

Nature Society (Singapore)
PRESS MATERIALS
June 21st, 2010.

ONGOING PROJECTS

What other projects is Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS) involved in as well as the Butterfly Trail at Orchard? Who are they collaborating with? How are these projects funded, where necessary?

(1) Kranji Reservoir (Marsh) Adoption From 2008. – Habitat management and restoration; community participation and education. Funded by donation from Bloomberg organization and NEA-organized CEO Run at Semakau Landfill.

The Nature Society adopted the area of the URA-designated Kranji Marshes Park under the PUB Water-bodies Adoption Scheme in November 2008. This Adoption Schemes falls under the ABC Waters Programme of the PUB, which embodies the Principle of the 3Ps (the Private, the Public and the People). The Society, as one of the People stakeholders, is carrying out the ecological objectives of the ABC Waters programme by taking care of the Kranji Marshes. The designated Marshes area is located along the north-western shore of the Kranji Reservoir, south of the Kranji Sancturay Golf Course. The area in total is estimated at 39 hectares, with adjacent woodland, and is a major freshwater marshland habitat in Singapore harbouring a rich biodiversity in terms of its birdlife and butterflies.

The Society has, as its initial activity, concentrated on opening up a much clogged pond in order to allow water birds such as the Lesser Whistling Duck and the Common Moorhen to find their preferred habitat. This restoration of the pond as an open water habitat, has also involved creating two small mud islands for birds. Whilst some of the clearing has to be done by machine, groups of volunteers, including some from Bloomberg, are involved in clearing unwanted vegetation from the edges and in heaping it up for transfer to a local organic farm as compost and mulch material. Success has already been registered by sightings of Cotton Pygmy Goose and of Common Moorhen at the pond in early 2010.

Volunteers from the various NSS Special Interest Groups have also engaged in base-line surveys of all types of flora and fauna at the site, and will monitor over the years to see changes. Volunteers also lead regularly monthly walks for members of the public from Neo Tiew Lane to the marshes and onto the bund along the reservoir, as well as walks conducted by the Special Interest Groups for NSS members. Publications of informational booklets on the area are targeted.

The overall project has been supported by sponsorships from Bloomberg Organization and from the NEA-organized CEO Run at Semakau in 2008.

SLA Bird watching map 2010 – community information

The Bird Group of NSS was selected by the Singapore Land Authority as one of 16 pioneer public, private and NGO sectors to provide precise location maps for this online information which covers a range of topics such as public services, land query, entertainment, family and culture as well as nature. This was a great opportunity for the Society to reach out to the public in promoting nature appreciation and bird watching. Eco-tourists will also find it a breeze to get to some of the best nature sites and to know the kind of habitats and wildlife to expect there.

Local birdwatching hotspots are grouped under various habitats. A click on a selected habitat, e.g. grassland, will open up a list of hotspots to choose from. Clicking on a particular hotspot will produce maps and directions to go there, and more clicks will open up more information and photographs on the areas and flora and fauna.

Horseshoe Crab Rescue & Research Programme From 2006. NSS Member, school and volunteer activity on rescue and research.

This 4 year old initiative started as a conservation effort to rescue Horseshoe Crabs entrapped in deployed and abandoned fishing nets at the Mandai mudflats. It then evolved to basic research and on to more sophisticated research to improve our understanding of this little-known ancient mariner, the Horseshoe Crab, which is as old as the dinosaurs.

Over the four years, we have had students from secondary schools, international schools and trainee teachers from NIE collaborating in rescue and research on the Mandai mudflats. This activity is a real immersion in "muddy hands-on and legs in mud" and "out of the comfort zone" search and, if necessary, rescue work. We introduce and train volunteers in the discipline of proper handling of the Horseshoe Crabs, measuring, identifying, marking, recording, releasing them back into the mangroves and recapture techniques. They may also be involved and assist with data analysis to help determine population size and density. A census in 2009 all around Singapore made a first attempt to determine which were the areas where Horseshoe Crabs could be found to create a preliminary map all the locations in Singapore where there are sizable colonies of our 2 species of Horseshoe Crabs and to use this as a baseline for a yearly census. A related interview activity with local fishermen also increased knowledge of horseshoe crab activities.

Our mission is to better understand the Horseshoe Crab, create awareness of their importance to the mangrove habitat and devise strategies, education and otherwise, to prevent their decline and, perhaps, inevitable march to extinction. We are now liaising with an International Horseshoe Conservation Organization based in the US. Proposed

research which is looking for funding will monitor the movements of Horseshoe Crabs from Mandai mudflats in the Straits of Johor.

Initial research & rescue funded by Caterpillar Foundation.

NSS Participation in the annual International Coastal Cleanup Singapore (ICCS) annually in September. Habitat cleaning.

NSS pioneered the organization of the ICCS, part of the international programme organized by Ocean Conservancy, which has now been located at the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, NUS. The ICCS involves mangrove cleanups and beach cleanups on two successive Saturdays in September, with all trash collected itemized, categorized and weighted, and the information sent to the Ocean Conservancy organization to be part of the international documentation. Focusing on the same area as the Horseshoe Crab Rescue & Research Project, NSS now clears up and documents the trash collected at the Mandai Mudflats annually on the nearest convenient Saturday afternoon to ICCS dates and contributes the information on garbage collected to ICCS and Ocean Conservancy data.

In 2009, 75 participants worked in the sticky and slippery environment on the afternoon of 5th September at low tide to clear from the rich biodiversity habitat 33 bags of litter and many assorted items too large to bag. In all the items of trash collected weighed 600.5 kg, although unfortunately this did not cover the full amount of trash on the mudflats. Tide times only allow a small window of time for collection. In 2010, the NSS team will utilize the low tide time between 4pm and 7 pm on Saturday September 25th for their participation in the ICCS.

Sungei Pandan Habitat Creation with SWCDC One Million Tree Planting Programme. 2009 - Habitat creation for increase of wildlife.

Working with the Southwest Community Development Council (SWCDC) One Million Tree Planting Programme, funded by Borneo Motors, and in collaboration with PUB and NParks, the Bird Group, Butterfly Interest Group and Plant Group of NSS have contributed ecological knowledge on indigenous plants that will support local bird and butterfly life in order to create new habitats along the Sungei Pandan corridor. It aims to create or expand existing patches of woodland, mangroves and riverine habitats and fill gaps to create a wildlife corridor along the river from the upper reaches at Ghim Moh to the lower reaches at Jalan Buroh. The various NSS Special Interest Groups have also made efforts to source or grow the necessary plants for planting and taken part in the physical planting activity as well as maintaining monitor surveys afterwards. These surveys will continue in future years so as to provide information for similar projects elsewhere in Singapore. The Sungei Pandan project was officially launched in terms of the planting activity on 8 January 2010 by Dr. Amy Khor, Mayor of the SWCDC.