapore Science Centre published a pocked-sized guide book series. In August 1982, the local daily printed my three-page illustrated essay on where to indulge in the sounds and sights of Singapore’s nature.



Launch of A Guide to the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve in 1992. From left: Prof Tommy Koh, Tan Cheng Guan, Dr Wee Yeow Chin, and Clive Briffett.

In 1980, Richard Hale successfully persuaded the government to turn a patch of mangroves at Sungei Buloh into a wetland reserve. Following this, the Society lobbied for the preservation of numerous green patches with plentiful wildlife. In 1992,

a golf course was planned at a protected Nature Reserve in Lower Peirce. By then, we had become Nature Society (Singapore) and I was elected its first President. With the agreement of Patron Prof Tommy Koh, we made our opposition to the golf course known. An environment impact assessment was published and distributed. Prof Koh was then the Chairman of the Preparatory and Main Committee of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; Singapore’s national report promised to preserve our nature reserves. Possibly because of this, the government eventually decided not to build the golf course.

Fifteen years after stepping down as President, together with other NSS members, we formed the Bird Ecology Study Group (BESG) which ran a popular blog that documented bird behaviour. Today, BESG is affiliated with the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, and besgroup.org continues to be visited by millions of local and overseas readers.

Prof Ng Soon Chye

FORMER PRESIDENT (1995 TO 1997)

“ I would like to share some of my exploits in the early years when we were still the Malayan Nature Society (Singapore Branch). I joined as a life member when I was in secondary school. I was then active in the Raffles Institution Natural History Museum focusing

on marine life. A vivid memory was discovering Prof Ivan Polunin half buried in the mudflats of Singapore photographing mudskippers. I also watched fireflies in the swamps of the Selangor River with the great man. Then I became active in bird ringing with Dr David Wells, who was with the University of Malaya as their ornithologist. We had fantastic bird netting sessions in Fraser’s Hill and Panti Forest in Malaysia. Bird life and nature were so rich then. I later took over the chair of the Bird Study Group from Dr David Robertson. One highlight was the ringing of a Curlew Sandpiper in the Serangoon Sludge Treatment Works which has now been cleared. The same bird was re-netted in Melbourne in winter that year!

Dr Geh Min

FORMER PRESIDENT (2000 TO 2008)

“ Our greatest challenge during my presidency was to prove to policy makers and the public what we in NSS already knew – that Nature was an essential part of Singapore’s existence and not merely recreational. Additionally, NSS was not just a ‘narrow interest group’ as how we were described by policy makers, but the Society could provide valuable information and insights on land use and other issues determining Singapore’s sustainability. We had to prove that we loved nature because we also loved Singapore, and this was a love that was stronger for being both emotional and rational.

In order to achieve this, we had to establish more communication and collaborations; to gain a reputation as a trusted partner; to work with government agencies and other interest groups, while not losing sight of our guiding principle of conserving natural ecosystems and biodiversity. Chek Jawa was the most publicised example of our success during this period, but there were others. It is my hope that there will be many more in the years to come.

Lim Kim Chuah

FORMER BIRD GROUP CHAIR

“ One of the best memories of my time in NSS is taking part in the inaugural Singapore Bird Race in 1984. It has gone beyond my wildest dreams that what started as an event to raise funds to publish a Singapore bird checklist, has grown to become one of the longest running bird races in this region. From two teams of eight participants in 1984, our numbers have ballooned over the years. The Bird Group now attracts

over 300 participants per race, forming more than 100 teams. I am delighted to see so many new birders each time, especially young ones taking part. Not only does this event promote the appreciation of birds and nature, it encourages us to do our part in the conservation of our natural habitats and biodiversity. I am glad to have played a role in growing the Singapore Bird Race into a marquee event on the NSS calendar today.



The inaugural Singapore Bird Race in November 1984. From left: David Bradford, Clive Briffet, Lim Kim Chuah, Lim Kim Seng, Sandra Sabapathy and Hugh Buck scrutinising the Bird Race results. Source: The Straits Times © SPH Media Limited. Permission required for reproduction.

Prof Lye Lin-Heng

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT & LEGAL ADVISOR; ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

“ I joined the Society when I was a young law lecturer at NUS in the mid-1970s. The Bukit Timah campus housed many faculties then. Faculty members dining at the Staff Restaurant would just join a table and get to know each other. That was how I met marine biologist Roland Sharma and botanist PN Avadhani. They asked if I liked nature and I expressed my love for it. When I was growing up, my dad would take us to nature areas like beaches and mangroves. They asked if I would like to become the legal advisor for the Society. I readily agreed, not knowing that the previous advisor was Prof Geoffery Bartholomew who had just stepped down as dean of our law school in 1976.

At that time, we were the Singapore Branch of the Malayan Nature Society. The legal issues then were simple, relating to possible claims for injuries sustained during nature outings. I drafted a form for participants to sign, stating that they attended events at their own risk and would not hold the Society responsible. Soon, other questions surfaced. Members observed people trapping wildlife and removing bird nests. Could this be done? I had no idea and had to research the issue. This was my first moment with environmental law. Many years later, I wrote a paper in 1991 entitled ‘Wildlife Protection Laws in Singapore’. I believe that it was the first article on environmental law in Singapore, published five years before the NUS Law Faculty established APCEL in 1996.

“It has gone beyond my wildest dreams that what started as an event to raise funds to publish a Singapore bird checklist, has grown to become one of the longest running bird races in this region.”

LIM KIM CHUAH



The 39th Singapore Bird Race in 2023 organised by the Bird Group attracted over 300 participants.

REMEMBERING THE GOOD OLD DAYS



Prof Lye Lin-Heng is an Advisory Committee member in NSS, as well as our former Vice President and Legal Advisor.

The next challenge for the Society had an international dimension that was new to me as well. In 1975, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) came into effect. Singapore was not a signatory despite the Society lobbying for the government to sign. The thinking then was that Singapore as a busy entrepôt port should have free movement of goods without hindrance. CITES would have required the checking of permits for endangered species. Singapore only acceded to CITES 10 years later when the US banned all tropical fish emanating from our country, although the fish industry claimed that fishes were captive bred and not wild caught. In 1986, Singapore passed the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act. The law was poorly drafted with light penalties. I watched its implementation over 12 years and wrote a critical article in 1999 on Singapore's implementation of CITES.

Under the leadership of NSS's first president Dr Wee Yeow Chin, we successfully fought the proposal to turn Lower Pierce Reservoir, a nature reserve with rich biodiversity, into a golf course. The ensuing years were challenging for the Society as tensions between development and conservation escalated in nature areas like Sungei Buloh, Chek Jawa, Kranji heronry and Marina South. I have great admiration for the NSS leaders, including the chairs of its Conservation Committees. They discussed each proposal in detail and thought of the

best strategies, motivated by the desire to preserve Singapore's natural heritage, yet mindful of the developmental challenges of a young nation. Today, we are happy that NSS works in partnership with the government, even as Singapore progressed from a Garden City, to a City in a Garden, to a City in Nature.

best strategies, motivated by the desire to preserve Singapore's natural heritage, yet mindful of the developmental challenges of a young nation. Today, we are happy that NSS works in partnership with the government, even as Singapore progressed from a Garden City, to a City in a Garden, to a City in Nature.

Amy Tsang & Dr Anuj Jain

BUTTERFLY & INSECT GROUP MEMBERS



One of the happiest news we received in 2023 concerned the Common Rose (*Pachliopta aristolochiae*), crowned the People's Choice of the National Butterfly of Singapore in 2015. This winged beauty has long been in decline locally. But in the 2023 edition of the Singapore Red Data book, it was downlisted from Vulnerable to Near Threatened (i.e. at a lower risk of extinction).

The conservation needle has moved in favour of the Common Rose thanks to increasingly widespread planting of its host plant the Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia acuminata*), fed on by its caterpillars. The push to cultivate more Dutchman's Pipe from 2018 onwards came from the Butterfly and Insect Group as well as NSS President Dr Yeo Seng Beng. We are thrilled that our efforts have paid off.

