

WETlands



Sungei Buloh Nature Park, Vol. 5 No. 1 April 1998. MITA(P) No. 088/02/98



CONTENTS

*The Park
celebrates its 5th
Anniversary in
December 1998
and many events
have been planned
for the countdown
to the anniversary.*

3 Did You Know?

Many prawn farms formerly occupied the area around Sungei Buloh.

4 Park Programmes

Programmes specially tailored for schools.

6 Countdown to the Park's 5th Anniversary

30th Nov 1997 was a day to remember.

8 What Happened

Recent events at the park.

8 Other Nature Areas

Other nature parks in Singapore.

9 What's Coming Up

Park events coming your way soon.

10 Useful Park Information

Information to help you plan your trip to the Park.

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Sungei Buloh Nature Park

Cover photo by Mr Wong Tuan Wah


Picture of a Green-crested Lizard,
Calotes cristatellus.

EDITORIAL

The Park celebrates its 5th Anniversary in December 1998 and many events have been planned for the countdown to the anniversary. This marks a major milestone in the life of the Park and there is a sense that much has been achieved thus far.

Nevertheless, we are constantly on the lookout for improvements to the Park to benefit you, the nature enthusiast. This newsletter is no exception. You may have noticed that the overall layout of the newsletter has taken a quantum leap in presentation to render it more reader-friendly and eye-catching. You will also now find in each issue, a feature on what is happening in our sister nature parks.

And to ensure that you can time your visit to catch the Park at its best, we will publish the tide table for the next 4 months. Finally, updates on birds spotted recently in the Park shall feature regularly in the newsletter.

We hope you will enjoy this new and improved newsletter, as well as the events we have planned for you. We look forward to seeing you at the Park soon! 

The Editor



Prawn Farming at

SUNGEI BULOH NATURE PARK

by lim haw chuan & colleen goh

Many prawn farms formerly occupied the area around Sungei Buloh. Not surprisingly therefore, the history of Sungei Buloh is closely linked to the prawn farming industry.

The waterlogged and muddy mangrove swamps that occupy much of the Park are rich in organic

nutrients. These nutrients make excellent food for the prawn fry.

Consequently, prawns would naturally spawn in the mangrove swamp. Making use of this knowledge, traditional prawn farmers devised an ingenious and low-cost way to trap, grow and harvest these prawns.

This entailed digging a shallow pond of about 1 - 2 hectares from the mangrove soil. Embankments are built around the pond and a sluice gate is constructed to allow for water exchange. The brackish ponds you see around the Park are the remnants of smaller prawn ponds that have been joined together by the breaking of the embankments between them.

With traditional prawn farming, the farmer starts by opening the sluice gate to allow the wild prawn larvae to swim into the pond. The prawn larvae are trapped in the pond when the sluice gates are shut.

There is no need for the farmer to feed the larvae as they will feed on the organisms that are already present in the water. All that he needs to do is to regularly flush out the water in the pond so as to get rid of the excrement-filled, de-oxygenated water and replace it with water rich in oxygen, minerals and food. Flushing is done when the water level in the pond is higher than the level of the sea water outside the pond. Thus when the top few planks of the sluice gate are removed, water will flow from the pond to the sea (the prawn fry do not escape as they usually inhabit the bottom part of the pond).

The history of Sungei Buloh is closely linked to the prawn farming industry.

When the prawns have grown to a sufficient size, the farmer will harvest them by placing a net at the gate whilst opening it at low tide. The harvested prawns may be sold at the market or kept for the farmer's own consumption.

Birds like the Egrets and Herons were attracted to the area around Sungei Buloh as a result of this prawn farming activity. They were able to feed on the marine life that was left exposed when the ponds were drained for harvesting.

Today, even though these prawn ponds are no longer farmed, they are still rich in life and visitors can still see the birds as they forage for food in the ponds just as they had done many years ago. 🦋

photo by matthew tan



A prawn pond at dusk.



Come Experience t

Children's Vacation Workshop



Children will participate in learning games, activities and nature rambles, all centering around the theme "Adaptations in Nature"

The end-of the year vacation workshop for kids was held in December 1997.

Participants from Pei Hwa Presbyterian School took part in this day-long workshop based on the theme 'Birds of Buloh'.

Through the use of innovative games and activities, participants learnt more about the birds that inhabit the Park. Knowledge acquired included bird identification techniques and different uses of beaks. They also found out how difficult it can be to build a nest after an interesting hands-on session.

