

URBAN BIRD FORUM 2022

Summary Report



SINGAPORE URBAN BIRD FORUM



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About The Urban Bird Forum



The first-ever urban bird forum in Singapore, co-hosted by ACRES and SPCA, was a virtual event that took place over 2 days on the weekend of **23-24 July 2022**. The forum comprised a workshop for students on the first day, and panels of invited speakers including international and Singaporean researchers on the second. The forum was targeted at various local stakeholders, such as **NParks**, town councils, pest control companies, the media and the public.

Objectives

The objectives of the 2-day forum were:

- To raise awareness about urban bird issues in Singapore, and gain respect and understanding for these birds;
- To explore humane methods for urban bird population management; and
- To spearhead further steps towards public education to minimise human-bird conflict in Singapore.

The discussion pointers for each session of the forum and the links to jamboards can be found below.

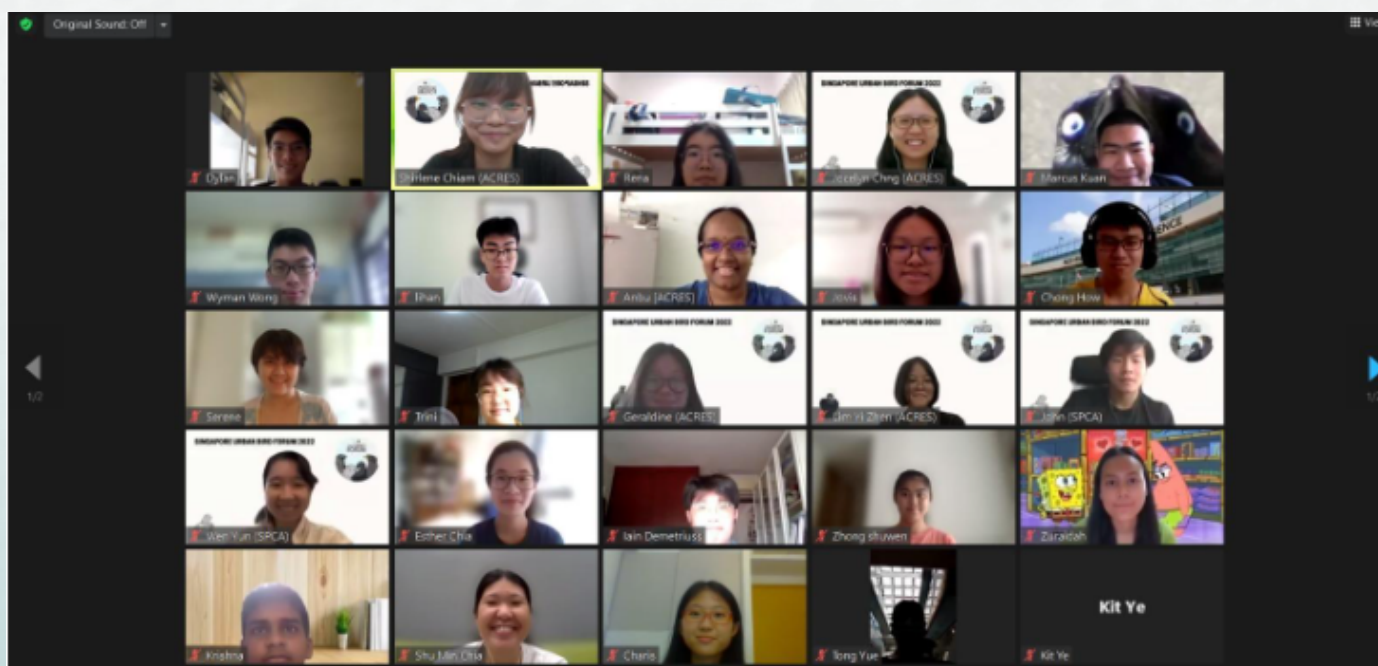
Follow up observations and recommendations from the participants on urban birds management can be found at the end of this report.

Day 1: Student Workshops



Participants of the Workshop conducted a site visit to an estate where they recorded their observations of local urban birds (rock pigeons, house crows and Javan mynas) and scored the bird management measures in the estate. Some estates surveyed included Jurong West/Jurong Gateway, Clementi West, Whampoa, Teck Whye, Sengkang and Yishun Street 21. During the workshop discussions, 18 participants shared their site visit findings, brainstormed innovative solutions for the issue, and concretised their ideas into plans.

