



wetlands

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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."*

ROBERT CRISPON



Partnership -Unity in Diversity

Wetlands Vol 10:3

EDITORIAL

As the year draws to a close, there is one thing on my mind – people! People are the essence of what makes this Reserve the special place it is. Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) over the years has been blessed with the 'people factor'. A team of dedicated staff, volunteers and corporate sponsors working towards a common vision and sharing similar conservation values have made SBWR what it is today. We have had local and international academic institutions using SBWR as a place of learning and development for young minds keen to venture further into the field of conservation.

Working in a wetland reserve, I have come to revel in nature's diversity. Diversity has a universal quality. The diversity at the Reserve gives rise to unity, bringing together people of different backgrounds and ages. To stay united, we must keep our focus on having the same vision for what holds true to this Reserve. The spirit of togetherness is our strength and so how special it is for me to see how the Reserve has united the diverse group of people for whom SBWR has a special meaning in their lives.

– Jeanne Tan



C o n t e n t s

- 3 Did You Know
Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve welcomed some very important people over the last few months. Among them were His Royal Highness, Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex.
- 4 The Learning Place
SBWR, is an outdoor classroom to the Canadian International School and the Jurong West Secondary School. Students and teachers from these schools collaborate with us to learn about the wetlands.
Also, there was a note-worthy experience by some very young 'entrepreneurs' determined to make a difference. Go to page 6 to find out who they are.
- 7 Scientific Front
The numbers speak for themselves! Senior Conservation Officer, James Gan, reports on our volunteers' role in bird census.
Conservation Officer, Ramakrishnan Kolandavelu gives an account of the 18th International Coastal Cleanup programme. And finally, a four-footed hairy brown resident makes his home here in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. No prizes for guessing who it is!
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Young hearts for 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.
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Cover Photo by Tay Soon Lian / Looking towards and beyond nature conservation



EDITOR : Jeanne Tan CONTRIBUTORS: Ng Sock Ling, Jeanne Tan, Jeremy Ang, James Gan, Ramakrishnan K, Halilah Ahmad, Jacqueline Lau, Zarina Ahmad Zakri, Cheryl Babin. DESIGN: Amphibios Creative PHOTOS CREDITS: Wong Tuan Wah, Tay Soon Lian, Jeremy Ang, Jacqueline Lau, Cheryl Babin, Neo Keng Keok.

Did you know?



VIP Guests

Ng Sock Ling,
Assistant Director

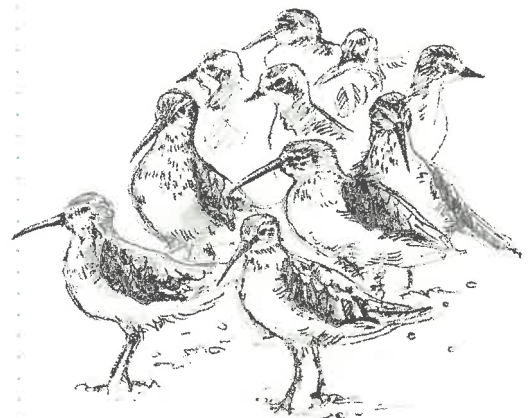
Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) welcomed some very important people over the last few months. Ministry of National Development Permanent Secretary, Mr Tan Tee How and Deputy Secretary, Mr Choo Whatt Bin came by for a visit on 22 May 2004. His Excellency Mr Michael Teo, Singapore's High Commissioner to the Court of St. James's and Ambassador to Ireland came with his family to SBWR on 24 August.

SBWR's most recent VIP guest, His Royal Highness Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, visited SBWR on 2 Oct 2004. He was accompanied by the British High Commissioner, Mr Alan Colins.

Forty excited Young Naturalists and about 20 National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) winners and participants were there to greet His Royal Highness, as were the HSBC Green Volunteers and SBWR Volunteers. All were eager to show the royal visitor how the HSBC-NParks-NYAAC partnership worked.

Prince Edward watched as the NYAA participants from Ngee Ann Polytechnic explained to the Young Naturalists the importance of the mangroves and smiled his approval at a scribbled bird list a Young Naturalist presented to him. He spent time talking with the NYAA award winners, and went on a guided tour of the Mangrove Boardwalk with the HSBC Green Volunteers.