The next series of vacation workshops will be held during the **June School Holidays**. Called "Adaptations in Nature", the workshop is targeted at Primary 5 and 6 students.

The primary aim of this workshop is to introduce children to the strange and wonderful flora and fauna of Sungei Buloh Nature Park and how they have adapted themselves to the different conditions found in the various habitats of the Park.

Children will participate in learning games, activities and nature rambles, all centering around the theme 'Adaptations in Nature'. They will also have the opportunity to get up close and personal with unusual but interesting creatures like Mudskippers, Horseshoe Crabs, Archerfish, Halfbeaks, Waterhens, Creeper Shells and Changeable Lizards - just to name a few!


Class size is limited to a maximum of 20 and participants have a choice of two days: **Tue 2 June** or **Fri 5 June**. The fee of \$40 includes meals and workshop materials. Those who are interested may contact the Education Dept at 793 7377 for more details. Do make your bookings early, as vacancies are limited. 



photo by bailiab abmad

"What do you think of the nest we made?"

Workshop participants during a games session.



The Wild Side of Life

by colleen gob

Teachers' Workshop

This workshop is held once a month on a Saturday morning. It aims to familiarise teachers with the various programmes and materials available at the Park and more importantly, to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct field trips to the Park.

The workshop begins with a short session where participants are introduced to the various programmes the Park has and given an update on the latest amenities and activities that have been set up (for example, the Spot Art Competition). This is followed by a familiarisation tour of two of the more popular walking trails - the Mangrove Boardwalk and Route 1. Here, teachers are taken on a guided walk by our education staff and introduced to the various flora and fauna that can be encountered along the trails.

A new segment that has been included in this year's workshop programme is the introduction of fun and environmentally-friendly activities that teachers can conduct with their pupils while at the Park.

The participants are appreciative of the efforts taken to introduce the Park to them and leave with a better understanding and appreciation of Singapore's wetland paradise.

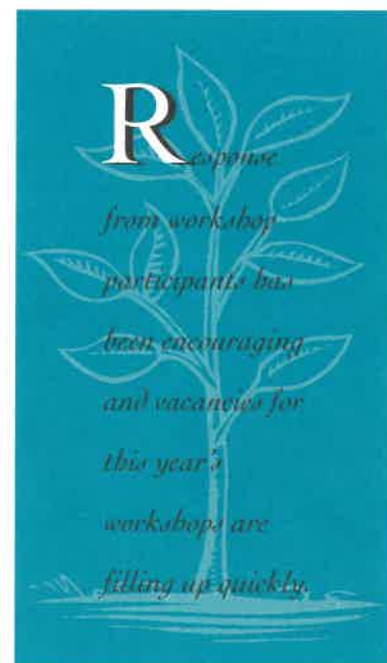
Response from workshop participants has been encouraging and vacancies for this year's workshops are filling up quickly. Teachers interested in applying for the remaining workshop slot in November may contact the Education Dept at 793 7377.

Remember to confirm your attendance early. 🐸



photo by haliab abmad

"Eeks! What's that?" - Teachers having fun during the workshop.



Countdown to Sungei 5th Anniversary

December 1998 marks Sungei Buloh Nature Park's 5th Anniversary and the Park has lined up a series of events to count down to this first major milestone.

Kicking off the countdown was a donation of \$120,000 from HongkongBank's Care-for-Nature Trust Fund to set up the Sungei Buloh Education Fund. It will be used to fund the Park's public education activities, including programmes promoting awareness of the Park as an important natural heritage and inculcating a greater knowledge and appreciation of nature. Proceeds and donations collected from visitors to the Park from the sale of publications and activities like the Spot-art Competition will also go into the fund for future projects.

Countdown Events 30 November 1997

- A ceremony was held for the setting up of the Sungei Buloh Education Fund. The cheque of \$120,000 from the HongkongBank's Care-for-Nature Trust Fund was presented by Mr Connal Rankin (Chief Executive Officer, HongkongBank) to Dr Tan Wee Kiat (Chief Executive Officer, National Parks Board).

- Launch of the new Sungei Buloh Nature Park brochure.

- The countdown to the 5th Anniversary was kicked off with:

BirdWatch 1997 (30 Nov - 6 Dec 97)

BirdWatch Week, an annual Park event since 1995, promised fascinating views of migratory birds. Guides with telescopes were stationed at the Main Hide to assist visitors in spotting and identifying our feathered friends from afar.

