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EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE



Guarding Our Greenery

THE PRESERVATION OF SINGAPORE'S GREEN SPACES



Sustaining A Green City

RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS COMPEL SMARTER PLANNING AND SOLUTIONS



Living In Nature

OF OTTERS, PENGUINS AND ROBOTIC TREES

NATURE, new and old

The significant role
of flora and fauna
in Singapore life

Ed's Note

Dear readers,

Green is the theme for this issue of *Experience Singapore*. The 'green spaces' that make Singapore a 'City in a Garden', that is. Nature reserves in land-scarce Singapore account for 3,300 hectares of our land mass. Close to a tenth of the island state is devoted to green spaces. **Guarding our greenery** reveals why protecting and preserving these spaces is an important aim.

Living in nature gives an idea of the flora and fauna that abound in Singapore (who would have associated penguins and otters with this urbanised city-state?) as well as how policies and schemes enable this biodiversity to flourish.

The helping hands of many passionate players behind-the-scenes play a huge part too. **Nurturing nature** puts the spotlight on four such individuals, including a marine scientist and an arborist, who ensure that Singapore's green spaces get the protection and respect they deserve.

In planning for a green city, Singapore has to reconcile economic growth with a sustainable environment that includes green buildings and energy-efficient transportation. At the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit last September, Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan announced a new Sustainable Development Programme in support of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This programme kicked off with a five-day leadership course organised by the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) and the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence this May. In **Sustaining a green city**, read about the country's whole-of-government approach towards sustainable development, as well as the related programmes to be rolled out by SCP.

Happy reading!

Teo Lay Cheng

Director
Public Affairs Directorate
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SINGAPORE

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GUARDING OUR GREENERY

Protecting and preserving Singapore's green spaces has become an increasingly important aim even as its ultra-urban environment continues to grow.

TEXT BY ARTI MULCHAND



In the perpetual work-in-progress that is Singapore, towering skyscrapers jostle for space in the sky just as, on the ground, the networks that keep its 5.7-million population connected continue to grow. Yet, Singapore's green spaces continue to hold their own in this ultra-urban environment, and were accorded pride of place by Singapore's very first "gardener", former Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew, since the 1960s.

Despite its land scarcity, Singapore's nature reserves account for 3,300 hectares (ha) of the land mass and close to a tenth of the land is devoted to "green spaces", according to the Sustainable Blueprint 2015. Today, there are more than 300 public parks in Singapore, and about 50 per cent of the country is under vegetative cover. The island-wide Park Connector Network links parks, nature sites and housing estates. It is expected to grow from 300 km to 360 km by 2020. The island also has numerous walking trails and over 250 trees that have been accorded "Heritage Tree" status (see sidebar). →



Singapore Botanic Gardens.



Henderson Wave Bridge along the Southern Ridges.

HOLDING ON TIGHT

Over the last 15 years, efforts to preserve the country's green spaces have grown. A key aspect of Singapore's green efforts lies in nature conservation, with new pockets of nature and wildlife constantly emerging on the tiny island and off its shores.

Most recently, in February this year, the Kranji Marshes re-opened after an almost decade-long upgrading project by National Parks (NParks) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority. At 56.8 ha (about the size of 60 football fields), it is Singapore's largest freshwater marshland, and home to 54 species of butterflies, 33 species of dragonflies and more than 170 species of birds, including 22 threatened species. At its opening, Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs and National Development Mr Desmond Lee said: "In our dense urban landscape, nature conservation and greenery provision are key to the high-quality physical environment that we are so proud of."

But even away from the concrete jungle, there has been a desire to keep a firm hold on Singapore's natural riches, such as Chek Jawa on the island of Pulau Ubin, off the northeastern coast of Singapore. The mudflats – and the rustic Pulau Ubin island – continue to draw nature lovers, and the Government continues to work with the community to create new points of interest. For instance, a \$2 million, 2.1-ha Ubin Living Lab was launched by NParks this February to serve as an outdoor classroom for the island's history, nature and heritage. By year-end, it will include a mangrove arboretum showcasing 35 local mangrove species. In addition, the Wildlife Reserves Singapore, the parent company of Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari and the Singapore Zoo, currently supports close to 20 conservation projects.