Before he left, Prince Edward planted a sea teak tree (*Podocarpus polystachyus*) together with SBWR's partners in conservation, represented by HSBC CEO Mr Paul Lawrence, NYAAC Chairman Professor Leo Tan, Ngee Ann Polytechnic Principal Mr Chia Mia Chiang and NParks Chief Operating Officer Dr Leong Chee Chiew.





Briefing on mangrove planting for our pupils



Hard at work



SMILE - Our labour of love for the environment - Mission POSSIBLE!

Miss Zarina Ahmad Zakri
CIP co-ordinator
Jurong West Secondary
School

Community Involvement Programme at the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Since 2003, Jurong West Secondary School has been in partnership with the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve to involve its Secondary Three pupils in its "Care For Nature" Community Involvement Programme (CIP).

One of the main criteria of the school's CIP policy is to create a strong sense of environmental conservation and management. The collaboration was also to promote the school value of Teamwork, as well as, to align with the school's strategic goal of "Respect by Community".

The programme started with the pupils engaging in coastal cleanup in 2003. This activity involved the removal of debris, which was left behind after high tide. As

none of the pupils had heard of SBWR before, the trip was an eye-opener. They were amazed to find "never-thought-of" debris like tyres and large styrofoam containers. More important was the discovery of how many plastic items were collected.

Our staff also participated in coastal clean-up in March 2004 as part of our Staff CIP. Even though the activity could not be completed due to weather, our principal, Mr Oliver Balasingam, commented that "the weather did not dampen our spirits. We had a good time besides contributing something to society."

In 2004, Secondary Three pupils were engaged in mangrove planting. It involved the pupils planting mangrove saplings during low tide, which meant having to trudge in the mud. The activity was well-received. The classes that could not go due to wet weather had all requested to go next year.

Comments from pupils' reflections: "We learn to treasure nature by not polluting it"; "We learn to cherish plants".

JWSS looks forward to another year of a meaningful programme with the National Parks Board. 

"Photographing Nature Workshop"

Sponsored by the Press
Foundation
of Singapore Limited

On 2nd November 2004, more than 20 students from Commonwealth Secondary School, Chestnut Drive Secondary School and Hillgrove Secondary School attended a one-day Nature Photographing Workshop in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) sponsored by the Press Foundation of Singapore Ltd (PFS).

Professional nature photographer, Mr David Tan conducted the workshop jointly with SBWR staffs, Ms Halilah Ahmad, Mr Tay Soon Lian and Jeremy Ang.

The students were taught the basics of digital photography such as getting the desired exposure, photograph composition and digital photography editing techniques. In addition, they were given a 2-hour hands-on photography session in the reserve to practice what they had learnt from the workshop. After the photography session the students used the laptops in Nature Cove to download, choose and submit their best photograph for a calendar competition. Moreover, individual schools were also tasked to design a Poster Calendar using the digital photographs they had taken. To round up the session, the trainers commented on each photograph submitted and gave tips to the students on how to improve their skills.

Jeremy Ang
Conservation Officer

The results of the photo and poster design competition were announced at the launch of the nature cove at SBWR on 4 Dec 2004. 

At the end of the workshop the feedback collected from the students were that :

"Very useful and interesting."

— Kevin Hanurata, 17, Hillgrove Secondary School.

"Very enriching!"

— Gabriel Wong, 15, Commonwealth Secondary School

"It taught us many things most people wouldn't know about nature, and it lets us get up close and personal with nature."

— Donovan Leow, 14 Chestnut Drive Secondary School.

The students at the Canadian International School (Singapore) have become skilled observers with heartfelt appreciation of the environment after spending an entire week experiencing the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

We all need time when learning to really experience new things and look closely at details before we can achieve a true level of understanding. This is just what CIS teachers and students did during their week at Sungei Buloh. Through the Canadian School's Open Minds Programme, teachers and conservation officers from SBWR teamed together to create an educational and memorable week-long experience for middle school students.



Experiencing Life in the Mangroves

— The Best Way to Learn

Cheryl Babin,
Open Minds Programme Coordinator
Canadian International School (Singapore)

Experts of SBWR shared their time and knowledge with students in many ways. During the Wader Census, students learned how to count, identify and observe the birds. Using journals, students recorded their questions, observations and took the time to draw what they saw. In addition to counting the waders, students had the chance to observe these special birds as they were being tagged for the purpose of tracking bird migration patterns along the East Asian Australasian Flyway. An up-close look at measuring and weighing the birds demonstrated important details that helped to enlighten the students. Conservation officer, Jeremy Ang, shared information about the conservation efforts for preservation of SBWR. Local artist and SBWR volunteer, Pui San, also worked with the students to see the mangrove ecosystem through the eyes of an artist. Students spent time painting, drawing and interpreting the beauty and wonder of this national jewel.

