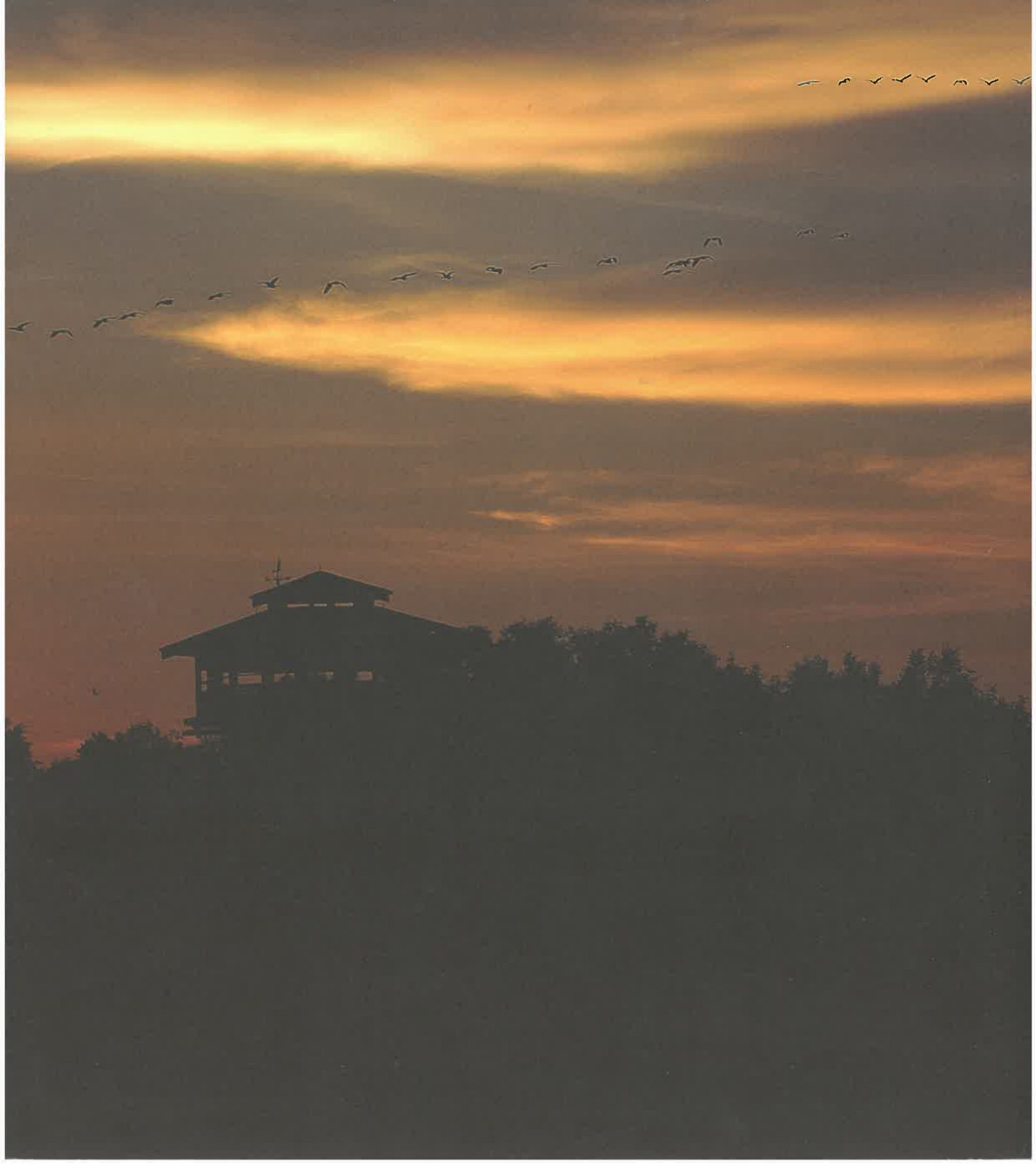


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*"The more clearly
we can focus
our attention on
the wonders and realities
of the universe about us,
the less taste
we shall have
for destruction."*

Rachel Carson



A Place for Everyone

Wetlands Vol 10:2

EDITORIAL

With the support of HSBC, NParks launched a Young Naturalist Programme (YNP) Camp for children and a Teachers' Workshop promoting YNP concurrently over World Environment Day this year in June 2004. With this step, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve continues to take on new and more meaningful roles for people of all ages. This "watery" forest and great escape remains a wonder and sometimes a mystery to many, and nevertheless, she still holds her sublime appeal. Find out what hidden treasures this living heritage holds...

— Jeanne Tan

C o n t e n t s

- 3 Did you know?
Its time to check out the 'Smooth Operators' of Sungei Buloh. Find out what Conservation Officer, Tay Soon Lian, is referring to.
- 4 The Learning Place
The Young Naturalist Programme continues to impact young lives. This year, the programme takes the childrens' interest to a different level through a camp with exhilarating indoor and outdoor activities that ran over two exciting days! Senior Outreach Officer, Linda Goh, reports on the camp and Teachers' Workshop.
- 6 Feature
The Mangroves of Sungei Buloh – A watery forest with its own special beauty and charm.
- 8 Special Report
Bird ringing has been carried out at Sungei Buloh since 1990. Last year, "...bird ringing continues to reveal surprises..." Senior Conservation Officer, James Gan, unfolds the surprises for us.
- 12 Volunteer Corner
A Ramsar site and a World Heritage site – follow SBWR volunteer Edie Lim as he takes you on a memorable one-day voyage through Keoladeo National Park.
- 14 What's Up
A series of exciting events and activities lined up for you.
- 15 Nature Journal
SBWR volunteer Tham Pui San shares his connection with nature.



