

NATURE SOCIETY (SINGAPORE)
MINUTES of the 68th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held on Saturday, 21 May 2022 on Zoom Video Conferencing platform

At the appointed start time of 14:00 hrs, **only 26** members (excluding outgoing Exco members) were present and the start was duly delayed by 30 minutes to see if a quorum of 60 could be reached. In accordance with the Society's Constitution, the meeting commenced at 14:30 hrs with **33** members present, excluding **8** outgoing Exco members, and **4** other members who joined later:

OUTGOING EXCO MEMBERS PRESENT

Shawn Lum (President)	Andrew Lin (Acting Honorary Treasurer)
Leong Kwok Peng (Vice President)	Goh Ter Yang (Committee Member)
Morten Strange (Hon Secretary)	Lester Tan (Committee Member)
Evelyn Ng (Assistant Hon Secretary)	Joel Leong (Committee Member)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Liew Kai Khiun	Ngo Kang Min	Esther Koh	Cheryl Lao
Anuj Jain	Lim Kim Chuah	Kua Kay Yaw	Lee Lay Tin
Lee Xiu-Ping	Lee Chiu San	Amy Choong Mei Fun	Leong Wei Peck
Margie Hall	Miranda Clark	Karl Png	Richard Hartung
Peter Connell	Keita Sin	Teresa Teo-Guttensohn	Sng Bee Bee
Yeo Seng Beng	Tan Kok Chiang	Tan Gim Cheong	Tan Beng Chiak
Kathy Xu	Yap Von Bing	Bian Tan	Huang Ning Xin
Tan Hang Chong	Goh Si Guim	Natasha Naira	Yeo Suay Hwee
Gerald Tay			

Arrived after 14:30 hrs:

Anne Chong	Felicia Wee	Abiel Neo	Tomy Ng
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Apologies for not able to attend the meeting received from:

Kerry Pereira	Albert Liu	Bernie Tan	Pandian Parthasarathy
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Staff and interns assisting the zoom meeting:

Sung Mei Yee	Joseph Lim	Rahman Jaafar	Michelle Simon Hariff
Tan Shin Ying			

WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT

Between 14:00 and 14:30 hrs, Zoom hosts Sung Mei Yee and Joe Lim ushered the last of the members onto the platform, Lester Tan helped out with the Zoom technique; Mei Yee explained the rules about how participants should address the meeting from the room and conduct themselves technically and socially. Morten Strange expressed hope that the next AGM, in May 2023, could be conducted in person at the renovated NSS headquarters. At 14:30 hrs, President Shawn Lum welcomed all members present and started the meeting off.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Minutes of the 22 May 2021 AGM had been previously circulated to all society members and the link was made available again allowing all meeting participants to scrutinize them further. There being no comments or corrections from the floor, Leong Kwok Peng proposed a motion that the Minutes be accepted and Peter Connell seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously accepted by members.

2. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Shawn Lum presented the President's Report for 2021 and shared the highlights of the report by displaying a number of slides onscreen for meeting participants to follow; the full report was made available online at the NSS website shortly after the meeting.

In his summary, Shawn started out by focusing on some of the major conservation efforts by the Society during 2021, especially the work by chair Leong Kwok Peng and other members of the Conservation Committee. More details are available in the ConCom's own report, but here Shawn Lum singled out efforts to protect the Dover/Ulu Pandan Forest, a campaign which rallied large parts of the public and resulted in HDB conserving more adjacent green spaces. Internationally, as a partner in the BirdLife International network, NSS had been instrumental in supporting successful proposals to conserve the Getbol Korean Tidal Mudflats, part of the Yellow Sea coastline and some of the most important habitats for marine invertebrates as well as feeding grounds for migratory shorebirds in Asia.