Canadian School teachers led students through a variety of activities that tied SBWR into the different subject areas of curriculum. Microscopes and magnifying glasses were used to view pond water samples, poetry, journal entries and other forms of writing were created and students had ample time to discuss their thoughts, ideas and questions with their peers, teachers and parents. Back at school, math concepts were used to analyse and graph data that was collected during the week.

During the last day at SBWR, students and teachers took part in a coastal clean-up project which gave them a most valuable chance to take action and make a difference in helping the environment. They were not afraid to get a little dirty, and their efforts paid off! It was amazing to see how much garbage could be collected in a very short amount of time.

After a week of observation, journal writing and talking to the experts at Sungei Buloh, students have developed new understandings, formed deeper questions and more value for this unique wetland environment. Special thanks go out to the caring staff at Sungei Buloh who made these learning experiences possible for our students.

Doing what they do best...

For A Good Cause.

Jeanne Tan,
Senior Outreach Officer.



It was not just another ordinary Saturday on the 31st of July this year. For some 25 students from Hillgrove Secondary School's Environment Club (EC), they came together at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) for one sole purpose – to raise funds and do their part for conservation.



It was a day for these EC students to work their entrepreneurial skills, with a delectable mix of art and nature. These students, as dedicated and focused as they come, did not let the dark clouds and sound of thundery 'booms' nearby dampen their spirits. The skies looked almost as if they were about to burst with heavy rain, and yet, the students remained hopeful, that they could still manage to raise some money for conservation. One would have reckoned that their positive outlook and enthusiasm had helped things to start off well. They believed with much conviction that hard work does pay off, eventually. The students and teachers of Environment Club had started to prepare for this event several weeks before, conscientiously preparing craftwork for sale.

Much to almost everyone's surprise and delight, the dark clouds, as near as they were to Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, began to move away with a change of wind direction and gave the wetland reserve a miss!

Each of the students summed it up as a fun-filled and enriching morning. The students had several items up for sale. There was an interesting range of bookmarks, batik printed cards, bags, stones and pyrography craftworks, all done with wetland wildlife motifs. The students did an excellent job in communicating to the visitors the purpose of this mini-sale. Aside from the sale of craftwork, the EC students also had a time of interaction with children of a younger age, guiding them on the basics of art. It was endearing to see how they fitted into a big brother and big sister role, taking the hands of these young ones, teaching them how to draw, as well as gently explaining to them the importance of conserving nature.

In half a day here, the students raised \$445.00 for the SBWR Conservation Fund. To the students and to the dedicated and committed teachers of Hillgrove Secondary, namely, Mrs Susan Tham, Ms Neo and Mdm Sarah, we would like to thank you for your tireless giving and participation as an adopter school of SBWR. Over the years, we have gained much in this partnership. I am sure my colleagues would agree with me that your students have added much vibrancy to our work place, and to some of us, our lives. To the students, I want to add, keep up your positive spirit, and continue to do what you do best....

"The students from the Environment Club have shown great enthusiasm in making these items for sale...They realized that it involves a lot of hard work."

— Mdm Siti Sarah, teacher, Hillgrove Secondary School.

"The activity was fun. I wish to do it again!"

— Mohd Imran, 3E2.

"It was a fun-filled and an enriching experience for me."

— Pek Yong Qing, 3E1.

"I'm proud to have done my part for conservation..."

— Rida Nisar, 3E1.

Ramakrishnan Kolandavelu,
Asst. Conservation Officer
James Gan,
Senior Conservation Officer

Volunteers Conduct Heron Counts at Sungei Buloh



Hérons (and other species from the Ardeidae family) have been counted through systematic surveys, together with other groups of birds at Sungei Buloh since 1990 but the counts in 2003 represent the first time efforts were made to count the Ardeidae species regularly on a weekly basis. And what was even more special was that this was the first time Sungei Buloh volunteers, Prakash and Seema, had committed to one full year of regular Sunday morning counting the herons, egrets and bitterns in the wetland. The aim of the counts was to establish the abundance, species composition and trends regarding the species over a calendar year at the wetland.

The dedication of the volunteers has enabled the wetland reserve to obtain a snapshot of the heron numbers over a calendar year (See graphs attached).