WITHOUT THE GREENING EFFORT, SINGAPORE WOULD HAVE BEEN A BARREN, UGLY CITY

FORMER PRIME MINISTER MR LEE KUAN YEW



Kranji Marshes.



Boardwalk swamp coastline at Chek Jawa.

A DEEPENING CONCERN

Conservation efforts also run deep. Late last year, Singapore's first marine park, the Sisters' Islands Marine Park, was designated for the research and conservation of Singapore's marine life. It spans about 40 ha around Sisters' Islands, and includes the western reefs and seashore areas of Saint John's Island and Pulau Tekukor. Besides being home to 250 species of hard corals, nurseries have been created in the waters for marine organisms. Among them is the Neptune's Cup Sponge, which was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered off Singapore's coast in 2011.

Dr Karenne Tun, deputy director of the National Biodiversity Centre at NParks, said that some of the research by the centre indicates that the Sisters' Islands have the "potential of being the strongest source of reef for Singapore – which basically means, if we can improve the biodiversity here, it will be a place that seeds other areas". Intertidal guided walks are carried out twice a month, and there are even dive trails for experienced divers to get closer to Singapore's marine life.



Panoramic view of the aerial view from the main hide, in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

Photos: National Parks Board (Flame of the Forest, Tembusu, Damar Hitam Gajah), Getty Images, Shutterstock



Waterfall in Rain Forest, Jurong Bird Park.

NATURAL UPGRADES

Much effort has gone into ensuring that the appeal of Singapore's green spaces remains robust. The 74-ha Singapore Botanic Gardens, which became the country's first UNESCO Heritage Site last year, is noted for its role in pioneering cultivation techniques that made the rubber boom in 1900s possible*, as well as its tropical garden landscape. Established in 1859, it is home to the world's largest orchid display, and will add an Ethnobotany Garden to its treasures in 2017. The new garden will exhibit plants that serve various purposes in Southeast Asian cultures and show visitors how they are used by indigenous societies.

The 163-ha Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Singapore's oldest nature reserve established in 1883, is being restored in phases since September 2014. It is home to some 40 per cent of Singapore's flora and fauna, and more than 500 species of animals, including rare and native ones like the Singapore Freshwater Crab.

In addition, NParks has carved out nature trails that circle and traverse parks around the island as well as lush pockets, bringing visitors up close and personal to the flora and fauna. For example, the Southern Ridges, a 10-km stretch of connecting trails and bridges, links some of Singapore's most popular parks and peaks including Mount Faber Park, Kent Ridge Park and Labrador Nature Reserve. NParks also conducts guided walks and tours to make the discovery more meaningful.

New green pockets continue to be added as well. This year, Singapore announced its first "Forest Town" – Tengah, a 700-ha space that will be integrated with both the surrounding nature and the nearby Jurong Innovation District. Meanwhile, new nature parks like Thomson, Chestnut, Windsor and Springleaf serve to protect diversity while bringing people closer to nature.

It takes political will and a sustained effort to continue to make Singapore the distinct urban environment that it is. As Mr Lee Kuan Yew so famously put it in 2012, "Without the greening effort, Singapore would have been a barren, ugly city. There would have been a few trees, planted haphazardly here and there, but there would have been none of the planning or the care and maintenance that sustain our greenery today." ●



* It is estimated that 70 per cent of the world's entire latex production originated from the 11 rubber trees planted in the Gardens in 1877, according to Dr Nigel Taylor, Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

SINGAPORE'S HERITAGE TREES: WHERE ARE THEY?

Since 2001, more than 250 trees have been accorded "Heritage Tree" status. To qualify, a tree's girth must measure more than 5m, or it must have botanical, social, historical, cultural and aesthetic value. *Experience Singapore* locates eight prominent trees that are in the Heritage Tree Register.

