

SINGAPORE

WRS: Singaporeans can help regional conservation efforts from home

Wildlife Reserves Singapore wants Singaporeans to join its conservation efforts



[Ry-anne Lim](#)

© Mar 05, 2018 06:00 am

The Asian unicorn, better known as the saola, is a critically endangered deer-like mammal found in the rugged Annamite Mountains in Vietnam and Laos.

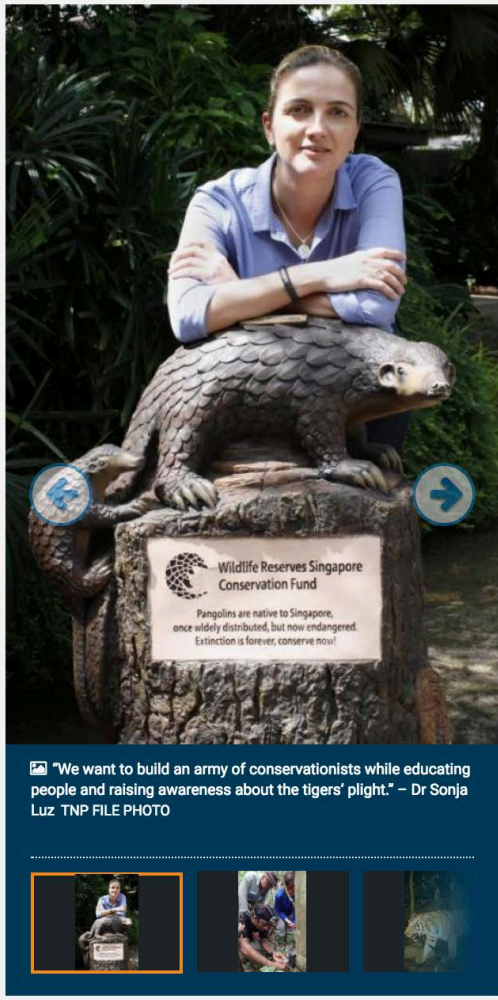
There are fewer than 250 in the wild and none in captivity, said the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), formerly known as World Wildlife Fund.

Singaporeans can help Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS), which is involved in protecting the saola in Laos, by taking part in its Instagram campaign this month (See report on right).

At the campaign launch last Friday, Dr Sonja Luz, WRS director of conservation, research and veterinary services, said the saola's head and horns had been seen in illegal wildlife trade.

She told The New Paper: "Patrol units we fund removed horrendous amounts of snares in the forest. There were thousands of them."

To protect endangered animals like the saola, Spix's macaw, Bali starling and Malayan tiger, WRS, which runs the Singapore Zoo and Jurong Bird Park, among others, will step up its support for wildlife conservation efforts this year. Last year, it supported 16 local projects and 23 regional ones, and hopes to support 30 regional projects this year.



It is working with Global Wildlife Conservation and the Saola Working Group to save the saola in Laos through the recruitment and training of rangers to patrol the area and remove snares.

Dr Luz, who has never seen a saola, fears they might already be extinct. She said: "It's hard to say how many saola are still around. But it's worth seeing if there's still something we can do to turn things around."

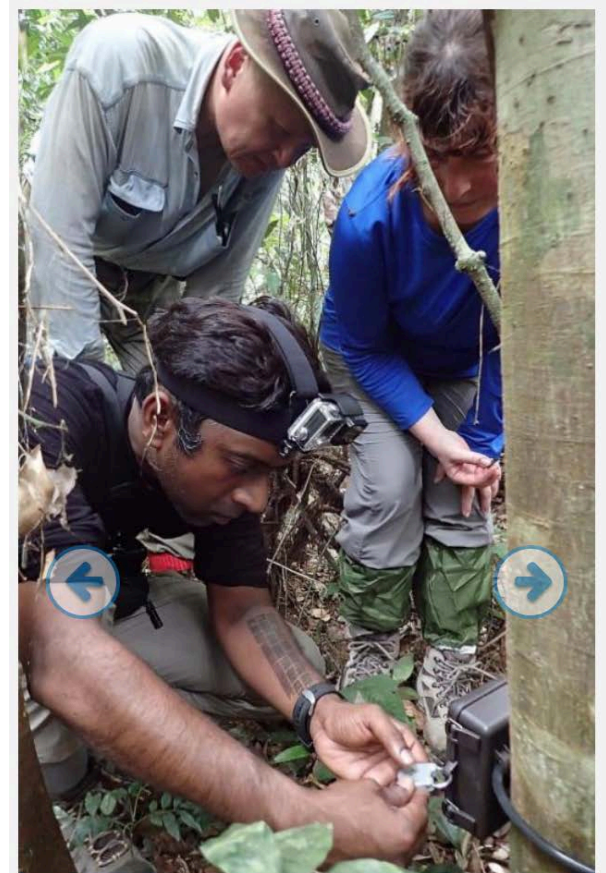
In Malaysia, WRS has been working with the Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers to protect the Malayan tiger.

Its zookeepers and employees go on attachment to help forest rangers patrol the jungle, and learn to read tiger tracks and remove snares.

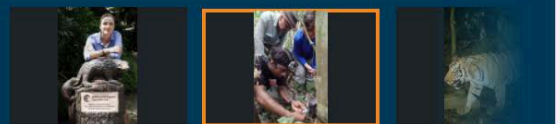
Said Dr Luz: "We want to build an army of conservationists while educating people and raising awareness about the tigers' plight."

In South America, it is trying to help release the Spix's macaw, a rare blue parrot, back into the wild. Only about 150 of the critically-endangered birds are in human care globally, and WRS hopes to repopulate them in their native habitat in Brazil.

Dr Luz urged Singaporeans to be more aware of protecting not just animals but also the environment.



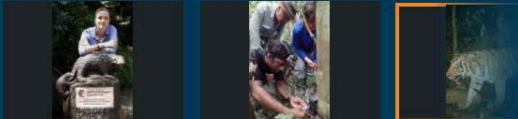
Footage of a Malayan tiger from a camera trap like the one being installed by the Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (above). PHOTOS: KAE KAWANISHI FROM MYCAT & SUZALINUR MANJA BIDIN



Instagram users can help endangered species like the saola and Spix's Macaw, by posting upside-down photos of themselves with the hashtag #TogetherforWildlife.



Footage of a Malayan tiger (above) from a camera trap like the one being installed by the Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers. PHOTOS: KAE KAWANISHI FROM MYCAT & SUZALINUR MANJA BIDIN



This is part of Wildlife Reserves Singapore's (WRS) year-long conservation campaign, Together for Wildlife. For every Instagram picture posted in March, WRS will pledge \$1 towards wildlife conservation with a target of raising \$250,000.

WRS also hopes people can pledge to change their lifestyles, such as boycotting products made of endangered animals or single-use plastic items.

Mandai Park Holdings chief executive Mike Barclay said: "Young people are energetic and persuasive. If we get them behind this theme of conservation, it will make a tidal wave of difference." - RY-ANNE LIM