

**Committee:** UNESCO

**Issue:** Are Natural World Heritage sites a universal common good?

**Author:** Singapore

Singapore is a modern and technologically developed city, famous for being a global financial centre and one of the richest countries in the world. What is not widely known is, is that it is one of the greenest cities in the world, taking exquisite care of its natural parks and habitats. In addition, it is actively restoring nature in urban areas and promoting more native plant and animal species conservation according to the National Parks Agency of the government of Singapore. Singapore follows agreements, such as the UN's 2030 Sustainable development Agenda and the Paris Agreement and believes in working together towards a better and brighter future for humanity and the planet. Therefore, Singapore is aware of the importance of natural heritage and its benefits to the country and to the rest of the world and of the opinion that natural heritage is a universal common good.

Conservation of natural heritage sites is critical for ecosystem integrity and biodiversity. Areas inhabited by endangered species of animals and plants must be protected at all costs. UNESCO seeks to preserve these sites, together with organisations and different countries. Also in Singapore, that has many national parks, nature reserves, reservoirs, and islands off the coast that have unique wetland reserves and a diverse flora and fauna. The most famous natural heritage site there is the UNESCO site, the Botanical Gardens. Singapore aims to protect these by initiating plans such as the Species Recovery Plan by the National Parks organisation. These are strictly followed to ensure a greener and universal future.

In 1819, Singapore's landscapes were covered in rainforests with a diverse arrangement of flora. However, the biodiversity of fauna was relatively low. After the British made Singapore their trading post, they started using the natural resources which resulted in deforestation due to crop cultivation. In the past 183 years, 95% of the natural habitats of Singapore have been lost, including the extinction of many species of freshwater fish, birds, and some mammals.

To address these environmental challenges, the Singaporean government initiated the Singapore Green Plan in 1992, updated over the years. The primary objectives of this plan were to monitor the vulnerable populations of wildlife, establish new national parks, and create connections between existing parks. As part of these efforts, the "National Biodiversity Reference Centre" was established in 2006, coinciding with the establishment of two new nature reserves in 2002. This centre has since undertaken various targeted initiatives, including conservation projects for the hornbill and the rare dragonfly species, *Indothemis limbata*.

In 1967, in response to diminishing natural spaces, the government introduced the concept of transforming Singapore into a "garden city" to enhance the quality of life. Consequently, nearly 10% of Singapore's land has been designated for parks and nature reserves. The government remains committed to safeguarding the country's remaining wildlife, which includes the UNESCO botanical gardens. For the future, The Singapore Green Plan 2030 has ambitious targets, as it aims for 80% of buildings to fall into the Super Low Energy by 2030. Additionally, an 80% improvement in energy efficiency is also an important goal as well as greening 80% of its buildings' areas.

A remarkable example for a site of natural importance are the Botanical gardens. They were founded in 1859, showcasing more than 10,000 types of flora. It became a UNESCO world heritage site in 2015 and has grown into a garden of 82 hectares since then. Initially planned as an ornamental garden of 19 hectares in 1822, it now consists of a variety of historic landscape features, plantings and buildings depicting its evolution throughout the years.

The biodiverse area, home to approximately 3,000 plant species and various animal species such as frogs, birds, squirrels, and butterflies, has become a supreme location for scientific research in the fields of tropical botany and horticulture. The Garden is a good example of a British colonial botanic garden. A key significance of the garden was its role in supplying the rubber industry as of 1877. The initial seedlings originated from the Kew Botanic Gardens in England, were planted in Singapore and launched Malaya's rubber industry. At the time, it was an uncommon investment, but the director of the gardens Henry Nicholas Ridley, promoted its economic value, thereby expanding the market rapidly. His research on the plant's cultivation and rubber extraction method, aided in the rubber's trade boom

and Singapore made a lot of money. The historic importance of the gardens must be preserved, as it has been since its founding.

The importance of the Botanical Garden and other UNESCO sites being universal goods is a fantastic opportunity, as they allow the sharing of knowledge about our ancestors and the history of the planet. By preserving natural heritage, scientific research can be performed to make new discoveries about the past and the future. New medicines and technology will unite countries. Sharing new knowledge opens hidden doors to working on a greener future, an educated civilisation, and a more equal world. This is Singapore's ambition. By universalising and working together with the UN, Singapore hopes to be a part of this plan.

To conclude, Singapore is a global city with highly modern and environmentally friendly infrastructure. It has beautiful natural landscapes and reservoirs, inhabited by many different species. The significance of natural heritage is not merely their beauty, but also their symbolism and history. The knowledge that can be obtained when researching rare environments should be universalized and open to everyone. Singapore believes in a brighter, greener future that can only be accomplished by openly working together.