



The Coastal PlayGrove @ East Coast Park offers opportunities for children to explore and discover nature on their own

# NURTURING NATURE

Nature is an inspiring classroom where children can learn the values of care and respect for the world they live in.

‘Screen time’ or ‘green time’, or both? While positive screen time helps children feel connected to the rest of the world and supports their development, balancing this with direct contact with nature enhances their health and well-being.

Mr Lim Liang Jim, Group Director for Conservation at the National Parks Board (NParks), lists several benefits of spending time outdoors for our physical and mental health. “Multiple research studies have linked exposure to greenery to benefits such as improved problem-solving abilities, greater attentiveness, superior cognitive functioning, more developed psychomotor skills and the ability to cope with stress,” he says. It could also help prevent childhood obesity, myopia and attention deficit disorder in the young.

Nature education also reinforces the values of care, compassion, responsibility and being civic-minded. Mr Lim says, “Children learn to be respectful neighbours and care for nature by not removing plants from their natural habitats, or by observing animals from a distance instead of disturbing them. When children learn to treat nature with respect and sensitivity from a young age, it is much more likely that they will continue to do so when they are older.”



NParks’ preschool resource kit teaches children to be kind to animals

## ENGAGING WITH NATURE

Preschoolers may be too young to fully understand abstract concepts like rainforest destruction and melting glaciers. Nonetheless, adults can encourage their curiosity about the natural world by allowing them to discover and explore on their own.

Singapore’s many interactive gardens and nature play spaces offer opportunities for children to engage with nature in a sensitive and considerate manner. Mr Lim suggests a few to visit:

- **Butterfly Maze at Jurong Lake Gardens.** Children can play alongside butterflies that are attracted to the native plants within, and learn to coexist with wildlife without touching or hurting them.
- **Nature Playgarden at HortPark.** There are play stations for children to interact with sand, gravel, wood and water.
- **Jacob Ballas Children’s Garden.** Children can delve deeper into the ecology of plants and the environment through discovery and experiential learning.
- **Coastal PlayGrove at East Coast Park.** There is a series of log trails and bamboo tunnel trails that encourages creative, self-led play.

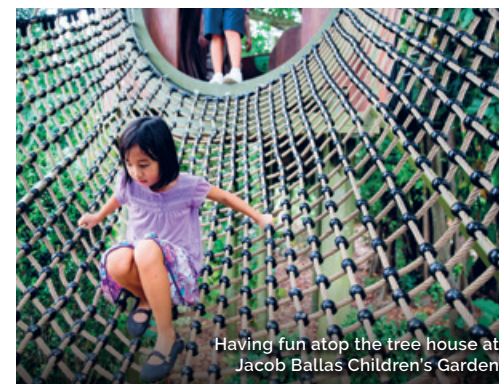
## NATURE IN OUR BACKYARD

“Besides these nature playgardens, there are many family-friendly green spaces in heartland neighbourhoods such as Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park, Pasir Ris Park and Yishun Pond Park,” adds Ms Lee Pin Pin, NParks’ Group Director for Communications & Community Engagement.

While exploring the parks and walking trails, point out interesting sights and sounds, and use them to spark a conversation with children on values. For example,

it is a great opportunity for modelling the value of caring for one’s environment. Ms Lee offers these tips:

- The forested areas of **Thomson Nature Park** provide habitats for rare and locally endangered animals. Remind children not to litter and to keep their voices low so as not to disturb the wildlife there.
- At the **Learning Forest in the Singapore Botanic Gardens**, children can use the interpretive signs to look out for various types of plants, plant parts and different textures of tree bark along the Canopy Trail. They can put into practice the value of civic-mindedness by taking nothing but photographs and memories.



Having fun atop the tree house at Jacob Ballas Children’s Garden

Back in the classroom, educators can use two nature-themed preschool resource packages developed by NParks. One showcases the biodiversity found around Singapore, while the latest kit — which was distributed to all preschools last year — offers various tools to teach children about sharing our living space with animals in the community. A picture book, written in rhymes, tells the story of two kids who learn how to be responsible pet owners. Educators can reinforce key lessons in the story by playing the card game provided. The kit also contains interactive videos and construction models that can be used to role-play how to interact respectfully with animals found in nature reserves, parks and neighbourhoods.