Even though the Common Rose is far from being safe from local extirpation, the improvement in its conservation status shows that when NSS members come together with purpose and determination, we can make a difference. Let us continue to grow more Dutchman's Pipe to support the recovery of our National Butterfly. We hope that in the near future, it will live up to its name 'Common' Rose and actually become common.

Please refer to <https://www.nparks.gov.sg/biodiversity/wildlife-in-singapore/species-list/lepidoptera--butterflies-for-the-conservation-status-of-singapore's-butterflies-based-on-the-singapore-red-data-book-on-threatened-animals-of-singapore> (3rd edition).



Common Rose eclosing from its pupa. Photo: KC Tsang.

APCEL & The Good Stories Movement

The citations by APCEL are part of the Good Stories Movement. This movement was initiated by Philippines Attorney **Tony Oposa**, as good stories can 'inspire and set hearts on friendly fire'. Tony is inspired by what Singapore has achieved, in cleaning up and taking care of its environment, and preserving and protecting nature, despite the many challenges of an urban environment and tight land constraints.

Capturing Nature in Art

Dr Sng Bee Bee explores her rich artistic journey, from oil and watercolour, to Chinese painting, calligraphy, botanical art, nature printing and digital art. Even though her choice of art media has evolved, her one constancy is to capture nature in art.

Text & Artwork by **DR SNG BEE BEE**



Peonies and Phoenix – Chinese painting in the Xieyi style. Peonies were grown during the Tang Dynasty in royal gardens. It became an imperial symbol of luxury and beauty, and a favourite subject in paintings and fabrics.

My journey as an artist started in 2008 when I sought out a hobby to destress from teaching. I began with oil paintings and discovered my passion for producing art. I then went on to do Chinese painting and calligraphy, before becoming interested in botanical art. Art is a space for me to engage in self-reflection. It serves as an expression of my love for nature, my favourite subject matter.

Using oil and acrylic media, I began with painting landscapes and gardens in Singapore and abroad. During this time, I went on weekly walks with NSS guides and learnt about various trees and plants as well as the interdependence between flora and fauna. This knowledge spurred me to capture the beauty of nature in my paintings. I was encouraged when some of my works were chosen

for nine art exhibitions organised by NParks. These were held in conjunction with NParks' various festivals, including an exhibition at the CDL Gallery in the Singapore Botanic Gardens as well as an art exhibition at the Woodlands Botanical Garden. Such festivals are important platforms to showcase and spread the knowledge of native flora and fauna.

From oil paintings, I expanded my scope to learn Chinese brush painting. This enabled me to appreciate the significance of nature in Chinese culture. Originating thousands of years ago, Chinese brush painting involves the use of Chinese ink and/or coloured paints on rice paper called *Xuan* paper. The artform combines different subjects such as flowers, animals and mountains to create paintings with a variety of styles and techniques.

The two main styles are *Xieyi* (写意) and *Gongbi* (工笔). *Xieyi* is a freely expressive style, translated as sketching the image in one's mind. The brush technique captures the spirit of the subject intuitively. It resembles Chinese calligraphy and demands a mastery of ink and brush. *Gongbi* is the opposite of *Xieyi*. *Gongbi* is a precise realist technique that pays close attention to details. It has more variety and richness of colours than *Xieyi*. It depicts real life subjects more closely.

Nature figures prominently in Chinese paintings. For instance, the lotus plant symbolises purity of heart and mind, and carries the significance of long life, humility, honour and tranquility. The peony represents nobility, beauty and good fortune. The crane similarly signifies noble character and longevity, while the tiger denotes luck, courage and power.

My knowledge of plants has grown by leaps and bounds after I ventured into botanical art

I went on weekly walks with NSS guides and learnt about various trees and plants as well as the interdependence between flora and fauna. This knowledge spurred me to capture the beauty of nature in my paintings.

painting where I have to study the plants closely before attempting to depict them in art. It helps that I am a member of the Plant Group in NSS where I had learnt the basic techniques in plant identification and first understood the role of insects in pollination. I now realise that art and nature can reinforce our appreciation and love for the plants around us.

I recently expanded into digital art using the software Procreate. Unlike oil and Chinese paintings where brush strokes, blending of colours as well as composition are important, digital art requires the combination of different brush strokes and patterns available in the software to compose a painting.

For me, the challenge is to learn how to apply the features in Procreate. It requires a different mindset as well as cognitive and motor skills. I am doing this to keep up with the times. Digital art is in demand in modern publications, and I hope that my artwork can be used in this regard, especially in promoting nature.

I am grateful that I was given many opportunities to share my knowledge of art and nature with the community through teaching.



Chinese painting in the Xieyi style. In Chinese culture, owls can symbolise misfortune though not always so. It can mean both positive and negative energy, representing wealth, wisdom and knowledge.



Mountains & Water – Chinese painting in the Gongbi style, 山水 (shanshui), translated as mountains and water. In Chinese culture, mountains have a spiritual symbolism connecting heaven and earth. Water represents life, vigour, and movement to balance the solidity of mountains.



Goldfish (Carassius auratus) – Chinese painting in the Xieyi style. In the Tang Dynasty, the goldfish symbolised wealth and prosperity as the Chinese word for fish 'yu' sounds like the word for abundance. Goldfish are kept in homes and shops to bring abundance and good luck.



Carnations and Hydrangeas – watercolour painting. The flowers were created with a square-headed brush, making the squarish petals of the hydrangeas a breeze to paint. The carnations were painted with the same brush but tilted differently. This is a loose style of painting, unlike the tight style commonly used in botanical painting.

Types of Botanical Art

Italian plant biologist Dr Michele Rodda who works as a tropical botanist at the Singapore Botanic Gardens shares with Bee Bee his thoughts on nature printing, plant illustrations and painting flowers. Dr Rodda is a committee member at the Botanical Art Society (Singapore).

Since childhood, I have been fascinated by plants. As a teenager, I started to grow a wide variety of exotic species in my family's garden in northern Italy. This led me to study botany at the University of Turin, where I obtained my PhD in 2012. When I became a tropical botanist, I developed a personal and professional interest

in illustrated botanical books and botanical art. I now curate botanical art exhibitions, collect illustrated books and original art, train artists who illustrate for scientific papers, and have my own printmaking practice.

As an artist, my main interest is nature printing. It involves taking impressions directly or indirectly from the surface of natural objects to produce an image on paper. I particularly like nature printing's ability to capture a huge amount of detail. I experiment with different papers, inks, inking and printing techniques to maximise the amount of detail recorded.

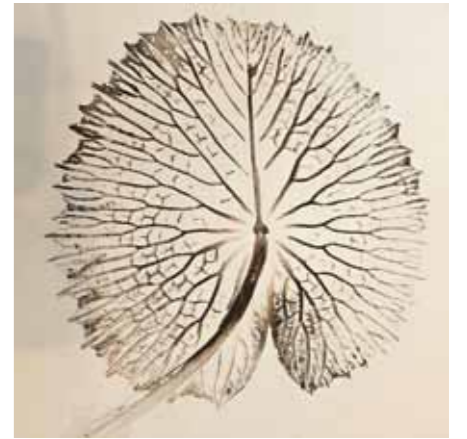
Plant pictures have made plant identification more accessible. Plant illustrations were first used to identify medicinal and useful plants. Nowadays, illustrations in scientific publications help identify rare plants with no photographic documentation, or pin point the identity of plants easily confused with similar looking species unless examined in detail. Plant illustrations take years of practice to master and require a high level of commitment.

Many might enjoy painting flowers on a casual basis, and while so doing, learn basic plant morphology. At the start of the drawing process, I feel that it is crucial for the artist to work with fresh flowers to better understand the subject. He or she is able to handle the flowers, dissect the various parts, and faithfully record the colours. This cannot be done retrospectively from photographs. This technique is summarised by Japanese botanist Makino Tomitaro, "It is important to illustrate details of plants as, in doing so, the morphological details of the plant will make a deep impression on your mind and such impressions will help in making a correct identification of the plant".

