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**Celebrating APCEL's
25th Anniversary**

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APCEL NEWSLETTER

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A Message from the Director

The law plays a crucial role in addressing many critical environmental problems, such as plastic pollution, climate change and nature conservation. The Asia Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (APCEL) has pioneered a wide-ranging programme of teaching, research and public outreach to galvanize the use of legal mechanisms to address our environmental challenges. In the past year, while governments and citizens were doing their utmost to get a grip on the 'new normal', many aspects of nature thrived. Singapore had frequent sightings of otherwise elusive animals like the Smooth Coated Otter, and many countries documented their lowest carbon emissions in years. However, 2020 did end up being the hottest year on record, demonstrating the scale of the problem and how far we have yet to go.



Where we would have normally have organised large in-person lectures or hosted visiting researchers from around the world, 2020 saw us adapting rapidly to use all the digital tools at our disposal to continue our environmental protection efforts. The virtual events we organized in the past year have brought together international organisations, local NGOs, students, scholars and governments with a redoubled sense of urgency and commitment. Through research initiatives (e.g. Marine Plastic Pollution Rule of Law (MPPRoL) Workshop) and webinars (e.g. Resource Sustainability Act, One Year On), we engaged various stakeholders and found that as dispersed and physically distant as we may be during this crisis, our common aims and resolve still unite us. It is with this unity that we must continue our efforts to address key environmental issues this year and beyond.

I would like to conclude my message not only on a note of unity but also gratitude. Much of what APCEL has achieved in the past few months would not have been possible without the tireless commitment of our administrative staff and researchers. We also benefitted from the generous contribution of pro bono researchers and long-standing friends of APCEL. I like to express my heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you for being part of APCEL's journey with me.

Jolene Lin

January 2021

New Faces

Dr. Tara Maria Davenport,
Deputy Director



Q: What is your favourite nature-related fact?

A: There are approximately one million species of animals that live in the oceans, many of which have not even been classified yet. It is a great reminder of how vast and mysterious the oceans really are.

Nikhil Dutt Sundaraj,
Research Apprentice



Q: If you could invent any environment-saving technology, what would it be?

A: A form of international travel which does not require large airports, ports or quantities of fuel. I want to travel the world while still being kind to the environment.

Dr. Linda Yanti Sulistiawati,
Senior Research Fellow



Q: How would you convince a sceptic that climate change is real?

A: I would explain it using relatable issues, like hotter days and decreasing fish stocks. I might also hand them the Summary for policymakers of IPCC special report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees.

Selene Tanne,
Research Intern



Q: What is your most memorable nature-related experience and why?

A: Hiking with my dad to the top of Jeju Island's Sunrise Peak in the winter of December 2019. The cold weather was amazing! We saw plenty of nature and some great views.

Tee Ming Zee,
Visiting Researcher



Q: What environmental topic most engrosses you and why?

A: There are way too many! Recently, I have been thinking deeply about the inadequacies / assumptions baked into the idea of 'Net Zero', climate justice in the context of residual emissions.

Biodiversity Conservation and Resource Management

Singapore's Resource Sustainability Act, One Year On

APCEL was honoured to host Dr. Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for Sustainability and the Environment, in a webinar on 4 September 2020 which featured practitioners in the field of resource sustainability. Their experiences shed light on the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Act. The main issue areas addressed by the Act are recycling, extended producer responsibility, and reducing waste.



External events and publications about biodiversity and resource management involving APCEL researchers

What makes an effective and successful biodiversity conservation framework?

This question is central to APCEL's new Research Apprentice, Nikhil Dutt Sundaraj's research project which seeks to identify the characteristics of a successful biodiversity conservation legal and governance framework and how such a framework would comply with the Convention for Biological Diversity.