Back to the domestic issues, Shawn mentioned that the Society's Every Singaporean a Naturalist (ESN) programme had gone from strength to strength during 2021 and an ESN Second Project Officer had been hired as a full-time staff; currently (2022) Michelle Hariff occupies that position. The project works closely with the newly formed Youth Committee. Shawn also 'very briefly' touched on important NSS partnerships for the year, with the Green Recovery efforts spear-headed by Marla Lise, with the Outward Bound Singapore (training OBS instructors in their biodiversity skills) and with the NUS Institute of Policy Studies in their Reimagining Singapore 2030 efforts. After the gradual easing of Covid-19 social distancing measure, the Society had slowly started to resume nature walks and outreach activities.

Fundraising efforts for the Society were ongoing, and financially 2021 had been a good year. However, with regards to governance 2021 had been 'a bit difficult' due to the data breach issue troubling the Society. The Society ended up being fined \$14,000 and accepted that outcome so as not to prolong the matter with further appeals and investigations, which would have been taxing for our volunteers and staff dealing with this. Shawn expressed hope that with a new and more secure website and IT structure being planned for 2022 such an event would not happen again, and he also looked forward to working with new Hon Sec Natasha Raina who has a law background and experience with governance issues from other NGO work.

Looking forward, Shawn emphasised that the Society aims to make better use of our biodiversity data in conservation and also to better engage the tens of thousands of people who follow the Society on Facebook and other social media platforms; we need to convert more of these casual followers into active members, so as to strengthen our nature conservation advocacy efforts. The Society leadership continues to invite 'new faces' into the Executive Committee and the Council, during 2022 we expect to expand the NSS internship programme to identify and encourage future conservation leaders; with regard to the structure of Committees and Special Interest Groups, Exco is continuously considering the role and dynamics of these arrangements as well as resolutions of any problems that might arise from within these sub-groups.

Shawn concluded that there is an important role for the Society to play within the broader scope of Singapore civil society, to engage with other NGOs and government agencies to further our goals. In closing, Shawn gave generous thanks to all NSS staff, volunteers as well as supporters and collaborators within the Malaysian Nature Society; he had prepared three special slides featuring outgoing VP Leong Kwok Peng and Assistant Hon Sec Evelyn Ng, as well as Morten Strange who has committed to one more year in Exco as new Assistant Hon Sec.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

The detailed 20-page Treasurer's Report for 1 January to 31 December 2021 was uploaded onto the NSS website prior to the meeting, including fully audited Financial Statements. During this meeting, Acting Honorary Treasurer Andrew Lin shared a very useful and easy-to-grasp summary of results onscreen for participants to study. He briefly covered the main financial highlights of the year: Income for the year was \$926,531, expenses \$369,462, which resulted in a healthy net surplus of \$557,069 (vs \$128,641 for FY 2020) and accumulated total assets of \$1,959,503 (up from 1,405,670 in FY 2020).

Andrew however also struck a somewhat cautionary note looking forward. No major fundraising efforts were currently planned for 2022, while expenses were expected to go up with higher staff costs, more activities as Covid-19 restrictions were being lifted and an expensive major overhaul of the Society's IT situation in the works for 2022.

Margie Hall proposed a motion that the Treasurer's Report for 2021 be adopted and Kua Kay Yaw seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously accepted by members.

4. COMMITTEE AND SIG REPORTS

By the time the AGM started, reports from most of the Committees and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) had already been uploaded onto the NSS website for all AGM participants to study. Therefore, to facilitate a shorter AGM, the reports tabled by Committee and SIG chairs during the meeting were kept brief with just a few slides shared onscreen showing a summary of the respective groups' work during 2021.

Opening up the presentation was our probably most important Conservation Committee: Chair and outgoing VP Leong Kwok Peng covered the main nature conservation priorities of the Society. Starting out with the NSS feedback proposals on the Dover/Ulu Pandan Forest, which resulted in parts of the western area being conserved, Kwok Peng moved on to highlight the committee's work to ensure favourable conservation outcomes for the Tengah, Keppel Club and Rail Corridor areas. The Kranji Woodlands issue featured big for the year 2021, with before and after drone shots by NSS supporters exposing damaging clearance of vital greenery resulting in public outcry that went all the way to the Parliament. 2021 saw continuous engagement with government agencies such as LTA, PUB, JTC, NParks and HDB; and looking forward to 2022, Kwok Peng highlighted the committee's work to conserve and improve green areas around Sungei Pang Sua, the Rail Corridor and Alexandra Hospital.

