

**The Nature Society (Singapore)
The Conservation Committee**

**Appeal to Save the Woodland at Sg Ulu Pandan Designated for
HDB Development**

The report is endorsed by the Council of the Nature Society.

Introduction

The area of woodland that we are concerned with is bounded by Sg Ulu Pandan, Commonwealth Avenue West and Climent Road. The total size of the woodland comes to roughly 70 ha. For convenience of reference, we have divided the woodland into two sectors, the **Eastern** and the **Western**, with the dividing line at the waist of the elongated area --- drawn northwards from the Dover MRT Station. See the attached Satellite Map. The **Eastern Sector** comes to about 30 ha, while the **Western Sector** comes to about 40 ha. We understand that part of the area in the **Eastern Sector** closer to the Buona Vista MRT Station (info from HDB website) will be used for a small cluster of HDB housing units (1300) in the SERS scheme to rehouse the to-be-revamped Ghim Moh precinct (1006 units.)

Nature Society's Proposal

First, we here propose URA & HDB consider that the housing site be shifted to the compound of the two schools --- Ghim Moh Primary & Ghim Secondary --- located just north of the Sg Ulu Pandan. (See the attached Satellite Map.) Ghim Secondary is no longer in use as a school, while Ghim Moh Primary will be relocated by the end of 2008.

If that be really not possible, we propose that there be a shift in the site within the woodland area itself --- using the **Western** rather than the **Eastern Sector** for the HDB housing. This **Western Sector** of the woodland is much larger than the eastern half --- as mentioned above, about 40 ha. If this sector be used, the housing units should be concentrated along the corner stretch flanking Climent Road and Commonwealth Avenue West, which is less wooded --- leaving a green woodland corridor intact along the Sg Ulu Pandan for this **Western Sector**. (See the attached Satellite Map.)

The woodland in this **Western Sector** is generally less dense compared to the **Eastern** and in terms of biodiversity of lesser value.

Nature Society's Reasons for the Proposal

1) This is a substantial and attractive patch of woodland and should be preserved as much as possible to provide a green-lung to the housing estates around. Such a green lung also helps to reduce the urban-heat effect --- cooling the ambient air in our very urbanized landscape. Given the global warming crisis, we should be making committed efforts to preserve such remaining green wooded spaces in our suburbia as our contribution to the provision of carbon sinks. Every effort should be made to exploit brown-field sites or revamp existing built-up areas for new development projects, instead of devouring more and more of our green areas. A good example of such a potential revamping site is the compound of defunct Ghim Moh Secondary School just to the north of Sg Ulu Pandan, which together with the to-be-phased-out adjacent Ghim Moh Primary School, is sufficient enough in area size, if we are not mistaken, to contain the projected HDB development.

2) The presence of such wooded areas moreover lends beauty to the landscape around and would be appreciated by residents in the neighbouring estates and people from outside using the connectors for recreation. Moreover, the Sg Ulu Pandan woodland forms a beautiful green corridor along the Nparks' recreational connector from Ghim Moh going all the way to the Pandan Reservoir. The wall of green makes strolling, jogging, cycling, birdwatching, etc., a very pleasant experience. It must be said that such a green, luscious backdrop to a recreational connector is very rare in our suburban zone.

The greenery in the area has been there for about 40-plus years, becoming a familiar land-mark to the people using the park connector and residing in the various housing estates around. Having such a pleasant and lovely landmark in the area where we live enhances the congeniality of our living environment and contributes significantly to a sense of place and home.

Natural greenery as part of the living landscape and out-door recreational arena is an asset for the lure of foreign talents that cannot be over-estimated. A good learning point is the loss of attractiveness of Hong

Kong as a place of residence for foreign professionals and investors due to the increasing problem of environmental degradation.

3) Looking towards the south-east beyond the Buona Vista MRT Station, this woodland forms a chain of green corridors alongside the woodlands at Rochester Park, Portsdown, Alexandra and finally Kent Ridge Park in the south. Such a chain of woodlands is indispensable for existing wildlife, in particular bird survival and propagation in suburbia. Moreover, a green trail could be run through these woodlands for recreational purposes -- - benefiting all, residents in the housing estates, students in the various schools and academic institutions and foreign talents coming to the One North bio-tech hub.

