

# HAPPY HANDS

Building An Endearing Home

## Wild about NATURE

*"The most rewarding part of working for nature is meeting the fascinating community of people passionate about Singapore's natural heritage."*

Ms Ria Tan  
Nature Enthusiast

Fun and discovery at the MND Family volunteer leaders workshop and learning journey

URA volunteer docent Ms Tan Yen Fong on sharing Singapore's stories

How NParks' Citizen Science Programme lets the community participate in monitoring our biodiversity



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Image: Clarence Lee

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## SHARE A STORY

Share with us a story today! We would love to hear your inspiring stories and personal journeys about volunteering with the MND Family. Whether it is in the form of an article, an illustration or a photograph, we welcome your contributions. Do drop us a note at [happyhands@mnd.gov.sg](mailto:happyhands@mnd.gov.sg)!

## FEEDBACK

Tell us how we are doing! Did we meet your expectations? Do you have suggestions that could help us make this newsletter interesting and relevant to you? Let us know via [happyhands@mnd.gov.sg](mailto:happyhands@mnd.gov.sg)!



Image: National Parks Board

**Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister of State for National Development  
Mr Desmond Lee with participants at the launch of the NParks Garden Bird Count on 16 April 2015**

Dear Friends of the MND Family,

Since joining MND, I have had the pleasure of meeting many individuals and groups who share my interest and concern for issues such as conserving our natural environment, protecting our heritage, and improving animal welfare. Many of you dedicate your time and effort to make a difference in various aspects of our work at the MND Family. Whenever a meaningful project comes up, I am heartened by the response from the community in stepping up to help shape how we use and share our spaces, now and for the future. For example, by spreading the word on eco-living in our heartlands, helping to monitor and conserve our rich biodiversity, and envisioning the future of places that we all hold dear, such as Pulau Ubin and the Rail Corridor.

I recently joined some of MND Family volunteer leaders on a learning journey around the Marina Bay area, where I got to meet some of you. I also managed to catch up with some others, such as Mdm Salbiah, who started off as a Community In Bloom volunteer with NParks in 2005 and is now also a Master Grower with AVA where she continues to share her gardening interest and skills with others. This is the advantage when we start to organise ourselves as a network of volunteers in the larger MND Family, because then the field is larger, more diverse and the potential to make a bigger impact is also higher.

Another recent highlight in my calendar was Ubin Day, which would not have been possible without the passion and energy of more than 400 volunteers from 34 organising groups who created a wonderful programme for visitors to explore Pulau Ubin and discover its amazing biodiversity and heritage. Special thanks must go to Ria and Min Lin, members of the Friends of Ubin Network, for coordinating Ubin Day 2015.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life, but one commonality that strikes me is the exuberance and commitment that you have for the causes that you help to champion. To all of you, my sincerest thanks for sharing your passion with us. The MND Family and indeed Singapore are better for it and I hope you will continue to support our programmes and help make them even better for everyone to enjoy.

Yours sincerely,

Desmond Lee  
Minister of State for National Development  
Chairman of the MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network



## SPECIAL FEATURE

### A Family outing

Fun and discovery at the MND Family volunteer leaders workshop and learning journey



Image: Clarence Lee

Volunteer leaders from programmes across the MND Family came together for a day of learning and discovery

On 16 May 2015, 38 volunteer leaders from across the Ministry of National Development (MND) Family came together for a day of learning and networking during the inaugural MND Family Volunteer Leaders Workshop and Learning Journey to the Singapore River and Marina Bay.

Participants included volunteer leaders from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) Master Growers programme, Building and Construction Authority (BCA)'s Build it Green Club Executive Council, Housing & Development Board (HDB)'s Heartland Ambassador and Friends of SPHERE programmes, National Parks Board (NParks)' Conservation and Community In Bloom volunteer programmes as well as Friends of Gardens by the Bay (GB) volunteer programme.

#### “Being an Effective Volunteer Leader”

The day began with a morning workshop conducted by Ms Lam Moy Yin, an experienced trainer and consultant in volunteer management. Participants discussed their role as volunteer leaders and gained insights into communication styles. They also learnt how to deal with conflicts while managing other volunteers.

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It was an eye-opener for me. My take home message is mainly ‘DISC’, which is very useful when we have to manage different people.

**Peggy Tan**  
**HDB Heartland Ambassador**

The workshop gave us an excellent opportunity to learn from fellow volunteers leaders from different backgrounds. We also have a better appreciation of the Singapore success stories and are motivated to continue our strong participation and do even better in our respective volunteering endeavours.