I am a firm believer in humanitarian work. In my 30-year teaching career, I have done work for disaster relief, refugees and poverty in Southeast Asia. I travelled to rural areas in these countries to teach English and train English teachers. As these students are in primary and secondary schools, I use art as a good medium to motivate them to learn English.

For instance, I could get stu-

dents to design greeting cards for their loved ones and write their well-wishes in English. Or I could get them to design banners and write the slogans in English. My involvement in humanitarian work, taken in tandem with my art and nature activities, have led to a deep conviction that I must continue to share the importance of nature conservation through my art. 🌱



Waterlily (Nymphaea) – nature printing. Ink on paper using a hand-held roller.



Passiflora – painting in watercolour. This was selected for Woodlands Botanical Garden 2024 calendar.



Swing – digital art illustrated with Procreate. It depicts a girl sitting on a swing with her cats, suspended between two eucalyptus trees.



Dr Sng Bee Bee is currently a lecturer in research methodology and academic writing skills in various Singapore universities. She has taught

these topics to both undergraduate and postgraduate students specialising in ecotourism, sustainability and environmental issues. Bee Bee is a member of the Botanical Art Society (Singapore).

WILD ECHOES

Fun with Feathered Tales & Songs

By SHREEYAA SUBRA

Certain animals are associated with good or bad fortune. Some are linked to fantastical stories. There are many ethnobiological examples that reveal an intrinsic connection between humans and the natural world. Education Committee Chair Tan Beng Chiak recognised the importance but underappreciation of such perspectives when she revisited songs, stories, and myths from her childhood. This inspired her to create an afternoon of sharing, also roping in Norlinda Ishnin as co-presenter. NSS intern **Shreeyaa Subra** sums up their presentations.

Although often dismissed as unscientific or illogical, the intersection where nature meets culture provides a different way to look at the world. This perspective has the potential to instil knowledge and values, encouraging us to find awe in nature. On 29 June 2024, we embarked on a programme that brought participants on a journey to explore melodies and stories inspired by our avian friends and the intangible values we place on them. The event took place at the Singapore Sustainability Academy.

Beng Chiak kicked off the session with personal childhood memories, etymology, and popular stories connected to three familiar birds: sparrows, magpies, and swallows. The sparrow (麻雀) is widespread across the world, representing values like diligence, humility, adaptability, cleverness, and freedom. But there is a duality in its symbolism.

During China's Great Leap Forward, in an effort to stop the sparrows from eating grain, they were attacked under the Four Pests campaign against flies, mosquitoes, rats and sparrows. People zealously shot sparrows, destroyed their nests, and banged pots and pans so that they could not land and died of



Sing along session led by Mr Zero Nalpon. Photo: Huang Ningxin.

exhaustion. Up to a billion sparrows were killed. Instead of solving the problem, it led to severe ecological imbalance, one of the causes of the Great Chinese Famine.

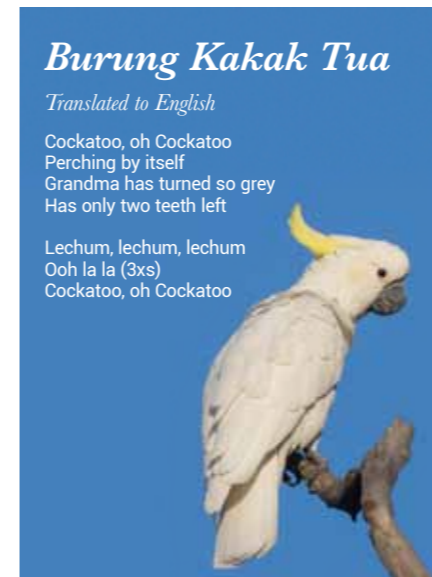
In Western culture, the magpie is viewed negatively as a thief ('thieving magpie') and a sign of bad luck, although there is no evidence that magpies are attracted to shiny objects. But in Chinese, the magpie (喜鹊) represents joy and the bearer of good news. It is hence a popular bird in Chinese paintings.

The Chinese mythology 'The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl' tells of a forbidden romance, where the cowherd (represented by the star Altair) and the weaver girl (represented by the star Vega) were ban-



Tan Beng Chiak getting the response of some enthusiastic participants. Photo: Huang Ningxin.

ished to opposite sides of the heavenly river (symbolised by the Milky Way). Annually, on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, a flock of magpies would form a



Burung Kakak Tua

Translated to English

Cockatoo, oh Cockatoo
Perching by itself
Grandma has turned so grey
Has only two teeth left

Lechum, lechum, lechum
Ooh la la (3xs)
Cockatoo, oh Cockatoo

Above: Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*). Photo: Francis Yap.
Right: Grey Heron. Photo: Khoh Zhi Wei.

bridge to reunite the lovers for a single day. Examining the lyrics of the Chinese children's song '小燕子' (Little Swallow) reveals that it refers to the migratory Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) that returns every spring and autumn to Singapore. In contrast, we also have the resident Pacific Swallow (*Hirundo tahitica*) that is here throughout the year.

Indeed, songs and stories told across the world have given us different takes on all three birds. The context of the stories and songs also affect our actions. Viewing sparrows as pests, led to their eradication and subsequent ecological disaster. If stories can cause imbalance, they can surely help in restoration. We should also reflect on our personal encounters with these birds that have shaped our thoughts on them.

Norlinda then moved on to examine the birds depicted in Malay songs. She sang them in her youth as popular children and folk songs. They inadvertently teach us about the birds found in this region.

The first song 'Bangau Oh Bangau' could refer to either the heron or the stork, both called *bangau* in Malay. The song highlights the diet, behaviour, predators, physical features, and habitat of the *bangau*. Using the examples of the Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and Milky Stork (*Mycteria cinerea*),



Left to right: Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) and Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). Photos: Daniel Neo, Damien Wong, Francis Yap.



Bangau Oh Bangau

Translated to English

Stork o stork
Why are you skinny?
How am I not skinny?
The fish won't go up
The fish won't go up

Fish o fish
Why won't you go up?
How can I go up?
The weeds were too long
The weeds were too long

Weeds o weeds
Why are you so long?
How am I not long
The buffalo won't eat me
The buffalo won't eat me

Buffalo o buffalo
Why won't you eat the weeds?
How can I eat the weeds
My stomach ached
My stomach ached

Stomach o stomach
Why were you aching?
How am I not aching
I ate some raw rice
I ate some raw rice

Rice o rice
Why were you raw?
How am I not raw
The woods were wet
The woods were wet

Woods o woods
Why were you wet?
How am I not wet
The rain fell on me
The rain fell on me

Rain o rain
Why did you fall on the woods?
How can I not fall
The frog called me
The frog called me

Frog o frog
Why did you call the rain?
How can I not call it
The snake wanted to eat me
The snake wanted to eat me

Snake o snake
Why did you want to eat the frog?
How can I not eat it
It is my food
It is my food

Norlinda looked at the differences and similarities between the two species, giving participants a taste of bird identification.

The next familiar folk song from Indonesia Norlinda looked at was 'Burung Kakak Tua' which is about a cockatoo that grows as old as a grandmother. This adorable song is based on the cockatoo's long lifespan, being able to live between 40 and 70 years.

There are feral cockatoos in Singapore that came over because of the pet trade. Non-native parrot species found here include the Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*), Red-breasted Parakeet (*Psittacula alexandri*) and Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*). As released or escaped birds, they have established wild populations

in Singapore. Norlinda guided participants to dive deeper and critically question these two songs to learn lessons including responsible pet ownership and not releasing animals into the wild.

After the enlightening presentations, participants had a sing along session led by Zero Nalpon and Leong Kwok Peng. Not only did everybody learn the folk songs featured, they also sang other oldies such as *Blackbird* by The Beatles.