The survey results have established that Ardeidae species numbers in the wetland do not exceed 200 individuals at any one time. The Little Egret is the most abundant Ardeidae species with a maximum of 163 individuals counted in January with three lesser peaks of 130 in late February and 80 and 128 in late November. The Great Egret is much less abundant than the Little Egret with a peak count of 19 also recorded in January. The Grey Heron was found to be generally more abundant than the Purple Heron. Peak counts of 41 individual Grey Herons were noted in July with lesser peaks scattered throughout the year. The Purple Heron had peak counts of 10 individuals.

Bitterns were not abundant and being secretive with a tendency to hide among the thick vegetation, the numbers counted during the surveys are certainly less than the actual numbers present. The Yellow Bittern was the most abundant bittern with a peak count of 7 followed by the Black Bittern and Cinnamon Bittern with peak counts of 2 and 1 respectively. Based on the count data, the bitterns appeared to be more abundant in the first half of the year especially between the end of March and May.

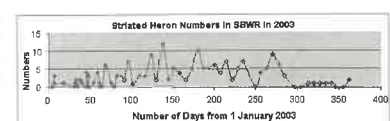
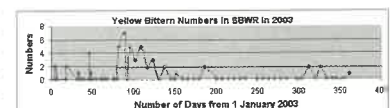
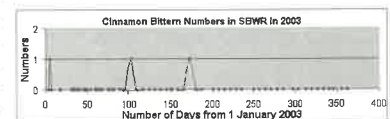
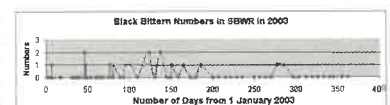
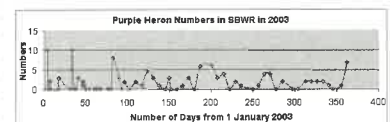
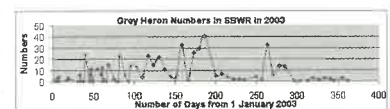
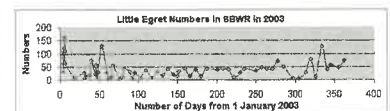
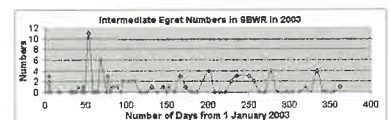
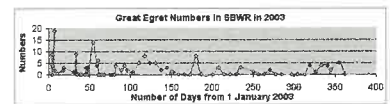
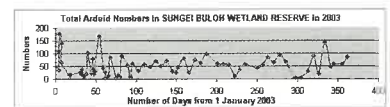
The data collected overtime, will be invaluable for the conservation management of the wetlands.

In general, the count data obtained has provided an indication of the Ardeidae species and numbers that might be expected in Sungei Buloh over the next few years and in similar wetland sites in the vicinity of Sungei Buloh at different periods of a year.

Post Script:

The results of the heron counts has translated into the presentation of an abstract and poster to be presented at the Singapore Institute of Biology, Biology in Asia International Conference held at Nanyang Technological University from 7 to 10 Dec 2004. The title of the abstract is:

"Gan J.T.W.M., Ramakrishnan R.K., Prakash S., & Seema S. 2004. Ardeidae species abundance and diversity in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, Singapore in 2003."



13th International Coastal Cleanup (2004)

Ramakrishnan Kolandavelu,
Asst. Conservation Officer

At the Annual International Coastal Cleanup, people in 70 countries across the globe rolled up their collective sleeves and clean up debris from mangroves and beaches. In the process, they help to collect important data which are then used to educate the public on the issue of marine debris, to create a positive change to reduce trash in the world's waterways and to improve the environment.

As with previous years, the energetic team from the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (RMBR) of the National University of Singapore took the lead to rope in volunteers from schools and organisation to help with the cleanup of Singapore's coastline. The partners for this year comprised Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, Anderson Secondary School, Beatty Secondary School, Commonwealth Secondary School, National University of Singapore, Raffles Museum Toddy cat, Saint Andrew's Junior College, Singapore American Middle and High School, Tao Nan Scouts, Victoria Junior College, Yusoff Ishak Alumni. The focus for the cleanup was the mangroves at Kranji Nature Trail. This year, some 460 volunteers cleaned up a total area of 450 square metres of coast.