Care-for-Nature
PROTECTING OUR LIVING RESOURCES

'Wetlands' is sponsored by HSBC under its Care-for-Nature programme.

HSBC's Care-for-Nature programme is dedicated to help conserve and protect our living resources in our natural environment and at the same time generate awareness among the public to do likewise.

The sponsorship of 'Wetlands' is one such effort to help promote a better understanding and appreciation of wetland ecology such as Sungei Buloh and its importance to our natural landscape.

Please call 6530 1845 if you wish to know more about HSBC's Care-for-Nature Programme. Or write to us at:

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Cover Photo by Tay Soon Lian / Another day in paradise



EDITOR : Jeanne Tan CONTRIBUTORS: Linda Goh, James Gan, Halilah Ahmad, Tay Soon Lian, Edie Lim, Tham Pui San, Tan Geok Choo, Yap May Li DESIGN: Amphibios Creative PHOTOS CREDITS: Tay Soon Lian, Jeremy Ang, Edie Lim, James Gan, Ramakrishnan K.

Did you know?

Smooth Operators

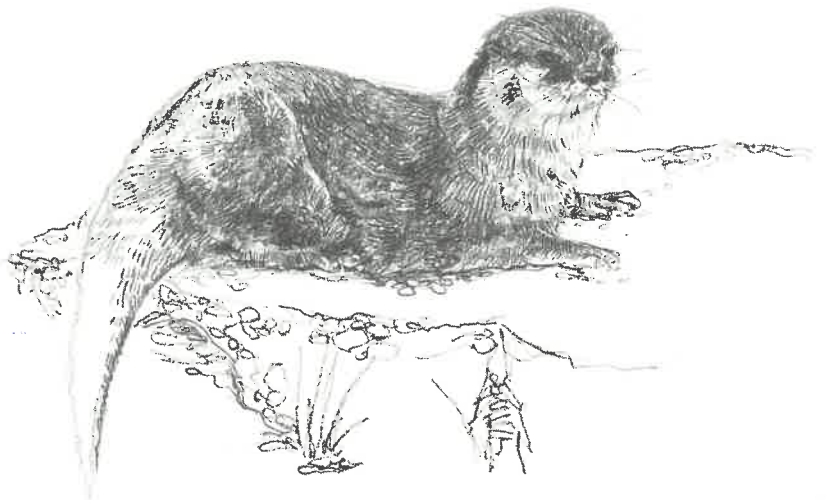
Tay Soon Lian,
Conservation Officer

*It was during the peak of the
bird migratory period when
I made my usual visit to the
Main bridge/SBWR at dusk.
It seemed to me that wild lives
have this instinctive
knowledge of knowing
when the reserve is at its safest
and most tranquil.*



Nikon D100 with 600mm lens; 1/1600mm at f4; tripod

Standing at the bridge over Sungei Buloh Besar with a pair of good binoculars, one can observe many interesting sights. My many encounters with the otters at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve were at the Main Bridge when the tide was ebbing. But this time the tide was rising and the family of four otters had a free ride by drifting upstream with the current. When they saw me, they stopped to check me out. Upon realising I'm the same old being who loves to stare at them, they greeted me with a squeak and carried on upstream. One of the challenges for photographers at SBWR is to get good photographs of the family of otters on land as we know they prefer to be in the water. This photo shows the otters racing playfully into the water.





YOUNG NATURALISTS PROGRAMME

The Young Naturalists Programme was designed to provide a journey of discovery into the wonders of nature for the children. It aims to nurture the interest and involvement of children in caring for our environment through a programme of hands-on education and conservation activities.

Launched with the support of HSBC in 2001, this programme has seen over 1200 children in participation. Now into its third year, NParks with the support of HSBC launched the YNP camp and Teachers' workshop on 4 and 5 June 2004.

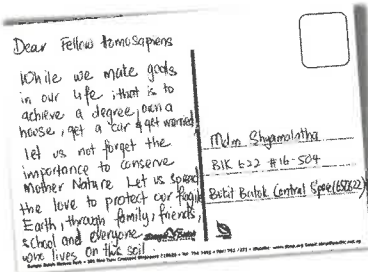
Linda Goh, Senior Outreach Officer, reports.

Young Naturalists

A group of 42 children aged 8-14 trooped to Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve on 4 June 2004 to join the reserve's inaugural Young Naturalists Camp jointly organized by National Parks Board and HSBC. In this camp, the enthusiastic young naturalists had the opportunity to explore the mangrove habitat, learn more about the feathered kind, wax lyrical, express creativity and participate in international events like World Environment Day. Catch a glimpse of what the children did during the one and a half day camp and join us for the next camp on 6 December 2004.



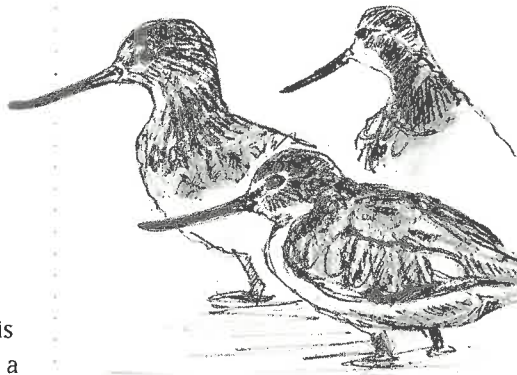
While the children were enjoying the camp, Prof Ho Peng Kee launched the YNP teachers' workshop on 5 June 2004. A total of 26 teachers were trained to conduct the YNP activities. A teachers' pack filled with information and interesting activities to keep students engaged was also developed to complement the workshop. Read what these teachers have to share about the workshop.