The scoring sheet that ACRES created for the evaluation of an estate can be found [here](#).






Workshop Discussions and Ideas

During the workshop discussion in small groups, the student participants demonstrated impressive focus and depth of thinking in identifying key issues to target and brainstorming solutions. For example, one group who focused on engaging senior feeders identified ways to engage and interest seniors that were sensitive and catered to their chosen target audience. Several groups chose to reach out to children and youth; correspondingly their ideas included video games, comics, and QR codes. Other groups chose to focus on physical exclusion measures, such as creating enclosed areas for religious offerings, and intensifying efforts to enclose tray return stations, as well as educate the public about the importance of such preventive measures.

The 5 groups' ideas are summarised on the following slide:



SUMMARY



GROUP 1 (Pigeons) Holistic approach (feeder engagement [games, activity centre to engage senior feeders] and educational campaign to change public perception)

GROUP 2 (Crows) - Dedicated offerings areas in neighbourhoods and raising awareness

GROUP 3 (Mynas) - Infographics → copy dengue sign and integrate bird-human conflicts, stories for kiddos, informative games (with more graphic photos of glue trap etc)

GROUP 4 (Crows) - Campaign → Competition for people to create a game (Life of a crow) → Use the game to conduct outreach at Bird Festivals, roadshows

GROUP 5 (Crows) - Video playing at hawker centre TVs on why people should return/clear their trays and modifying tray return stations to be more bird-proof

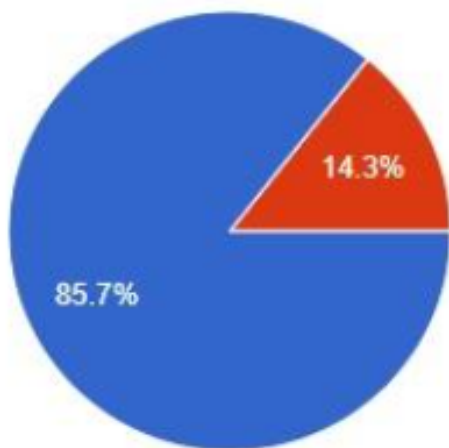


- All groups' notes and ideas can be found at the detailed [Padlet](#).
- Through voting by participants, group 3 won with the highest number of votes. They were awarded goodie bags from our kind sponsor [Everyday Vegan Grocer](#).