In conclusion, under the dominant anthropocentric Western viewpoint, we risk losing our cultural perspectives and values. We can look forward to future runs of Wild Echoes that will include other mediums such as poems and art to further explore the knowledge and values of birds. 🌿

Cyprus: Birding Road Trip

Morten and Bee Choo Strange seek out the avian treasures of Cyprus, from its salt lakes and marshes to its mountains.



Text and Photos By **MORTEN STRANGE
& BEE CHOO STRANGE**

In April 2024, we visited the Mediterranean island of Cyprus for 10 days of bird-watching. Cyprus lies 35 degrees north of the equator covering an area of 9,250 km². The northern third of the island is a Turkish-controlled enclave outside the jurisdiction of the Greek-speaking EU-member state of the Republic of Cyprus. Our birding trip covered only the Grecian part of Cyprus.

The best time for birding is springtime from March to May. After the winter rains, the landscape is green. Migrants pass through on their way north, while resident birds start to sing and breed. During our stay, it only drizzled for one day. The rest of the time was bright

and clear with daylight from 6 am to 8 pm, while the temperature remained a pleasant 15-28°C.

Cyprus can be reached from Singapore on several Middle Eastern airlines. We used Lufthansa (via Frankfurt) which had the cheapest deal then at \$1,288 return. We paid a reasonable \$73 per night on average for excellent resorts. The Mediterranean-style food and local wine were outstanding and good value for money. Nine days of car rental cost \$227. Fuel for our 983-km road trip cost only \$85. All in all, our billings were below budget.

With some 12,000 years of human history, numerous archaeological sites, nice weather, good food and sandy beaches, Cyprus is a magnet for visitors including eco-tourists like us. We are not twitch-

Above: We stopped at a recommended birding spot, the Evretou Dam. The dam is an important water supply to the region. It was a beautiful and tranquil place where we picked up six new species. We also went to the Akamas Peninsula in the extreme west of Cyprus. We checked out this rocky and rugged terrain with both a hike and a boat trip up the coast from Latchi Marina.

ers. We simply enjoy a nice habitat, hiking and watching the critters living there. Seeing a lifer now and then adds to the value.

Cyprus is an endemic bird area and has three birds found nowhere else on earth. We saw two of these, an owl and a wheatear, but dipped on the last one: the Cyprus Warbler (*Sylvia melanothorax*). Some British birders we ran into at Troodos Forest said that this bird has declined a lot in recent years. In

addition, Cyprus has three species endemic to subspecies level. We had good views of all three: A jay, a treecreeper and a tit.

The main birding sites in Cyprus are generally easy to locate. Many of them have walkable trails, elevated hides and signboards. The Republic values eco-tourism, although it has problems with illegal hunting and trapping. Martin Hellicar, director of BirdLife Cyprus has more to say on bird trapping: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/03/13/boycott-is-the-wrong-response-to-bad-news-on-bird-trapping/>. Communities around the Mediterranean, from Malta to Lebanon, are also struggling with these issues.

Currently, Cyprus has 406 bird species on its checklist, a similar number to Singapore. Like us, most species listed are uncommon or rare vagrants with a few national records.

Currently, Cyprus has 406 bird species on its checklist, a similar number to Singapore. Like us, most species listed are uncommon or rare vagrants with a few national records. In our week of birding, we saw 93 species in a variety of habitats: coastal terrain, salt lakes, freshwater marshes, arid scrub and montane forest. We missed some expected and presumably numerous species but added a few surprises. That is how birdwatching will always be. Apart from our 93 confirmed species, we saw some birds that we could not positively identify and heard others, like the Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) and Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), which we did not count. We only added birds that showed well and were preferably photographed to confirm their identities.

We present here a photo essay of the key places visited and animals found.



Larnaca town on the southeast coast of Cyprus is the gateway to the island. Famous for its resorts and beaches, we were there for the salt lakes and ponds around Larnaca Airport. Important nature sites in Cyprus are usually well signposted and often have elevated hides and information boards at the trailheads. This rental car is the cheapest and greenest we could find, with a 685 cc engine, giving us 28.2 km per litre. In Singapore, these economical small cars are never imported.



People have lived in Cyprus for thousands of years. Today, the island has a population of almost one million residents. Most of the original forest has long been cleared and replaced by agriculture and urban sprawl. But up in the interior hills, in the Troodos Forest, there is still some good habitat left. The hills reach their highest point at the 1,952-m Mount Olympus. There is even a ski resort up here, although the snowy season is short. The vegetation is mainly pines, spruce and other conifers. Near the summit of Troodos, many of the trees were infested with caterpillars of the Pine Processionary (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*). The larvae weave a silky nest for protection before they turn into moths later in the year.



April is the breeding season in the Mediterranean. Driving from Larnaca towards Paphos, we stopped at the Limassol Salt Lake. The big salt lake itself was pretty empty, but Akrotiri Marsh and the lagoons around Lady's Mile were more productive. We found a few Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) and lots of shorebirds here including the Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*), Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) and Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*). Cyprus is famous for big flocks of Greater Flamingos that fly in from their breeding grounds in nearby Turkey and spend all winter on the island. We had good views of them at Oroklini Lake, a 50-hectare wetland at the northern fringes of Larnaca that is home to 190 bird species.



Cyprus has three full endemic bird species. One of them is the Cyprus Wheatear (*Oenanthe cyprica*). Most wheatears are associated with open country. Somewhat surprisingly, we found this species to be mainly a woodland bird. This male is perching in a tree within Troodos Forest.



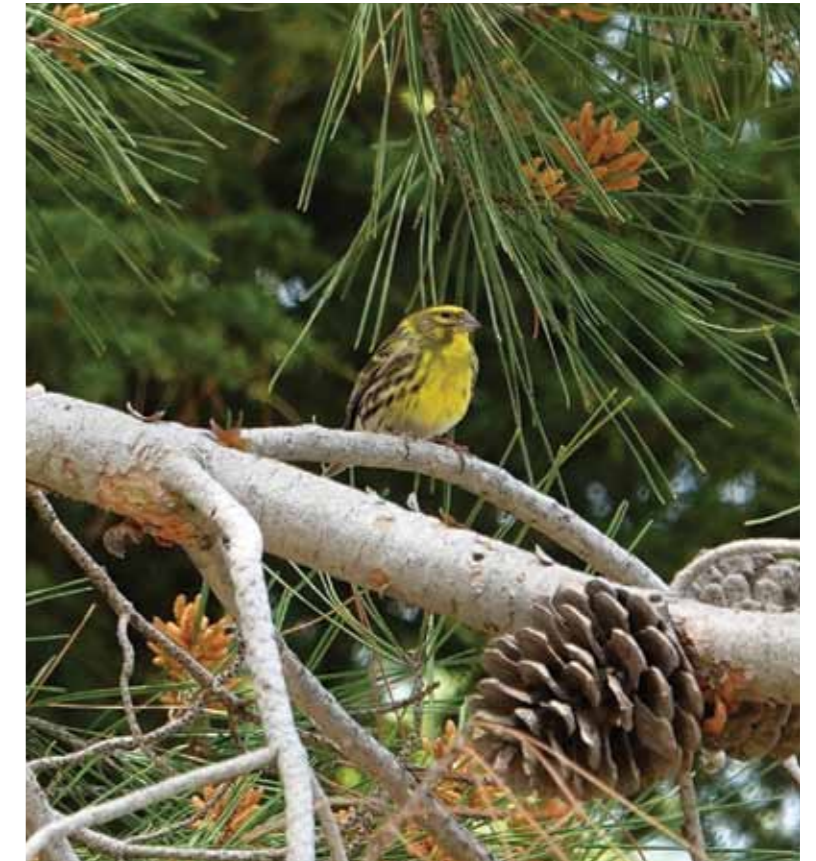
The widespread Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) was indeed common and vocal around Troodos. Here, a male has come down to the ground for a drink.



