



Animal interactions are opportunities for children to practise being empathetic and respectful to other living things

# LET'S GET WILD!

Regular, respectful interactions with animals help children develop healthy attitudes and behaviours.

Encounters with nature and wildlife give children a greater appreciation of the wider world around them. Through this, adults can nurture their respect for diversity, and foster kind, empathetic and compassionate behaviours.

"Nature is the epitome of diversity," says Ms May Lok, Vice President of Education at Mandai Wildlife Group (MWG). "Exploring nature at a young age allows children to appreciate and respect diversity. It also develops their empathy as they understand that different life forms require different environments to survive.

We can help our children appreciate the web of life and the interdependence of all living things, including our relationship as humans with other living things."

## RESPECT AND CARE FOR ANIMALS

Developing children's interest in living things besides themselves is a step towards nurturing children's ability to care for others. "If young children can find space in their hearts for plants and animals, they will protect them when they grow up. I believe we cannot protect something that we do not know or love," observes Ms Lok.

Care for wildlife can also take the form of stewardship. Preschools like Ace @

Work Childcare at Choa Chu Kang Blk 757 initiated a 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) project to spread awareness about wildlife conservation (see box story). MWG offers a programme called *Adopt-An-Animal School Edition*, where children work together to raise funds to adopt an animal. Through this experience, they discover the importance of teamwork, perseverance and being proactive while learning about wildlife.

## GETTING CLOSE TO NATURE

Ms May Lok offers some tips to introduce little ones to nature.

- Go on a nature walk or visit an all-weather park such as River Wonders, which is sheltered and stroller-friendly.
- Observe which animals pique the children's interest and talk about them.
- Describe what children are observing to enhance their vocabulary and thinking skills. Example: "What is the otter doing?" or "Why do you think it is diving into the water?"
- Support children's sense of wonder by exploring their questions about the animals. Example: "How does it move?" or "What does it eat?"
- Borrow books about their favourite animals from the library.



Preschoolers find a connection with aquatic animals through River Wonders' Story Walk programme

## MINDFUL INTERACTIONS

Mindful interactions with animals can support children's holistic development by helping them understand respect, healthy boundaries, and the impact of their actions.

Besides venturing out to nature spaces like neighbourhood parks and beaches, parents and educators can bring children to wildlife parks where interactions with animals are carried out under the close supervision of professional animal care staff.

Ms Lok advises, "Adults need to be mindful of children's feelings and comfort level when they come face-to-face with animals during such interactions. Children might feel excited, overwhelmed or even scared. Excitement can lead to sudden actions that might startle an animal."

## FRIENDS OF ANIMALS

These two preschools' SSDB 2022 projects revolve around animals.



### ADOPT A SEA LION

After learning about the dangers wild animals face due to pollution and climate change, the children of Ace @ Work Childcare at Choa Chu Kang Blk 757 set out to raise funds to adopt Pedro, a sea lion at the Singapore Zoo.

They wrote and illustrated storybooks on the impact of human activities on our wildlife. Each child pledged to help with chores and show positive behaviour at home in exchange for more donations. The children also created posters and banners to spread awareness about the importance of animal conservation in the neighbourhood.

"Our project helped children learn about respecting our wildlife and the environment, and how small and simple steps can make a difference to animals," says senior teacher Mrs Louie Anne Rodenas-Ricarro.

Our class donations will help the zookeeper buy food and medicine for Pedro!

HANNAH KWA, K2

## BE A RESPONSIBLE STEWARD



"In an urban ecosystem like ours, we have a social responsibility towards the animals and plants that inhabit our City in Nature," says Dr Chang Siow Foong, Group Director of Community Animal Management and Professional & Scientific Services at the National Parks Board (NParks).

Dr Chang shares three tips to instil social responsibility in young children:

- ➔ **Be respectful.** Seek a pet owner's permission before approaching or touching their pet. Be gentle when interacting with their pet.
- ➔ **Pets are for life.** A pet is a lifetime commitment and needs lots of care and attention. Get more information and read up before getting a pet, and understand the challenges involved. Find out more about the pet's needs (e.g., health and dietary requirements, grooming, training) and more importantly, whether you have the resources to take care of them.
- ➔ **Encountering wildlife.** You may encounter monkeys, otters and monitor lizards during walks at beaches, parks and nature reserves, or even around your neighbourhood. Do not make abrupt movements or try to approach or interact with them. Remember to throw litter in bins, dispose of pet droppings properly, and do not leave food scraps lying around.