After a briefing by RMBR staff for the student leaders of the various schools a week before the cleanup session, it was time for action. Excitement was in the air as the participants made their way into Sungei Buloh and gathered at their assigned area. Everyone began their task of picking up litter in earnest. They separated the trash into different categories and recorded the data. All these were done with much enthusiasm. The leaders then collated and submitted all data cards to the operations room for updating on the web page by the data manager. The litter collected on the

It was time again for another annual 'spring cleaning' of the mangroves and beaches on this earth! Here in Sungei Buloh, we held our cleanup on 18th September 2004.



land was removed, by means of using wheelbarrows and trollies. The trash and litter collected from the sea were removed using canoes. Everyone did their part well. The whole cleanup operation was a success and a great deal of important data was collected on this tiring but meaningful day of cleaning up our mangroves...

Summary

Total number of Volunteers	-----	460
Total number of trash bags filled	-----	334
Total number of items collected	-----	22,164
Total weight of trash collected	-----	3,167 kg
Total area cleaned	-----	450 Sq.m

Sources of Debris

Shoreline & Recreational Activities	-----	17,999	---	81.2%
Debris of Local Concern	-----	1,787	---	8.1%
Ocean / Waterway Activities	-----	1,7331	-----	7.8%
Smoking-Related Activities	-----	320	-----	1.4%
Dumping Activities	-----	259	-----	1.2%
Medical / Personal Hygiene	-----	68	-----	0.3%

Wild Boar Sightings!

Jeremy Ang,
Conservation Officer

A family of wild boars was sighted on 17th September this year at about 10.30am near Gate B by the freshwater ponds. The family consisted of one female and four juveniles. Since the encounter was an absolute surprise, the adult female hastily led her young ones back to the safety of some bushes. Thus, the only photograph that we have was of them running away to the bushes. Nonetheless, it is wonderful to know that wild boars are breeding in the vicinity of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.



Charlie



Apart from this encounter, we had a friendly young wild boar, affectionately named "Charlie". Charlie enjoyed going through merry rounds in our visitor carpark chasing after vehicles, rolling in mud pools that he dug for himself, sniffing and digging vegetated areas for food and lazing in the shade during hot humid afternoons. Whenever Charlie was at the visitor carpark, he established 'public relations' with both staff and visitors, making himself a "mascot" for SBWR. However as time passed, Charlie grew bigger and became quite a handful. He was caught chewing off young plant seedlings in our plant nursery, rubbing mud on vehicles and getting a bit too close to visitors for their comfort, especially to young children. We were concerned that there were signs of poachers trying to trap him too. Once he had a nasty cut on one of his hind legs, presumably sustained from a poacher, and another time a wire noose was found looped to his upper jaw. Due to all these issues, the management decided to translocate Charlie into the reserve where he will be protected and possibly find a mate and start his own family.

Charlie since then, has been safely translocated from the visitor carpark into the reserve. We conducted checks and found him adapting well. Hopefully, in the near future, we can see him and his offsprings roaming in the reserve. For now, if you are ever approached by a friendly male wild boar while hiking in the reserve, chances are he might be Charlie. 🐾





An ASEAN Experience

Conference on ASEAN Heritage Parks,
at Khao Yai National Park, Thailand,
20th to 24th Sep 2004

Ng Sock Ling,
Assistant Director

On 18 Dec 2003, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) joined 26 other protected areas of high conservation value across ASEAN to become Singapore's first ASEAN Heritage Park.

ASEAN Heritage Parks are protected areas of high conservation importance that together, preserves a complete spectrum of ecosystems representative of the ASEAN Region. Each site is nominated by its government and evaluated by other member countries and experts.

The ASEAN Heritage Parks were established with two aims: "to generate greater awareness, pride, appreciation, enjoyment and conservation of ASEAN's rich natural heritage through the creation and support for a regional network of representative protected areas" and "to generate greater collaboration between ASEAN member countries in preserving their shared natural heritage" (Guidelines for the Nomination and Management of ASEAN Heritage Parks, 2003).

In the selection of SBWR for this prestigious programme, NParks accepted both the honour and the responsibility of managing SBWR as a showcase example for the protection of the ecosystem it represents.

A year after the ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks was signed, the inaugural Conference on ASEAN Heritage Parks convened at Khao Yai National Park, Thailand, on 20th to 24th September 2004. It was a conference that brought together representatives from a full spectrum of environmental conservation backgrounds, from the ASEAN Secretariat, to international experts, to ASEAN Heritage Park managers. His Excellency Mr Ong Keng Yong, ASEAN Secretary General, was the Guest of Honour.