1 ANGSANA (*Pterocarpus indicus*)

Esplanade Park

These five Angsanas are more popularly known by their dialect Hokkien name, "Gor Zhang Chiu Kar" (under the shade of five trees), thanks to the fact that the area was popular with dating couples between the 1960s and 1980s.

2 MADRAS THORN (*Pithecellobium dulce*)

Fort Canning's Fort Trail, just opposite the link to Clarke Quay

This Madras Thorn is Singapore's largest on record so far. It has a girth of 7.4m and has numerous Bird's Nest Ferns and other epiphytes growing on its branches. The tree gets its name from the pairs of spine-like stipules on its twigs.



3 FLAME OF THE FOREST (*Delonix regia*)

Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital, Serangoon Road

This holds the honour of being the oldest surviving tree planted by the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew in 1963. The umbrella-shaped deciduous tree, which can grow up to 20m high, gets its name from the bright scarlet flowers that cover its crown when it is in full bloom.



4 TEMBUSU (*Fagraea fragrans*)

Singapore Botanic Gardens, Lawn E

This 30m tall Tembusu is said to be over 200 years old, and is featured on Singapore's \$5 note. Its creamy-white flowers open during sunset and give off a sweet scent.

5 PENAGA LAUT (*Calophyllum inophyllum*)

Singapore Botanic Gardens, next to the Botany Centre Function Hall

The Gardens' Botany Centre was actually designed and built around this Penaga Laut, which is over 100 years old. *Calophyllum* means "beautiful leaf" in Greek.

6 TEAK TREE (*Tectona grandis*)

Singapore Botanic Gardens, along Office Ring Road, Botany Centre

This 15m tree, with a girth of 2.3m, dates back to 1884 and was first recorded in 1927. The tree has flourished due to its pest- and water-resistant high-quality timber.

7 RAIN TREE (*Samanea saman*)

Singapore Botanic Gardens, along Office Ring Road, Botany Centre

The 22 Rain Trees here make up the largest number of Heritage trees on a single avenue. The trees' leaflets fold up both on rainy days and at night, and flowers resemble pink tassels.

8 PEREPAT (*Sonneratia alba*)

Pulau Ubin (view from restored jetty outside House No. 1)

The two large Perepat trees are the only two mangrove trees listed in the Heritage Tree register. They spend a fair amount of time half-submerged in seawater.

9 DAMAR HITAM GAJAH (*Shorea gibbosa*)

Changi, Along Netheravon Road and Turnhouse Road

This magnificent Damar Hitam Gajah – probably one of the last few standing in Singapore – can grow to a height of more than 30m and produces commercially-valuable timber. It has a cauliflower-like tree crown and its fruits typically look like shuttles with two to five vanes (wings).



SUSTAINING A GREEN CITY

Resource constraints compel smarter planning and solutions.

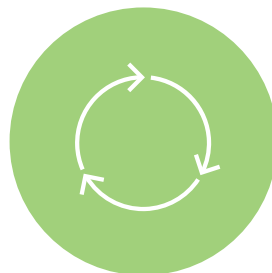


Looking at Singapore today, one might find it hard to imagine the clean, green and blue urban landscape as once filthy and polluted. Steered by a pragmatic approach to balance economic development and environmental conservation, Singapore has since come a long way as a city in a garden. Green policies and sound policy implementation are geared towards environmental sustainability.

WHAT GREENING A NATION MEANS

Greening a nation is not just about planting more trees. It is also about being innovative and resourceful at reconciling economic growth with a sustainable environment comprising green buildings, green spaces for recreation, eco-habitats and energy-efficient transportation. Take skyrise greening for example – Singapore is at the forefront of this vertical greenery movement where walls and rooftops are designed to accommodate foliage. In fact, we are integrating whole townships with greenery. Singapore's latest public housing estate in Tengah will be planned as a "Forest Town". In land-scarce urbanised Singapore, skyrise greening helps improve air quality, cool our surroundings and offers aesthetic benefits.

← Gardens by the Bay, a 101-ha green space, is set in the heart of the city.