Dear fellow homosapiens,

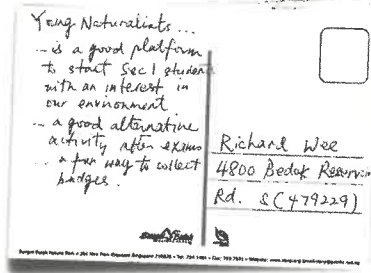
While we make goals in our life; that is to achieve a degree, own a house, get a car and get married, let us not forget the importance to conserve Mother Nature. Let us spread the love to protect our fragile Earth, through family, friends, school and everyone who lives on this soil.

Mdm Shayamalatha



The teachers' workshop lasts for half a day and is run six times a year.

Teachers who are interested to participate in this workshop can call 67941408 for more information.



Young Naturalist...

... is a good platform to start Sec 1 students with an interest in our environment.

... a good alternative activity after exams.

... a fun way to collect badges.

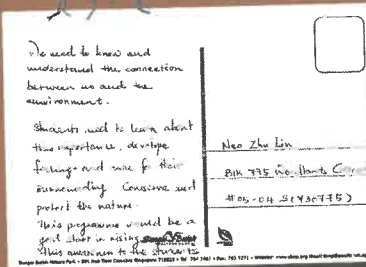
Richard Wee



This has been such an enriching experience – the rare opportunity to get together with other nature enthusiasts and catch up with old friends.

I will certainly want to bring my pupils here and impart to them the knowledge that I've gained today – and to get them to share the love I have developed for all things fragile in nature.

Koh Soo Keong

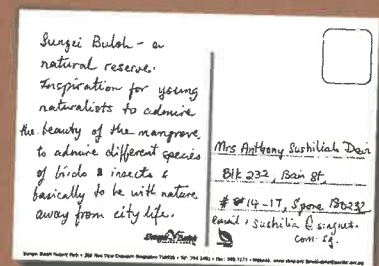


We need to know and understand the connection between us and the environment.

Students need to learn about this importance, develop feelings and care for their surroundings. Conserve and protect the nature.

This programme would be a good start in raising this awareness to the students.

Neo Zhu Lin



Sungei Buloh – a natural reserve. Inspiration for young naturalists to admire the beauty of the mangrove, to admire different species of birds and insects and basically to be with nature and away from the city life.

Mrs Anthony Sushiliah Devi



Mangroves

This article was originally published in LianHe Zaobao on 15th February, 2004. It was written by Ms Tan Geok Choo and translated by Ms Yap May Li.

Have you ever seen mangroves at high tide? Have you noticed its beauty and charm, or listened to the sounds it emits?

On one particular day, I brought my children to a mangrove walk conducted by the Nature Society of Singapore. Led by the volunteer nature guide, we were strolling along, admiring the mangrove forests, when suddenly, I was completely swept off my feet by what was revealed before my eyes. It was high tide, and the entire patch of submerged mangroves ahead of me appeared ... like a forest on water, tranquil and almost surreal!



That breathtaking sight left a deep impression on my mind, constantly tugging at my heartstrings. Oh, how I yearn to take in its beauty one more time! But alas, the following few visits that I made to the mangroves did not coincide with the high tide, and I was denied the chance to see those watery forests again.

On a recent visit to the mangroves at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve one early morning, I had with me, four children in tow, ranging from six to nine years of age. We walked leisurely along, pausing now and then to seek out the birds roosting amongst the branches of the trees, and those scurrying along the shores, searching for food. We gazed at the fishes gliding in the watery depths, and observed the unique trees and greenery around us.

Having sensed the rising tide level, we decided to stay on at the reserve for a little while longer after lunch. I had hoped to catch a glimpse of that watery forest again and share the joyous moment with my loved ones.

It was a fine day. Despite the faint rumblings of thunder in the distance, it did not rain. We strolled along the boardwalk in the blowing breeze, watching the gentle waves lapping the shore and gradually inching up the coastline with the rising tide. It was indeed a bewitching sight.

Mangroves at low tide appear to be an entire patch of undulating mud and slime, but underneath that decaying mass, it is teeming with life. You will find mudskippers clambering clumsily in the puddles, countless crabs scurrying around, and the constant clamping sounds from bivalves opening and shutting their shells. But as the rising tide gradually covers the muddy coast, what is revealed is a luscious "carpet of seawater".



At times when the water level is not too high, you will be able to see the different species of mangrove trees, with their interesting root structures. The Rhizophora trees bear stilt roots, very much like a Gothic architecture. With minimum amount of material, such roots keep the trees firmly in the ground against the flowing current. Have you ever wondered why these trees do not have buttress roots like those in the rainforest? Well, if this were the case, being subjected to the constant battering by the pounding waves, it would only be a matter of time before the tree gives way and gets washed away by the tide. The Rhizophora have evolved a simple but effective way to address this problem by growing stilt roots, spread over a large surface area.

There is another Rhizophora tree in the reserve, with roots that grow in symmetry. Each time I pass by this tree, I would pause to admire its intricate and unique root structure. The first time I laid my eyes upon it, I was very amazed by the wonders of nature. For every root that grows from the base of the trunk, a corresponding root would sprout out from the other side, in perfect balance and symmetry. It is incredible that mangrove trees are able to balance themselves in this simple manner, without any complicated computation or Man's interference, and yet achieve the perfection of symmetry which Man has constantly pursued for ages.

Besides providing physical support for the tree itself, the interlocking roots also form a shelter for countless marine organisms. Climbing up the roots or tree trunks, many crabs and snails hide from their predators lurking in the water below. Adults and children alike, they always find it a joy to challenge one another to locate all crabs on a tree. Wouldn't this be as interesting as contemporary puzzle games? The only catch is that there is no right or wrong answer. Would this lead to a sense of uneasiness for our children who are used to questions with definite answers? I wonder.

