



NATURE'S CLASSROOMS

Why preschools are heading to where the wild things are and bringing lessons to life.

Collectively, our four wildlife parks — the Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, River Safari and Jurong Bird Park — are home to some 1,000 species of animals. They are great living classrooms for the little ones, enabling them to connect with nature. “We design our spaces to be dynamic, to cater to families with young children, with the intent of enhancing their learning about wildlife,” says Director of Education of Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) Ms May Lok.

DISCOVER THE WORLD OF BIRDS

Jurong Bird Park has a bird-themed playground called Birdz of Play. Its wet and dry play zones offer ample space to run around and explore the play equipment designed to help enhance and develop children’s motor skills.

Children visiting the Bird Discovery Centre will learn about inventions that are inspired by birds, the largest egg in the world, and how many chicken eggs it equals. On weekends, docent stations manned by volunteers, offer tactile and sensorial experiences to excite



An exhibit of bird eggs at the Bird Discovery Centre

children’s thinking and imaginations.

Additionally, the bird park’s events and programmes tie in with different themes, such as eggs, penguins and so on. “We make sure that the activities involve both parents and children,” says Ms Lok. “It’s important to get the parents on board so that the whole family can learn, do things together and bond.”

RETURN TO NATURE

“Child-friendly spaces like Birdz of Play are important in this wired age, where children have more screen time than outdoor play,” says Ms Lok. “We want to provide an exciting avenue to pull them away from their screens — to be active, to connect with nature,” she explains. “Family bonding is also important. We want to give families a reason to come together.”

Besides designing family-oriented facilities and programmes, WRS has also rolled out educational projects in partnership with preschools, under the “Start Small Dream Big” initiative. “We work with preschools on issues such as deforestation, climate change, wildlife and sustainability. Such collaborations with preschools offer two-way benefits. Children have richer learning experiences and acquire new skills, while WRS gains little wildlife or conservation ambassadors,” says Ms Lok.



Learning about baby birds at the park's Breeding & Research Centre



Birdz of Play

THREE TIPS FOR AN EDUCATIONAL VISIT

Ms May Lok of Wildlife Reserves Singapore has this advice for parents and educators to get the best out of a trip to the wildlife park.

→ **Pick a theme.** The parks are big, so focus on just one aspect or theme (e.g. flight, food, colours, habitats) to get the most of your day at the park. Visit the WRS website ahead of time to see what features of the park work best for you and your children. Email toa.jbp@wrs.com.sg for clarifications regarding your visit.

→ **Let the child lead the learning journey.** You are there to facilitate and get children to see, think and wonder. Encourage them to ask questions and to be as curious as possible. Give them time to think about what they see and let them draw their own conclusions.

→ **Encourage children to share their experience.** Give children, including the shy ones, an opportunity to speak up and talk about what they see. This builds confidence and courage. Some children may also find it easier to voice their thoughts and opinions in an environment outside the classroom.



WILD ESCAPES

Check out some of the wildlife parks’ newest programmes for toddlers and preschoolers.

FOR 2 TO 4 YEAR OLDS

▶ Penguin Adventure | Jurong Bird Park

Watch how penguins walk and swim, then take part in a race to fetch their favourite foods.



▶ Manatee & Me | River Safari

Explore fingerplay in the Amazon Flooded Forest and draw inspiration from the movements of the manatees for a singalong session.

▶ Bunny & Friends | Singapore Zoo

Come up close to rabbits, guinea pigs, hedgehogs and goats, and learn how to handle and feed them.



FOR 5 TO 6 YEAR OLDS

▶ Let's Build a Nest! | Jurong Bird Park

Take on the challenge of building a nest with natural and artificial materials.



▶ Otter Hunt | River Safari

Participate in a series of activities through story cards that aim to familiarise children with different emotions while learning about otters.

▶ Fallabella & Friends | Singapore Zoo

Meet the world’s smallest horse, feed goats and learn how to care for rabbits.



