

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Ubin Living Lab provides opportunities for outdoor learning and citizen science projects

ITE East and Republic Polytechnic students participate in species recovery efforts on Pulau Ubin

27 February 2016, Singapore – The National Parks Board (NParks) today announced the opening of the new Ubin Living Lab (ULL) on Pulau Ubin. This new facility will be a catalyst for community participation in conserving the island's biodiversity and heritage and promoting sustainability, through citizen science programmes, outdoor camps and scientific research. Students collaborating with NParks in species recovery efforts helped mark the completion of the first phase of the ULL today. Republic Polytechnic students presented to Senior Minister of State for National Development Desmond Lee their bat box prototypes, while ITE East students assisted in building nest boxes for the Blue-throated Bee-eater. The launch of the ULL kicked off a series of year-long activities celebrating Pulau Ubin, more details of these activities can be found in the [Annex](#).

These species recovery efforts are part of community initiatives in conserving the biodiversity on the island for generations to come. Bat box prototypes designed by Republic Polytechnic students will be fabricated into boxes to be installed at various locations around the island. These boxes will then be monitored to determine if they are conducive for bats to roost. The bee-eater nest boxes that ITE East students are helping NParks to construct will eventually be installed beneath sand mounds at Ketam Quarry.

At the same event, SMS Lee planted coastal tree saplings as part of reforestation efforts together with some 80 Friends of Ubin Network (FUN) members and partners. He also helped the ITE East students in assembling one of their bee-eater nest boxes.

The Ubin Living Lab

The new 2.1 ha ULL serves as an integrated facility for field studies, education and research, and community outreach. It will function as an outdoor classroom for school groups to conduct educational programmes while providing a platform for students to learn about the island's history and heritage, as well as biodiversity on the island through citizen science. Organised groups may hold talks and workshops which aim to deepen appreciation for nature and heritage. NParks will work with various groups to implement environmental education programmes. Amenities at the ULL will also be available to field researchers to support their research activities on the island. Activities held at the ULL will be aligned with The Ubin Way and encourage greater community involvement in preserving Ubin's rustic charm for future generations.

SMS Lee said, “With the completion of the first phase of the Ubin Living Lab, school groups, researchers and the nature community will have a space they can call their own to study the rich biodiversity on Ubin and conduct research, exchange ideas with one another and actively participate in conservation initiatives.” *(please check against delivery)*

The ULL was first announced in November 2014 as one of the initiatives for The Ubin Project. Located at the former Celestial Resort site at the southwestern tip of the island, two buildings have been refurbished to house two laboratories, a multipurpose hall, meeting and seminar rooms, two dormitories, as well as a gated outdoor campsite that can accommodate up to 100 campers. A basic first-aid post will be installed to provide treatment when there are activities at the ULL. NParks staff based in Pulau Ubin will also start using the office space in the next few months. A mangrove arboretum will be set up within the ULL near Sungei Puaka by NParks and the community. Expected to be ready by the end of 2016, the arboretum will showcase 35 mangrove species found in Singapore as part of conservation initiatives under The Ubin Project. This includes 8 critically endangered mangrove tree species that will be established and re-introduced to the mangroves in Ubin as part of the ongoing reforestation and habitat enhancement efforts.

Since 2014, members of the community have shared suggestions and feedback on the development of the ULL. When completed, the total area of the ULL will span 5.4 hectares. Future phases of the ULL will include the planning and implementation of pilot projects for sustainable design and practices in potable water supply, waste management, electrical power supply, as well as green buildings. In the interim, NParks is also working with partner organisations to implement water treatment systems to provide potable water for visitors to the ULL and public toilets on Pulau Ubin.

The rustic surroundings provide students with a suitable platform to engage in experiential learning while playing their part in conserving Singapore’s biodiversity. Educators and research groups who wish to use the facility may send an e-mail to nparks_Pulau_Ubin@nparks.gov.sg two weeks in advance. To date, eight groups comprising educational institutions and outdoor activity groups have signed up to use the facilities at the ULL to hold training sessions and nature appreciation workshops for the rest of the year.

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About National Parks Board (NParks)

National Parks Board (NParks) is responsible for providing and enhancing the greenery of our City in a Garden. Beyond building green infrastructure, NParks is actively engaging the community to enhance the quality of our living environment.

NParks manages over 350 parks and 4 nature reserves. Adding to this is the extensive streetscape, or roadside greenery, that forms the backbone of our City in a Garden. An island-wide Park Connector Network is also being developed to link major parks, nature areas and residential estates.

As the lead agency on biodiversity conservation, NParks has developed an urban biodiversity conservation model, which aims to conserve representative eco-systems in land-scarce Singapore. NParks also monitors and coordinates measures to enhance the presence of biodiversity in our urban landscape.

NParks is working closely with partners in the landscape and horticulture industry to increase productivity, and provide training for all levels of the workforce. Enhancing competencies of the industry will support Singapore's vision of being a City in a Garden.

For more information, visit www.nparks.gov.sg and www.facebook.com/nparksbuzz

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ANNEX

Celebrating Ubin

NParks and its partner organisations will be holding a series of activities this year to celebrate Pulau Ubin's rich natural and cultural heritage. Ranging from conservation to sports activities, these will encourage a greater appreciation in preserving the island's heritage for generations to come.

DATE	ACTIVITY
Monthly	Biodiversity surveys NParks volunteers will be carrying out monthly surveys on fireflies, birds and butterflies on Pulau Ubin. Members of the public may sign up to volunteer for this activity and learn how to identify birds by their calls or recognise butterfly-attracting plants. The findings will contribute valuable data on our biodiversity.
Monthly (subject to availability of low tides)	Chek Jawa Wetlands guided tour Members of the public may sign up for this guided one-hour tour to experience Chek Jawa's amazing natural heritage. Registration and details of the tour can be found at www.nparks.gov.sg/ubin
Monthly	Kampong tour Visitors may participate in a 2-hour walk to experience Pulau Ubin's natural and cultural heritage. Stops on the tour include Pekan Quarry, Kampong House, the Toa Pek Kong Temple and the Wayang stage. Registration and details of the tour can be found at www.nparks.gov.sg/ubin
Monthly (From January to September 2016)	Mangrove propagules collection Participants will learn to identify various mangrove species and collect plant propagules to carry out planting on the island.
22 May 2016	International Day for Biological Diversity Participants can join in nature workshops and activities conducted in celebration of this annual event.
April, July, October 2016	Operation Deadline Participants will be involved in removing the stray fishing tackles and lines left by anglers in Pulau Ubin's mangroves, beaches and ponds. Through this, they will learn about the negative impact of stray fishing lines on our biodiversity.
March, May, June 2016	Conservation projects with schools NParks will be working with schools to raise awareness on conservation issues through nature-appreciation activities like coastal clean-up sessions and sculpture making.
End May to June 2016	Ubin Day and fringe activities The annual Ubin Day will be held on 4 June. Visitors to the island can participate in various activities in the days before and after the main

	event. Nature groups will also be organising a host of sports and nature activities around the island.
From June 2016	Reforestation monitoring Volunteers will help to tag trees, monitor the growth of trees by measuring girth and height, as well as record observations of birds and butterflies in the reforested sites.
Dates to be confirmed	Restore Ubin Mangroves (RUM) A ground-up initiative supported by NParks, RUM was founded with the aim of restoring the mangrove forests naturally through science-informed methods, and outreach efforts to the community. Volunteers can help with data collection to aid natural restoration of Ubin's mangroves.

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