**Tan Teck Chye**  
**Volunteer with Pulau Ubin**

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**HDB Heartland Ambassador  
Ong Qi Yuan shared about effective  
ways to manage youth volunteers**



**GB volunteer leader Amy Hoon  
making notes of her group's  
discussion on the role of a  
volunteer leader**



**Community In Bloom volunteer  
Hamzah Osman could not resist  
harvesting from the curry leaf tree  
at the MND sky garden!**

### Learning Journey to Singapore River and Marina Bay

Minister of State for National Development Mr Desmond Lee joined the volunteer leaders in the afternoon for a tea session and learning journey to the Singapore River and Marina Bay. Aboard the Singapore River Explorer, they learnt about the vision, challenges and planning behind the transformation of the area into the distinctive new downtown today. Disembarking at the Marina Barrage, participants learnt how the barrage came to be designed as a vibrant recreational space beyond just serving a functional purpose.

As the programme came to a close, here is what some of the volunteer leaders had to say:



**Volunteer leaders with Minister of State for National  
Development Mr Desmond Lee on a learning journey  
around the Marina Bay area**

“

The boat ride down Singapore River complete with a good guide's commentary felt like history coming alive. The Marina Barrage tour showcasing our advancement and fruit of many talented people's hard work completed the entire learning experience for me. I am so proud to be a Singaporean!

**Genevieve Chan**  
**Volunteer Guide with Gardens by the Bay**

The MND volunteer leaders' day out was thoroughly fulfilling. Most of us are quite immersed with the history and culture of Singapore with the guide work we do, but this offered a unique forward-looking aspect to how Singapore has evolved and is evolving.

**San Lo**  
**Volunteer with Fort Canning Park**

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## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Wild about nature

Ms Ria Tan, creator of the popular website [WildSingapore.com](http://WildSingapore.com), wants people to get to know and cherish the wild places in Singapore



The most rewarding part of working for nature is meeting the fascinating community of people passionate about Singapore's natural heritage.

*Ms Ria Tan  
Nature Enthusiast*

#### What sparked your passion for Singapore's natural heritage?

My first real taste of wild nature in Singapore was as a volunteer guide at Sungei Buloh. Through the volunteers and people at Buloh, I heard about Chek Jawa, about six months before it was originally planned to be reclaimed. I first visited Chek Jawa in mid-2001, and fell under her spell. From then on, I became more involved in guiding at Chek Jawa and other nature awareness programmes.

#### You have volunteered with NParks for 15 years now. Tell us about your collaborations on projects such as TeamSeagrass and the Comprehensive Marine Biodiversity Survey.

I helped set up TeamSeagrass together with Siti Maryam Yaakub in collaboration with the NParks National Biodiversity Centre and international Seagrass-Watch. The Team collects data on the seagrass and submits them to NParks and Seagrass-Watch to aid in better understanding and managing of Singapore's seagrasses.

The Comprehensive Marine Biodiversity Survey, also known as the Mega Marine Survey, was launched in 2010. Led by the NParks National Biodiversity Centre, it is the first such survey undertaken to take stock of Singapore's marine biodiversity and it brought together the larger community of experts from tertiary institutions, NGOs and individual enthusiasts. I helped manage the social media platforms for the Survey and online registration for volunteers.

#### What are some of the most rewarding experiences you have had as a nature advocate?

There is nothing as exhilarating as seeing our very own wild creatures going about their daily lives, as they have done for millions of years, and learning more about them. From birds to jeweled insects, intriguing plants, magical corals, comical crabs... the list is endless.



TeamSeagrass volunteers amidst vast seagrass meadows at Cyrene Reef, Singapore. Seagrasses are an important source of food for animals and seagrass meadows are important nurseries for marine life.



What is even more rewarding is sharing this excitement with others; the joy of introducing a child or child-at-heart to our wild places and witnessing their fascination and appreciation. My favourite way is to share such knowledge with them personally during a guided walk. Another way is through photographs, which capture the wondrous qualities of our flora and fauna. I have recently started uploading many of my photos to [WildSingapore Flickr](#) for teachers and nature educators to use. I also hope that [WildSingapore.com](#) can be a one-stop resource for those who want to learn about our wild places and do more for them.

But the most rewarding part of working for nature is meeting the fascinating community of people passionate about Singapore's natural heritage. Just like the rainforest or coral reef community, these "wild people" are just as varied, colourful and interesting. Many are well-camouflaged as "ordinary" people, but surprise with their true wild nature!