From the Education Committee: Chair and Exco member Goh Ter Yang provided a list of 10 talks about various nature and biodiversity themes conducted by supporters of the committee during 2021, all online. He thanked all these contributors and expressed hope that in-person talks and workshops could re-start in 2022.

The IT Working Group is not an officially formed SIG, but as a task force the members played an important role in the Society during 2021. Exco member and newly nominated VP Lester Tan reported from the grouping that big progress regarding the Society's IT situation had been made in 2021, continuing into 2022. Using Pixely as a vendor and Salesforce as the main software package, the task force is well into preparations to modernize and seamlessly integrate the Society's various data requirements such as the membership database, biodiversity data management, membership renewal and payments and a newly designed website with a secure web-shop linked to the Society's accounting functions. The cost for this will be substantial, but a government grant will cover up to 80% of the expenses. Lester thanked the other members in the task force and singled out Ngo Kang Min for her tireless work to deal with the plans, the vendors and government funding agencies.

Bird Group: Chair Tan Gim Cheong shared a series of slides onscreen also available online covering the group's activities for the year. These included five conducted bird walks, various bird counts and co-operation with the ESN programme, BirdLife International, Malaysian Nature Society, Outward Bound Singapore, Mandai Nature, NParks and various other government agencies. The 37th Singapore Bird Race had been the biggest ever with 230 participants in six categories and generously supported by Mapletree Group. On behalf of NSS, the BG signed a co-operation agreement with e-Bird in 2021 and had a number of magazine articles and blog posts published. Finally Gim Cheong paid special tribute to BG members Geoff Lim and Isabelle Lee for compiling the monthly online bird reports.

Butterfly and Insect Group: Sharing slides onscreen, outgoing chair Dr Ngo Kang Min reported on behalf of the group: In 2021, spear-headed by Amy Tsang, the group had worked on improving the habitat of the Common Rose and Common Birdwing in Singapore, Kang Min herself worked on the Clementi-Ulu Pandan Nature Corridor Butterfly Sanctuary project. Other BIG members and one part-time staff worked on the moths of Singapore, including a red data list of species scheduled for completion in 2023. The group participated in a number of publications and other outreach and research events; finally Kang Min welcomed new BIG chair Abiel Neo to the meeting and the group.

Jalan Hijau: Chair Tan Hang Chong shared some ‘self-explanatory’ slides onscreen with the meeting, some dealing with climate change issues. As such, Shawn Lum added that Jalan Hijau and its chair is the Society’s link to the broader civil society dealing with wider ‘green’ issues, somewhat outside of the Society’s usual biodiversity and habitat conservation agenda.

Marine Conservation Group: On the day of the AGM, chair Kua Kay Yaw had not yet uploaded his slides onto the NSS website, but he provided an on-screen summary of the group’s activities for 2021. Due to the Covid restrictions to social gatherings, the group’s public outreach had been ‘quite restricted’; however, there had been plenty of engagements with public agencies, as the MCG represents the important ‘blue’ aspect of Singapore nature conservation. It was the group’s policy to engage with the government, such as participating in NPark’s Friends of the Parks volunteer network. In this regard, and because of the lack of overseas travel during 2021 caused many people to venture out into local nature spots, the public pressure on coastal areas had increased, and Kay Yaw expressed concern about the widespread collection of marine animals in intertidal zones.

Nature Ramblers Group: Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this group was dormant in 2021 but hoped to re-vamp activities during 2022.

Plant Group: Chair Bian Tan reported from this ‘small group’ of plant enthusiasts; he described how the group had done a number of surveys during 2021, and what usually started out as a general walk to find out ‘what was there’ plant-wise often turned up interesting rare plants which would be of interest when listing endangered species for the up-coming new edition of the *Red Data Book*. Bian shared four slides onscreen featuring 2021 surveys in Turf Club Ravine, NTU campus, Sungei Pang Sua and Alexandra Woodlands. In conclusion, Bian urged all NSS members present to contact him if they had an interest in plants, so that they could join the group as new members were always welcome.