Oh, listen to the gurgling currents! The sounds of waves pounding on the mangroves trees, so haunting and sonorous, like a tune that is beyond any means to transcribe into a score. Yet, it offers me serenity and total peacefulness within myself.

The scenery during high tide is entirely different. Mangroves become submerged in the water, no trace of their roots in sight. The water creates a mirror reflection of each leaf, branch and root, even the billowing clouds in the sky are not spared. Such is the allure of mangroves at high tide! This is indeed the watery forest that I have longed for all this while.

We took a respite at one of the gazebos near the sea. We could hear the intermittent calls of some Collared Kingfishers. A blue shadow flitted passed, and stopped to rest at a nearby branch. With its handsome coat of blue and distinctive white collar, the kingfisher looked as if it had a certain dignified air about it. As we looked on, we realized that it was stalking its prey, staying motionless on the branch, only to dart forward at the opportune time to snare the unsuspecting fish.

Besides the sound from the waves, there is also the constant shrill chirping from cicadas in the background. The children had a great time challenging one another to find the well-camouflaged cicadas. With their acute hearing, it took them no effort at all to trace the calls back to their source - cicadas that blend perfectly well with the tree bark, waiting for their mates.


Whiffs of the salty water reminded me of my childhood days, when occasionally, my father would bring the family to visit a relative living near some mangroves. We even had the chance to ride a boat across the mangroves once! But that was a long, long time ago, what remains in my memory is only fragments of those happy times.

A pair of Common Flame-backed Woodpeckers flew past. It was naïve of me to know only one woodpecker, namely the Woolly Woodpecker, which is a popular cartoon

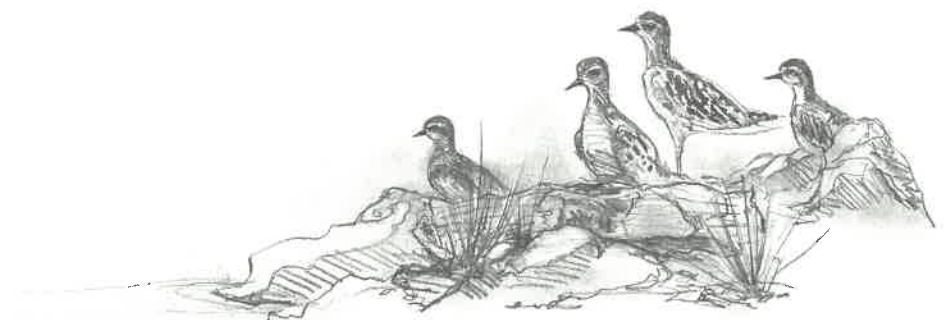
character with a signature laughter. In my first encounter with a real woodpecker in our forest, I was elated and could not imagine that we do have woodpeckers in Singapore!

Now I know that there are a few species of woodpeckers in Singapore. Moreover, the male members tend to be more brilliantly coloured than the females. Gazing at the pair of male and female woodpeckers, busy pecking at the branches looking for food, I felt a sense of tranquility and peacefulness growing in me.

At that moment, I wished for a boat to roam amongst the mangroves at will, along the watery paths. Wouldn't it be awesome to be surrounded by masses of mangroves?

I am deeply grateful to have these beautiful mangroves right here in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. There is no need for one to travel beyond our own shores to enjoy such beauty. To spend a peaceful and quiet afternoon admiring the sights of these watery forests is indeed a delight! 





Bird Ringing

in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in 2003

James Gan,
Senior Conservation Officer

The ringing work has continued to bear fruit with an increase in the recapture rate over the past three years. The recapture rate has increased steadily from 4.5% (2000) to 11.0% (2001) to 14.3% (2002) and 15.4% (2003). In 2003, there were 97 recaptures of birds from 29 species for birds that had been ringed before 2003.

Bird ringing has been conducted at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) since 1990. This article gives an overview of some of the results of the bird ringing effort at Sungei Buloh over the past year. In 2003, a total of 535 birds from 64 species were ringed. The ringing field work was carried out on scheduled days and nights throughout the year. A summary of the number of birds ringed in 2003 (and the previous three years) is provided in Table 1.

The most commonly ringed bird species were (numbers ringed in brackets): Pacific Golden Plover (87), Yellow-vented Bulbul (52), Marsh Sandpiper (46), Javan Munia (35), Collared Kingfisher (26) and Plain-throated Sunbird (26). Compared to ringing results in 2002, the number of birds ringed has decreased slightly from 595 to 535. The decrease may be attributed to fewer productive hours of mist netting. Consequently, the absolute number of birds ringed especially shorebirds have decreased. In particular, no Curlew Sandpipers were ringed while numbers of Common Redshank ringed continue to trend sharply downwards.

Regular bird counts in SBWR have revealed no significant changes in shorebird numbers apart from the apparent avoidance of the wetland by most of the Mongolian Plovers in the area and the general absence of Curlew Sandpipers over the past year. The results of the regular shorebird counts carried out in SBWR do not suggest cause for alarm. Nevertheless, SBWR has commenced several habitat management measures to increase the attractiveness of the wetland's mudflats to the Curlew Sandpiper and Mongolian Plover. The ringing and shorebird counting efforts over the next few years will help to determine if these measures are effective and whether the trends currently noted with regards to the shorebird numbers should be of concern.

While the absolute number of birds ringed has decreased, the year saw some species ringed or recorded for the first time in SBWR. They are the Ashy Minivet, Blue-winged Pitta, Crimson Sunbird and Eastern Crowned Warbler. This brings the total number of wild birds recorded at SBWR between 1987 and 2003 to 212 species. The Blue-winged Pitta, mist netted in June, is believed not to be an escapee from the bird trade but a genuine late migrant on its northward migration. A Brown-chested Jungle-Flycatcher, a globally threatened species, was mist netted and ringed for a second consecutive year.