The Cyprus Scops Owl (*Otus Cypricus*) is another local endemic. At one of the Troodos Forest trails, we ran into two hot-shot British birdwatcher friends who showed us this individual hiding well inside a dead tree. In addition, three forest bird species are endemic to subspecies level. We found all three, including the local taxon of the Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glendarius glaszneri*) which is common in the Troodos Mountains.



Left: In our 10-day road trip, we only saw one wild mammal, a rat that quickly scuttled away. The warm and dry Mediterranean habitat was good for lizards though. We found four species with little effort. With some help from iNaturalist experts, we identified them as (from top to bottom): Snake-eyed Lizard (*Ophisops elegans*) which is common around Cape Greco; Shreiber's Spiny-footed Lizard (*Acanthodactylus schreiberi*) which is an endangered Mediterranean species seen at Cape Greco; Cyprus Rock Agama (*Laudakia cyprica*) which is numerous around Cape Greco and other locations, coming in variable sizes and colours; Troodos Lizard (*Phoenicolacerta troodica*) which is a Cyprus endemic seen at a small waterfall in Troodos Forest.



We made a stop at the Troodos Botanical Garden and added a few bird species, including this pretty European Serin (*Serinus serinus*).



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Main field guide: *Birds of Cyprus*. London, UK: Helm Field Guides. Richardson, C. & Porter, R. (2020).

Site guide: *Birdwatching in Cyprus: Where to go and what to look for*. Cyprus: BirdLife Cyprus. Stylianou, J. (2022).

<https://birdlifecyprus.org/>



Morten Strange is a retired petroleum engineer, retired nature photographer, retired publisher and former editor-in-chief of *Nature Watch*. He has been a life member of NSS since 1984. Learn more at mortenstrange.com. **Bee Choo Strange** is also a life member of NSS and is currently active in international hornbill conservation.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Compiled by **GLORIA SEOW**


Applicable for all NSS Events

- Participants have to be well on the day of the event, and must wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing. NSS reserves the right to turn away those who are unwell.
- Register early to avoid disappointment. Closing dates are generally one to two weeks before the event. Details will be emailed to confirmed participants after the closing date. For enquiries on bird-related events, contact Lee Ee Ling at ellee1584@gmail.com. For all other enquiries, contact Kerry Pereira at kerry@nss.org.sg unless stated otherwise.

17 August 2024, Saturday

Birdwatching for Beginners at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park


Members Only

 Bishan-AMK Park offers an interesting mix of birdlife, from sunbirds, to orioles, munias, kingfishers and herons. Its open vegetation makes it easy for novice birders to spot birds. Trip leader Lee Ee Ling will share tips on birdwatching including bird identification, habitats, and equipment. Time: 7.30 am to 10.30 am. Maximum: 15 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGbirdwalk1>.

24 August 2024, Saturday

Online Talk: My Shark Conservation Journey

Open to the Public

 Join Kathy Xu of The Dorsal Effect as she shares her journey from being a secondary school history teacher to becoming a self-proclaimed shark conservationist with her work in ecotourism and fishery port research. Kathy is also a Marine Conservation Group member. Time: 10 am to 11 am. Maximum: 80 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSMCGTalk2>.

24 August, 28 September, 26 October, 30 November 2024, Saturday

NSS Rewilding Project


Open to the Public

 Join the NSS Rewilding Project to make the Rail Corridor a greener place. Get involved every step of the way, from the manual processing of grass to weed clearance and the planting of native trees. We aim to restore a continuous canopy cover to the Rail Corridor for it to be a better conduit for plants and wildlife. Participants need to be physically fit, including being able to lift at least 10 kg and withstand the hot sun. Time: 9 am to 12 pm. Venue: Rail Corridor opposite Jalan Bumbong. Register at <http://tinyurl.com/NSSRewildingProject2024> for any of the dates offered. Contact Sylvia at HP: 9190 4849 for enquiries.

24 August 2024, Saturday

Butterfly Walk at Windsor Nature Park

Members Only

 Led by Mohamed Jusri, this butterfly walk at Windsor Nature Park will feature a variety of forest butterflies. We will spend time watching and videoing them. Possible sightings include the Common Birdwing, Common Mormon and Branded Imperial. Time: 9 am to 11 am. Maximum: 15 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBIGwalk2>.

31 August 2024, Saturday

Plant Walk at Fort Canning Park

Open to the Public

 Be captivated by majestic heritage trees and a diverse spice garden at this historic hilltop park. To celebrate Singapore's birthday, we will tell stories that reveal intriguing facets of our past. Uncover the connections between these living treasures and our nation's development. Led by Plant Group members Benjamin Low, Tan Beng Chiak, Dr Yap Von Bing, Angie Ng-Chua and Tan Foong Heng. Time: 8.30 am to 10.30 am. Maximum: 20 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSPlantWalk1>. Contact Benjamin at HP: 9797 4063 for enquiries.

31 August 2024, Saturday

Introduction to Bird Photography

Open to the Public

 Bird watching and photography have been gaining popularity. Learn how to take stunning pictures of birds and wildlife as well as the etiquette of bird and wildlife photography from former Bird Group Chair Alan Owyong and Canon EOS Master Bernard Seah. Held at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, this event is hosted by NSS in collaboration with Friends of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. Time: 9 am to 11 am. Maximum: 60 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGWorkshop>.

7 September 2024, Saturday

Dragonfly Walk at Hampstead Wetlands Park


Members Only

 This wetlands park is a hotspot for Blue Dashers, Common Redbolts, Yellow-barred Flutterers, Variegated Green Skimmers and a dozen other common dragonfly species. Led by Robin Ngiam and Lena Chow of the Butterfly and Insect Group, we also hope to spot the Crenulated Spreadwing damselfly, which is not often seen outside MacRitchie Reservoir. Time: 9 am to 10.30 am. Maximum: 15 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBIGdragonflywalk1>.

14 September 2024, Saturday

Marvellous Musang Night Walk


Members Only

 Join civet researcher and Vertebrate Study Group member Fung Tze Kwan on a night walk at Old Upper Thomson Road to discover the Common Palm Civet. Native to Singapore, this nocturnal mammal has a distinctive black mask, slender body and black tail. It forages for fruits, insects, and small animals under the cover of darkness. We might even spot bats, snakes, and mousedeer. Time: 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm. Maximum: 12 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSVSG1>.

15 September 2024, Sunday

Fun with Migratory Birds at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Open to the Public

 Waders from as far as Siberia stopover at Sungei Buloh to refuel during their autumn migration. Catch them as they feed in flocks out on the mudflats in this walk led by Education Committee Vice Chair Gloria Seow. We will learn about the dangers these brave birds face while traversing cities, mountains and coastlines, and peer through telescopes to observe them up close. Gloria will also point out the cool denizens of Sungei Buloh – from the mighty Saltwater Crocodile to the wily Archer Fish. Time: 8 am to 10.15 am. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSCommActivity2>. For enquiries, contact Gloria at gloria_seow@yahoo.com.

28 September 2024, Saturday

Forest Bathing at Singapore Botanic Gardens

Members Only

 Forest bathing is immersing oneself in a forest atmosphere, where we practise being present and mindful in nature. Join us for a rejuvenating session at the lush Singapore Botanic Gardens. Let the calming atmosphere and fresh air restore your body, mind and spirit. Learn how to add forest bathing exercises to your self-care routine. We will engage in relaxation and nature connection activities to enhance well-being, relieve stress, and stimulate creativity. The session ends with tea sharing. Time: 8.30 am to 10.30 am. Maximum: 15 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSPlantGrpWalk>.

29 September 2024, Sunday

Birdwatching at Gardens by the Bay


Members Only

 The water features and plant life at Gardens by the Bay have proven attractive to local and migratory birds. Interesting sightings include the Red-legged Crake, Common Kingfisher and Stork-billed Kingfisher. Meet Bird Group Chair Veronica Foo at Kingfisher Wetland. The walk ends at Marina Barrage. Time: 7.30 am to 10.30 am. Maximum: 15 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGbirdwalk2>.

