

[REPORT] INSTALIVE INTERVIEW

# URBAN BIODIVERSITY

GUEST: TAN KAI REN, GREEN G.O., CLUB MED CHERATING  
MODERATOR: CHUA SU LIN

**9 MAY 2020, 2-3PM**

Kai Ren is an alumnus from University of Malaya with an incredible amount of experience working in the urban biodiversity field. He is currently the Green G.O. (gentil organisateur) of Club Med Cherating in Pahang. His role as a Green G.O. is to ensure the resort runs sustainably, and he is also helping out with a CSR project on the side. He has seen a wide array of biodiversity on the daily in the forest of Cherating including monitor lizards and monkeys. By the beach, he has seen crabs and sometimes with luck, even turtles.

Moderated by Chua Su Lin, or better known as Judy, the interview kicked off with clarification on whether pests are considered as wildlife. Kai Ren explained that pests are living organisms that bring harmful effects to human-related activity whereas wildlife usually refers to undomesticated animals, which means creatures like cats and dogs are not considered wildlife. With regards to pests being considered as wildlife, Kai Ren states that all pest is wildlife but not all wildlife is pest. He gave the example of how people consider orangutans as pest as they 'steal' fruits but in broader terms, orang utans are wildlife because it is a protected species. It is difficult to concretely define pests and wildlife, though Kai Ren made it clear throughout the whole interview that it ultimately depends on each individual's definition of the words. He also lightly touched on other topics like gardening, farming, weeding, and ways to control invasive species. Answering a viewer's question on his favourite wildlife, he states that it is the dragonfly. Dragonflies are one of the top predators in urban areas and their larvae feed on the larvae of mosquitoes.



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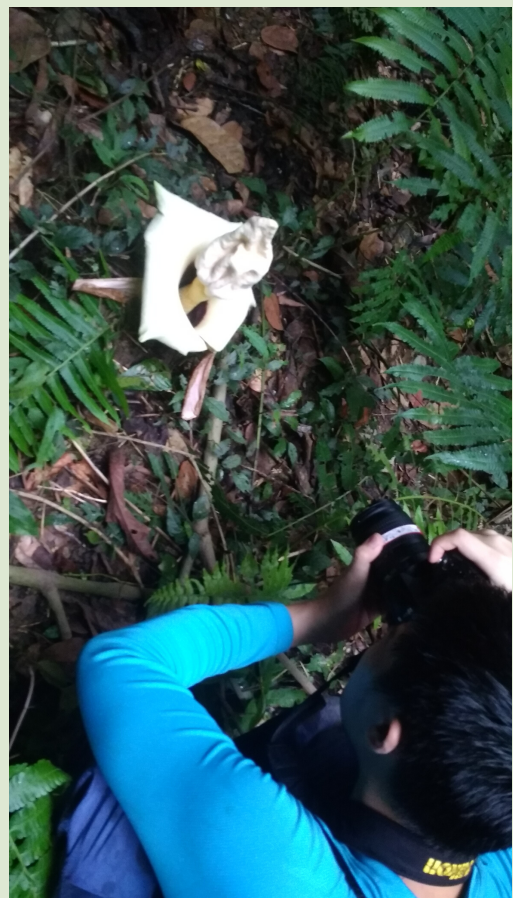


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Kai Ren introduces iNaturalist to viewers which is an app that helps in contributing to urban wildlife conservation. He aptly dubs it 'the Facebook for naturalists.' On the app, users can share photos to discuss about plants and animals from anywhere around the world, allowing anyone to become a citizen scientist. Kai Ren shared the highest number of species found in Malaysia and states that most sightings are of species commonly found in urban areas like long-tailed macaques, pigeons, and giant African snails. For plants, it is of flowers found abundantly in cities like coromandel, tridax daisy, ixora, touch-me-not plant, and soapbush.

The interview ended with Kai Ren advising viewers to appreciate everything around us. Everyone plays their own part in the city as every species has its own function and importance, even the tiniest of ants.

**Kai Ren appreciating nature ►  
through photography**



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## HUMAN PERCEPTION & STIGMAS TOWARDS 'WILD'

The term 'wild' typically sounds aggressive and messy. When speaking of wild animals, the term refers to creatures like tigers and lions whereas when the word 'wild plant' is mentioned, it gives a vision of grassy messiness.