Finally from the SIGs, newly appointed chair of the Vertebrate Study Group, Yeo Suay Hwee shared his slides onscreen with three bullet-points for 2021 activities: Study on the Sunda Pangolin, biodiversity study at the old Turf Club and status of the Third Edition of the *Wild Animals of Singapore* book due to be completed in 2022.

From the floor, Sng Bee Bee enquired if the Society was aware of ongoing efforts to cover the Lower Seletar Reservoir and other Singapore water bodies with solar panels, and she wondered what effect this would have on the local otter population and other aquatic life forms. From the ConCom, Leong Kwok Peng replied that the Society was engaged with government agencies regarding these developments and would consider the consequences; he suggested that he and Bee Bee continued this discussion ‘offline’ and maybe use Facebook to highlight the issue.

5. ELECTION OF THE 2022-2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCO)

By the due date prior to the meeting, a single nomination was received for the nine positions specified in the Society’s constitution:

Position	Name of Nominee	Proposed by	Seconded by
President	Shawn Lum	Tan Hang Chong	Goh Ter Yang
Vice President	Lester Tan	Goh Ter Yang	Leong Kwok Peng
Hon Secretary	Natasha Raina	Morten Strange	Shamla Subaraj
Hon Treasurer	Andrew Lin	Ho Hua Chew	Brice Li
Asst Hon Secretary	Morten Strange	Nick Baker	Yeo Suay Hwee
Asst Hon Treasurer	Joel Leong	Andrew Lin	Leong Kwok Peng

Member	Albert Liu	Lester Tan	Andrew Lin
Member	Goh Ter Yang	Tan Hang Chong	Andrew Lin
Member	Yeo Seng Beng	Lim Kim Chuah	Alfred Chia

Since no positions were contested, the above members were duly elected to serve on the 2022-2023 Exco. New members Natasha Raina and Dr Yeo Seng Beng, as well as promoted VP Lester Tan introduced themselves briefly to the meeting, and on behalf of the incoming Exco the President thanked them for agreeing to serve.

6. ELECTION TO THE FINANCE ADVISORY GROUP

Members of the Finance Advisory Group serve for three years; each year one member steps down and another member is nominated at the AGM. Dough Elliott (2020-2023) and Bhagyesh Chaubey (2021-2024) continue to serve, but Peter Cornell (2019-2022) had completed his three years and stood down. Leong Kwok Peng proposed veteran NSS member Dr Lee Lay Tin to replace him and this was seconded by Margie Hall. As there were no other nominations, Dr Lee was unanimously elected to serve in the group 2022-2025.

7. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Acting Honorary Treasurer Andrew Lin opined that auditor Tan Eng Sun from Robert Tan Partners PAC had served both effectively and efficiently as the Society's external auditor for the past year, since he was appointed at the 2020 AGM, and Andrew re commended him to continue for one more year. Morten Strange proposed a motion that Tan Eng Sun be appointed as external auditor for the 2022 financial year as well; Peter Connell seconded it; the motion was unanimously accepted by members.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business had been notified by the deadline prior to the meeting. However, Leong Kwok Peng used this opportunity to present to the meeting new Reforestation Officer Rahman Bin Jaafar who together with volunteer helpers will be working on rewilding parts of Kranji area Rail Corridor with funding mainly from the PUB Green Run and Bloomberg (S) Pte Ltd and in cooperation with NParks. Shawn Lum then also presented Michelle Hariff, who joined the Society in 2022 as well, as ESN Second Project Officer. This brings the 2022 NSS head-count of professional staff to five and shows the impact we are having on the Singapore nature conservation scene.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING BY THE PRESIDENT

The meeting ended right at 17:00 hrs, and Shawn Lum officially finished the meeting by thanking all participants for their contributions; some participants and old friends stayed online for a while longer to catch up and exchange greetings and news.

Minutes prepared by Morten Strange