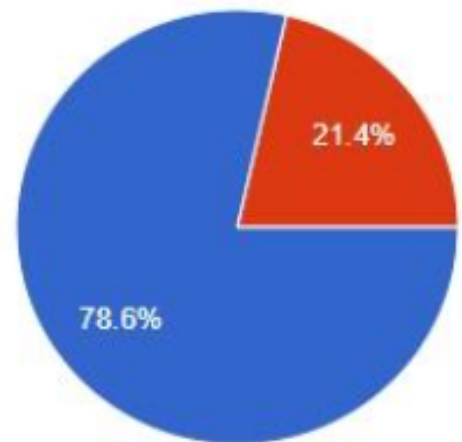


Feedback from participants

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the workshop



2. I have learnt something from the workshop.



● Strongly Agree
● Agree
● Disagree
● Strongly Disagree

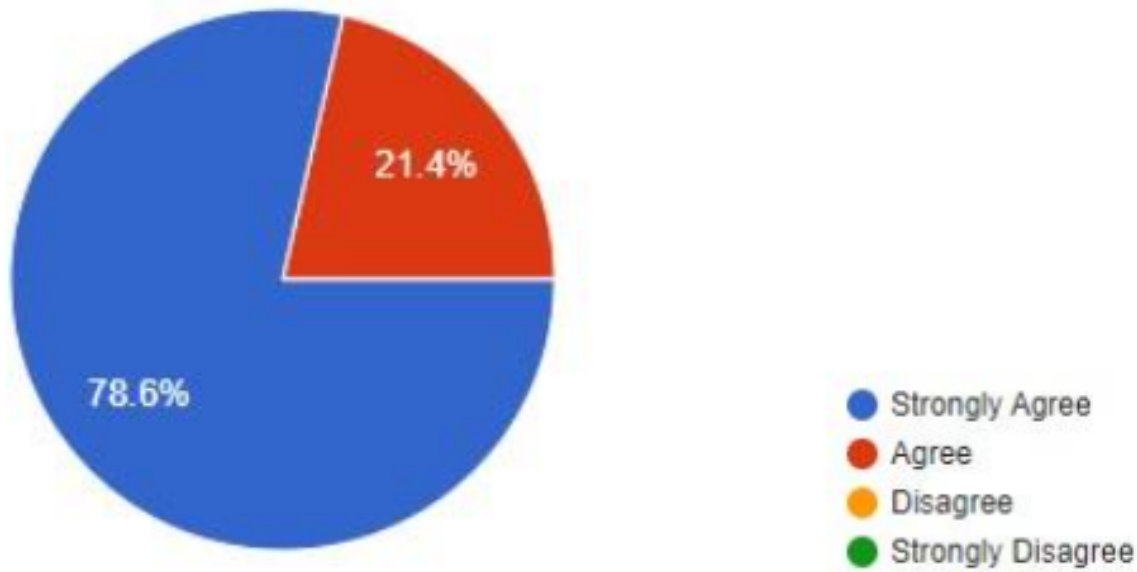
3. Please feel free to share some pointers of what you have learnt.

- Students have gained deeper insights into how feeding birds/wild animals could worsen the human-bird conflict issue and the different kinds of measures carried out to manage their population.
- Students learnt that there are many other humane ways to tackle urban bird issues such as using bird netting, bird spikes and long term education measures.





4. I found the pre-workshop activity meaningful.





Day 2: Main Forum



Panel 1 - Introductory Panel: Current Measures in Urban Bird Management in Singapore

Moderator: Anbarasi Boopal, Co-CEO, ACRES

- Ongoing urban bird management measures and ACRES' efforts to engage town councils - Jocelyn Chng, Wildlife Management Team, ACRES
- Responsible feeding of community animals and glue traps - Aarthi Sankar, Executive Director, SPCA
- Sharing from project on pigeon feeder engagement - Nurin Najwa, Ngee Ann Polytechnic Civic Interns
- Winning project Team 3 sharing on their ideas to heighten awareness on urban birds - Tong Yue, workshop participant

This panel generated an eventful discussion with questions from the floor encompassing the deeper reasons why people might feed birds, and demonstrating innovation in suggestions of possible measures that can be explored further.

These suggestions include:

- Looking into the plants and trees in the urban environment, not just the species planted but also in terms of locations and landscape design
- Contraception
- Physical structures such as tray return stations at food centres



Panel 2 - Science and Community Engagement: Integrated Approaches in Urban Bird Management

Moderator: Anbarasi Boopal, Co-CEO, ACRES

- Study on feral pigeon management at Texas Technological University - Ms Erin Stukenholtz, M.S., Texas Tech University
- Feral pigeon population in Singapore and ecological-based animal management - Dr Tang Qian, National University of Singapore
- Ecological studies of feral pigeons and house crows in Singapore - Dr Malcolm Soh, National Parks Board

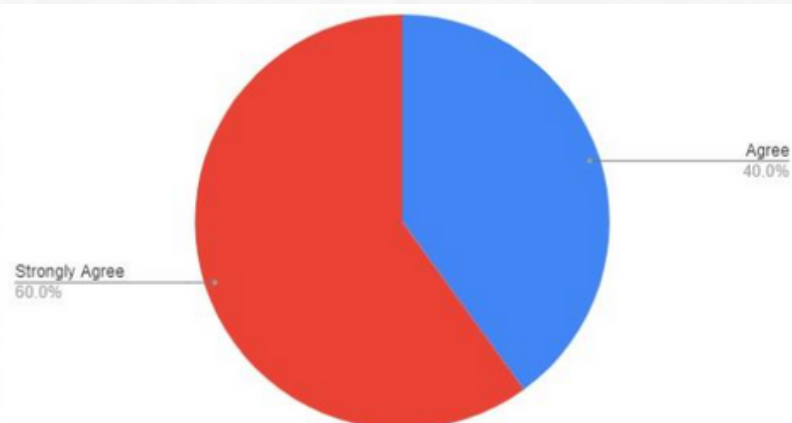
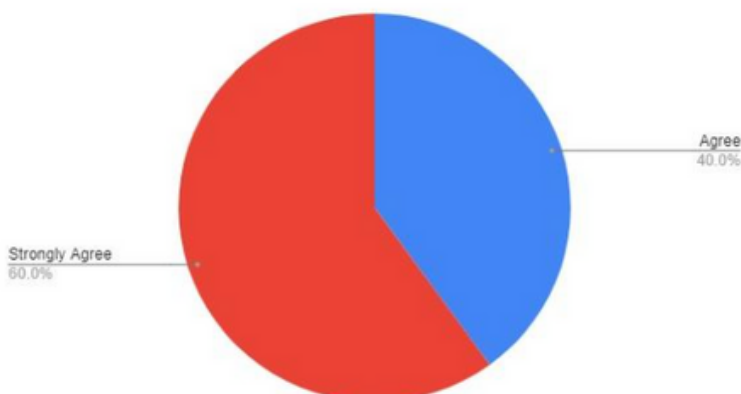
The invited speakers in this panel shared insights from their research, which spurred another fruitful Q&A discussion. Points discussed include: how the researchers monitor urban bird populations in their different contexts; trends in Singapore; and ecological solutions to manage urban bird populations (habitat modification).

