

World Wildlife Day Regional Youth Symposium 2023

in conjunction with World Wildlife Day

The second World Wildlife Day Regional Youth Symposium was held physically in Singapore from 3 to 5 March 2023. The event was organised by 16 youth stewards under the Youth Stewards for Nature Programme of Singapore's National Parks Board (NParks), with support from NParks, Mandai Nature (main event sponsor), and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity. The three-day programme featured 14 expert speakers and special guests, 9 workshop partners, and over 40 passionate youth facilitators from the nature community around the ASEAN region. The symposium physically brought together over 170 youth attendees representing 15 countries, including all 10 ASEAN member states, to share their aspirations and discuss how youths could play a part in nature and biodiversity conservation.

175 attendees

14 speakers and guests

9 workshop partners

15 countries

With attendees representing:

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, Australia, China, India, United States & United Kingdom.

Themed 'Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation in Southeast Asia', the event sought to highlight the partnerships that have been at the heart of CITES, and the people who are making a difference. The event also celebrated the 50th anniversary of CITES. The three thematic tracks of the symposium 'Living with Nature', 'Learning for Nature' and 'Saving Nature' formed the foundation for the programme. The Symposium was planned with 3 main objectives:



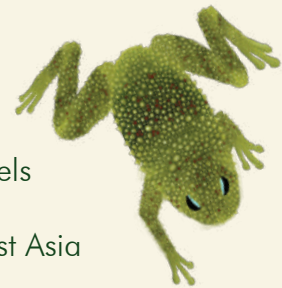
Anchor and grow the youth network in Southeast Asia



To connect youths in Southeast Asia to Southeast Asian role models



Raise international awareness on nature conservation in Southeast Asia



The symposium began with an exclusive networking event on Day 0, 3 March 2023 at Fort Canning Centre as a time when youth facilitators and event partners across the region could interact and form international and intergenerational connections with one another. After the dinner and welcome address by Dr. Leong Chee Chiew (Executive Director of National Parks, Gardens & Nature Reserves Cluster and Commissioner of Parks & Recreation), a fireside chat with panellists who participated in CoP19 in Panama was held. The panellists shared about the importance of partnerships for wildlife conservation, setting the tone for the rest of the symposium to come.

On Day 1, 4 March 2023, the main symposium programme was held at JEM. The opening ceremony of the symposium featured remarks, messages, and addresses from Mr. Desmond Lee (Minister for National Development, Singapore), His Royal Highness, The Regent of Pahang Crown Prince Tengku Hassanal, Ms. Ivonne Higuero (Secretary-General, CITES), Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim (Executive Director, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity) and Dr. Melvin Gumal (Deputy CEO II, Sarawak Forestry Corporations). Participants were then involved in two thematic tracks 'Living with Nature' and 'Learning for Nature', which aimed to showcase the challenges to conservation in Southeast Asia, along with efforts to promote it.

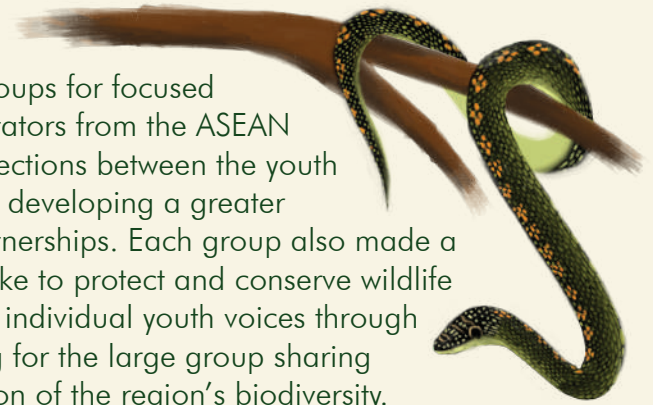
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The two tracks featured four and five speakers respectively, followed by panel discussions moderated by youth moderators from the organising team which aimed to bring together the speakers' diverse backgrounds to share their thoughts on chosen topics. Besides providing participants with an opportunity to ask questions, the panel session provided insight into the speakers' journeys to achieve their conservation goals, inspiring participants to forge their own pathways in the environmental field.

Following the sharings, participants were split into groups for focused group discussions facilitated by volunteer youth facilitators from the ASEAN region. The focused group discussions fostered connections between the youth and encouraged them to learn from their peers while developing a greater understanding of the complex nature of regional partnerships. Each group also made a youth pledge to establish tangible steps they could take to protect and conserve wildlife in Southeast Asia. This was an opportunity to amplify individual youth voices through collaborative goals and promises before reconvening for the large group sharing where they voiced their aspirations for the conservation of the region's biodiversity.



On Day 2, 5 March 2023, the symposium's focus was on the theme of 'Saving Nature', with the program being curated to provide hands-on experiences in conservation. Participants were granted the exciting opportunity to participate in one of six workshops conducted in partnership with nine workshop partners:



Tree Planting & Invasive Species Management Program

held in partnership with Earthlink NTU, NUS Toddycats and NUS SAVE, in support of the NParks One Million Trees movement



Tackling Illegal Wildlife Trade through Wildlife Forensics

held in partnership with the NParks' Centre for Wildlife Forensics and Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation with Conservation International



NParks x WWF Cyber Spotter Program 2.0 Crash Course

held in partnership with NParks and WWF-Singapore



Nature Walk: Storytelling Through an Artistic Lens

held in partnership with Jayaprakash Joghee Bojan



R.E.C.L.A.S.S. The way you influence pro-environmental behaviour

held in partnership with Professor Reuben Clements



Conserving Southeast Asia's Most Threatened

held in partnership with Mandai Nature



Overall, the symposium was enjoyed by the guests, partners, and participants, receiving an average rating of 4.5/5 across the three days with 85% of participants expressing interest in returning for the next rendition of the symposium. The symposium itself embodied the essence of its theme through the many partnerships that made it possible along with the connections forged during the event. After the event, the post-symposium report shared speaker contacts and follow-up volunteer activities with the hopes of further encouraging meaningful action among the youth.

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