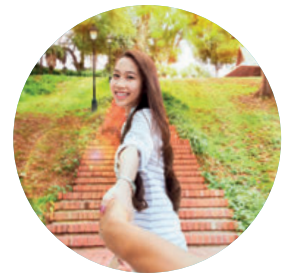
✦ Tengah, Singapore's 24th public housing township, will be planned as a 'Forest Town'.



SINGAPORE'S SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY BUILDING

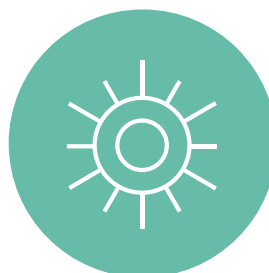
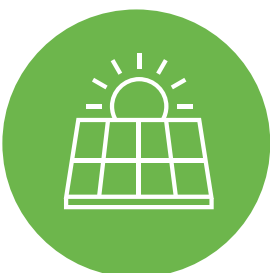
Last September, at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York, Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan announced a new Sustainable Development Programme in support of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Capacity Programme kicked off with a five-day leadership course organised by the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) and the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence in May, on the theme of the 2030 Agenda that also highlighted Singapore's whole-of-government approach towards sustainable development. Come July 2016, the SCP will partner the Centre for Liveable Cities to hold a leadership programme on urban governance in conjunction with the World Cities Summit.

Singapore has been promoting sustainable development long before the term became fashionable. The SCP continues to roll out programmes on energy efficiency, environmental management, climate change adaptation strategies and related topics to share Singapore's development experience in greening and sustainable development with our friends from around the world. As Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman said during the Committee of Supply Debate in early April, we will deepen these efforts by responding to new training requests that arise from the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change.



Global warming and climate change are accelerating the challenges for many developing countries. At the same time, we see new opportunities for positive change. With the advent of new technologies and civil society activism, the SCP is exploring Public-Private Partnerships with Singapore businesses and NGOs to complement our technical assistance and capacity building efforts. We remain committed to building a more eco-friendly and liveable environment for everyone. ●

✦ Bedok Reservoir Park in the eastern part of Singapore surrounds a 88-ha reservoir and is popular among joggers and water sports enthusiasts.



→ The Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park is a lush 153-acre urban park along the banks of a former canal with lawns, walking tracks and playground.
↓ A family of otters has made their home at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park.

FRISKY OTTERS AND WADDLING PENGUINS ARE VERY MUCH A PART OF LIFE IN WIRED-UP SINGAPORE.

TEXT BY
ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN



LIVING IN NATURE

BLUE AND GREEN VEINS

Singapore's network of waterways and reservoirs are key to its water supply. In 2006, PUB, the national water agency, embarked on a groundbreaking programme to transform these water bodies into picturesque rivers and lakes for the community to enjoy. Since then, more than 30 waterways have been transformed under the Active, Beautiful & Clean Waters programme with breathtaking results: dingy concrete canals have given way to gently meandering rivers that support a host of flora and fauna, bringing Singaporeans closer to nature. The programme's flagship development at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park is now home to a romp of smooth-coated otters which have appeared in Sir David Attenborough's *Wild City*, a documentary about wildlife in Singapore.

There is also a 300 km network of park connectors, which are trails linking the island's parks and nature reserves. Residents can easily get from one green space to another by foot or bicycle. By the end of this decade, the network is expected to stretch 360 km – nearly twice as long as Singapore's coastline.

Park connectors are not just for humans, too. Opened in 2014, the Eco-Link@BKE provides a safe crossing for wildlife travelling between Singapore's two largest nature reserves: the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, which are split by a busy expressway. The eco-link's most frequent visitors are pangolins, civets and squirrels.

