

# Best wildlife hot spots in Singapore

CNNGo reader Grace Cheng shares her favorite wildlife sanctuaries in Singapore, dispelling the myth that it's all concrete and glass in this island nation

Most people know Singapore as a busy and modern concrete jungle. But Singapore is also home to incredibly rich diversity of fauna and flora because of its geographical location. Singapore is home to more than 300 species of birds, roughly 60 species of mammals, at least 100 species of reptiles and 28 species of amphibians.

And there are many places to spot this spectacular wildlife here, if only one has patience, sharp eyes, and a little bit of luck.



**This beautifully patterned paradise gliding snake was photographed slithering down a tree in the Botanic Gardens.**

## 1. Singapore Botanic Gardens

Nestled in the heart of the city are the Singapore Botanic Gardens, founded in 1859. The well-tended gardens include a small patch of primary rainforest as well as secondary forest, and are a favorite weekend destination for bird-watchers, photographers, families and couples. It may come as a surprise to many that this place is actually a botanical and wildlife treasure trove.

With keen observation skills and patience, you can spot many of the 300-plus species of birds in Singapore in the gardens, including kingfisher, sunbird, bee-eater, woodpecker, and waders like the white-breasted waterhen, the secretive yellow bittern, and many more. If you look up to the sky, you may even spot raptors like the white-bellied sea eagle circling above. Besides birds, you may also spot the slender squirrel, the Malayan monitor lizard (the largest lizard found in Singapore), the Malayan giant frog which can be as big

as your open hand, the colorful paradise gliding snake and many others.

**How to get to Singapore Botanic Gardens:** The gardens are open from 5 a.m. to 12 midnight daily, and the admission is free. You can get to the gardens by public bus via Holland Road or Bukit Timah Road. For more information, visit [www.sbg.org.sg](http://www.sbg.org.sg).



**Only a handful of hornbills are left in Singapore, and the best place to see them is at Chek Jawa on the island of Pulau Ubin.**

## 2. Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin

Chek Jawa is a precious wildlife haven situated at the easternmost corner of Pulau Ubin, an island off Singapore's north-east coast. It encompasses diverse inter-tidal habitats, ranging from coastal forest, mangrove, sandy beach to sandflats and coral rubble. Many animals found here can no longer be found on mainland Singapore. Stroll along the boardwalk at Chek Jawa, and you may spot amazing wildlife such as Singapore's only Hornbill species, red junglefowl, wild boar, fiddler crab, mudskipper, knobbly sea star, horseshoe crab, sponges and fan worms. For now, reclamation at Chek Jawa has been deferred, and it is now conserved for the foreseeable future.

**How to get to Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin:** Chek Jawa is open daily 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the admission is free. To get to Pulau Ubin, take a bumboat from Changi Point Ferry Terminal. A one-way boat ride costs S\$2.50 per person, and the boat will leave when they have 12 people. Once on the island, you can rent a bicycle or take a van to Chek Jawa. The vans usually charge S\$2 per person one-way. For more information, visit [chekjawa.nus.edu.sg](http://chekjawa.nus.edu.sg).



**One of the many long-tailed macaques that can be seen around the MacRitchie Reservoir, Sentosa, and other forested areas.**

### **3. MacRitchie Reservoir Park**

MacRitchie Reservoir is one of the four reservoirs that bound the nature reserves which consist of around 2,000 hectares of secondary rainforest, and is a popular place to see the numerous long-tailed macaques living in the area. Take a stroll along one of the many trails and boardwalks through the forest, keep your eyes open, tread slowly and quietly, and you might just spot lizards and squirrels on tree trunks, the clouded monitor hiding under a pile of dead leaves, the elusive Malayan colugo, black-bearded flying dragon, lesser mousedeer, sunda pangolin, various species of freshwater fish, among many other wild creatures in the reserve.

**How to get to MacRitchie Reservoir Park:** There are many public buses that stop along Lornie Road at the bus stop in front of MacRitchie Reservoir Park. The nearest MRT station at Marymount is two kilometers away from the Park.



**The Malayan water monitor abounds in Sungei Buloh and other wetlands where it can reach three meters in length.**

#### **4. Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve**

This wonderful 130-hectare nature reserve is well-known for its diversity of wild birds (more than 200 species have been sighted there), especially during the migratory season between September and March when big flocks stop over. The mangroves and inter-tidal zones are great places to spot mudskippers, fiddler crabs, climbing crabs and the archer fish that shoots insects off tree branches with a jet of water. If you are very lucky, you may even spot the reserve's resident family of wild otters! Boardwalks and trails give you the opportunity to spot the Malayan monitor lizard, changeable lizard, mud lobster, leaf oyster, horseshoe crab, baya weaver, grey and purple heron and the white-collared Kingfisher.

**How to get to Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve:** The Reserve is open from 7.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. on Monday to Saturday, and 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sundays & Public Holidays. Admission is free, except on Saturdays, Sundays, Public Holidays and School Holidays. Entry fee is S\$1 per adult. Board bus 925 from Kranji MRT Station and alight at Kranji Reservoir Carpark for a 15 minute walk to the Reserve. For more information, visit [www.sbwr.org.sg](http://www.sbwr.org.sg).



**The beautiful brown-throated Sunbird can frequently be seen in Sentosa, the Botanic Gardens, and on flowering trees island-wide.**

## **5. Sentosa**

Sentosa, an island off the South coast of Singapore, may now be home to Singapore's first integrated resort and the Universal Studios theme park, but that doesn't mean you can't spot wildlife among Sentosa's 45 hectares of natural coastal and secondary forests! Try spotting the long-tailed macaque, slender squirrel, various species of sunbird and kingfisher, white-bellied sea eagle, and the highly endangered yellow-crested cockatoo which can sometimes be seen perched on bare branches at the top of the tallest trees.

**How to get to Sentosa:** Take the North-East Line on the MRT and alight at HarbourFront Station. From there, go to the third level of VivoCity shopping mall to take the Sentosa Express to Sentosa. Each two-way ticket costs S\$3 per person. For more information, visit [www.sentosa.com.sg](http://www.sentosa.com.sg).