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Table 1

Summary of individual birds ringed at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in 2003

JAN to DEC 2003

S/N	Species	Ring 2000	Retrap pre-2000	Ring 2001	Retrap pre-2001	Ring 2002	Retrap pre-2002	Ring 2003	Recapture pre-2003
1	Abbott's Babbler	2		2	1	3		0	
2	Arctic Warbler	3		2		0		2	
3	Ashy Minivet	0		0		0		1	
4	Ashy Tailorbird	20	1	18	2	19	4	19	6
5	Asian Brown Flycatcher	2		0		0		1	
6	Asian Dowitcher	1		0		0		0	
7	Asian Glossy Starling	53	1	18		23	1	20	
8	Asian Koel	2		1		0		1	
9	Asian Paradise Flycatcher	0		1		1		1	
10	Baya Weaver	60		22	3	23		16	
11	Black Bittern	5		3	1	4	1	5	
12	Black-browed Reed Warbler	1		0		0		0	
13	Black-capped Kingfisher	6		3	1	4	1	5	1
14	Black-naped Oriole	5		2		2		2	
15	Black-tailed Godwit	1		0		0		0	
16	Blue Magpie	1		0		0		0	
17	Blue-eared Kingfisher	0		0		1		0	
18	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	3		1		0		1	
19	Blue-throated Bee-eater	6		2		6		4	
20	Blue-winged Pitta	0		0		0		1	
21	Brown Shrike	4		7		1	1	1	
22	Brown-chested Jungle-Flycatcher	0		0		1		1	
23	Chestnut Munia	2		0		0		0	
24	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	4		2		0		0	
25	Cinnamon Bittern	5		0		2		2	
26	Cinnamon-headed Pigeon	1		0		0		0	
27	Collared Kingfisher	43	8	48	12	32	16	26	16
28	Collared Scops Owl	5	1	5	2	3	4	3	
29	Common Flameback	1	1	2		3	3	1	2
30	Common Greenshank	0		2		1		1	
31	Common Iora	6		5	1	4		2	
32	Common Kingfisher	15		13		4	2	7	1
33	Common Redshank	263	24	117	21	72	13	26	2
34	Common Sandpiper	9	1	17	3	5	3	6	3
35	Common Tailorbird	15		14	1	16	3	13	2
36	Copper-throated Sunbird	0		1		9	1	2	1
37	Crimson Sunbird	0		0		0		1	
38	Crow-billed Drongo	1		0		0		1	
39	Curlew Sandpiper	26		34		9		0	
40	Dark-necked Tailorbird	3		1		0		2	
41	Drongo Cuckoo	1		0		0		0	
42	Eastern Crowned Warbler	0		0		0		2	
43	Emerald Dove	13	1	3	6	2	1	2	
44	Eurasian Curlew	1		0		0		0	
45	Forest Wagtail	0		1		1		0	
46	Greater Sand Plover	1		0		0		1	
47	Grey Heron	0		0		1		0	
48	Grey-tailed Tattler	0		1		0		1	
49	Indian Cuckoo	0		1		0		0	
50	Japanese Sparrowhawk	2		1		0		0	
51	Javan Munia	80		124	3	60	2	35	
52	Laced Woodpecker	4		3	2	3	2	5	4
53	Large-tailed Nightjar	1		4	1	4	3	4	2
54	Lesser Coucal	1		1		0		0	
55	Little Bronze Cuckoo	1		1		0		0	
56	Marsh Sandpiper	25		60	5	48	3	46	9

JAN to DEC 2003

S/N	Species	Ring 2000	Retrap pre-2000	Ring 2001	Retrap pre-2001	Ring 2002	Retrap pre-2002	Ring 2003	Recapture pre-2003
57	Mongolian Plover	61	2	96	4	10	1	8	3
58	Olive-backed Sunbird	1		15	1	4		1	
59	Olive-winged Bulbul	7		9	4	6	1	6	1
60	Oriental Magpie Robin	12	1	7	3	9	2	5	1
61	Oriental Reed Warbler	2		2		1	1	0	
62	Oriental Scops Owl	1		0		0		0	
63	Pacific Golden Plover	27	1	86	2	52	8	87	12
64	Pacific Swallow	7		3		0		0	
65	Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler	0		2		0		1	
66	Pied Fantail	10	1	9	2	6	2	13	2
67	Pied Triller	1		1		0		0	
68	Pink-necked Pigeon	8		3		2		3	
69	Pintail Snipe	0		1		0		0	
70	Plain-throated Sunbird	73	4	47	14	36	3	26	9
71	Red-legged Crake	1		0		0		0	
72	Red-necked Stint	0		0		1		0	
73	Ruddy Kingfisher	1		1		0		0	
74	Ruddy Turnstone	0		1		0		0	
75	Rufous Woodpecker	0		2		0		2	
76	Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	15		10	3	8	1	6	1
77	Rusty-breasted Cuckoo	1		0		2		0	
78	Scaly-breasted Munia	45		49		23		7	
79	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	1		2		0		1	1
80	Siberian Blue Robin	3		0		1		0	
81	Slaty-breasted Rail	1		0		0		1	
82	Spotted Dove	3		1		1		0	
83	Stork-billed Kingfisher	9		6	4	6	2	7	4
84	Streaked Bulbul	0		0		1		0	
85	Striated Heron	9		6	4	3		3	1
86	Striped Tit Babbler	0		0		3		1	
87	Terek Sandpiper	16	1	2		0		0	
88	Tiger Shrike	16		8		4		8	1
89	Watercock	1		0		0		0	
90	Whimbrel	13		27		6		8	1
91	White-breasted Waterhen	5	1	11	1	0		0	
92	White-browed Crake	1		2		0		0	2
93	White-chested Babbler	0	1	0		0		0	
94	White-headed Munia	0		1		0		0	
95	White-rumped Shama	0		0		1		0	
96	White-throated Kingfisher	10		10	1	5	1	3	1
97	Yellow Bittern	17		10	3	5	1	6	3
98	Yellow-bellied Prinia	3	1	3	2	5	4	5	1
99	Yellow-rumped Flycatcher	5		2		4		1	
100	Yellow-vented Bulbul	60	3	22	11	20	8	52	4
101	Zebra Dove	6		6		3		3	
TOTAL		1156	54	1003	124	595	99	535	97