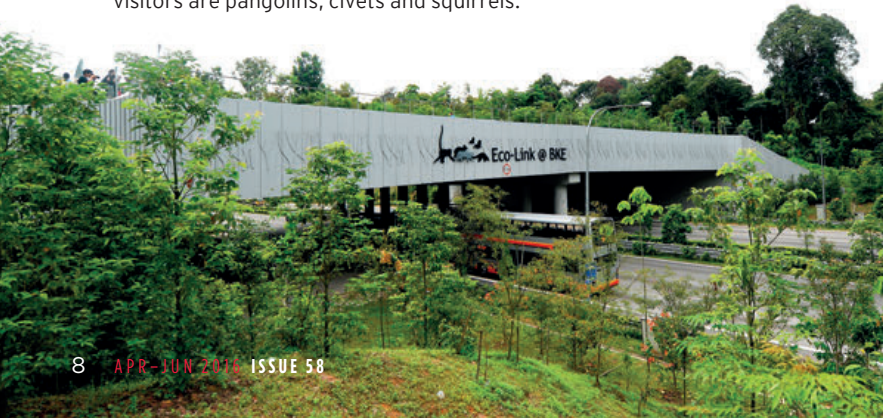


→ The Flower Dome offers a peek at the world's flora.

↓ The Eco-Link@BKE is a life-saving bridge for wildlife.

DOMES OF FLOWERS

The 101-ha Gardens by the Bay offers a chance to get up close to the rest of the world's flora without having to leave the country. The attraction features cooled conservatories and the world's largest glass greenhouse. The former simulates both the cool and moist climate of mountains and the semi-arid nature of Sub-Saharan Africa. The latter, dubbed the Flower Dome, hosts seasonal floral displays and a permanent exhibition of temperate flowers. In March this year, cherry blossom trees were flown in from Japan, while Dutch tulips were displayed in April. The Gardens are also famed for its 'Supertrees'. Each of these 18 structures is a vertical garden covered in ferns and tropical flowering climbers. They emulate the ecological processes of real trees by absorbing solar energy, which they store and use to light up at night.





CROWNS OF GREEN

Land-scarce Singapore has turned to creative ways to stay green, by introducing vertical and rooftop gardens island-wide. Besides adding to a building's aesthetic value, these gardens also improve energy efficiency. For example, the Tree House condominium, home to the world's largest vertical garden, saves more than S\$500,000 in water and energy costs each year. Its 24-storey green wall acts as a natural filter, keeping out pollutants and carbon dioxide. The wall reduces heat absorption and the amount of energy needed to cool indoor areas.

WILD WONDERLAND

Singapore has four wildlife-themed attractions. On the western end of the island is the Jurong Bird Park, Asia's largest avian attraction. Home to more than 8,000 birds from 600 species, the park is also home to one of the world's largest walk-in aviaries, inhabited by nearly 600 birds. The park has a successful breeding programme, and has recorded the world's first hatching of the black hornbill in captivity. The stars are undeniably its 200 penguins which occupy the world's second-largest penguin enclosure. Singapore also has the world's first nocturnal zoo, the Night Safari. Opened in 1994, it is one of the Republic's most popular attractions. The animals – among them giraffes and rhinoceroses – are made visible by lighting that resembles moonlight.



↑ Penguins flourish at the Singapore Bird Park.

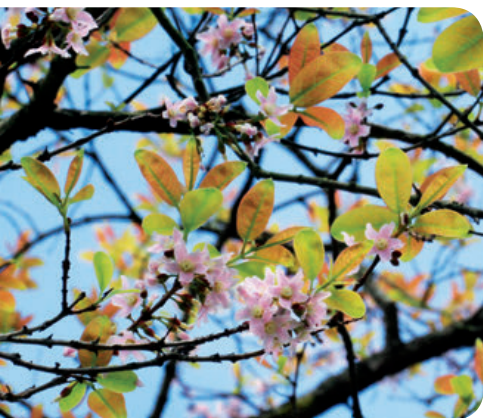


A COMMUNITY OF GARDENS

Nine in ten Singaporeans live in high-rise apartments, which means that they may not be able to flex their green thumbs. The Community in Bloom programme provides spaces for such residents to garden, and fosters bonds among the young and old. Since its inception in 2005, the programme has worked with more than 20,000 residents to develop nearly 1,000 community gardens, which produce flowers, fruit and vegetables. The produce are often cooked and enjoyed as a community at garden parties, combining the passion for gardening with Singaporeans' love of food.