Fostering children’s interest in and care for the environment, and for every living thing in it, can only happen when they make a genuine connection with the natural world. Mr Lim reiterates, “Becoming a good steward of nature begins at a young age. It is important for young children to be interested about nature, and not afraid of it.”

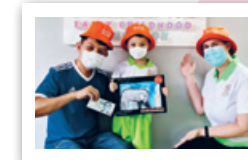
Visit [go.gov.sg/ssdb2021book](https://go.gov.sg/ssdb2021book) to see other SSDB 2021 projects!

## BECAUSE THEY CARE

Three preschools recap their ‘Start Small Dream Big’ (SSDB) 2021 community projects and what the children learned about caring for animals, the community and the environment.



To fund the adoption of the Singapore Zoo’s orang utan Ah Meng, children at **Artemis PreSkool @ Woodleigh** created their own artworks for an online auction.



↑ Their drawings were put up in an online auction, which collected \$950 in donations from their parents.



↑ With Ah Meng’s adoption certificate and the fundraising cheque, which went to the zoo and Wildlife Reserves Singapore’s animal conservation efforts.

“We must protect our wildlife so that they can be safe and happy like me.”

LUTH AQEEL BIN MATIN, K1



↑ Planting chilli seeds in pots made from recycled materials.

“I used a Milo tin to plant chilli seeds. It is important to recycle. If we keep throwing things away, the turtles and fishes in the sea will eat them.”

LIM JIE EN, K2



**Ci Ai Education Incubator’s** gardening project taught children to care for nature through cultivating edible plants and reducing waste, and to also share their harvest with others.



← Children shared their chilli plants with their neighbours and relatives.



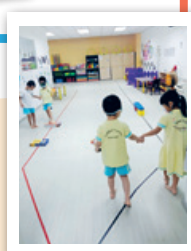
To show support for Singapore athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, K2 children at **Eshkol Valley @ Northstar** took part in the I’mPOSSIBLE Celebrations 2021 campaign.



← A storytelling session with Singapore’s first para-archer, Ms Syahidah Alim, who has cerebral palsy.

“When I heard Ms Syahidah’s story, I felt happy she never gave up. I learned it is important to ‘believe and achieve’. We need to be kind to people who need our help.”

VIKASH AGILAN, K2



↑ Through a buddy run, where one child was blindfolded and guided by a classmate through an obstacle course, children learned what being a visually challenged athlete is like.



learn

win →

Three readers will each receive a copy of the children's book, *Secrets of the Swamp*, along with two NParks post-it pads. Written by Neil Humphreys and published in partnership with NParks, the story emphasises the importance of encouraging children's relationship with nature, and our shared responsibility in nurturing the natural environment around us.



Simply answer this question:

Name one child-friendly attraction or feature in our nature playgrounds and parks.

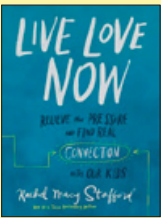
Submit your answer online at [go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest](http://go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest) or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **27 May 2022**



## Book Value

Pick up the qualities needed to make friends and handle stress.



### > Live Love Now

By *Rachel Macy Stafford*  
OverDrive link: [nlb.overdrive.com/media/4815239](http://nlb.overdrive.com/media/4815239)

What do children need as they face stressful situations such as academic pressure, parental expectations, loneliness, isolation, and growing up in a digital and social media-savvy world? This book provides straightforward approaches and prompts to help parents raise and guide their children to become resilient, empathetic, accomplished adults.

Contributed by *Olive Gan, Librarian, National Library Board*



### > Give Me Back My Book!

By *Travis Foster and Ethan Long*  
OverDrive link: [nlb.overdrive.com/media/3257648](http://nlb.overdrive.com/media/3257648)

Sharing is not only caring, but it is also an important step to building a friendship. This story brings young readers on an entertaining journey to learn how the joy of reading is best explored through sharing their favourite book with their friends. With colourful illustrations and humorous dialogue, it might inspire your little one to create their own picture book with you!

Contributed by *Siti Nurulhuda, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*



### BE A ROLE MODEL

Show your child what compassion looks like by exemplifying it yourself — for example, being kind to others. You can help build your child's social and emotional skills to demonstrate love, care and concern, commitment and respect through strong family relationships.

For more parenting resources, visit [go.gov.sg/familiesforlifeparenting](http://go.gov.sg/familiesforlifeparenting).



## 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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