

Joint Forum Reply by NParks and AVA

ST Forum Online, 8 Aug 2018

[Forum Reply] Feeding of wildlife causes host of problems

<https://www.straitstimes.com/forum/letters-on-the-web/feeding-of-wildlife-causes-host-of-problems>

Feeding of wildlife causes host of problems

We thank Mr Lee Chiu San for his letter ([Feeding wild animals will cultivate love for nature](#); July 20).

The National Parks Board (NParks) and Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) agree that it is important to promote greater interest and appreciation for nature and wildlife.

However, we advise the public not to feed wildlife as it can have adverse effects on humans, animals and the ecological balance.

Feeding alters the natural behaviour of wildlife and makes them reliant on humans for food.

In turn, they may associate humans as food providers and have an increased propensity to approach humans.

This may lead to them becoming a nuisance and displaying aggressive behaviour towards people.

Feeding wildlife with processed foods can cause health problems as the food is not suitable for them.

Wildlife may also lose their natural foraging skills and struggle to survive in their natural environment when there is no readily available food source.

Furthermore, many animals fulfil ecological roles, such as pollinators and seed dispersers, and these processes may be disrupted when they rely on humans for food instead.

The population and distribution of wildlife is regulated through the resources available in the natural environment.

Feeding causes an artificial increase in food which may result in an unnatural and unsustainable increase in populations.

This may in turn contribute to increased human-wildlife conflict and also upsets the ecological balance.

NParks works closely with the community on long-term nature conservation efforts, including habitat protection, habitat enhancement and species recovery.

Planting of diverse native species to restore the forest habitats will sustain our rich biodiversity in an ecologically-balanced manner, and help our native species adapt to environmental changes.

NParks also organises activities and programmes that allow the public to interact responsibly with nature and help foster a love for our environment.

Some examples include guided walks, bird-watching, and citizen science programmes. To grow our City in a Garden, we will continue to encourage more Singaporeans to be stewards and custodians of our natural heritage, and to coexist harmoniously with wildlife.

We advise the public not to approach, disturb, feed or try to catch wildlife. It is best to leave them to forage in their natural ecosystems.

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Group Director, Animal Management Group
Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore

Original letter

The Straits Times Forum, 20 July 2018

[Letter] Feeding wild animals will cultivate love for nature

Feeding wild animals will cultivate love for nature

In February, Nee Soon GRC MP Louis Ng announced that he would be proposing changes, including to disallow the feeding of wild animals, to the Wild Animals and Birds Act through a private member's Bill.

If this becomes law, it will drastically set back the promotion of interest in nature. People, especially children, develop an interest in the environment through opportunities to interact with animals and birds.

One of the best ways of doing so is by feeding them. Singaporeans

should not be forced to appreciate animals only at a distance.

In Europe and America, many people set up feeders to attract songbirds to their gardens.

This practice is catching on in Singapore. Formerly scarce species such as magpie robins, zebra doves and even hornbills are increasing because home owners in urban and suburban areas feed them. Cute squirrels are more common now because more and more people provide them with food.

And though I have reservations about feeding wildlife in or near

HDB flats, on landed property and within private condominiums, doing so is a matter that should be resolved, without the need for any legislation or intrusion by the authorities, entirely between home owners and their neighbours, except in the case of monkeys and species officially designated as pests.

Caring for and appreciating wildlife in Singapore should be permitted to be practised by all, especially when this is done on private property.

Lee Chiu San