5 October & 30 November 2024, Saturday

Forest Clean-up at Pulau Ubin


Open to the Public

 Pulau Ubin is a Key Biodiversity Area with various healthy habitats rich in animals and plants. Make a difference by helping to clean up its forest while learning about a variety of conservation issues and how you can become a better steward of nature. Time: 9 am to 1 pm. Maximum: 15 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSForestCleanupatUbin> (5 Oct) or <https://tinyurl.com/NSSForestCleanupatUbin2> (30 Nov)

6 October 2024, Sunday

Birdwatching at Kranji Marshes


Open to the Public

 Join Bird Group guides Florence Lian and Yap Wee Jin to explore the core area of Kranji Marshes Nature Park. The paths and hides offer excellent views across the freshwater marshes. Birding highlights include resident birds such as the Red-wattled Lapwing, Changeable Hawk Eagle and Grey-headed Fish Eagle as well as winter visitors like the Common and Black-capped Kingfishers. A hired bus will ferry us to the start point. The walk is free but participants need to cover transport cost of \$15 per person. Time: 7.30 am to 11 am. Maximum: 21 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGbirdwalk3>.

19 October 2024, Saturday

Butterfly Walk at Bukit Gombak Park


Members Only

 Join Steven Choong on a butterfly walk to seek out the Silver Forget-me-not, Lemon and Orange Emigrants, Plain Tigers, Grey Pansies, Common and Broad banded Sailors, and Julia Heliconia. We will watch and video these beauties. On a sunny day, the Dark Cerulean, Apefly and Common Birdwing might make their appearance. Over 70 species have been recorded here. Time: 9.30 am to 12 pm. Maximum: 25 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBIGwalk>.

9 & 10 November 2024

40th Singapore Bird Race

Open to the Public

 Mark your calendar for our 40th edition of the Singapore Bird Race. Exciting programme details will be shared soon.

16 November 2024, Saturday

Migratory Bird Walk at Kranji Marshes

Open to the Public

 Join Dr Yong Ding Li of the Bird Group at Kranji Marshes to see some of our regular, long-distance visitors from across Asia. He will introduce us to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, Singapore's geographical position in the flyway, and the many migratory species using it. Get acquainted with regular migrants like the Barn Swallow, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Arctic Warbler and Wood Sandpiper. With a bit of luck, we might observe reed warblers and even the Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. To top it all, it will be raptor migration season and sightings are a possibility. A hired bus will ferry us to the start point. The walk is free but participants need to cover transport cost of \$15 per person. Time: 7.30 am to 11 am. Maximum: 21 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGbirdwalk4>.

8 December 2024, Sunday

Sunny Stopovers: Storytelling, Sharing & Art Jamming

Open to the Public


 *Sunny Stopovers* is a captivating picture book that presents bird migration in a simple but charming story: "Sunbird attends the Migrant Welcome Party – the biggest gathering of birds in Sunny Singapore. He is thrilled to befriend migratory birds from overseas. Their journeys are filled with dangers, from predators to bird traps, habitat loss, storms, accidents, exhaustion and starvation. Yet they continue to fly thousands of kilometres year after year. What survival secrets will Sunbird learn from these brave birds?" We invite families with children between

4 to 8 years old to join us for this fun event. There will be an exciting storytelling session as well as insightful sharing by author Gloria Seow and illustrator Kenneth Chin on their creative processes that went into publishing this book with Marshall Cavendish. Kenneth will then teach us to draw one of the brave birds in an art jamming session. Be sure to bring your own drawing and even colouring materials (i.e. pencil, paper, eraser and clip file). To view the book, please see <https://lorisowl.wordpress.com/sunny-stopovers/>. Time: 3 pm to 4.15 pm. Venue: To be advised, will be in town. Contact Gloria at gloria_seow@yahoo.com for enquiries. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSCommActivity1>.

14 December 2024, Saturday

Birdwatching at Kranji Marshes


Open to the Public

 Join Bird Group guides Jamie Chan and Lee Ee Ling to explore the core area of Kranji Marshes Nature Park. The paths and hides offer excellent views across the freshwater marshes. Birding highlights include resident birds such as the Red-wattled Lapwing, Changeable Hawk Eagle and Grey-headed Fish Eagle as well as winter visitors like the Common and Black-capped Kingfishers. A hired bus will ferry us to the start point. The walk is free but participants need to cover transport cost of \$15 per person. Time: 7.30 am to 11 am. Maximum: 21 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGbirdwalk5>.

29 December 2024, Sunday

Birdwatching at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Members Only

 Join Bird Group Chair Veronica Foo in a three-hour walk to explore this prime birdwatching site. Aside from the resident sunbirds, bulbuls, doves and kingfishers, expect to encounter migrant shorebirds like egrets, plovers and sandpipers. Time: 7.30 am to 10.30 am. Maximum: 20 pax. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/NSSBGbirdwalk6>.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

To become a NSS member or renew your membership, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/BeAnNSSMember>

Growing Green Minds & Networks

KALEIDOSCOPE
NEWS AND HAPPENINGS AT NATURE SOCIETY SINGAPORE

By GILLIAN HARRYANTO, NSS ESN intern

Every Singaporean a Naturalist (ESN) is NSS's flagship citizen science and nature education programme. Since its inception in 2018, we have organised events and initiatives to develop students' and teachers' knowledge and passion for nature. Here are the ESN highlights for the first half of 2024.

NSS Youth Naturalist Leader Network

NSS Youth Naturalist Leader Network (YNLN) is a fresh initiative helmed by NSS Assistant Director and Head of Secretariat Huang Ningxin. YNLN aims to engage passionate ESN participants and alumni to work

towards environmental stewardship, conservation, and sustainability within their school, community and beyond. The first workshop on 11 March 2024 held at Raffles Girls' School (Secondary) was attended by 13 Youth Naturalist Leaders from four schools. NSS



Youth Naturalist Leaders at a design thinking workshop where they identified nature-related issues in their schools and developed solutions for their target audience.

volunteer and professional UX designer and instructor Wilson Chew conducted the session. Students were guided through a design thinking exercise to identify nature-related issues in their schools and develop solutions for their target audience. They storyboarded their ideas and presented them.

NSS ESN Naturalist Chatter 2024

ESN Naturalist Chatter is an online speaker series that broadens and deepens participants' understanding of local conservation issues. We began 2024 with our fifth talk 'Our Mudflat: An Ecological Wonder'. In line with the International Horseshoe Crab Workshop 2024 hosted by NSS, we had a marine conservation theme.

Marine Conservation Group Chair and local horseshoe crab expert Lester Tan spoke about the importance of the mudflat habitat, the unique characteristics of horseshoe crabs, the threats they face, and local efforts to conserve them. This session on 16 February 2024 was attended by 25 students and teachers from five schools.



The 5th NSS ESN Naturalist Chatter 'Our Mudflat: An Ecological Wonder' was delivered by Marine Conservation Group Chair Lester Tan.

NSS Naturalist Educator Network

NSS Naturalist Educator Network (NEN) is a new initiative helmed by Education Committee Chair Tan Beng Chiak. NEN aspires to be a collective force of dedicated educators, united by a shared vision to empower the

next generation of environmental leaders. Serving as mentors, trainers, and catalysts for change, NEN aims to instil in students and teachers a sense of responsibility and passion for the environment. The first meeting took place at Raffles Girls' School (Secondary) on 26 January 2024, attracting 13 Naturalist Educators from nine schools. These teachers were introduced to what NEN entailed. They also shared and discussed the nature initiatives and programmes in their schools.



NSS Naturalist Educator Network aspires to be a collective force of dedicated educators, united by a shared vision to empower the next generation of environmental leaders.