3) Generally, the woodland as a whole is pretty rich in birdlife. A rapid survey of the birds has been carried out and we have a total of 36 species recorded in two morning survey sessions. See the **Appendix**. This is about 10 % of the total recorded for Singapore as a whole. For a suburban site, this is impressive and more surveys, especially during the peak migratory season, will yield more records.

There are 12 species here that are affiliated to the forest habitat (see the **Appendix**). Among these, 7 are native and resident species, and these are: the Changeable Hawk Eagle, Banded Woodpecker, Long-tailed Parakeet, Grey-rumped Treeswift, Greater racket-tailed Drongo, the Dark-necked & the Rufous-tailed Tailorbird. The Changeable Hawk Eagle is a nationally endangered species and the Rufous-tailed Tailorbird is uncommon, while the Grey-rumped Treeswift is becoming rather uncommon.

The fact that these forest species can be found in this suburban woodland indicates that the forest in our Nature Reserves are too small to hold them and they are here seeking a new ground for their survival. The preservation of such woodlands is a form of compensation for what our forest species have lost over the decades due to widespread and relentless destruction of our forest cover.

4) A very important biodiversity highlight here is that the woodland in the **Eastern Sector** is the nesting site of a pair of the Changeable Hawk Eagle --- as mentioned above, a rare and nationally endangered species in Singapore. (See the attached Satellite Map for the location.) The **Eastern**

Sector of the woodland is more mature and denser with taller trees --- comprising mostly of Albizzias with a scattering of Banyans. The nest is placed on an Albizzia tree. The presence of this Eagle's nest here shows that the woodland as a whole is mature and sizeable enough for this spectacular bird of prey to feel comfortable to choose it for this purpose. We are indeed very concerned that any built development will scare this rare nesting pair away.

The Changeable Hawk Eagle is a forest species and as the forest in our forested Nature Reserves (Bt. Timah & Central Catchment), are rather limited, the species has colonized the outlying large and mature woodlands for feeding, roosting and nesting. But their numbers are pretty small and their nesting sites are a rare sight. We should be doing our best to protect this endangered bird of prey --- a spectacular and exciting bird to behold, especially when it appears in our suburbia.

Concluding Remarks

We are delighted to see that HDB is taking a big step forward in its housing design towards a green and eco-friendly direction, where "loving nature --- revelling in Nature's glory --- and saving Mother Earth", among other essentials, has being made a benchmark in future housing projects. The HDB Treetops @ Punggol is indeed "Singapore First Green Mark". We take it to be a very significant recognition of the growing Singaporeans' dream of living the good life in close contact with nature and in harmony with Mother Earth .

In this light, we here urge that the greater part of the Sg Ulu Pandan Woodland be preserved as a public park with a **Nature Core** taking up most of the **Eastern Sector**. As to the **Nature Core**, paths can be created running though it for accessibility to the wildlife.

Where feasible without disturbing the existing nesting Eagle and the wildlife, we urge that a project be also implemented to introduce in stages various local plants to showcase our native flora in the area.

Thus, the preservation of the woodland here not only helps to preserve our natural heritage and the beautiful landscape in the area but also allows for the creation of the planned HDB housing estate as well. This is a win-win situation.

We will be happy to answer any queries on the biodiversity and to provide eco-friendly assistance in this project.

Acknowledgement: The Conservation Committee would like to thank the following for their ideas, feedback and/or assistance in the bird surveys:
Alan Owyong, Goh Si Gium, Ho Hua Chew, Jimmy Chew, Willie Foo & Sutari Supari

Dated: 29 March 2007

Appendix

Birds of Sg Ulu Pandan Woodland

The list is compiled from observations in two morning sessions conducted by the Bird Group on 28 January & 3 February 2007. It is not a definitive list of the birds to be found in the Sg Ulu Pandan Woodland. The woodland is located in the wedge-shaped stretch of undeveloped land bounded by Commonwealth Avenue West, Climent Road and Sg Ulu Pandan. More surveys --- especially during the peak migration period will yield more records.