↑ Rain trees have a distinctive shape.
↓ The Mempat tree has been dubbed Singapore's 'cherry blossoms'.



TONNES OF TREES

Singaporeans share their home with a multitude of trees – about two million of them, to be exact. This number grows every year, thanks to the annual Tree Planting Day in November (the month was chosen as it marks the beginning of the rainy season, thereby minimising the need for watering). This is when schools and interest groups plant and water saplings around the island. Each is carefully selected: trees with large crowns, like the Angsana and Rain Tree, are often planted next to roads to provide shade, while those with visually pleasant blooms beautify parks and gardens. The Mempat Tree, for example, is a common sight around housing estates and is well-loved for its light pink flowers – dubbed Singapore's 'cherry blossoms'.

UNIQUELY SINGAPOREAN

THESE TWO CREATURES ARE AMONG THOSE THAT CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN SINGAPORE.



Spanning just 3 cm, the **Singapore freshwater crab** (*Johora singaporensis*) hide under rocks at the edge of streams. They are a critically-endangered species and there is a conservation strategy in place to protect these tiny, but ecologically-important creatures.



A recurring character in regional folk tales, the **lesser mouse deer** stands at 45 cm. These shy and nocturnal creatures can be found in Singapore's Central Catchment Reserve. In Asian folk tales, they are often portrayed as witty animals which are able to outsmart larger creatures. ●



Anbarasi Boopal of ACRES.

NURTURING **NATURE**

Their passion for plants, animals and marine life makes a big difference to enhancing wild Singapore.



Dr Karenne Tun of NParks.

DR KARENNE TUN

DIRECTOR (COASTAL AND MARINE), NPARKS

When the opportunity arose in October 2013 for Dr Karenne Tun to lead the NParks Coastal and Marine team, and establish the Sisters' Islands Marine Park, she could not help but dive in.

"It was too good to pass up," said the coral reef biologist, who graduated from the National University of Singapore. Dr Tun has been involved in ecology, conservation and management for over 20 years. "I would be able to apply my knowledge and experience to establishing a Marine Park that could be a model for others around the world, and create a refuge for our marine biodiversity."

Dr Tun has been fascinated by the sea since her first Open Water diving course in 1990. The more she dived, the more her love for life underwater turned into concern. Today, she and her team of 11 safeguard Singapore's sea life from both natural and man-made impacts, investigating wild fish deaths and studying how corals and other marine life respond to changes in temperature and water quality.

Managing the 40-ha Sisters' Islands Marine Park, Singapore's first Marine Park, keeps the team busy. Plans were recently announced to transform the islands into the heart of the country's marine life conservation efforts. These plans include Singapore's first sea turtle hatchery and a see-through floating pontoon.

With over 250 species of hard coral, Singapore's waters are home to a third of the world's coral population.

While she is based at the National Biodiversity Centre, Dr Tun gets back into the blue whenever she can. "The most fulfilling part of my job is giving voice to our voiceless stakeholders – the coastal and marine environment," she said.

ANBARASI BOOPAL

DIRECTOR OF ACRES WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTRE AND CRIME UNIT

Ms Anbarasi Boopal first took a walk on the wild side as a volunteer at the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) in 2005.

The 33 year-old, who grew up in India, came to Singapore in July 2006 to do her Masters in Environmental Management at the National University of Singapore. Her initial stint at ACRES was meant to be short and temporary, prompted by horror at a plain-pouched hornbill and Indian star tortoise kept openly as pets.

Just over a decade later, Ms Boopal, known as Anbu to most, is Director of its Wildlife Rescue Centre and Crime Unit Director – with no plans to leave. “My work here in animal care and rescue is far from done,” said Ms Boopal. She even lives in a room at the centre, located in the west of Singapore. This means Ms Boopal is around even when she is not pulling a 32-hour shift with her six team members.

The team responds to tip-offs on illegal wildlife trade and conducts rescue operations, handling an average of 700 cases a month. The wildlife they rescue range from birds and pangolins to snakes, tortoises and turtles. ACRES provides temporary care and shelter for rescued animals, and has more than 190 reptiles in its open-air enclosures.