Growing Green Minds & Networks

NSS ESN 3rd Biodiversity Race 2024

The NSS ESN 3rd Biodiversity Race took place on 29 May 2024. Some 40 teams comprising 159 students from 12 schools raced for 3.5 hours at six nature parks across Singapore. This fun inter-school competition put students' nature

knowledge and observation skills to the test. They explored a park of their choice to note fauna sightings from five taxonomic groups, namely amphibians, birds, butterflies and moths, mammals, and reptiles.

Working in teams, they identified, photographed, and uploaded their sightings to the iNaturalist race platform. In all, 967 observations of 118 species were recorded. Of these, 89.7% were research-grade observations shared to the Global Biodiversity Information Database for conservation work and research. We even received media coverage from *The Straits Times*: <https://str.sg/viz-race>.

After an exciting morning, students had lunch and recharged at Mapletree Business City. They received race keepsakes consisting of a pin, postcard, and Banded Malayan Coral Snake sticker.

The afternoon programme began with a Reflection Presentation, where school representatives shared their race experience and learnings through poems and skits. Many revealed that the race was an eye-opening experience that increased their appreciation of local wildlife.



NSS ESN 3rd Biodiversity Race 2024 had a splendid turnout of 159 students from 12 schools. Collectively, they chalked up 967 observations of 118 species in one morning.

Mapletree's Group Chief Corporate Officer Wan Kwong Weng was our guest of honour. During his opening address, he congratulated the students and encouraged them to continue their nature endeavours. Participants won prizes in various categories including Highest Number of Species with Research-grade Observations, Most Unique Observation, and Best Photographed Observation. Prizes were presented by Head of Primate Conservation and Singapore Programmes at Mandai Nature Dr Andie Ang, NSS President Dr Yeo Seng Beng, and Director of Corporate Communications at Canon Singapore Edwin Teoh.

The race would not have been possible without the continuous support of our sponsors Mandai Nature, Mapletree and Canon Singapore. Canon loaned 15 cameras to race participants and trained them on camera usage. Similarly, Mapletree provided a wonderful venue and sponsored the race prizes. We thank the NSS Exco, ESN Working Group, staff, interns, and volunteers for their hard work behind the scenes. Last but not least, a big shout-out to all teams for their enthusiastic participation.



Common Sun Skink and Grey Heron – both photos won the Best Photographed Observation prize for Teck Whye Primary School and Yishun Town Secondary School respectively.



Renewal of IPC Status

We have successfully renewed our Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status. We would like to thank the membership for coming together at the recent Annual General Meeting to vote for the changes in the NSS Constitution as mandated by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Due to the overwhelming support, the changes were passed and we have received our three-year IPC renewal.



Snapshots of Past Events

By GLORIA SEOW

KALEIDOSCOPE

NEWS AND HAPPENINGS AT NATURE SOCIETY SINGAPORE



1 **Birdwatching at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve**, 13 April 2024. Led by Lee Ee Ling, 19 birdwatchers picked up 35 bird species in one morning including the Slaty-breasted Rail (above), Great-billed Heron and Copper-throated Sunbird. They were also pleased to see the Black-spitting Cobra, Paradise Tree Snake and Green-crested Lizard. Photo: S Suresh.



2 **Butterfly Walk at Lornie Nature Corridor**, 14 April 2024. The creation of Lornie Highway has diverted traffic from Lornie Road. The reduced flow has resulted in nature reclaiming Lornie Nature Corridor running alongside Lornie Road. Guided by Simon Chan, 17 participants had a walk here, encountering the rare Eliot's Cornelian as well as 43 other butterfly and moth species. Photo: Simon Chan.



3 **NSS Rewilding Project**, 27 April 2024. An encouraging 41 volunteers turned up to perform site maintenance at the Rail Corridor next to Jalan Bumbong as part of rewilding works. The regulars were happy to guide the newbies in weeding and tending to the young saplings. Photo: Sylvia Tan.



4 **Plant Walk from Bukit Panjang to Pang Sua**, 1 May 2024. Bukit Panjang Neighborhood 5 Park has unusual plants normally found in older forests. Plant Group Co-Chair Dr Amy Choong led 18 participants on a botanical walk at this park before heading towards Pang Sua pond where they looked at floating plants installed for cleaning water.



5 **Nature Ambassador Workshop**, 4 May 2024. Trainers Kerry Pereira and Steven Lee briefed 14 participants on how to represent the Society at our outreach booths in schools and other events. Participants learnt to engage people of all ages and backgrounds to promote nature appreciation and conservation. Photo: Steven Lee.



6 **Birdwatching at Pasir Ris Park**, 5 May 2024. Birding leads Florence Lian and Jamie Chan pointed out the birds to 20 participants at Pasir Ris Mangroves and Park. They chalked up a count of 26 species, including the Large-tailed Nightjar, Rufous Woodpecker and Oriental Pied Hornbill. Photo: Lee Ee Ling.



7 **Pasir Ris Park Butterfly Walk**, 24 May 2024. Guide Mohamed Jusri introduced the walk's three participants to 13 butterfly species such as the Tailed Jay, Peacock Pansy and Dartlet. Photo: Mohamed Jusri.



8 **NSS Rewilding Project**, 25 May 2024. Some 45 participants, including 21 students from the Singapore University of Social Sciences who were fulfilling their Community Involvement Programme hours, joined in this monthly rewilding session. The focus was on planting, mulching and maintenance. Photo: Thomas Boudenne.

Snapshots of Past Events



9 **Colugo Walk at Bukit Batok Nature Park**, 7 June 2024. Led by Dr Norman Lim of the Vertebrate Study Group, 18 participants encountered five colugos in the park's 'Colugo Highway' including a mother with infant as well as one that performed a spectacular glide. They also found the Oriental Whip Snake, Malesian Frog and Common Fruit Bat. Photo: Tan Leng Seow.



10 **Pesta Ubin: Nature Macrophotography Workshop**, 9 June 2024. Wielding DSLRs, digital cameras or camera phones with clip-on macro lens, 12 participants explored the miniature world of insects and spiders with Mohamed Jusri and other macro imaging experts. They were introduced to essential gear, field techniques, and composition tips. Photo: Jimmy Ng.



12 **Pesta Ubin: Birdwatching at Pulau Ubin**, 16 June 2024. Despite overcast skies, trip leaders Yap Wee Jin and Lee Ee Ling came up with the goods. Their group of 13 participants managed to see and/or hear 36 bird species, including the Mangrove Pitta, Abbott's Babbler and White-rumped Shama. Photo: Lee Ee Ling.



13 **Pesta Ubin: Birdwatching at Pulau Ubin**, 22 June 2024. We had washed out weather – drizzle and intermittent rain – which resulted in few birds showing. Notable sightings included the Oriental Pied Hornbill and Grey Heron. The walk had seven participants led by Lim Kim Keang, Wong Chung Cheong and Lee Ee Ling. Photo: Lim Kim Keang.



15 **NSS Rewilding Project**, 29 June 2024. Organised under the Go Green SG 2024 banner, this rewilding session saw 18 participants doing site maintenance at the Rail Corridor, guided by NSS's Rewilding Assistant Manager Sylvia Tan and stalwart volunteers. Photo: Sylvia Tan and Lee Kwang Boon.



16 **Forest Clean-up at Pulau Ubin**, 29 June 2024. With the morning downpour clearing up midway, this forest clean-up by eight enthusiastic participants turned out to be fun and enjoyable. Led by the Society's Members and Outreach Manager Kerry Pereira, they also spotted the Sumatran Flying Dragon, Clouded Monitor and Malayan Water Monitor. This activity came under the Go Green SG 2024 banner.

See Page 18 for Upcoming Activities



11 **Online Talk: A Space for Both of Us – Proposing Protected Areas for People and Turtles**, 16 June 2024. In celebration of Sea Turtle Day, turtle biologist Rushan bin Abdul Rahman shared with 13 participants about how including people who live alongside the turtles into turtle management plans is vital to the sustainability of conservation goals. The talk was hosted by Marine Conservation Group Chair Lester Tan. Photo: Rushan bin Abdul Rahman.



