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38 Under 38

Back In The Spotlight

38 Talking Points

Essays

NDP Photo Gallery

PM Goh's Message

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| Next >>

## 1 The Frog Prince

Leong Tzi Ming, 30, graduate student

WHEN the full moon is out, the air warm, and the ground soggy, trust Mr Leong Tzi Ming to be lurking in the bushes looking for some amphibious action.



As Singapore's only frog researcher, his job is to find out everything he can about the slimy creatures, from how they live to how they mate.

The National University of Singapore graduate student is pursuing a PhD in zoology, specialising in tadpoles in Singapore and Malaysia.

He says: 'Frogs are a good bio-indicator of the environment. They're sensitive creatures, so any change in their behaviour is a sign that things are going wrong.'

He got interested in frogs after helping the National Parks Board with a series of surveys on fish and amphibians 10 years ago. 'It was an eye opener to see such a wide diversity of frogs still left in what little forest we have. That made me curious,' he says.

His thirst for knowledge has led to a few feathers in his cap. He has discovered 10 new species of tadpoles here, in Malaysia and Indonesia. Last year, he discovered a species of frog in the Malaysian highlands. He named it *Rana banjarana*, or mountain range frog.

His findings, accumulated over two years of studying the frog which had been mistaken previously for another species, were published in the June issue of the international scientific journal, *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*.

Three years ago, the son of a prison counsellor and housewife received a Ford Motor Company Conservation and Environmental Grant worth \$20,000. The grant is given to organisations and individuals who are working towards preserving the natural environment. He is using the money to produce educational material based on his research, including a CD of frog sounds.

Sharp ears, 20/20 vision and nimble hands are a basic requirement for what he does. He can identify different species of frogs from a cacophony of croaks, and spot a brown frog buried in brown mud. He can catch hold of - and hold on to - frogs half the size of his little finger.

And it is the 'joy of discovery' which keeps him going. 'Singapore has only 3 per cent of forest left. How much longer can this small patch of forest sustain frogs? I want to discover as much as I can before it's too late.'

### Off the cuff:

'I'm not a jungle boy or Tarzan-wannabe. But simple things - fresh air, sunshine, the rustling of leaves - put a smile on my face. To me, this is life.'

1 **Leong Tzi Ming**

2 Dawn Kua

3 Tony Chow

4 Nur'Anini  
Mohamed Yasli

5 Yeo Ching Kee

6 Loh Lik Peng

7 N. Sivasothi

8 Shie Yong Lee

9 Trevor Xie

10 Andrew Giam

11 Jacinta Phoon

12 Vinothini Apok

13 Phua Mei Pin

14 Eric Ng

15 Grace Lim

16 Yue Lip Sin

17 Abdul Hadi  
Kamarolzaman

18 Dr Loh Lik Eng

19 Leslie Kee

20 Keith Sim

21 Pamela Chia

22 Tang Chi Sim

23 Flying Sotong  
Can

24 Chan Hock Keng

25 Pang Siu Yuin

26 Patrick Chia

27 Ken Hong

28 Amrin Amin

29 Collin Yeo

30 Chong Li-Chuan

31 Serene Chew

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| Next >>