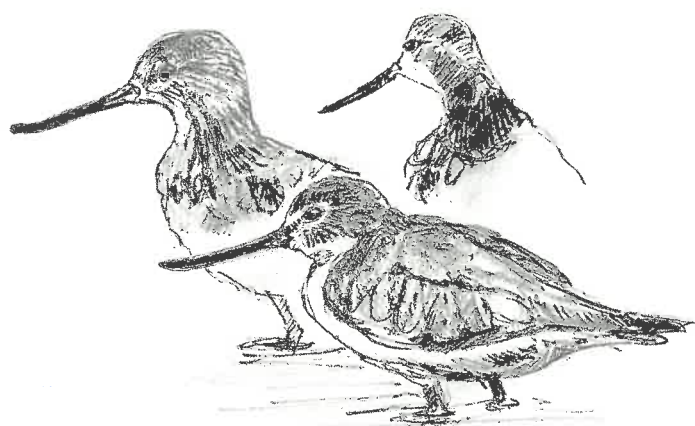




Table 2

Longevity Records (Selected species)

At least 6 months for resident birds or 1 season for migrants



Species	Date Ringed	Date Recaptured	Interval (mths)
Ashy Tailorbird	23 Aug 00	3 Sep 03	36
Laced Woodpecker	21 Jul 00	20 Nov 03	40
Olive-winged Bulbul	24 Aug 00	20 Nov 03	39
Pacific Golden Plover	29 Oct 90	3 Jan 02	146
Plain-throated Sunbird	28 May 97	15 Oct 03	76
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	25 May 00	20 Aug 03	39
Stork-billed Kingfisher	23 Mar 00	21 May 03	38
Whimbrel	2 Oct 01	18 Feb 03	17
White-browed Crake	22 May 01	21 Aug 03	27
White-throated Kingfisher	20 Sep 00	3 Sep 03	35
Yellow Bittern	22 Mar 00	22 Apr 03	37
Yellow bellied Prinia	2 Apr 96	2 Apr 03	84
Yellow-vented Bulbul	24 Jul 96	22 May 03	82

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This article is possible because of the field studies supported by NParks. Thanks to fellow ringers Ramakrishnan, Linda Goh, Charles Lim, Patricia Phua, Ray Knock, Mustaffa bin Hajar, Abdul Khalid and Chan Su Hooi for contributing to the ringing work. Ray, in particular, shared his extensive experience in ringing which we found beneficial. Many others assisted with the ringing including staff, volunteers and friends especially Halilah Ahmad, Ong Hai Chwee and Supardi bin Mohd Shariff. I am grateful for the voluntary help from Nick Baker, Debby Ng, Lua Wai Heng and R. Subaraj who provided expert advice and some sighting records.

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- Wetlands Vol 10, No.1, April 2004, Bird Ringing in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in 2002.. Pp 6-8, Publication of SBWR, National Parks Board, Singapore

Other interesting birds ringed in 2003 were the Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Crow-billed Drongo and Striped Tit Babbler.

The ringing work has continued to bear fruit with an increase in the recapture rate over the past three years. The recapture rate has increased steadily from 4.5% (2000) to 11.0% (2001) to 14.3% (2002) and 15.4% (2003). In 2003, there were 97 recaptures of birds from 29 species for birds that had been ringed before 2003. The Collared Kingfisher continues to maintain its lead with 16 individual birds recaptured. The Pacific Golden Plover had 12 recaptures followed by the Marsh Sandpiper and Plain-throated Sunbird with 9 recaptures each. One use for the data obtained from recaptured birds is the enabling of longevity records and the survival of different bird species in the wild to be determined. These records are provided in Table 2. Of special mention, a Pacific Golden Plover was recaptured after an interval of 146 months (12 years 2 months) smashing the previous record set in 2002 of 108 months (9 years). **This bird from Sungei Buloh is believed to be the world record holder for the title of the oldest ringed Pacific Golden Plover in the world!**

Other interesting recaptures include the Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, White-browed Crake and Yellow Bittern.

In summary, bird ringing in 2003 has continued to reveal surprises in the presence of bird species, their movements, abundance and survival in Sungei Buloh. Data collected are invaluable for the long-term conservation management of the wetland reserve.

Comments or feedback? E-mail at sbwr@pacific.net.sg



Keoladeo National Park

Ramsar Site, World Heritage Site
Rajasthan, India

Edie Lim,
Volunteer of SBWR

Friday, 2nd January 2004. The coach pulled up at Bharatpur Central Bus Station at 9:30am. The winter temperature was cold and it was very foggy. I had just arrived in Bharatpur after a 15-hour road journey from a village in Rajasthan via Sirsa & Jaipur and looking for a hotel near the Nature Park.

Painted Stork



Keoladeo National Park (KNP) occupies an area of 29 sq.km. It was a natural depression 250 years ago and was flooded when Maharaja Suraj Mal constructed the Ajan Bund between 1726 and 1763. The inundation resulted in the growth of aquatic vegetation, which attracted large flocks of birds to this rich feeding ground. Unfortunately, this Waterfowl Refuge soon became a Duck Shooting Reserve. Hunting rights were reserved for the Maharajas and their royal guests.

