

# Take a walk on the WILD SIDE

Tucked away in an unassuming corner of the National University of Singapore campus, the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research houses one of the world's largest collections of South-east Asian species. The 500,000 specimens gathered over the last 150 years, normally restricted to researchers, are open to the public tomorrow. Victoria Vaughan uncovers some of the natural treasures.

A rare male Giant Hawker dragonfly, one of the largest in Singapore at over 10cm long. Singapore has a rich biodiversity. There are more types of trees on Bukit Timah Hill than in the whole of North America.



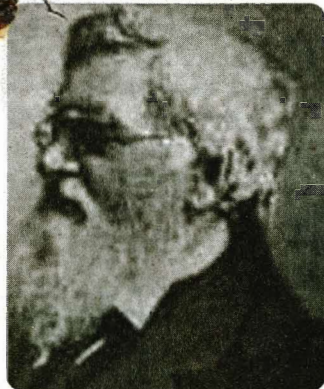
A preserved Indian cobra. The museum carries out research throughout Asia looking for new species and new behaviours of species



A preserved Ocellated Brown Snake which can be found in Malaysia and Indonesia. It is housed in the museum's inner sanctum in the Zoological Reference Collection. Access is limited so the researchers don't get disturbed.



British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace is the lesser known co-founder of the theory of evolution along with Charles Darwin. He spent two weeks collecting specimens in Singapore. One bird caught in Malacca in 1862, a brown flycatcher, is thought to be the oldest in his collection.



A preserved giant crab spider or a Huntsman spider. This one was found in the Sarimbun Scout Camp in Singapore. This fast-moving spider can be hard to spot.



A nondescript office opens into three rooms filled floor to ceiling with mammals, marine life, insects and reptiles found as far back as the 1800s. Some early specimens were collected by Singapore's founder Sir Stamford Raffles, a keen amateur naturalist. The specimens, carefully labelled and laid in wooden drawers, or preserved in formaldehyde-filled jars, were originally stored at the National Museum of Singapore.



Butterflies commonly known as the Blues. They are one of the most colourful species in the collection and are often found in Singapore near cycad plants which have fat trunks and large palm-like leaves. The insects are kept in a warm dry room to preserve, while the mammals must be kept in a cool room.

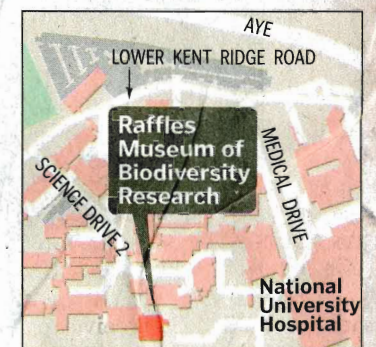
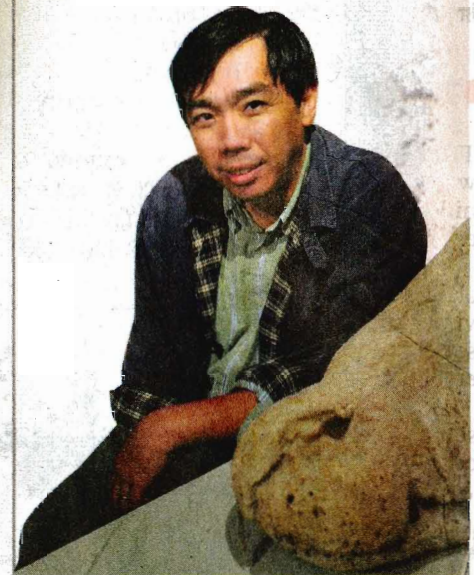


This leatherback turtle was found in Singapore in 1883. It is the largest specimen in the collection at well over a metre long. Such specimens are a significant research tool. They can also be looked at in a new way by X-ray or through DNA finger-printing.



"Although some people may find it morbid to keep all these dead specimens, they provide a significant research tool. The more we know about animals and plants, the more we can do for the preservation and conservation of these creatures. They have a long-term value."

Professor Peter Ng, director of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research



As part of International Museum Day celebrations, the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research is opening its doors from 10am to 5pm tomorrow. Entrance and tours are free.

For more information: look up [http://museums.com.sg/imd09/highlights.html#highlights/hi\\_rmb.html](http://museums.com.sg/imd09/highlights.html#highlights/hi_rmb.html)