

# where my *classroom* is

*The best way to learn about nature is to immerse oneself in it. Every year, NParks works closely with individuals and organisations to initiate outreach programmes for students and the public. Educating them about the importance of conservation will ensure that our future generations continue to enjoy a green canopy over their heads. That is where their classrooms are.*







NParks works with volunteers, sponsors and partners to establish programmes and initiate activities that will inspire a love for nature.



Public education is an important component of NParks' outreach programmes. Over the years, NParks' programmes for promoting nature appreciation have grown in popularity and extent. With its unique setting and flora and fauna, as well as dedicated staff, the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) has been able to partner diverse organisations and the public in planning and implementing its education programmes. Last year, corporate partners such as The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, SPH Foundation, Underwater World

Singapore, Timberland and Toyota Motor Corporation contributed to various workshops and projects such as coastal clean-ups.



Six key sponsors were presented with a framed photo of their Heritage Tree during a dedication ceremony held by the Garden City Fund. (Left to right) Dr Shaw Vee Meng (Shaw Foundation), Lady Yuen-Peng McNeice, Mr Wilson Cheah (Hotel Properties Limited), Mr Jeffrey See (STMicroelectronics), Mr Paul Lawrence (HSBC) and Mr Au Foo Yien (Chevron Oronite Pte Ltd).

SPC CEO Mr Koh Ban Heng together with Guest-of-Honour, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan<sup>2</sup>, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports & Second Minister for Trade and Industry, at the summit of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.

Over at the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, staff of Singapore Petroleum Company Limited (SPC) celebrated the company's 35th Anniversary by planting 35 native saplings and participated in a guided walk from Bukit Timah Hill to Hindhede Nature Park.

The Central Catchment Nature Reserve in MacRitchie played host to the Vertebrate Race aimed at combining research and study with friendly competition. This 24-hour event allowed field researchers and nature lovers to pit their skills in a bid to record the highest number of vertebrate species.

<sup>2</sup> Then Acting Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports & Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry.

NParks also embarked on an outreach programme in conjunction with Vesak Day to advise the public not to release animals in the Nature Reserves. The programme included a public exhibition, distribution of brochures and educational exercises with the support of volunteers and nature groups.

Meanwhile, the Botanic Gardens continued with its popular and well-regarded educational and nature awareness outreach activities with over 250 programme runs involving some 9,000 participants. The highlights included three new thematic tours centred on the Evolution Garden. To complement the tours, a new workbook “Adventure with Plants – Sara at the Evolution Garden” was launched to help students and children on their journey of discovery.

The Pasir Panjang Nursery also continued in its outreach efforts and conducted 21 guided tours for some 680 participants from schools and the general public.

**Involving the Community** To encourage the community to express their personal stake in sustaining the Garden City effort, the Garden City Fund (GCF) continued in its efforts to work in partnership with individuals and organisations. Among the new partners who contributed their support were Ricoh Asia Pacific Pte Ltd and the SPH Foundation. Ricoh partnered NParks in developing a new pocket park at Tanjong Pagar while the SPH Foundation’s support resulted in establishing a resource centre at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

At the same time, HSBC continued in its commitment towards environment

**Left** The Evolution Garden serves as an outdoor classroom for school children to encourage an interest in the life sciences.

**Right** Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew planted a sapling of the *Hopea sangal* (Mersiput) during Clean and Green Week.

conservation and education by establishing the HSBC-GCF TreeTop Walk Fund which will go towards supporting community programmes and activities for the nature trail.

On 1 July 2004, the GCF expressed its appreciation to six of its key sponsors for their generous contributions over the years by dedicating Heritage Trees in their honour. Lady Yuen-Peng McNeice, the Shaw Foundation, HSBC, Hotel Properties Limited, Chevron Oronite Pte Ltd and ST Microelectronics had collectively contributed over \$6 million and enabled the GCF to initiate many meaningful projects including the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage, the re-landscaping of the Bromeliad House at the Singapore Botanic Gardens and various other educational, reforestation and conservation programmes.





A regular highlight in NParks' outreach programme, Clean and Green Week 2004 was launched by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who planted a *Sindora wallichii* (Sepetir) tree. In all, 81 constituencies led by grassroots advisors planted more than 800 trees.

The campaign also marked the launch of NParks' "Green Thumbs" gardening project and the Community Gardening Programme. Both projects are aimed at cultivating a gardening culture among Singaporeans, inculcating a passion for gardening and developing a greater appreciation for greenery.

The "Green Thumbs" gardening project saw children and students from 14 childcare centres,

primary and secondary schools designing and planting garden plots while the Community Gardening Programme kicked off with pilot projects in Mayfair Park and Novena Park. The pilot projects involved NParks working with home-owners and residents to plant the plots fronting their houses with a variety of plants. The project was well-received and resulted in landscaped frontages lovingly tended to by enthusiastic residents. NParks is currently working with over a hundred community garden groups in estates, schools and organisations on community gardening projects.

Clean and Green Week 2004 also saw park adopters taking part in various activities such as community gardening and tree

**Left** Children contributing to Singapore's greening efforts.

**Right** Planted roadside verges provide a visual treat for residents of Mayfair Park.

planting as well as the Green Market exhibition at the launch of Clean and Green Week in Yew Tee estate. The biennial Creative Awards held in November last year also provided a platform for park adopters to showcase their efforts in their adopted parks and the community. The year under review saw eight schools and organisations joining the Adopt-A-Park Scheme, bringing the total participation in the Scheme to 150. Meanwhile, the Park Watch Scheme continues to be well-received. The Scheme aims to encourage community involvement in the management of public parks. To date, some 480 volunteers in eight parks provide regular feedback as well as conduct guided walks for the community.





**Left** Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong touring the exhibits at the launch of Clean and Green Week 2004.



**Right** Volunteers under the Park Watch Scheme undergoing training.

**Enhancing Our International Linkage** To augment efforts to safeguard our natural heritage for education, recreation and conservation, NParks represented Singapore in regional and global initiatives during the year. This included the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB) and Ad-hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing held in Manila and Bangkok respectively. NParks also participated in activities of the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC), and contributed to its efforts to enter a new phase of existence as the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity from mid 2005.

At the same time, the Botanic Gardens continues to maintain its strong international ties through the herbarium as well as

a seed exchange programme involving some 50 institutions worldwide. Regionally, the Gardens worked with the Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) to participate in programmes in Indonesia and Thailand as well as contributed to training and capacity building at the invitation of other institutions. The Gardens is also a participant in the Flora Malesiana and Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak projects.

Internally, NParks also put in place the Plant Conservation Strategy. This is aimed at maintaining and increasing existing populations of selected endangered and rare plant species. Ground surveys were also conducted to assess population size and to make permanent records in the form of herbarium specimens.