**"Snakes are venomous"**

**"Bats are dirty! They bring all sorts of things back to the house and poop everywhere, and I constantly need to sweep the mess I did not create"**

**"Oh no, a bee hive! The bees are going to sting me"**

**"Monitor lizards will bite you"**

**"Don't go outside!"**

**"Don't touch the frog"**

**"A bug. Kill it!"**

How did people get these perspectives? From Kai Ren's point of view, it starts from one adult and it spreads to other adults. When it comes to young kids, it is simply a parent's natural instinct to be protective of their children. If they do not know what the animal is, it is easier to assume it's dangerous. The lack of information and limited exposure to wildlife creates fear, and this fear leads to misunderstandings. There are also cases of people being shocked when they see live plants because the only edible plants known to them come from the supermarket.

Another example given was on centipedes and millipedes. Both look pretty alike to non-experienced eyes as these creatures are the only living beings with hundreds of legs. Since centipedes have the ability to bite, and because a harmless millipede looks like a centipede, people end up deducing that anything with a lot of legs is dangerous.

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**“People's perception about nature is usually negative. They pay a lot of money to go to nature escapes like national parks, but when nature comes to you, you reject them. People laugh when we talk about this but this is what is happening around us.”**

**- Kai Ren**

## EDUCATION IS THE KEY

Through his experience working with The Rimba Project, it is best to start the topic of urban biodiversity with something more approachable like butterflies. A butterfly is not feared as much as a cockroach, so explaining similar characteristics between a butterfly and a roach - both having six legs, antennae, and wings - would make a good start. Besides educating through comparison, explaining life cycles is also a great way to educate people on the importance of biodiversity around us. Another approach is by looking into the ecological function of the animal and its ecology. In the case of a centipede, it is true that that they can give a

painful bite when disturbed but they are also an important species for soil. Frogs and dragonflies on the other hand help to keep the mosquito population in check. For cases like bats stealing bananas and mangoes from our backyards, Kai Ren illustrated an analogy - imagine going into a forest and you spot a cempedak tree. The tree belongs to other animals in the forest that depend on it, animals such as squirrels. You pluck the cempedak tree and you eat the fruit. You now stand at a similar position as the bats eating from your banana plants and mango trees. Essentially, it is a matter of looking at it in a different perspective where both humans and wildlife share the same space. Having these wildlife around you could only indicate that the area you live in has a healthy ecosystem.



*Kai Ren teaching participants on using iNaturalist app*

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# [REPORT] INSTALIVE INTERVIEW SERIES 2 8.05.2020 - 10.05.2020

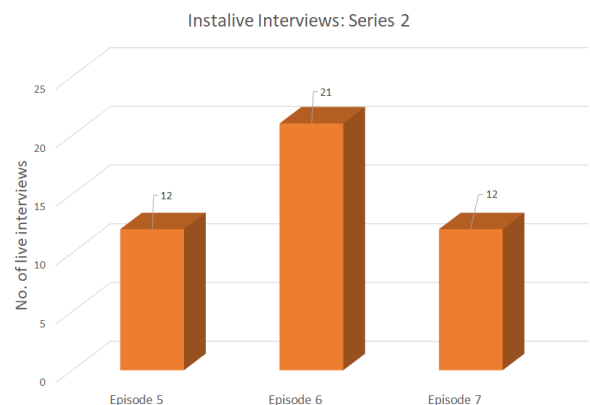


*Instalive Interview is a conversation series discussing on various topics ranging from urban garden, environmental education, urban wildlife, volunteer enhancement/support and art. There are two series of these live streams. Here in the second series we had three invited guests, each of them has their own unique ways and experiences of conserving nature in the city.*

*Interaction with viewers where we addressed their questions in realtime allowed greater engagement as they became active participants that are directly involved in the discussion. The recorded Instalives were then uploaded to The Rimba Project's YouTube page. Time stamps with topic of discussion was added in the description for viewers to jump straight to their preferred topics of interest. The series was a success as this form of networking has increased the audience for The Rimba Project on the social media platforms, especially on Instagram.*

*('Urban Biodiversity' video is not available due to technical error)*

**Bar graph shows the total highest number of viewers whom participated in the interactive interviews throughout all three sessions**



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