KNP was initially known as Ghana (meaning dense forest); and later as Keoladeo (after Lord Shiva). In 1956, it was declared a Sanctuary and in 1981, KNP was declared a National Park as well as a RAMSAR Site. Later in 1985, it achieved the status of World Heritage Site under the World Heritage Convention. Over 370 species of birds, both resident & migratory, have been recorded here, including the rare and highly endangered Siberian Crane.

The next morning, although it was still foggy, the fog had lifted considerably from the night before. A minute by bicycle and I was at the entrance of KNP. The entrance fee for overseas visitors is Rs 200 (about SGD 8.00). To move around within the park, one could go on foot, rent a bicycle, hire a rickshaw or go on the Electra (electric) Van. I opted for the bicycle, which I had rented from my hotel. Persistent nature guides offered their services for a fee and the best way to avoid being continuously harassed is to proclaim "I am a nature guide too".

As I entered the park proper and to the wetlands area, it reminded me very much of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR). There were differences though – the weather, size, vegetation, diversity of birds, people behavior etc. I concentrated on the "wetlands" for the most part of my visit simply because this was for me the most

interesting and was also easily accessible on my bike. The first encounter was with a small group of ducks swimming happily in the cold murky water. As I approached, they moved away quickly and in my haste & enthusiasm, I managed a "lousy shot". I moved along the wide path, getting on and off my bike, to better appreciate and understand the diversity of birds. They were everywhere and were all ready to pose for the cameras, well almost. There were the familiar egrets, white-breasted water hens, grey & purple herons, green & red shanks. Wetland birds that are not so common or not found in Singapore included many species of Ducks & Geese, Eurasian Spoonbills, Blackheaded Ibis, Sarus Cranes, Darters and Little Cormorants, just to name a few. The enormous number and species of colourful ducks and geese that were swimming gracefully and feeding at intervals fascinated me. For a while, I sat, watched, wondered and dreamt – if we could somehow "convert" one of SBWR's freshwater ponds along quiet Route 3 into a duck sanctuary... how wonderful and rewarding that would be for our visitors!

Siberian Crane



There were also many flocks of nesting birds. Nesting birds included little cormorants, herons, egrets and the most spectacular of them all – the Painted Storks! There were just too many of these Painted Storks, occupying more than ten trees in one area alone. I spent a long time watching, wondering and absorbing these noisy, yet ever so elegant nesting birds, balancing their sturdy long legs on thin vulnerable branches on the treetops!

After spending most of my time in the marshes & wetlands, I moved into the drier grassland and scrubland. The atmosphere was significantly quieter and I felt at one with Mother Nature again. Some of the birds that I spotted included the Lesser Coucal, White-bellied Drongo, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Brainfever Bird, Oriental Magpie Robin, White-throated Kingfisher and many more. As I sat down for a well-deserved rest near the Shiva Temple, a beautiful Hoopoe darted just a couple of metres from me, searching and savouring its precious catch.

Besides birds, KNP also boasts a variety of other faunas which included the bigger versions. There are the familiar fish, monitor lizards, turtles, otters and also the unfamiliar bigger animals like Spotted and Sambar Deers, Bluebulls, Foxes, Blackbucks and Indian Rock Pythons. The biggies restricted themselves to the quieter areas away from heavy human traffic. KNP boasts a total of 27 species of mammals, 43 species of fish, 13 species of snakes and 7 species of amphibians.

As the longer winter night began to envelope the shorter winter day, I bade farewell to KNP. It had been an exciting, educational, exhilarating and entertaining day for me at "The Park", as the locals affectionately call it. Nothing was left behind except my footprints and nothing taken out except pleasant memories, photos and a sore buttock from the not-so-comfortable rented Hero bicycle! 🦋



Hoopoe

Note:

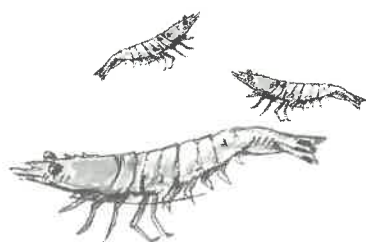
The easiest way to visit KNP is via Delhi where there are 3 or 4 Express Trains daily to Bharatpur. Buses are less comfortable but more flexible as they leave at regular intervals from morning to night.

What's up?



Calendar of Events

compiled by halilah ahmad,
Outreach Officer



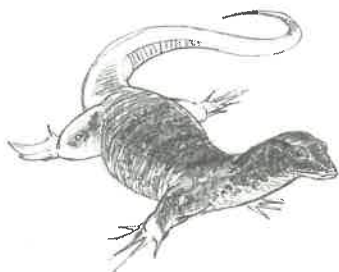
PrawnWatch

Dates: 20 November & 18 December 2004

Time: 9.30am.

Witness the traditional way of prawn harvesting at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and find out what else can be found in the pond.

Please note that this activity is weather permitting. Visitors are advised to reach the reserve by 9am sharp and follow the guide to the prawn pond.



Clean and Green Week

Date: 6 to 21 November 2004

- Guided Walks

6 & 13 November 2004

Time: 9am, 10am, 3pm & 4pm

Get to know the inhabitants of the mangroves through our volunteer guides. Meet these guides at the Visitors Centre at the allocated time.

Please note that this activity is weather permitting.

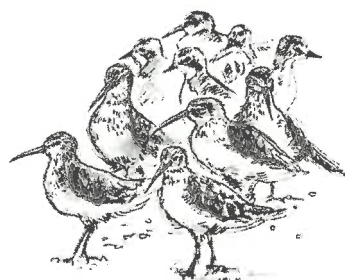
- Birdwatch

6, 7, 10, 13 & 14 November

Time: 9am to 11am, 3pm to 5pm

Its time of the year where the mudflat cafes of Sungei Buloh are fully operational! Flocks of migratory waders visit the Reserve's mudflats to replenish their fuel supply before setting off to their next destination. Simply watch them eat, clean & rest on the mudflats from the comfort of the observation Hides.