I attended the Conference as the park manager of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, together with Mr Wong Tuan Wah, Director for Conservation, NParks. It was an invigorating experience.

The Conference was held at Khao Yai National Park, Thailand's oldest National Park and an ASEAN Heritage Park. Covering an area of 2,165 km, the Park is about three times the size of Singapore. It is part of the Phanom Dongrak mountain range that separates Thailand's northeast plateau from the central plain, and the source of five main rivers in Thailand. Not surprisingly, it enjoys a cool climate and has numerous spectacular waterfalls. Vegetation also ranges from tropical rain forests to hill evergreen forests, dry evergreen forests and mixed deciduous forests.

The Conference delegates were housed at the Park's headquarters, in comfortable chalets and bungalows, with light and (very cold) running water and within close



proximity of the Park's Cafeteria. Surrounded by nature, it was an ideal setting to consider the beauty and value of an ASEAN Heritage Park, and to discuss conservation concerns with like-minded folks. While the days were filled with important presentations and country reports indoors, the early mornings and nights were spent quite differently.

In the early mornings, I woke up to the calls of gibbons and monkeys, swinging their way through the green forest canopy just outside my chalet. I was not alone in my curiosity, for I spotted Dr John MacKinnon, trusty camera and tripod in hand, heading down the path following movements in the tree canopy. Sambar deer, the males magnificent with their antlers, were everywhere. In the evenings after dinner, our amiable host Mr Prawat Wohandee, park manager of Khao Yai, arranged for 'spot-lighting' sessions for delegates eager to sample the night life of the Park. As their children held up powerful spot lights from the windows, Park Rangers transported delegates in buses around the park to watch startled porcupines ambling away into the shadows, civet cats skulking in the grass, deer placidly feeding and owls staring from the trees. The Park had a 9:00 pm curfew, when visitors were told to stay indoors so as not to be in the way of the elephants and tigers that wander the park grounds at night. Those of us waiting for the thrill of seeing a tiger were disappointed, but on the final night of our stay, some of the lucky delegates saw a herd of elephants.

This first Conference set the tone for future exchanges between the ASEAN Heritage Parks. The meeting-together of political minds, international conservation experts and the park managers involved in the day-to-day work of managing these valuable ASEAN heritage sites formed a dynamic environment which stimulated the cross-exchanges of ideas and best practices. It also fostered a greater understanding and appreciation of our shared natural heritage among the representatives of the 10 member countries of ASEAN.



Volunteer Outing to Pulau Kukup

& Yong Peng Heronry, Johor, Malaysia

Jacqueline Lau,
SBWR Volunteer



Early morning on the 15th of August 2004, a busload of an assortment of individuals headed north-west of Singapore, towards the south-western end of Johor. For this year's volunteer and staff outing, Pulau Kukup and the Yong Peng Heronry were our destinations.

We were provided with a tourist guide who entertained us non-stop for pretty much the entire journey, telling us, with zest, about the lands and history of the regions the coach passed through. To get to Pulau Kukup, we had to make a stop at the busy rural town of Pontian and proceed to the island by boat. But that was not before spending some time in the Johor National Park Visitor Information Centre, enjoying the exhibits they had there of their natural heritage.

Declared a Ramsar site, or a wetland of international importance, at the beginning of this year, Pulau Kukup, like Sungei Buloh, is a mangrove reserve. "*If there is one mission that unites national parks all over the world, it is the conservation ethic.*" This was one sentence from Johor Parks' Pulau Kukup website which caught my eye and provoked some thoughts. That was certainly true, especially for reserves which have such similar habitats. While at Kukup, our conservation officers exchanged knowledge with the Park Manager, who led us around Kukup, pointing out the unique fauna and flora which could be found there. We, who were used to being the guides in a nature reserve, were now the ones being guided.

We pointed out the tiniest of crabs, in the brightest of colours, "Oh, oh! There's an orange one there!" And a few seconds later, "There's an even smaller one here! There... you see the green one?" We were amazed at how small the denizens of Kukup were... compared to those in Buloh. The mudskippers were small. The halfbeaks were petit. So were the many species of spiders found there, and the caterpillars. The animals there were either small, or were so well-camouflaged that most of them, I reckon, had escaped our notice. Those of us with cameras snapped away at this speckled moth on a bark; it greatly resembled the Peppered moth of Europe. With the cameras flashing around it, it must have felt like a celebrity. The few grey herons that we saw were not as 'chubby' as those we were used to seeing. All these were not a sign of a lack of nutrition though. Far from that, Kukup is vibrant, and rich with life. Our conservation officers speculate that many of them might be sub-species.