Nomenclature, Abundance & Status based on Nature Society's **Pocket Checklist of the Birds of the Republic of Singapore (1999)**

Legend:

Abundance:

A : Abundant
C: Common
U: Uncommon
R: Rare

Status:

RB: Resident breeder
R (B): Resident, breeding not proven
WV: Winter Visitor
PM: Passage Migrant
I: Introduced

Conservation Status:

Nationally Near-threatened
Nationally Threatened
* Globally Threatened

S/No.	Species	Abundance/Status
1.	Banded Woodpecker (<i>Picus miniaceus</i>)	C/RB
2.	Laced Woodpecker (<i>Picus vittatus</i>)	C/RB
3.	Common Flameback (<i>Dinopium javanense</i>)	C/RB
4.	Lineated Barbet (<i>Megalaima lineata</i>)	U/IRB
5.	White-throated Kingfisher (<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>)	C/RB
6.	Collared Kingfisher (<i>Todirhamphus chloris</i>)	A/RB
7.	Blue-tailed Bee-eater (<i>Merops philippinus</i>)	C/WV
8.	Asian Koel (<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>)	C/RB & WV

9. Rose-ringed Parakeet (<i>Psittacula krameri</i>)	U/IRB
10. Red-breasted Parakeet (<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>)	C/IRB
11. Long-tailed Parakeet (<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>)	C/RB
12. Grey-rumped Treeswift (<i>Hemiprocne longipennis</i>)	C/RB
13. Spotted Dove (<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>)	C/RB
14. Pink-necked Green Pigeon (<i>Treron vernans</i>)	A/RB
15. White-breasted Waterhen (<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>)	C/RB & WV
16. Brahminy Kite (<i>Haliastur Indus</i>)	C/RB
17. Japanese Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter gularis</i>)	C/WV & PM
18. Changeable Hawk Eagle (<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>) ##	R/R B
19. Tiger Shrike (<i>Lanius tigrinus</i>)	C/WV & PM
20. House Crow (<i>Corvus splendens</i>)	C/IRB
21. Large-billed Crow (<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>)	C/RB
22. Black-naped Oriole (<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>)	C/RB
23. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>)	C/RB
24. Common Iora (<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>)	C/RB
25. Asian Glossy Starling (<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>)	C/RB
26. Javan Myna (<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>)	A/IRB
27. Yellow-vented Bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>)	C/RB
28. Yellow-bellied Prinia (<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>)	C/RB
29. Common Tailorbird (<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>)	C/RB
30. Dark-necked Tailorbird (<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>)	C/RB
31. Rufous-tailed Tailorbird (<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>)	U/RB
32. White-crested Laughingthrush (<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>)	C/IRB
33. Hwamei (<i>Garrulax canorus</i>)	U/IRB
34. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker (<i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>)	C/RB
35. Plain-throated Sunbird (<i>Anthreptes malaccensis</i>)	C/RB
36. Olive-backed Sunbird (<i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>)	C/RB

Summary

Total No. of Species -----	36
Total Residents (RB & R (B)) -----	33
Migrant (WV & PM) -----	3

Rare Resident Species -----	1
Changeable Hawk Eagle	

Uncommon Resident Species -----	4
Lineated Barbet (Introduced)	
Rose-ringed Parakeet (Introduced)	
Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	
Hwamei (Introduced)	

Nationally Threatened Species -----	1
Changeable Hawk Eagle	

Woodland & Forest Species ----- 11

- 1) Banded Woodpecker
- 2) Lineated Barbet (Introduced)
- 3) Rose-ringed Parakeet (Introduced)
- 4) Red-breasted Parakeet (Introduced)
- 5) Long-tailed Parakeet
- 6) Grey-rumped Treeswift
- 7) Changeable Hawk Eagle
- 8) Tiger Shrike
- 9) Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
- 10) Dark-necked Tailorbird
- 11) Rufous-tailed Tailorbird
- 12) White-crested Laughing Thrush (Introduced)

Observers: Alan Owyong, Ho Hua Chew, Jimmy Chew, Sutari Supari & Willie Foo

Compiled by Ho Hua Chew

Dated: 24 March 2007
