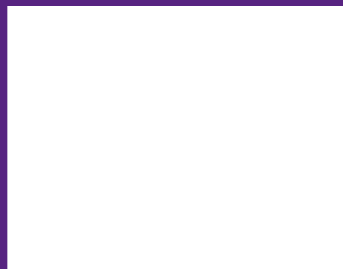


Springboard into Comprehension **5**

Main Idea **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve**

	The Nelson Mandela Story
Compare and Contrast	Animals under Threat Soccer v Ballet
Fact and Opinion	The Great Rainbow Hill Council Debate The Smith Family Diaries
Cause and Effect	It's Just Not Right Save Our Planet!
Bias and Prejudice	What's Up? Changing Times
Figurative Language	Sports Mad Magazine The Highwayman

RA 10.5–11.5



Factual Description



Bukit Timah Nature Reserve



Written by Judy Ling

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

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Written by Judy Ling

Introduction

Singapore is a modern city on a small island. It has many tall buildings, shops, malls, and city streets. It is also the home of an important nature reserve called the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. The reserve covers an area of about 1.64 square km of pristine rainforest. Parts of this forest have never been logged for timber.

The reserve is a treasure trove of animal and plant life. It is home to about 500 different animal species. There is an amazing variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. In the small area, there are over 840 different plant species, such as palms, ferns, and giant trees. Today, people are still discovering new species in the reserve.



An elevated view over parts of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

Location of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve



The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve was one of Singapore's first forest reserves. At one time, much of Singapore was covered in forest. Most of this was cut down for logging and to make way for the city. In 1883, the government created the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Consequently, this lush forest has remained relatively undisturbed.

Let's take a journey through the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and discover some of its fascinating plants and animals.



The crimson sunbird, the national bird of Singapore, is a resident of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.

Malayan Pangolin

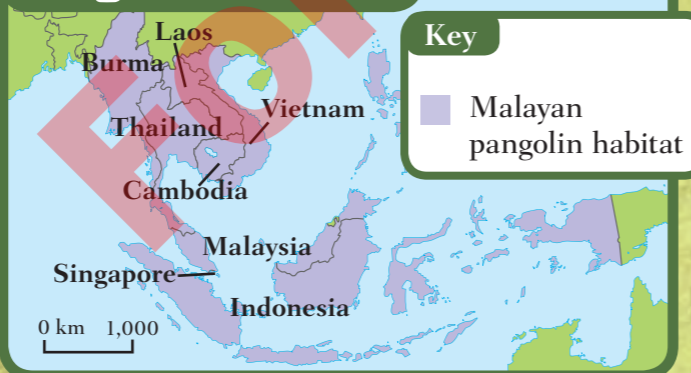
The Malayan pangolin is a scaly anteater. A tough coat of armour of large, overlapping scales covers its back and tail. The scales are horny and sharp. If the pangolin is threatened, it rolls itself into a ball so the coat of armour completely covers it. The pangolin has a pointed snout, a small mouth, and a long, sticky tongue. It can stick out its tongue to about one third of the length of its body.



It is easy to see why the Malayan pangolin is nicknamed the “living pine cone.”

The Malayan pangolin lives in Burma (Myanmar), Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia. It is also found in Singapore’s Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Unfortunately, it may now be almost extinct in other parts of Singapore.

Where the Malayan Pangolin Is Found



The pangolin is an animal that eats other animals, a **carnivore**. As a carnivore, the pangolin feeds only on termites and ants. The pangolin’s body is made for eating termites and ants. It has strong front claws to rip open termite mounds and **ant nests**. It also uses its claws to dig burrows. With its tongue, it **scoops up termites** and ants. A pangolin can eat up to 70 million ants and termites each year! The pangolin does not have teeth but uses the walls of its stomach to crush its food.

The pangolin has a prehensile tail and is a good climber. It can use its tail to hold on to and hang from tree branches. It can climb to reach ant and termite nests in trees.

At sunset, the pangolin becomes active and begins to search for food. It can search for food for up to four hours at a time. The pangolin has poor eyesight, but a strong sense of smell that it uses to find its prey. During the day, the pangolin rests in a burrow.

The female pangolin looks after the young. She usually gives birth to one baby once a year. She carries her baby on her tail to protect it from danger. When she is asleep, she rolls her tail around the baby. If she is threatened, she curls into an armour-covered ball around her baby.

The Fact Files

Scientific name: *manis javanica*

Length: 80 cm, tongue 25 cm!

Weight: up to 10 kg

Diet: carnivorous

Threats: hunting for meat and international trade of body parts such as skin and scales

Conservation Status
Endangered

Straw-Headed Bulbul

The straw-headed bulbul is a songbird with many distinct features. Its cover of feathers, or **plumage**, is light brown, with a golden-yellow crown and cheeks. It has a white throat, red eyes, and black streaks across the eyes and cheeks. Its breast has white streaks. It has a short neck and a fairly long tail.

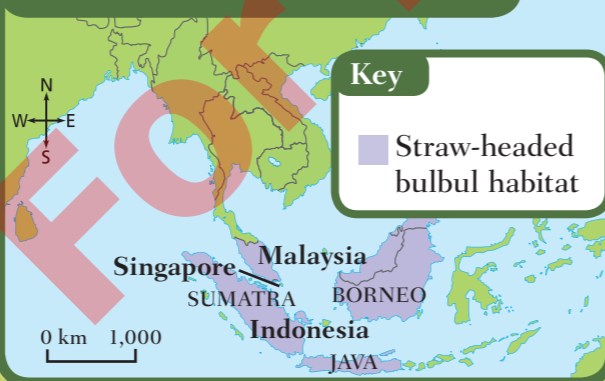
Up until about 20 years ago, this bird was fairly abundant and widespread in South-East Asia, its range reaching from Burma (Myanmar) to the island of Borneo. Today, it is possibly extinct in Thailand and the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra. Populations remain healthy only in a few remote areas. There, the straw-headed bulbul lives in areas near water, such as rivers, streams, and marshes.

The straw-headed bulbul is an animal that eats mainly fruit, a **frugivore**. Although its diet consists of mostly fruits and berries, it sometimes feeds on small animals such as insects.



The golden-yellow feathers on top of its head give the straw-headed bulbul its name.

Where the Straw-Headed Bulbul Is Found



This animal is a social species. Straw-headed bulbuls usually live in pairs or family groups of about five birds. The straw-headed bulbul is a confident and lively bird. It produces a loud, musical, and warbling song with its strong, rich voice. Some people have described its song as “liquid gold.” This has made the bird a target for the illegal wildlife trade that supplies caged birds to pet owners around the world.

The straw-headed bulbul nests all year round. It uses plant material to build a **cup-shaped** nest in a tree. The female usually lays two eggs at a time. Both parents, and sometimes even the wider family group, look after the young.



Because they swallow fruit whole, straw-headed bulbuls are important for spreading seeds.

The Fact Files

Scientific name: *pycnonotus zeylanicus*

Length: 29 cm

Weight: 80–90 g

Diet: frugivorous

Threats: wildlife trade and habitat loss due to forest clearing and logging

Conservation Status
Vulnerable