

**MEDIA RELEASE
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**Bukit Timah Nature Reserve Reopens after Completion of
Restoration Works**

- Expanded exhibition with new, interactive displays at gallery

Singapore, 22 October 2016 — The National Parks Board (NParks) today reopened the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve following the completion of restoration works and sensitive enhancements that spanned two years. The two-year closure has allowed NParks to repair and enhance the slopes and trails for public safety, restore the forest habitat to safeguard one of the last vestiges of Singapore's primary tropical rainforests in the heart of the islands, and conduct a two-year biodiversity survey to help provide better understanding of the conservation status and distribution of plants and animals.

Visitors can now explore the Reserve using restored trails and boardwalks, and at the upgraded Visitor Centre, learn about Singapore's natural heritage and ongoing biodiversity conservation efforts. Minister for National Development and second Minister for Finance, Lawrence Wong, together with Advisers of Holland-Bukit Timah GRC, planted two *Endocomia canarioides* trees to mark the occasion.

Restoration works to conserve the forests in the Reserve

Restoration works on the Reserve began in September 2014 and concluded in October 2016. During this time, slope stabilisation works were carried out as a pre-emptive measure to ensure public safety. NParks also restored trails and added intermediate steps to more challenging routes, making hiking more accessible to the elderly and young. Following the completion of slope stabilisation and trail repair works at Summit Path, the Main Road leading to the Summit was open on weekends since April 2015. The popular Dairy Farm Loop was also subsequently reopened on weekends starting in August 2016.

In addition, NParks carried out sensitive enhancements to protect the Reserve's biodiversity, such as enrichment planting to enhance the forest habitat, as well as the installation of a raised boardwalk at several sections to minimise the impact of trampling on leaf litter organisms and soil compaction on tree roots. Railings have been installed beside the trails to encourage visitors to keep to designated trails, which would reduce footpaths widening into the surrounding forest.

A variety of sustainable features were installed at the upgraded Visitor Centre, including the provision of skylight panels at the exhibition gallery to reduce the need for electrical lighting, and the repurposing of windows into terraces for planter beds. More details on these features can be found in Media Factsheet A.

Upgraded amenities for enhanced visitor experience

The exhibition gallery at the upgraded Visitor Centre will educate visitors on the special importance of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and ongoing conservation efforts, as well as Singapore's native biodiversity. Building on previous content about the Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves, the exhibition's themes have been expanded to encompass forest ecology, the changing landscape of the Reserve over the years with the addition of buffer areas, as well as the Reserve's biodiversity, interpreted through life-sized animal models and interactive stations. The permanent exhibition has been designed to engage visitors' senses with tactile components, such as seeds collected from plants locally found only in the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. The upgraded amenities around the Visitor Centre also include a toilet block with a wash bay, drinking fountain and benches for rest.

Interim findings from comprehensive survey of Reserve

While restoration works were ongoing, a comprehensive survey for the reserve, supported by HSBC through the Garden City Fund, was initiated in early 2015. The survey will conclude in 2017.

Interim findings from the survey have revealed many rediscoveries and new records in the Reserve, such as the *Soejatmia ridleyi*, the only clambering bamboo native to Singapore, the *Scindapsus lucens*, a climber which is a new record in Singapore's native plant list, as well as a new site locality for the endemic Singapore Freshwater Crab (*Johora singaporensis*). In addition, researchers have found more than five potentially new species of spiders from the *Paculla* and the *Aetius* genus, which are currently in the process of being described. Other key findings include the Malayan Porcupine (*Hystrix brachyura*), which was recorded at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve for the first time during the survey, and the Slow Loris (*Nycticebus coucang*), which was not recorded in previous surveys. More details of these findings are in Media Factsheet B.

This survey involved NParks staff, science academics and individuals with domain knowledge of specific taxonomic groups. Information gathered from this latest survey will help NParks to continue to sensitively manage the Reserve.

Prior to the recent survey, a team of international researchers has been monitoring a 2-hectare survey plot within the forest since 1993. The data collected contributes to global research on forest dynamics and ecology.

The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Singapore's second ASEAN Heritage Park, is home to around 40% of our native species even though it occupies only 163 hectares of Singapore's land area.

Friends of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

In addition to management strategies grounded in scientific research, the active participation of all stakeholders and the community as co-owners and stewards is an imperative for the conservation of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.

NParks today announced that it intends to form a "Friends of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve" community. The "Friends of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve" group will include members from the nature community, recreational users, schools and nearby residents. The objective is to ensure that education, research and recreation will be sensitive to the conservation of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. One example of ownership and stewardship is the Bukit Timah Wildlife Network. Spearheaded by Bukit Timah Community Club (CC) Youth Executive Committee (YEC), and comprising residents, volunteers, schools, government agencies and civic organisations, this group has been raising visitors' awareness of the importance of reducing human-monkey interactions by not interfering in the animals' natural diet, and eliciting visitors' commitment to refrain from feeding the wildlife or leave litter behind. More details on the "Friends of the Parks" scheme can be found in Media Factsheet C.

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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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