Kid's Lucky Dip (30 Nov - 6 Dec 97)

All the children who visited the Park during this period were kept busy around Route 1, collecting clues along the migratory bird trail for a chance at the lucky dip. Armed with our trail booklet: "Endless Summer: The Story of a Seasoned Traveller", the children found out about the wonders of migration from the journey taken by our star, the Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*). Many happy kids went home from the Park not only with newly acquired information on these fascinating birds but also generous prizes like stamp prints, binoculars, first-day covers and other souvenirs, all kindly sponsored by HongkongBank.

Spot Art Competition (30 Nov 97 - 30 Nov 98)

The 'Care For Nature' Spot Art Competition, which spans the entire year, is open to all

children aged between 6 - 16 years. Each month, 10 top entries will be selected from both the Primary and Secondary School Category to qualify for the Grand Finals.

Heron Watch (17 Jan, 28 Feb, 21 Mar 98)

This features fun-filled activities while on a tour to the heronry. The activities will illustrate the survival needs of the herons and the importance of conserving the wetland habitats that are essential to the herons.

Mangrove Mania (18 Apr, 30 May, 27 Jun 98)

Plant and bring home a part of the mangrove swamp, as part of our mudflat clearance programme.

Ecology Trail (Jul - Sep 98)

A trail along Route 1 for a better understanding of the interdependency in the world of living things.

5th Anniversary

The annual BirdWatch event will be held again. In addition to the regular wader spotting, we will also be conducting bird-sketching workshops, mime performances and story telling sessions at the Park.

Sungei Buloh's rich food source, thanks to its mudflats and mangroves, has made it a natural stop-over site for migratory birds during the colder months. Luckily for us, this very unique attraction and its potential was recognised, and in 1989, the government conserved it as a nature park. Today, people from all walks of life come to see the large variety of birds and plants, which thrive in diverse habitats here in Singapore's only wetland park.

Sungei Buloh Nature Park was officially opened on 6 December 1993 with this mission, 'To be a centre for excellence in tropical wetland management for conservation,

Dr Tan Wee Kiat, Chief Executive Officer of the National Parks Board, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning.

When the Sungei Buloh Park was opened in 1993, HongkongBank was among its first corporate supporters. Even today, if you take a stroll around the Park, you will easily see from the many signages the Bank's involvement in this uniquely important natural heritage of ours.

While these educational and instructional signages, which were installed at the

Buloh Nature Park's Celebrations

by ong chui leng



photo by wong tuan web

A tour of the Mangrove Boardwalk after the launch.

education, research and compatible recreation'. The team here at Sungei Buloh has worked very hard, through its educational programmes, publications and collaborations with researchers and institutions, to bring Sungei Buloh closer to Singaporeans. And the response has been encouraging. The Park sees more than 200 visitors each day. However, more can be done to draw on the large untapped market out there.

Sungei Buloh and HongkongBank have recognized this potential, and in preparation for Sungei Buloh's 5th anniversary in December next year, they have come together to

organise, not a 3 month, or even a 6 month, but a whole year's programme aimed at letting people discover this very different, very natural part of Singapore. HongkongBank is kindly donating \$120,000 towards the Sungei Buloh Education Fund for this purpose.

On behalf of the National Parks Board and Sungei Buloh Nature Park, I would like to extend our appreciation to Hongkong Bank for their generous support.

Tan Wee Kiat
Chief Executive Officer
National Parks Board
at the launch of the 5th
Anniversary Countdown
30 Nov 1997

inauguration of the Park, have seen better days, given the inevitable wear and tear of the past four years, the ecological importance of the Sungei Buloh nature park and its value to our environmental awareness-building efforts have not, in the least, been diminished. I am also glad to add that the same goes for HongkongBank's commitment to the conservation of the Park and to the environment as a whole.

Having supported the original effort to establish the Park, I am please that the Bank has been invited back by the National Parks Board

(NParks) to help mark Sungei Buloh's first major milestone and, even more importantly, to participate in NPark's effort to enhance quality and range of educational activities at Sungei Buloh for the enjoyment of Singaporeans and foreign visitors alike.

Being Singapore's first and only wetlands nature park in itself makes Sungei Buloh an ecological jewel in land scarce and urbanised Singapore. Yet I would venture to add that Sungei Buloh's greater value lies in its uniqueness as a living classroom for our school children and, indeed, for all of us.

