

other chapters. It concisely presents a sampling methodology described as the “minimum requirement to be done at each site for IBOY activity”, but limits further detail to recommended protocols and strategies rather than methods per se. The chapter includes a short list of key taxonomic groups (macroalgae, seagrasses, molluscs, decapod crustaceans, echinoderms, fishes and corals) that are recommended for species inventory studies, with no other specifics given. Considering the importance of the coastal habitats and the overall purpose of this book, it was a little disappointing to not see more information on sampling and study of these recommended groups.

Chapter 5, “Research Methods to Initiate PABITRA: The Island Ecosystem Branch of DIWPA” covers the relationship between PABITRA and DIWPA; the fundamental theories behind the former; as well as transect design. It mentions that a 15-chapter manual of biodiversity assessment methods for tropical island habitats is currently being prepared.

The editors of this volume were faced with the difficult task of trying to squeeze biodiversity research methods from a wide variety of ecosystems and taxonomic groups into a small handy manual (216 pp., A5 size, c. 12 by 15 cm). They acknowledge these problems in the Preface and welcome constructive comments that would help in producing improved editions. Despite some shortcomings, however, this first edition is still a very useful reference. Being “...designed for use by those with little formal biological training”, as mentioned inside, it would surely benefit workers at all levels. I would therefore recommend this book, especially for its “Forest Ecosystems” chapter as a manual for conducting forest surveys.

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**Chek Jawa. Discovering Singapore's Biodiversity.** Chua, E. K., 2002. Simply Green. 116 pp. USD 20. ISBN 981 04 6814 8. Tien Wah Press (Pte) Ltd.

Pulau Ubin is a small island of about 10km by 2km off the northeast coast of Singapore's main island. It is a special place for Singaporeans and visitors alike, having escaped the bustling growth of the city-state, and provides an impression of a way of life, long lost on mainland Singapore. However, in 2001, the island awaited an impending fate of reclamation of its eastern and southern coastlines. Villagers living in the area had been gradually shifted out and few remains of the buildings they occupied could even be seen. The now ghostly coastline however, provided complete access to curious nature enthusiasts who had previously stayed away from the private property of the villagers.

They stumbled onto a goldmine. This small coastal area boasted of several ecosystems in one site –coastal forest, mangrove, rocky shore, sandy shore, seagrass lagoon, mud flats and coral rubble. To a population more familiar with sterile beaches, it was an explosion of marine life – tunicates, sponges, sea cucumbers, sea stars, a variety of molluscs, seagrass, the list seemingly just went on. The visual splendour of the site, its uniqueness and impending extinction inspired an explosion of activity on its behalf by nature lovers, educators,

researchers, the media, public and the government. In a landmark decision, the reclamation of scheduled for Pulau Ubin was deferred, and Chek Jawa was saved for the interim at least.

Dr Chua Ee Kiam was amongst those inspired by the variety, space, stories and secrets of the area. Like many naturalists in Singapore, he was familiar with the pockets of terrestrial biodiversity on the mainland. He had in fact popularised such areas by authoring two photo-history titles, entitled “Nature in Singapore – Ours to Protect” (1993) and “Pulau Ubin – Ours to Treasure” (2001) (see <http://www.simplygree.com.sg>). A dentist by profession, he is a passionate nature photographer and nature conservationist, and communicates this through his images in books and by guiding and giving talks. This passion is obvious through the photographs and emotive writing of the book.

The contents are arranged somewhat into chapters. “*Discovering Chek Jawa*” is a brief account of the events leading to the eventual deferment of reclamation. Little of the complex series of events has been shared with the public and this is a good introduction to an important event in Singapore's history. “*Heaven on Earth*” provides an overview of the habitats and brief contributions about most of the ecosystems, and marine life is explored through the main plant and animal groups in “*Fascinating gems of Chek Jawa*”. The author's suggestions about education and tourism are raised in “*What next?*” and “*Voices from within*” is a sheet of quotations by various people. The various affiliations and more so the lack of affiliation of the various people who are quoted reflect the diverse interest that Chek Jawa summoned to her eventual relief. “*The plight and fragility*” and “*The last horizon*” are reflective pieces on issues facing

the urbanised Singaporean, and the significance of Chek Jawa.

This book does not pretend to be an authoritative marine guide but is instead, a reflection of the author's exploration of coastal ecosystems through the gift of Chek Jawa. However, even scientists will find the photos surprising and interesting. In a very short time, he has provided a glimpse into a significant event and place. Yet again he provides a refreshing story celebrating discovery and protection of a natural habitat in Singapore.

Proceeds of this book will be donated to the Raffles Museum

of Biodiversity Research for ongoing research at Chek Jawa. The sale of the book at the museum is also helping to fund its workshop series to train new volunteer guides for Chek Jawa, at which the author volunteers as a principal field instructor.

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