The respective speakers' papers are attached with this report.

Main Forum Feedback

1. Overall satisfaction

2. I have learnt something from the forum.





3. Please share which part of the forum you enjoyed the most

- Guest speakers regarding their research findings on urban bird management in Singapore and overseas - on their effectiveness and challenges.
- Student's project with the public and hearing about their challenges during on the ground public engagements.
- Overall, participants have gained insights on the importance of multi-agency collaborative efforts and noted that public awareness is vital to tackle the issue from ground up as well.

4. What is one action that you will take to help urban birds?

Participants shared on what action they will take to help urban birds situation in Singapore:

- Spreading awareness on the consequences of feeding and that feeding is not kind to the wild animals
- Preventing access to food waste to birds by discarding them in the bin properly
- Encouraging others to stop providing easy food sources for these birds
- Approaching feeders to stop feeding birds and explain how feeding negatively impacts the environment





Focus Group Sessions



During the focus group session, groups considered the following topics (1-3). Some of the issues discussed are summarised below each topic heading:

1. Deepening our engagement with community feeders

- More in-depth look into statistics and profile of feeders, instead of stereotyping them
- Enforcement; more stringent regulations
- Cat feeding stations and watercooler designs

2. Improving public perceptions of urban birds

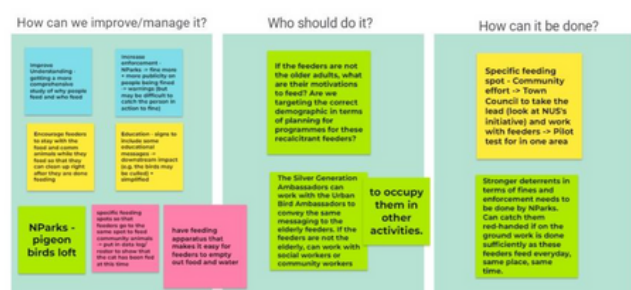
- Negative perception of urban birds by authorities
- Disconnect between people and biodiversity; lack of knowledge
- Community and ground-up initiatives to increase awareness and improve perceptions

3. Developing ways humans and urban birds can co-exist harmoniously (without interfering at the animal level) and Encouraging individuals to adopt exclusion measures as means to coexistence

- Mindsets and superstitions surrounding certain birds that can be difficult to change
- Bridging the gap between individual and government responsibility
- Focusing on educating children and youth