**This year was your second time coordinating Ubin Day. What are your thoughts on working with the agencies, organising groups and individuals who have contributed to it in their own ways?**

Ubin Day's key significance to me is in providing a kampung-style platform for agencies, groups and people who care about Pulau Ubin to work together in a positive atmosphere, thereby establishing trust and goodwill among all parties.

Many individuals volunteered as Friends of Ubin Network (FUN) Ambassadors. Various groups also organised events to celebrate Ubin, show others how to appreciate the island, and make a difference for Ubin issues important to them. I am grateful for the wonderful support provided by NParks for Ubin Day (both last year and this year) as it would not have been possible without them.

MOS Desmond Lee, who spearheads The Ubin Project, has always given his time, advice and support to us. The organising groups were especially touched that he took the time to meet them individually on both days, join in for their activities and hear from them about the issues that they are passionate about. Many volunteers said his thank-you meals were the highlight of their Ubin Day experience!



**More than 400 volunteers from 34 organising groups set up booths and organised activities for Ubin Day 2015.**



**The kayaking activities proved to be popular among Ubin Day 2015 participants.**

**What advice would you share with others about how they too can contribute to protecting our biodiversity?**

One person CAN make a difference - simply explore, express and act! There are many wild places that anyone can explore, from un-manicured parts of a park to wilder grasslands, sandy shores on mainland as well as wilder offshore islands. Express what you have seen by sharing it on social media. Bring your friends, family and co-workers along with you on your next trip. And if you are interested to do more, there are many volunteer opportunities with various groups who would be happy to welcome sincere and reliable volunteers.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Discovering Singapore's stories

Ms Tan Yen Fong's eye-opening encounter with Marina Bay's transformation sparked her desire to volunteer as a docent with the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)



I want to share Singapore's story with the next generation and hopefully inspire confidence and pride in our young.

**Ms Tan Yen Fong**  
*Volunteer Docent, Singapore City Gallery*

#### What first motivated you to volunteer with URA?

I first toured the [Singapore City Gallery](#) with my officemates in 2012. I was impressed by the work of URA and our government's foresight in strategic planning of our limited land. When I saw the Marina Bay Model at the Gallery, I was amazed by how much Singapore's skyline has evolved over the years from the time when the Singapore River was "The Smelly River" to us kids. I remembered reading in the papers

when I was an undergraduate about plans to reclaim the Marina Bay area but it did not hit me what that meant until I saw the Model and later, the actual view from Level 57 of Marina Bay Sands Hotel! I made up my mind to return as a docent in 2013 after retirement, as I want to share Singapore's story with the next generation and hopefully inspire confidence and pride in our young. This is my small way of giving back to society.



On her first visit to the Singapore City Gallery, Ms Tan Yen Fong was inspired by the strategic planning behind the remarkable transformation of the Marina Bay area.



### **Tell us more about what you do as a docent at the Singapore City Gallery.**

As a docent at the Gallery, I approach walk-in visitors, both locals and foreigners, and offer to share how we strategically manage our challenges as a city-state, riding on the various exhibits around the Gallery. I also share with them my personal stories, growing up in Singapore. Some became so interested that they would stay with me for an hour to hear Singapore's amazing story of transformation! At other times, I bring groups around by appointment.

### **What is the most common question that you have gotten from visitors?**

Well, the local visitors always ask whether I am a staff of URA! Some ask when I would be around next so that they could bring their families, friends or colleagues along to hear my stories.

### **What are some memorable encounters you have had?**

On one occasion, after 10 minutes of interacting with an elderly couple, they apologised and left for a late breakfast. Guess what! They returned half an hour later with a chendol drink for me! On another occasion, after I ended my 10-minute presentation of the Marina Bay Central Area Model over the PA system, the visitors who stayed around to listen broke into spontaneous applause! It always feels good to be appreciated. I would certainly continue to be a docent at the Gallery.

### **What do you enjoy most about volunteering?**

I really enjoy interacting with the visitors, telling Singapore's story and exchanging information with foreign visitors or sharing common experiences with fellow Singaporeans. It makes me feel rejuvenated and re-energised. The visitors whom I have had the good fortune to interact with are very impressed by what they learn of Singapore's efforts in land and resource management and very appreciative of me spending the time to explain these things to them.