Beyond animal rescues, ACRES’s larger purpose, said Ms Boopal, is advocating and catalysing a sustainable animal protection movement in Singapore and Asia. “A successful operation is not just an animal rescued in time, but also when I get the opportunity to encourage the public to foster respect and compassion for animals. We want to do all we can to educate people on lifestyle choices that are environmentally-friendly, and which do not involve the abuse of animals,” she said.

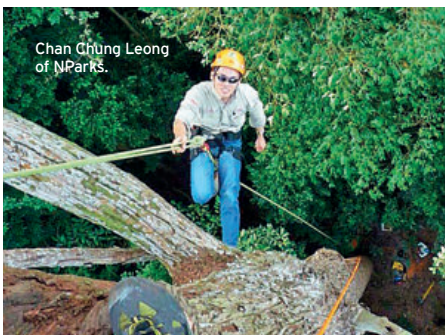
CHAN CHUNG LEONG

DIRECTOR (STREETSCAPE), NPARKS

It really should not come as a surprise that Mr Chan Chung Leong spends half of each work day up a tree.

A root around the car boot of the 38 year-old arborist turns up a foldable bicycle, pruning shears, pruning saws, a climbing helmet, and high visibility vests – which means he is ever ready to get into the thick of things.

His job involves checking on a tree’s roots, trunk, branches and crown, and knowing just when to intervene to alleviate the stress a tree could be going through – through pruning, fertilising or simply removing the tree from its environment.



Evelyn Eng-Lim
of Green Circle
Eco Farm.



I HOPE MORE PEOPLE LEARN
THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING
IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY...
NATURE IS NOT TO BE FEARED

MS EVELYN ENG-LIM, GREEN CIRCLE ECO FARM

EVELYN ENG-LIM

FARMER AND FOUNDER OF GREEN CIRCLE ECO FARM

She was a chemical analyst, and he, a retired accountant. But Madam Evelyn Eng-Lim and her husband Lim Tian Soo had other dreams.

In 1999, Ms Eng quit her job and Mr Lim came out of retirement to become full-time farmers, starting the Green Circle Eco Farm – a 2.2-ha organic farm in north-western Singapore. It is also their retirement home.

The duo first met when Mdm Eng volunteered at The Nature Society (Singapore) where Mr Lim was a member. Today, the two work alongside three employees and an army of bio-organisms – the farm is run on organic principles and is chemical and pesticide-free – and tend to vegetables like long beans and lady’s fingers, and fruits such as papaya, banana and mango. Even before “organic” became trendy, these have been grown at the couple’s farm without the use of chemical fertilisers or pesticides.

It has not been easy, said Mdm Eng. Much of the work has been hands on, from digging a pond to capture rain water for irrigation, to creating compost using branches, leaves, discarded soya beans and mung beans.

The farm is opened regularly for educational tours, impressing on everyone, from pre-schoolers to corporations, the need for clean, sustainable living, healthy eating and environmental conservation.

“I hope more people learn the importance of living in a sustainable way,” said Mdm Eng. “Nature is not to be feared.” ●

“Tree climbing is necessary during the inspection, assessment and pruning of a tree crown, where there is no means for mechanised access,” said Mr Chan. Such an exertion means he has to stay in shape and keep his climbing skills sharp. “I try to climb whenever possible, it is a good form of exercise.”

Mr Chan, 38, joined NParks straight out of Ngee Ann Polytechnic in 2003. He later did his degree in Horticultural Science at the University of Queensland and his Masters in Forestry at Yale University.

In his day-to-day work, Mr Chan leads a team of about 45 arborists and horticulturists who manage the planting, inspection and maintenance of greenery in the eastern part of Singapore. NParks’ arborists take care of approximately 1.5 million trees in Singapore in all. He also coordinates with private organisations and government agencies to integrate greenery with the urban environment.

It is a job that gives him immense satisfaction. “Given Singapore’s fast pace of development, we are doing a good job balancing between urbanisation and conservation,” said Mr Chan.

Supertrees at
Gardens by
the Bay.