It is on this premise that we have chosen to assist the National Parks Board in its endeavour to raise the profile of the Sungei Buloh Nature Park in the lead-up, as the backdrop behind me puts it, the countdown to its 5th Anniversary.

On this note, I am pleased to announce HongkongBank's donation of S\$120,000 to the National Park's Board for the setting up of a Sungei Buloh Education Fund to fund the Park's public education activities.

I hope this Education Fund will go some way to attracting more school children to the Park and, in the process, enrich each and every one of them with a greater knowledge of nature at work and, more importantly, with a deeper appreciation of the importance wetland parks like Sungei Buloh are to our natural landscape.

Before I conclude, let me share with you a quick observation. At the height of the recent haze problem, a colleague at the Bank remarked how human beings can be so silly in the way they all tend to take things for granted, the sunny blue sky in this instance, only to start

realising how precious something is when they no longer have it.

I hope that in time to come, we will not be saying the same of the Sungei Buloh Nature Park and for that matter, all our other parks and seashores.

Hopefully, the setting up of this Education Fund will help us keep the Sungei Buloh Nature Park as a cherished jewel of our natural heritage and a living classroom for generations to come.

Thank you.

Connal Rankin
General Manager & Chief
Executive Officer
HongkongBank Singapore
at the launch of the 5th
Anniversary Countdown
30 Nov 1997



Dr Tan Wee Kiat, CEO NParks receives the donation of \$120,000 from Mr Connal Rankin, CEO HongkongBank.

photo by wong tuan web

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

by colleen gob

The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve covers an area of 164 hectares and includes the highest hill in Singapore. The vegetation is typical of a humid equatorial climate and represents one of the few remaining tracts of primary forests in Singapore.

The forests of Bukit Timah have been a botanical collecting ground for more than a century. Many first known specimens of Malayan plants species have been obtained there. Even today, this unique and irreplaceable forest provides invaluable material for study by anyone who wishes to learn about the flora of the region.

Access

There is a metalled road, which provides a good walking surface leading to the summit. Public vehicles are not allowed in the Reserve. A series of well-marked footpaths are available for quiet walks through the forest. Huts for rest and shelter are provided at intervals and at various look-out points. Sign posts and maps can be found where footpaths intersect.

Flora and Fauna

Long-tailed macaques can be seen at the Reserve. Keen observers may spot the Common Treeshrew, the Flying Lemur and with a bit of luck, the extremely rare Pangolin.

The Dominant tree family is the Dipterocarpaceae. This important family yields the bulk of commercial tropical hardwood timber.

Around the edge of the clearings is a good place to view rattans, epiphytic ferns and climbers.

Activities

Nature tours, mountain biking, trekking.

For more information.
Call 462 9203



The Visitor Centre.

Babe Watch R(A)

by linda gob

It was a sizzling hot Saturday afternoon. Though the journey was long and winding, that did not deter more than 60 people from venturing to the spectacular site on 28 February 1998.

The stage was cleared. All of them came to gawk at one loving pair displaying their courtship behaviour, while another was building their love nest.

Oh no, pardon me. Please do not misunderstand. R(A)

in this case does not refer to the Restricted (Artistic) classification for films. It stands for Really Amazing. Kindly let me explain. The only babes these visitors were ogling at were the nesting herons of the Park.

Visitors were taken into the Park by our trained volunteers to look for the nesting Purple and Grey Herons. Along the route to the heronry, these participants got to find out more about these birds

through interesting analogies and educational games. They even had the chance to build nests and fish like the herons.

The highlight of the programme was seeing these beautiful herons for themselves in the act of building the nest, nestlings begging for food from the parents and parents feeding their chicks through regurgitation. One participant commented that it was an eye-opener and

hoped to attend more of such guided tours.

This HeronWatch'98 is one of our programmes leading up to the Park's 5th Anniversary celebrations in December. You are welcome to join our next programme on **21 March**. We hope that through these activities, you will be more aware and appreciative of their habitats. See you soon.

WORLD Wetlands Day

by linda gob

Forgive me?
World Wetlands Day?
Yes, there is such
a day.

The wetlands are now receiving so much positive reputation that the Standing Committee of RAMSAR Bureau has actually designated 2 February as World Wetlands Day to celebrate their existence.