**As a volunteer docent at the Singapore City Gallery, Ms Tan enjoys sharing Singapore's stories with visitors.**

The Singapore City Gallery Docent Volunteer Programme trains volunteers as docents to share with visitors Singapore's urban planning challenges and stories to help them gain a better understanding of how Singapore is planned. Training for volunteer docents is provided by URA. If you are interested to join this programme, do send an email to [ura\\_gallery@ura.gov.sg](mailto:ura_gallery@ura.gov.sg)

## PROGRAMME (NPARKS)

# Anyone can be a citizen scientist!

**A new Citizen Science Programme by the National Parks Board (NParks) invites the community to get involved in monitoring Singapore's rich biodiversity**

NParks' **Citizen Science Programme** encourages the community to learn more about Singapore's natural heritage and play an active role in contributing to organised research efforts. Initiatives under this programme include the Garden Bird Count, Heron Watch and the upcoming inaugural Butterfly Count. Data collected from these efforts will help in coming up with long-term strategies for conservation of these species.

### Garden Bird Count

More than 400 participants took part in the inaugural NParks Garden Bird Count from 16 to 26 April 2015. Over this period, they helped to record bird sightings from 58 locations across Singapore. Some of the interesting species spotted during the Count included the rarely-sighted Buffy Fish Owl at Jurong Lake Park and the Chestnut-bellied Malkoha at Bukit Batok Nature Park.

Participants who were novice birders attended training sessions conducted by NParks earlier. They learnt how to identify 30 common garden birds and how to collect data using the point-count technique, which involves staying in the same spot for a short period of time and recording the different birds that are seen from there.

The NParks **Garden Bird Count** will take place twice a year. The next session is planned for November 2015. Data collected from these counts will help in establishing population trends in the long run.



*Image: Henrietta Woo*

**An unexpected sighting during the NParks Garden Bird Count was the rare Buffy Fish Owl at Jurong Lake Park.**



**MOS Desmond Lee with participants at the launch of the NParks Garden Bird Count on 16 April 2015.**



## Heron Watch

As part of the ongoing **Heron Watch** programme, volunteers who are new to bird-watching may attend training sessions conducted by NParks. They learn how to identify Singapore's resident species of herons, egrets and bitterns before embarking on island-wide survey sessions to record sightings of these birds. Heron Watch survey sessions are conducted during the migratory and non-migratory seasons.

As herons are at the top of the freshwater food chain, they help keep populations of other aquatic wildlife in balance. The herons that have made Singapore their home are good indicators of our environmental health, and monitoring them helps NParks gauge how well they are coping in our local setting.

## Butterfly Count

If you enjoy butterfly watching and would like to find out more about butterflies, join in the inaugural NParks Butterfly Count! For one morning in September 2015, volunteers will carry out a butterfly survey at designated sites within our parks. Anyone aged 12 and above is welcome and training will be provided. Visit the **NParks Butterfly Count** registration site to sign up by 19 August 2015.



Standing at over 1 metre tall, the Great-billed Heron is one of the largest birds in Singapore.



Hands-on training for Heron Watch participants at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve extension.

NParks' Citizen Science Programme encourages the community to learn more about Singapore's natural heritage and play an active role in contributing to organised research efforts. Find out more about the various programmes at the [NParks website](#) and look out for invitations to participate at the [NParks Facebook](#) page. Interested participants may also register through email at [CIN@nparks.gov.sg](mailto:CIN@nparks.gov.sg).



## PROGRAMME (BCA)

### Going green at BiG Day Out 2015



A carnival atmosphere took over Dhoby Ghaut Green on 27 – 28 June 2015 where the inaugural Build it Green (BiG) Day Out was held. Families participated in activities and games to learn about making green living a way of life, and many exchanged their incandescent or compact fluorescent light bulbs for a free energy efficient LED one at the Swap a Bulb station.

BiG Club Junior members from Woodgrove Secondary engaged members of the public to pledge towards a greener built environment. These pledges included the aspirations to pursue a green career, actions for a greener built environment and ideas of what a green building should be, among other commitments to go green. They were then hung on a Singapore map to symbolise the efforts towards a greener nation.

BiG Day Out 2015 was organised by the Building and Construction Authority in partnership with the Singapore Green Building Council, to raise awareness about the importance of environmentally friendly buildings and saving energy.

Visit the [BiG Club website](#) to find out how you can take part in the BiG movement too!



Visitors learnt about green living through fun and interactive games at BiG Day Out 2015.



BiG Club Junior members with Senior Minister of State for National Development Mr Lee Yi Shyan.



## IN THE NEWS

### Good Neighbour Award 2015

The Good Neighbour Award (GNA) Ceremony 2015, one of the key highlights of this year's HDB Community Week, was held on 23 May 2015. As part of this annual celebration of the community spirit in the heartlands, HDB recognised residents who have made a difference in the lives of their neighbours through their acts of generosity and kindness.

