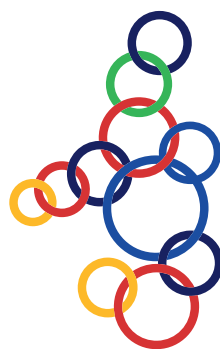




# mabuhay

DECEMBER 2019



PHILIPPINES 2019  
30<sup>TH</sup> SEA GAMES 



**WE FLY AS ONE**  
PHILIPPINE AIRLINES  
IS THE OFFICIAL AIRLINE  
OF THE 30TH SEA GAMES



 Singapore


## Creature comforts

A new nature park along Thomson Road promises a safe sanctuary for the Lion City's endangered animals

Amid Singapore's concrete cityscape lie pockets of lush green spaces, where a small population of rare endemic creatures such as the Raffles' banded langur find refuge.

This elusive and critically endangered black primate – a shy monkey that rarely descends to ground – was discovered about 200 years ago by Sir Stamford Raffles, and can only be found in Singapore and southern Peninsular Malaysia.

Once a thriving population here until the 1920s, only 60 remain today due to years of rapid urban development – but the species' plight may eventually be lifted thanks to the new 50ha Thomson Nature Park at the eastern cusp of the 2,880ha Central Catchment Nature Reserve. Launched in October and managed by the National Parks Board (NParks), this green lung is also home to other threatened animals like the Sunda pangolin and spotted tree frog.

While there are other parks in Singapore that draw visitors with their walking and biking trails, Thomson Nature Park is one that prioritizes animal conservation. It boasts 







## THIS USED TO BE THEIR PLAYGROUND

Before being overgrown with trees, Thomson Nature Park was a village for the local Hainan community

Beyond its natural attractions, Thomson Nature Park also features the ruins of a former Hainan village, which housed about 100 people around the time of Singapore's independence in 1965. It has been retained and forms part of five trails in the park that let visitors explore the forest, remains of the village and a rambutan garden. Watch out for old street signs on narrow roads, abandoned wells and ceramic jars, and stairs and walls of homes slowly being consumed by the jungle.



**Visitors to Singapore can look forward to another park opening early next year. The 4.8ha Bukit Gombak Nature Park will have a 400m walking trail, access to a community garden, outdoor fitness area, dog run and cafés. Keep your eyes peeled for 16 species of trees, including the critically endangered yellow flame and kula gardenia. [nparks.gov.sg](http://nparks.gov.sg)**

numerous measures to preserve the resident langurs and various creatures, including rope bridges for their use and a video analysis system that warns motorists when fauna are crossing roads, prompting drivers to slow down. Since 2016, over a third of the native trees planted here have become a food source for the langurs – and they are not the only species that benefit from such initiatives. "The secondary vegetation provides food for many locally endangered animals, such as the Malayan porcupine and straw-headed bulbul songbird," says Sharon Chan, NPark's director of conservation.

Together with the thick foliage, the park offers a buffer around the main catchment area, acting as "shock absorber" from nearby developments that conservationists worry may compromise the sanctity of the sanctuary.

"By having a forested green area between the Central Catchment Nature Reserve and developments and open spaces, Thomson Nature Park shields the main reserve from noise, lights, and the potentially drying and physical effects of wind and sun against the edge of the reserve," notes Shawn Lum, president of the non-profit Nature Society (Singapore) and senior lecturer at Nanyang Technological University's Asian School of the Environment.

"These 'edge effects' are believed by many ecologists to be one of the principal causes for the degradation and loss of species in forest fragments." [nparks.gov.sg](http://nparks.gov.sg) – Sanjay Surana

IMAGES: CALEB MING, JEANNIE TAN (RAFFLES' BANDED LANGUR, SUNDA PANGOLIN), DANIEL NG (SPOTTED TREE FROG), MAX KHOO (BLUE-RUMPED PARROT), NPARKS (SIDEBAR)