Sometimes hailed as the central structure of attraction at Kukup is a 6-storey-high aerie. As disinclined as I was to heights, I reminded myself that we had all survived the narrow 30m suspension bridge at the entrance of the Park, and scaling the aerie shouldn't be too difficult. The little struggle up the tower was worth it. From the top



of the aerie, one was treated to a 360 degree panoramic view of Kukup and its surrounds. It was a sea of green — the canopies of the mangrove treetops. And the best thing was, there was not another man-made structure in sight... it gave the feeling of what *nature* was meant to define.

After witnessing a wasp parasiting a poor caterpillar, we made our way back to Pontian, to enjoy a seafood lunch on a raised platform beside the jetty. Terns dive-bombed around us, and the then-greyish sky was welcomed by the photographers, who had their bazooka lenses all ready, aiming at the swooping seabirds.

It was another long journey — for us Singaporeans who have never had to travel too far to get to where we wanted — up to the famous heronry at Yong Peng. Upon arrival, nobody could be certain if that was in fact the correct destination. All there was was a row of shophouses, a bank, and a few Yong Peng residents sitting about having their afternoon coffee. Someone pointed out the back lane, behind the shophouses. We disembarked. The moment we got off the coach, we could hear the familiar hoarse calls and squawks of... herons! Did it sound like there were many of them around! The sight which greeted us was simply amazing — in a tiny patch of shrubs and grassland, a good 30-odd mixture of Black-crowned Night Herons and Purple Herons were perched on the tree branches. It was as urban a heronry as you could get. The adults and juveniles were totally oblivious to us humans with our scopes and monster lenses and cameras snapping away from not far off. I daresay we were only slightly more than 50m away.

The hour and a half that we spent there was not enough; some of us could have stayed there for hours on end. The heronry was a remarkable arrangement. There were wild, untouched lands all around, and yet the herons chose to live and nest at a location so close to human activity. Later we learnt that there was a dam near by, where the birds did their fishing, but still the main question which lingered in our minds went unanswered: what drew them to that particular patch of green and not any other? Not knowing why these feathered friends do what they do only makes us all the more in awe of them and their ways.

At the end of the day I had a little conversation with fellow volunteer Pui San, and in these words he summed up the spirit of the Buloh family: "The Buloh volunteers and staff... are a very tight-knit community. There's a strong family spirit... a strong bond between the volunteers, and between the volunteers and staff, and that's a very good thing."

It is outings such as this which brings out this spirit. And it is this spirit which has been instrumental in ensuring the success of Sungei Buloh as a wetland reserve... a centre for conservation and learning.

That being said... another trip in December, anyone? 



Calendar of Events compiled by Halilah Ahmad, Outreach Officer

PrawnWatch 2004

Date: 20 November & 18 December 2004

Time & Venue: 9.30 am, Prawn Pond, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

Be at the information counter by 9.00am and a guide will lead you to the demonstration site. Traditional prawn harvesting will take place on these 2 days. Learn the different types of prawns and the web of life of the prawn ponds of Sungei Buloh. Join us for an interesting demonstration on this dying trade in land scarce Singapore. Please call 67941401 to book for a time slot. Admission charges apply.

Clean and Green Week

- Free Guided Tour

Date: 6 & 13 November

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

Venue: Mangrove Boardwalk and/or Route One

Kranji Nature Trail

Join us for a guided tour and learn about the interesting web of life of the inhabitants of the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserves and the Kranji Nature Trail. Guided walks will be cancelled if it rains. Please call 67941401 to book for a time slot. Admission charges apply.

Birdwatch

- Date: 6, 7, 10, 13 & 14 November 2004

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

Venue: Main Hide

Learn how to identify the migratory waders thru the lens of a telescope and the expert knowledge of our guide. Please call 67941401 to book for a time slot. Admission charges apply.

Art in the Wetlands

- Exhibition

Date: 1 November to 28 February 2005

Venue: Visitor Centre, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

An exhibition of pastel paintings by Tham Pui San, a volunteer at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, will be held at the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve in conjunction with a 2-day Pastel Workshop on landscape painting for beginners.