14 **Pesta Ubin: Mousedeer Magic**, 22 June 2024. All nine participants had been to Pulau Ubin before during daylight hours, but this night walk there proved to be their first. Led by Marcus Chua, N Sivasothi and Airani S, they spotted the Greater Mousedeer, gawked at several Malayan Flying Foxes feasting on figs, and watched an Orb Weaver Spider spinning its web, amongst other sightings. Photo: Airani S.



17 **Wild Echoes: Fun with Feathered Tales and Songs**, 29 June 2024. Nearly 40 participants joined in this session facilitated by Tan Beng Chik and Norlinda Ishnin. The sing-along portion was led by Zero Nalpon and Leong Kwok Peng. Read about what transpired on page 12 and 13. Photo: Huang Ningxin.



Rewilding Reflection: Our Volunteer Journey

By SUSS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STUDENTS*

We are a group of second-year students from the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS). We never anticipated that a single SUSS course, 'Learning with Communities', would profoundly refine our perspective of nature. Through our involvement with Nature Society Singapore, we found ourselves evolving from viewing our NSS rewilding experience as a mere course requirement to building a deep and personal connection with nature.



Above: Rewilding volunteers.

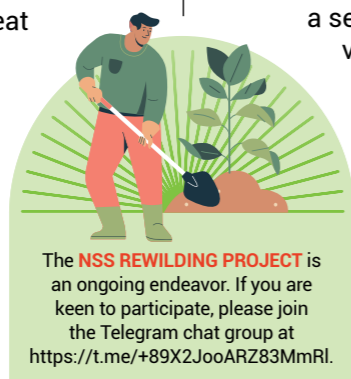
Right: Clearing the land to make way for replanting of native trees.



Maintenance work include pulling out weeds and removing the existing elephant grass cover to make space for future plantings. These activities connected us to nature and we felt the shared responsibility of making the project a success.

The NSS Rewilding Project aims to help volunteers become conscious of the delicate harmony in our environment and our collective responsibility to protect it. At present, the project has 326 people in its Telegram group chat. To date, some 120 or so volunteers have planted 188 saplings of 26 species along Rail Corridor North. "There are around 20 volunteers who show up consistently. We feel a sense of community," said committed volunteer Eric Gilbert.

This core group has formed a strong volunteer base to advance the project and foster a supportive community that is welcoming. The atmosphere is low pressure which encourages participation. Another regular volunteer Goh Si Guim highlighted the project's social aspect, "After rewilding work, we often go to a coffee shop to have a drink and chat."



The NSS REWILDING PROJECT is an ongoing endeavor. If you are keen to participate, please join the Telegram chat group at <https://t.me/+89X2JooARZ83MmRl>.



Rewilding along the Rail Corridor entails planting native trees to reestablish a continuous canopy cover that will better help wildlife move between forest fragments.

Our journey began with volunteering for NSS's rewilding sessions along the Rail Corridor, where we learnt first-hand about the importance of planting native trees to reestablish a continuous canopy cover that will better help wildlife move between forest fragments. Of all the sessions we attended, we found the tree planting one most memorable.

Great considerations go into selecting the perfect spot for each sapling, depending on its species, to ensure that it is in the right environment. Holes of the correct depth have to be dug to accommodate the root balls of young trees. The physical work under the hot sun had us drenched in sweat in only minutes. Through this, we began to appreciate and empathise with the efforts of the dedicated volunteers who have been going strong since the beginning of this initiative. Rewilding efforts may seem like minor deeds, but are really meaningful steps towards restoring our environment.

Beyond tree planting, the NSS Rewilding Project monitors and maintains all planted saplings.

* Article contributed by SUSS community engagement students Low Kai Tat, Muhammad Filkhairi Bin Zaini, Neo Yong Theng, Tan Chiao Jin Fabian and Tan Jing Han.

NATURE SOCIETY SINGAPORE

Planet | People | Partners



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

MISSION With our evidence-based approach and partnerships with agencies, peers, and corporates, we lead habitat and biodiversity conservation in Singapore and with partners in the region. Through engagement, education, advocacy, and research, we inspire and enable people to take action towards a sustainable and biodiverse planet.

Why Join NSS?

Nature Society Singapore or NSS is dedicated to the study, conservation and enjoyment of the biodiversity and natural heritage of Singapore, our neighbouring countries and the wider world. The Society is a non-profit, non-government organisation. Our members work with commitment and altruism to conserve Singapore's remaining nature areas such as forests, mangroves, wetlands and reefs.

NSS was formerly known as the Singapore Branch of the Malayan Nature Society (MNS), formed in 1954. In 1991, we became independent as Nature Society Singapore. Both NSS and MNS continue to maintain strong links with each other.

NSS organises guided nature walks, horseshoe crab rescues, nature surveys, clean-ups, talks, exhibitions, and overseas nature trips. Going on an NSS outing allows you to meet people from all walks of life with a common passion!

Join NSS Today & Receive Nature Watch for Free!

The values that NSS upholds are a bulwark against the excesses of an ultra-materialistic society. If you too feel that protecting our biodiversity and natural heritage are important, join NSS today and support the Society in our work. Members will receive four issues of *Nature Watch* (NSS quarterly magazine) and a regular e-newsletter for free. Members also get to participate in fascinating nature-based activities and events which enable one to forge friendships with fellow nature lovers.

Follow us at:

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- www.nss.org.sg/

Nature Society Singapore Membership Categories

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

- S\$40 **Ordinary Member**
Age 18 and above
- S\$75 **Family Member**
Husband, Wife & Children under Age 18
- 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
- S\$200 **Affiliate Member**
Non-Profit Organisations & Schools
- S\$4,000 **Corporate Member**
Nominal Fee of S\$200 + Annual Tax-Exempt Donation of S\$3,800

How to Join NSS

To join as a NSS member, please fill in this form <http://tinyurl.com/NSSmembershipform>. It allows you to settle the membership fees within the link. Once your membership is approved by the Executive Committee, you will receive *Nature Watch* and the e-newsletter for free, as well as be able to attend all member-only events.

How to Join NSS as a Volunteer or Intern

- To join as a NSS volunteer, please fill in this form <http://tinyurl.com/NSSvolunteerform>.
- To apply for internship, please fill in this form <https://tinyurl.com/NSSinternshipform>.

70th Anniversary Gala Donations

NSS has received Tote Board approval for the Enhanced Fundraising Grant (EFR) for the Society's 70th Gala Celebrations. Every \$1 donated will be matched by another \$1 up to \$250,000. This means that every dollar you give will be doubled. There are various ways to donate as detailed below.



- Scan the **PayNow QR code** for Nature Society Singapore's 70th Gala Donation account and enter your name, contact number or email address in the UEN/Bill Reference Number box.
- Fund transfers** can also be made via:
 - **NSS Giving.Sg**: <https://www.giving.sg/donate/campaign/celebrating-70-years-of-nature-society-singapore>
 - **NSS RayofHope**: <https://rayofhope.sg/campaign/nss70thanniversaryfundraising/>
 For donations via NSS Giving.sg and NSS RayofHope, please ensure that you copy the full link to paste into your browser.
- For other modes of payment, please get in touch with us via email contact@nss.org.sg.
- We also welcome individual and corporate donations to the Society. Please inform us via email contact@nss.org.sg of the amount you wish to donate, along with your name, title or organisation. Donations may be made by the payment methods mentioned above. Your generosity is much appreciated and all donations will receive a 250% tax-exemption receipt.



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

You can choose to inform us if you have considered us in your will, but it is not strictly necessary. Please ensure that your solicitor writes in the full name of the Society. We suggest below suitable forms of words that can appear in your will:

*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.



EST. 1954
**NATURE
SOCIETY**
SINGAPORE



NSS works to protect future habitats for animals in Singapore, such as the critically endangered Raffles' Banded Langur (*Presbytis femoralis*). Only 60-70 individuals remain here.
Photo: Andie Ang.