For more resources, visit [www.nparks.gov.sg/learning/teaching-and-learning-resources](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/learning/teaching-and-learning-resources).

## BRING YOUR PET TO SCHOOL

Bright Kids @ Pasir Ris collaborated with NParks to reinforce responsible pet ownership. The children visited The Animal Classroom in the Jacob Ballas Children's Garden, where they met rescued pets and learned about their care.

Back in preschool, the children were invited to bring their pets for a special "Show and Tell" session, where they discussed how they cared for their pets at home. In another activity, children role-played as animal vets and pet owners. A boy who performed "surgery" on an injured monkey was gentle and reassured his furry patient.

Principal Ms Grizel Koo says, "The children could better appreciate why we must be responsible pet owners, build trust with our pets and show empathy when taking care of animals."



Read about other SSDB 2022 projects at [cdn-littlestories-1.littlelives.com/static/publications/SSDB22\\_E-book.pdf](http://cdn-littlestories-1.littlelives.com/static/publications/SSDB22_E-book.pdf).

Animals feel sad if we do not protect them. We can look out for injured animals and bring them to the vet.

MUHAMMAD ARYAN MIKHAIL BIN MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, K1





learn

win

→ Three lucky readers will each receive an activity book, *Growing Up With Le Le*, and a set of bilingual storybooks on native wildlife.



Simply answer this question:

Give an example of the right way to behave when you encounter animals in nature or at a wildlife park.

Submit your answer online at [go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest](http://go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest) or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **26 May 2023**



## More Than Good Manners

Shining the spotlight on negative and positive behaviours.



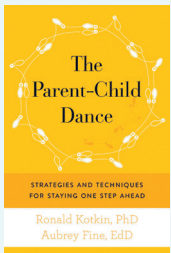
### > The Only Way Is Badger

By Stella J. Jones

OverDrive link: [nlb.overdrive.com/media/5740076](http://nlb.overdrive.com/media/5740076)

Badger thinks he is the best animal in the forest. Badger thinks he is always right and forces his friends to be just like him. When some of his friends fail to do things like him, he sends them to another side of a wall in the forest. Soon, he finds himself all alone. How will Badger resolve this conflict? Will his friends forgive him? This light-hearted book teaches children the importance of acceptance and forgiveness.

Contributed by Nandhini Bala Krishnan, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



### > The Parent-Child Dance

By Ronald Kotkin and Aubrey Fine

OverDrive link: [nlb.overdrive.com/media/2233969](http://nlb.overdrive.com/media/2233969)

Using dance as a metaphor, *The Parent-Child Dance* explores parenting techniques and strategies to create positive changes in a child's life. It is not only about leading the child but also about creating beautiful interactions with the child throughout the journey. With relatable scenarios from both the parent's and child's perspectives, this is a fun and easy-to-digest manual for all parents.

Contributed by Siti Nurulhuda, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



## FAMILY FIRST

The stronger the relationship between parent and child, the better the parent can reinforce the child's positive behaviours and address behavioural problems. And there's no better way to forge a close, loving relationship than by spending quality time together as a family!

An exciting line-up of family bonding activities is just around the corner with **National Family Week** from 3 to 11 June 2023. Organised by Families for Life (FFL), the island-wide celebrations will include an array of fun and engaging activities, family bundles and deals, as well as 'Meet & Greet' opportunities with FFL's mascot, 'Becky Bunny'.

Visit the FFL website at [familiesforlife.sg](http://familiesforlife.sg), or follow FFL on Facebook or Instagram, to get the latest updates.



## 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.

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Visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk), or scan the QR code



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It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.

**SHAPE**  
OUR TOMORROW

Start a career in EC at [www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow), or scan the QR code



Check out our Instagram page for exciting developments in the EC sector. Be inspired by what educators say about giving a good start to every child.

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