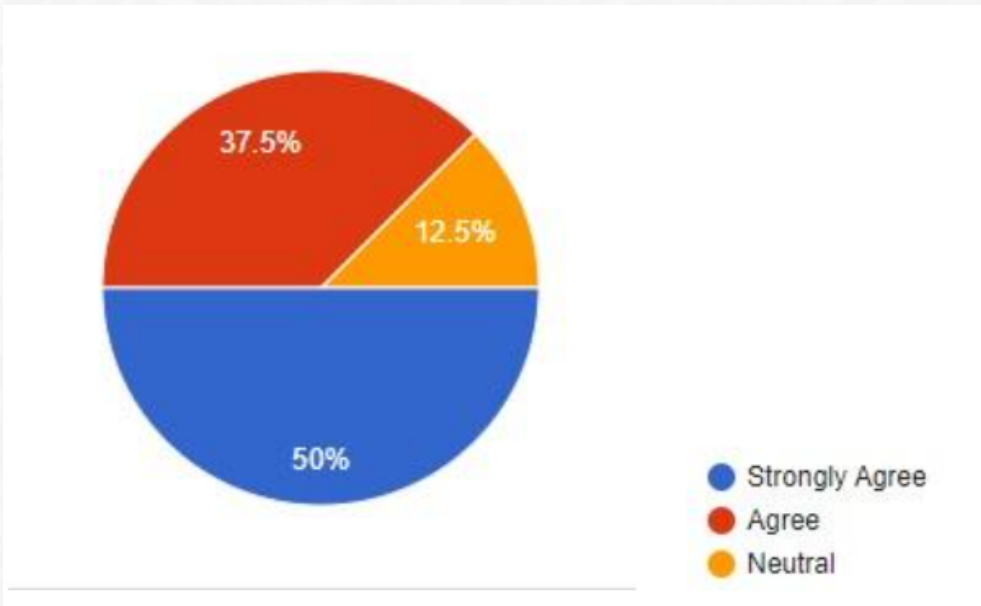
The discussions are summarised on a Google Jamboard, fully accessible via this [link](#).

Group 1 Topic: Deepening our engagement with community feeders



Focus Group Session Feedback

1. Overall I am satisfied with the focus group discussions



Follow-up observations & recommendations

1. Intensive, sustained and detailed public education is required



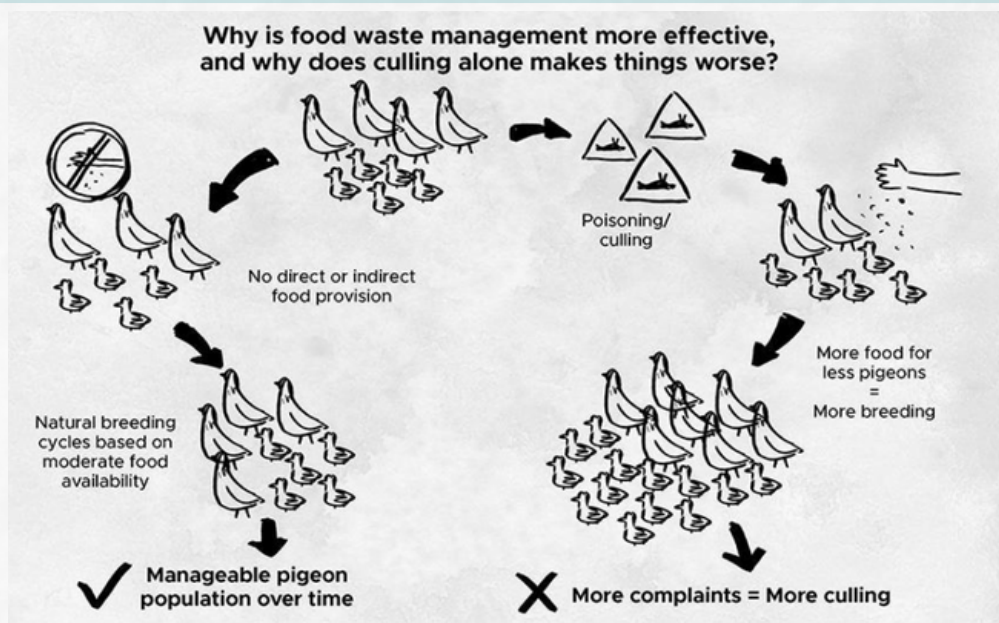
Although many estates in Singapore do already have some education signage in place (e.g. informing people not to feed pigeons), the continued provision of human food sources to urban birds, both direct and indirect, indicates that public education needs to be much more intensive and sustained.

As part of the forum's workshop on Day 1, the participants were asked to do a site visit to evaluate a chosen neighbourhood on the severity of urban bird issues there. In the category of "Education Efforts," the neighbourhoods were rated on how many of the following were present:

- i. printed advisories on notice boards
- ii. printed advisories inside lifts
- iii. outdoor signs/ standees/ banners
- iv. video advisories at lift lobbies/ community centres/ eateries
- v. advisories on social media channels

From data collected by 16 workshop participants, out of the 16 neighbourhoods:

- Only 3 neighbourhoods had at least 3 out of the 5 types of educational materials present;
- 10 neighbourhoods had only 1 or 2 out of the 5 present;
- 3 neighbourhoods had *none at all* (of these 3 neighbourhoods, 2 were rated overall to be seriously under-equipped to manage urban bird issues, and 1 to be moderately equipped.)