From taking the initiative to bring neighbours together for gatherings and activities, to voluntarily taking care of neighbours who are in need of help, the GNA 2015 recipients have proved that the spirit of neighbourliness is still very much alive in our community. Be inspired by their stories and pick up some tips on neighbourliness [here](#).

*Image and text courtesy of Housing & Development Board*



The Good Neighbour Award 2015 national recipients proved that neighbourliness is very much alive in our community.

### Festival of Biodiversity 2015

Themed Celebrating SG50: Our Natural Heritage, the Festival of Biodiversity 2015 was held at VivoCity on 27 – 28 June 2015. In commemoration of SG50, this year's edition included a special showcase of 50 fascinating plants and animals closely linked to Singapore's heritage.

At the Festival, Minister of State for National Development Mr Desmond Lee announced the new Sisters' Island Marine Park dive trails as part of the Marine Conservation Action Plan. The two dive trails will allow scuba divers to get up close to some of Singapore's marine habitats.

The Festival was organised by NParks in collaboration with the Biodiversity Roundtable, which comprises representatives from Singapore's biodiversity community including schools, volunteer groups, NGOs and nature-related enterprises.



Volunteers from 31 partner organisations brought the Festival to life by sharing with visitors their passion for different aspects of Singapore's biodiversity.

### Tips on engaging real estate salespersons

As part of consumer outreach efforts, the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) recently participated in two events to promote awareness on engaging salespersons for property transactions. At *Walk with CASE*, a walkathon cum mini-carnival organised by the Consumers Association of Singapore on 15 March, CEA set up a poster display and gave out collaterals with key consumer messages. At the *50plus Expo 2015* hosted by the Council for Third Age from 15 to 17 May, visitors to CEA's booth picked up useful tips through a poster exhibition and interactive games. CEA also reached out to non-English speaking visitors through a free Mandarin talk at the event.

Visit the [CEA website](#) for updates on events and seminars.



*Image: Council for Estate Agencies*

Visitors picked up tips on engaging real estate salespersons at CEA's booth during *Walk with CASE*.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MND Family SG50 Roving Exhibition

# 50 Years of Transforming *Our City, Our Home*

*Take a peek into the windows of our past...*

*See how far we have come,*

*Get a glimpse into an exciting future*



[www.mnd.gov.sg/OurCityOurHome](http://www.mnd.gov.sg/OurCityOurHome)

#MND SG50  
#EndearingHome  
#DistinctiveGlobalCity

**6-12 August 2015**

Jem, Level 6

**30-31 August 2015**

ITE College East,  
Admin Block

**4-11 September 2015\***

The URA Centre,  
Singapore City Gallery

*\*Closed on 6 September*

**18-22 September 2015**

Woodlands Civic Centre,  
Concourse

**16-20 October 2015**

Toa Payoh HDB Hub Mall

**20-24 November 2015**

Gardens by the Bay,  
North Colonnade



## Celebrate the SG50 Jubilee Weekend at the Singapore Botanic Gardens

NParks has lined up an exciting programme to celebrate Singapore's 50th birthday at the Singapore Botanic Gardens!

From 7 to 9 August, a fun-filled carnival will be held at the Bandstand and Orchid Plaza. On 7 & 8 August, catch free movie screenings at Lawn E (near Swan Lake) and concerts at the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage. On 9 August, a live telecast of the National Day Parade will be screened. For more details, visit the [NParks SG50 celebrations](#) website.



Image: National Parks Board

## Families for Life SG50 Picnics

Date: 7 August 2015, Friday  
Time: 4.00pm - 10.00pm  
Venues: Sembawang Park  
Pasir Ris Park  
West Coast Park

Enjoy a picnic with your family at a park near you during the Jubilee weekend!

Organised by Families for Life in collaboration with NParks, the picnics will feature fun carnival activities such as nostalgic childhood games, bouncy castles, roving buskers and kite flying! Movie screenings will begin at 7.30pm. Register [here](#).



Image: National Parks Board

## Singapore City Gallery Curator's Tour

Specially for the SG50 Jubilee weekend, URA is organising Curator's Tours at the Singapore City Gallery on 10 August 2015. Sessions will begin at 10.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm.

To register, send your name, number of people attending and contact number to [ura\\_gallery@ura.gov.sg](mailto:ura_gallery@ura.gov.sg)



For more MND Family News



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