▶ Camps | Singapore Zoo and Jurong Bird Park

These experiential learning journeys offer immersive and hands-on activities. It is also an opportunity for children to socialise with peers at day or overnight camps. Itineraries can be customised.

Programme and admission fees apply. Registration is required to enjoy school rates. For enquiries and bookings, email eduadmin.zoo@wrs.com.sg. For Camp Bookings, email campbookings@wrs.com.sg

LESSONS FROM RAISING RHINO



Last year, PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Braddell Heights Blk 417 partnered WRS on a “Start Small Dream Big” community project titled “Raising Rhino: Looking Through the Eyes of Oban”. Besides introducing children to wildlife conservation, the experience benefitted the children in other ways.



EVOKED EMPATHY

The children went on a special learning journey at the Singapore Zoo to meet Oban, a young male white rhino who was born there. Seeing Oban made what they learned in class more real and relatable. They began to see Oban as a friend, were concerned about what would happen to him, and even created a story and song about him.



SHARPENED THINKING & COMMUNICATION SKILLS

WRS also arranged for a session where the children peppered the rhino-keeper and education officer with questions. They asked questions about conservation, extinction, what

would happen to Oban and his feelings, and more importantly what they could do to help.

“In preparing for the visit, the children and the teachers had several discussions. We encouraged children to ask questions and also guided them on how to ask these. These skills help build their confidence to express themselves and ask questions,” says teacher Kollene Rae Marcelo Lacambacal.



CONSTRUCTED NEW KNOWLEDGE

Visiting the zoo and talking to the zoo staff created opportunities for children to research and find out more about the white rhinoceros.

“The learning process became more meaningful and engaging when they were challenged to observe, reflect and ask questions about its habitat, food and life cycle. By linking back to their prior knowledge about rhinos, they were able to construct new knowledge and enrich their learning,” says Ms Lacambacal.



CREATED FAMILY BONDING OPPORTUNITIES

Parents helped to collect recyclable items to make various crafts such as 3D rhinoceros figures for display at exhibitions in the centre and the 2018 ECDA Early Childhood Conference.

During the school holidays, the parents and children came back to the centre to work on these figures. At home, the parents carried out mock interviews to equip children with skills in their roles as little ambassadors during the exhibitions.

win

KAI KAI AND JIA JIA BOOKS BY WILDLIFE RESERVES SINGAPORE

Simply answer this question:
Name two features of Jurong Bird Park which have been designed especially for children.



Send your answer to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.
Closing date: **17 May 2019**

- ➔ One lucky reader will receive a set of three hardcover books from the series.
- ➔ Three readers will each receive *The River Adventure of Kai Kai and Jia Jia* storybook.



Preschool Daze

Help your child get the best out of school with these good reads.

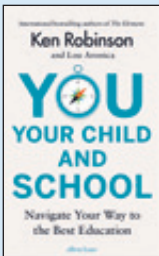


> The Day My Mom Came to Kindergarten

By Maureen Fergus and Mike Lowery

Parents are usually the ones who reassure their child on the first day of kindergarten. But the roles are reversed when a girl invites her excited mum to her class and the latter breaks all the kindergarten rules. After much pacifying, mum finally gets the hang of school! This ebook helps children understand school rules without being too sententious.

Contributed by *Hussain bin Bachek, Senior Librarian, National Library Board*



> You, Your Child, and School: Navigate Your Way to the Best Education

By Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica

Have you heard the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child"? This book highlights how parents can be more involved with school through volunteerism and building positive relationships with teachers. Parents can also strengthen this partnership by having daily conversations with children about their achievements and experiences in school.

Contributed by *Mardhiah Binte Mahamood, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*



June Events

Check out these upcoming programmes at the libraries:



Play@Library

Learn and make new friends through unstructured play at this programme featuring fun educational toys and books. Suitable for children aged 0 to 6 years old.



PlayMaker@NLB

A series of parent-child workshops that introduce children aged 4 to 6 years old to foundational technology and engineering concepts through robotics.

For more information on the dates, timings, and venues, visit www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary.

FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk, or scan the QR code



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