Besides increasing the volume and types of educational materials, participants in both days of the forum also observed that education and outreach needs to be more detailed. For example, materials should communicate the reasons why feeding urban birds is undesirable, rather than just stating that feeding is an offence that carries a fine.



2. Launch of the Urban Birds Ambassadors Team

In line with the above calls for more intensive public education and outreach, ACRES introduced at the forum its new Urban Birds Ambassadors (UBA) volunteer programme. This programme trains volunteers to equip them with knowledge about urban birds and the communication skills to engage bird feeders on the ground in a targeted yet friendly manner. Refer to the UBA poster below for more details.

URBAN BIRDS AMBASSADORS

HELP US END FEEDING OF BIRDS

Food provisioning has resulted in a population boom of urban birds such as pigeons, mynahs and crows in Singapore. This has resulted in resident complaints and often inhumane methods to keep their population low.

Pigeons and crows are culled, which involves indiscriminate poisoning and cage-trapping of birds. Caught birds are killed using carbon dioxide overdose. However, science has shown that reducing food availability is the most efficient way to manage their populations and culling alone is ineffective!

Will you join us in helping these birds?

Join us as an Urban Birds Ambassador to engage feeders and raise awareness on the plight of the animals.
Scan the QR or visit <https://bit.ly/ACRESUBATeam> to sign up!

<https://bit.ly/ACRESUBATeam>

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3. Research rather than glue traps and poisoning

Based on the main forum's feedback survey, 40% of the respondents found Panel 2 - Science and Community Engagement: Integrated Approaches in Urban Bird Management to be the most enjoyable part of the forum.

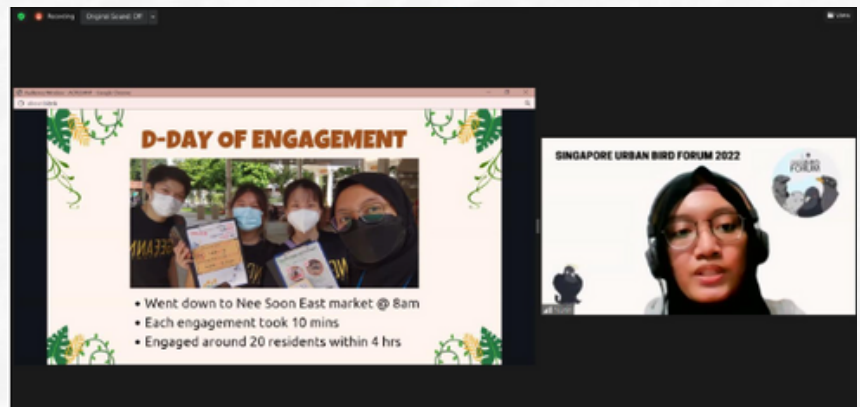
This indicates that there is public interest in the current research on urban bird management. Rather than continuing the use of methods such as poisoning and glue traps to deal with animals who are seen as "pests," more and more people are realising that these measures are not effective, and looking to ecological management strategies instead.

Although there are existing connections between agencies, some forum participants also recognised the need for a deeper long-term collaboration between relevant agencies, such as NParks, NEA, HDB, Town Councils, waste management companies, food centres, and religious organisations.

4. Need for more inter-agency collaboration

For example, possible concrete ideas that emerged for managing urban birds' access to food included creating enclosed areas for religious offerings in housing estates; and targeted exclusion measures and enforcement surrounding tray return stations at food centres. These promising ideas will work most effectively if all relevant stakeholders are invested and committed.

5. Involvement of youth



Finally, the enthusiasm and keen engagement of the youth participants at both the workshop on Day 1 and the main forum on Day 2 were apparent. Attendees of the main forum were impressed by the two sharings from youths in Panel 1 - Introductory Panel: Current Measures in Urban Bird Management in Singapore on their various projects and ideas for public education.

This energetic pool of young talent should not be overlooked and can be a powerful resource in public engagement efforts. Through ACRES' Urban Bird Ambassador programme as a starting point, it is hoped that various agencies will also step forward to welcome these youth collaborations in their estates.