It is a day where concerned governments, organisations and citizens seek to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits. This year saw more than 42 countries taking part in a

number of activities to celebrate World Wetlands Day. These ranged from guided tours of wetland sites to the launching of the Ramsar Strategic Plan for wetland centres.

Sungei Buloh Nature Park, being Singapore's first and only wetland park, will celebrate World Wetlands Day in 1999 and lots of events will be planned to commemorate this special day. So watch out for this space. 🦎

World
Wetlands
Day

MANGROVE MANIA

by linda gob

Are you interested to bring a part of the mangrove back home with you?

On 18 April, 30 May and 27 June 1998, you will be able to do just that at the Sungei Buloh Nature Park.

From 9am to 5pm, you can pick mangrove seedlings along Route 1 and pot them home.

To help you identify these seedlings, samples will be displayed and volunteer guides will be available to guide you along.

When these seedlings have grown to about 10cm tall, you may bring them back to the Park to plant them!

So what do you say?

The experience awaits you. 🦎

Photograph by John and Anne

WHY KNOWING THE TIDE TIME WILL MAKE YOUR TRIP TO THE PARK MORE ENJOYABLE

Time and Tide Waits for No Man

by linda gob

Knowing the times of the highest and lowest tides will enable you to catch the Park at its best.

What You Can See At Low Tide:

When the tide is low, the mangrove mud is exposed. This is the best time to spot the strange and wonderful creatures that live amongst the mangroves at the Mangrove Boardwalk. Look out for the well-camouflaged Crabs, Mudskippers and maybe even the Horseshoe Crab.

Low tide at the Main Bridge is also fun, as you will be able to spot the green mussels that live on the riverbed. See if you can catch them squirting water from their shells. Look out too for birds like the White-breasted Waterhen foraging for food on the exposed mud, near the riverbank.

What You Can See At High Tide:

During the migratory season (Sept to Mar), the best time to catch a glimpse of the migratory birds would be during high tide. This is because these birds, which feed on mudflat organisms are scattered all over the exposed mudflats in coastal areas outside the Park during low tide. However, during high tide, these feeding areas are flooded so they will fly into the Park where we always keep one out of our three ponds low for them. 🦋

Tide Table for May to August

What follows are the times for the lowest and highest tides for the Park. Use it to plan your visit to the Park.

<i>Tide Table</i>								
	May		June		July		August	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Day/Time								
1	0800	1600	1000	1700	1000	1700	1000	1700
2	0900	1700	1000	1800	1000	1800	1300	1800
3	1000	1800	1200	1800	1200	1800	1400	1900
4	1200	1900	1400	1900	1300	1900	1400	1900
5	1300	1900	1400	1900	1500	1900	1600	1100
6	1400	0800	1500	1000	1500	1000	1600	1100
7	1500	1000	1600	1000	1600	1100	0700	1200
8	1600	1000	1600	1100	0700	1200	0700	1200
9	1600	1100	0700	1200	0700	1200	0700	1300
10	1700	1100	0700	1200	0700	1300	0700	1300
11	1700	1200	0700	1300	0700	1300	0700	1400
12	0700	1200	0700	1300	0700	1400	0800	1500
13	0700	1300	0700	1400	0700	1400	0800	1500
14	0700	1400	0800	1500	0800	1500	0900	1600
15	0700	1400	0800	1600	0900	1600	1000	1700
16	0800	1500	0900	1600	0900	1600	1100	1800
17	0800	1600	1000	1700	1100	1800	1300	1800
18	0900	1700	1100	1800	1200	1800	1400	1000
19	1000	1800	1300	1900	1300	1900	1500	1100
20	1200	1900	1400	1900	1400	1000	1600	1100
21	1300	1900	1500	0900	1500	1100	0700	1200
22	1400	0900	1600	1000	1600	1100	0700	1200
23	1500	1000	1600	1100	0700	1200	0700	1300
24	1600	1100	0700	1200	0700	1300	0700	1300
25	1700	1100	0700	1300	0700	1300	0700	1400
26	0700	1200	0700	1400	0700	1400	0700	1400
27	0700	1300	0700	1500	0700	1400	0700	1400
28	0700	1400	0800	1500	0800	1500	0800	1500
29	0800	1500	0800	1600	0800	1600	0900	1500
30	0900	1600	1000	1600	0900	1600	1000	1600
31	0900	1700			0900	1700	1000	1700



I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR THE MONTHS OF DECEMBER AND JANUARY

by lim haw chuan

Visitors are always interested to know what animals have been spotted at the Park. This regular column will feature bird sightings at the Park. Not all the sightings are made by Park staff - some are incidental

reports made by visitors such as yourself.