- Pastel Workshop

Day 1: Date: 4 December 2004, Time: 2.30 to 5.30pm, Education Workroom

Day 2: Date: 11 December 2004, Time: 2.30 to 5.30pm, Mangrove Boardwalk.

The objectives of this workshop:

- To introduce the use of pastels in sketching and painting.
- To help students acquire basic landscape painting techniques.
- To promote nature appreciation through art.

What to bring:

A charcoal pencil, 2B lead pencil, small piece of sandpaper, penknife, pastel drawing block (min A4 size) or watercolour sketching book, and a basic set of pastels or pastels pencils.

This workshop is conducted free of charge. Participants are welcome to contribute to the Garden City Fund (by cash or cheque payable to 'Garden City Fund'). The proceeds will go towards conservation programmes at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

Please call 67941401 (8.30am to 6.00 pm daily) to register. Places are limited to the first 22 participants. Admission charges apply.

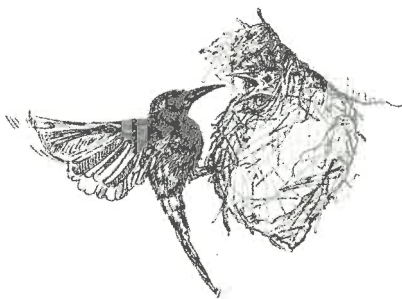
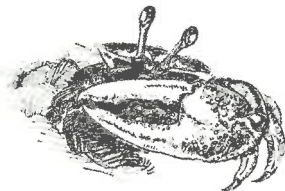
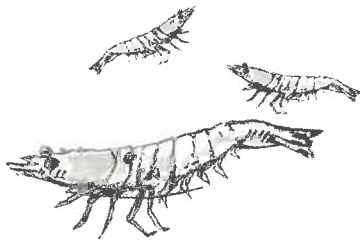
Young Naturalist Programme (YNP) camp

Date: 6 Dec 2004.

Venue: Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Limited to 50 children of ages between 6 to 12 year old, this one day-camp encompasses a series of hands-on activities including guided walks, birdwatching and nest-building. They will earn a stamp on their passports for each completed activity, and a collection of stamps will earn them a cloth badge. Each participant to purchase a YNP passport at 50 cents each and follow their camp leaders in exploring the wetlands.

Find out more about the programme at www.sbwr.org.sg. Please call 67941401 to register. Registration fee of \$5 is applicable and will be returned to participants who attend the camp. The fee will go into SBWR education fund if the child fails to attend the camp. Admission charges apply.



Young Hearts for Nature

By Jeanne Tan, Senior Outreach Officer

On 6 December 2004, we successfully ran another Young Naturalist Passport (YNP) Camp for a full day from 9am-5pm. The YNP camp takes place twice a year, in June and December respectively, and is sponsored by HSBC.

We had a group of enthusiastic young naturalists ranging from six to fourteen years old. One of the activities "write stuff" required the children to write a pledge for nature.

This page has the original thoughts penned by some of our young hearts for nature.

Dear Mum and Dad,
today I am writing
about planting mangrove.
We went outside and
we had gloves. We put
soil in a bag & put the
plant (called mangrove)
in the bag & fill it up
with soil again. But when
we were digging, we saw
tepedes! But fortunately
we managed to get
it out! Some carried on
& on... until
everything was done.
(The End) By: Dominique

TAN GUAT HOON
82 JLN LEBAN
SINGAPORE
571619

Dear Mom,
I will not
destroy their
homes
I will not
take away
their eggs
I will not
kill them.

from: Li Shuen
Singapore
5258016

Dear Mum and Dad,
we went to see birds
and horseshoe crab.
we went to the
mangrove. we saw
Kingfisher.
I love
mangrove to see
some birds.

Reserve Information
Opening Hours: Mondays to Saturday from 7.00am to 7.00pm.
Sundays & Public Holidays from 7.00am to 7.00pm. Free entry except Sat, Sun,
Sundays & School Holidays. Admission: \$1.00 per adult and \$0.50 per child/student/senior citizen.
Audio-visual Show: Mondays to Saturdays at 9.00am.
Sundays and Public Holidays: Hourly from 9.00am to 5.00pm.
TBS 935 will stop at the Reserve entrance.
Alight at Kranji Reservoir carpark.
301 Neo Tiew Crescent, Singapore 718925. Tel: 6794 1401 Fax: 6793 7271
Email: sbwr@pacific.net.sg Website: http://www.sbwr.org.sg

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