Please note that this activity is weather permitting.



Art in the Wetlands

Every last Sunday of the month

Time: 8.30 am to 11am

Please call 6794 1401 to confirm the date, time and venue of activity.

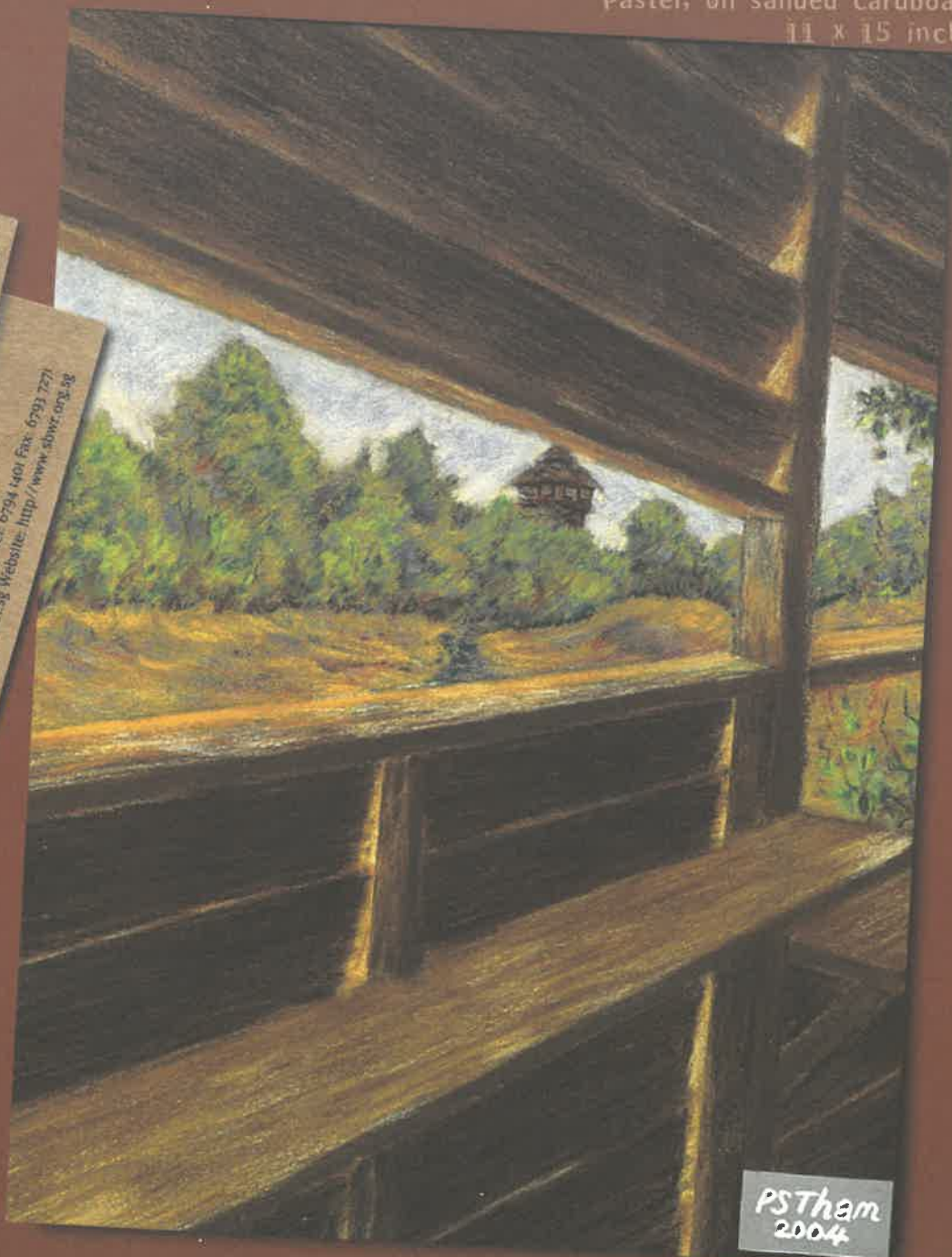
Tham Pui San, a volunteer of SBWR, is an avid artist who expresses his passion for nature through his artwork. Bring along your own art materials and enjoy learning different drawing techniques at Sungei Buloh.

Interested in taking part in other nature-related activities, visit NParks website at www.nparks.gov.sg

A Connection with Nature

Pastel, on sanded cardboard

11 x 15 inches



Reserve Information

Opening Hours: Mondays to Saturday from 7.00am to 7.00pm. Free entry except Sat, Sun, Sundays & Public Holidays. Admission: \$1.00 per adult and \$0.50 per child/student/senior citizen for a 15 min walk to the Reserve. Sundays and Public Holidays. Hourly from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Audio-visual Show: Mondays to Saturdays at 9.00am. Board service TBS 935 from Kranji MRT Station. Alight at Kranji Reservoir carpark. Surgei Buloh Wetland Reserve, 301 Neo Tiew Crescent, Singapore 718955. Tel: 6794 1401 Fax: 6793 7271. Email: sbwr@pacific.net.sg Website: <http://www.sbwr.org.sg>

The full view of the scenery as seen through the windows of Hide 1C seems ordinary. But when viewed from a few steps backward and at an angle, it takes on a new perspective, engaging me with a heightened sense of interest and anticipation of what is out there. The internal wall of the Hide simply blocks out much of the unwanted distractions. When I relate real life situations to encounters with nature, I would often pause to re-look at life from fresh angles, cutting out the irrelevance and complexities that surround it.

By Tham Pui San, SBWR volunteer
12 Jul 2004

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