If you spot an interesting bird the next time you visit the Park, and wish to make a record of it, feel free to fill up the Bird Sighting Record Book at the Ticketing Counter. Happy sighting!

Bird Sighting Record

During Census Count

Waders	Range *	
	December	January
Asiatic Dowitcher	0 - 2	0
Black-tailed Godwit	0 - 8	1 - 3
Common Greenshank	86 - 245	84 - 122
Common Redshank	5 - 235	0 - 96
Common Sandpiper	0 - 5	0 - 14
Curlew Sandpiper	102 - 549	3 - 170
Great Knot	0 - 4	0
Marsh Sandpiper	174 - 205	108 - 192
Mongolian Plover	0 - 95	2 - 11
Pacific Golden Plover	276 - 818	259 - 458
Ruff	0	0 - 1
Terek Sandpiper	0 - 4	0 - 1
Whimbrel	150 - 224	105 - 165

* The range refers to the lowest and highest number of birds sighted during the bird counts for the month.

Interesting Incidental Records by Park Staff

Bird	Location	
	December	January
Lesser Tree Duck	-	Freshwater Pond
Rusty-breasted Cuckoo	-	Mangrove Arboretum
Red-billed Blue Magpie	Visitors Centre	From Hide 2E
Chinese Pond Heron	-	From Hide 2E
Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	Sungei Buloh Besar	-

Interesting Birds Sighted by Visitors

- Ruff
- Grey-tailed Tattler
- Peregrine Falcon

Map to the Park



Opening Hours

7.30am to 7.00pm
on weekdays

7.00am to 7.00pm
on weekends

Sungei Buloh Nature Park
1 Neo Tiew Crescent
Singapore 718925

Tel: 795 7377
Fax: 795 7271

Admission

\$1.00 per adult

\$0.50 per child/
student/senior citizen

E-mail:

sbnp@pacific.net.sg

Website:

<http://www.sbnp.org>

Audio-visual Show

Mondays to Saturdays
9.00am, 11.00am,
1.00pm, 3.00pm,
5.00pm.

Sundays and
Public Holidays
Hourly from
9.00am to 5.00pm

Visitor Centre Facilities

- Theatrette
- Cafeteria
- Nature Gallery
- Nature Cove
- Toilet

Park Facilities

- Boardwalk
- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Bird Observation Hide
- Tower Hide
- Screen
- Outdoor Classroom
- Platform
- Shelter
- Binoculars
- Emergency Walkie-talkie

Getting There

Mondays to Saturdays:

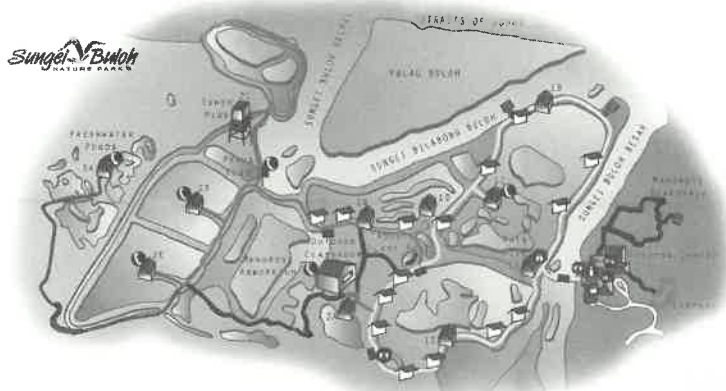
Board service
TIBS 925 from
Kranji MRT Station.

Alight at Kranji
Reservoir carpark
for a 15 min walk
to the Park.

Sundays and
Public Holidays:

TIBS 925 will stop at
the Park entrance.

Map of the Park



Would you like to have a Squirrel as your neighbour?



The Squirrel, often irresistibly cute and cuddly, eats a variety of food, but you can harm them if you feed them with our food. The co-existence between animals and man is delicately balanced. Nature, the environment and us – all part of the same web of life that is as fragile or as strong as our efforts to protect and care for it. Symphony 92.4 FM's Care-for-Nature series offers an insight into understanding, respecting and caring for nature. Tune in and find out how you can make the difference.

Care-for-Nature,
Mondays – Fridays, 12.20pm

Sponsored by:



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HongkongBank 