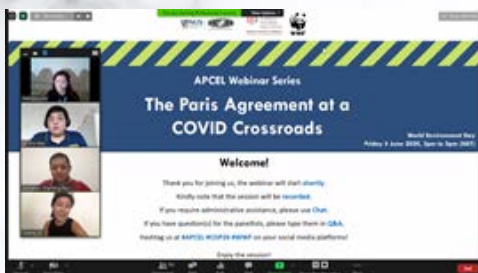
•On 28 August 2020, Adj. Prof. Lye Lin Heng spoke at a webinar organised by the Environmental Law Students Association on Zoonosis Emergence and the Wildlife Trade. The webinar elaborated on the pathogenic risks posed through human interactions with introduced and traded species and clarified the need to analyze these issues within their economic and socio-cultural contexts.

•Dr. Joseph Chun examines the Wild Animals and Birds (Amendment) Act in his working paper available on APCEL's website. The Act is a much-needed overhaul to the Wild Animals and Birds Act. He argues that while the amendments on the whole fill up long extant gaps in the legislation, some of the amendments arguably create more gaps or could have been drafted more clearly.

Climate Change

A lot of APCEL's most prominent work is in the field of addressing climate change through a legal and interdisciplinary lens.

Throughout APCEL's history, we have included people from legal, governmental, policy and corporate sectors in dialogues about climate change in Singapore and around the region.



Notable events

- 5th June 2020: APCEL Webinar Series: *The Paris Agreement at a COVID Crossroads*
- 1st July 2020: *Virtual Roundtables on Asian Law: COVID-19 and Climate Change in Asia: Opportunity or Red Herring?* (in partnership with the Centre for Asian Legal Studies, NUS)
- 20th August 2020 *Youth at International Environmental Conferences: The First and Last Generation?*
- 28th August 2020: *APCEL-Yale Virtual Book Launch: Climate Change Litigation in the Asia-Pacific*
- 3rd September 2020: *APCEL-IPCC Webinar: Debunking Myths About the IPCC*
- 13th November 2020: In conjunction with The Climate Change Litigation Initiative (C2LI): *C2LI webinar on Climate Change Litigation in Brazil*

Climate Change (continued)

APCEL's Outreach concerning Climate Change

APCEL's researchers have actively engaged in external discussions on pressing climate change related issues in the past months. Here are some highlights:

Climate Change Litigation in the Asia Pacific edited by APCEL Director Jolene Lin and Prof. Douglas Kysar (Yale Law School) was published in October 2020. The edited collection is the culmination of a research workshop co-organized by APCEL and Yale Law School in June 2018, and is the first comprehensive examination of climate litigation in the Asia Pacific region.



12th October 2020: APCEL Director, Jolene Lin, published an article titled Net Zero for the International Shipping Sector? An Analysis of the Implementation and Regulatory Challenges of the IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions

20th September 2020: APCEL Research Assistant Eric Bea Discussed the impact of SG's proposed 'flights to nowhere' in the Straits Times. He had earlier collaborated with Melissa Low (Research Fellow, Energy Studies Institute, NUS) to consider the impacts of Covid-19 on aviation and climate policy in a Policy Brief on 22nd July 2020.

17th July 2020: APCEL Director, Jolene Lin, participated as a panellist on the American Society of International Law's 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting on Climate Change Litigation and the Future of the International Climate Change Legal Regime.

APCEL and the Global Pandemic Network (GPN): APCEL is a member of the GPN, which aims to advance research on the impact of pandemics on the environment, cities, and climate change.

The GPN organized its first webinar, COVID-19 and Cities, Building Resilience on Human Rights and Environmental Protection, on 15th July 2020. APCEL's Senior Research Fellow, Linda Yanti Sulistiawati presented a discussion paper on COVID-19 and Climate Change Impacts in this event. The video of Linda's presentation is available on YouTube.

Pollution Control, Water Law and Policy

Marine Plastic Pollution

APCEL has been active in marine plastic pollution research this year, with numerous events and publications by our Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Linda Yanti Sulistiwati, who is an expert on the subject.

19th-20th October 2020: APCEL hosted the *Marine Plastic Pollution Rule of Law in Asia-Pacific Workshop 2020*.

Presenters and commentators rigorously discussed measures to counter Marine Plastic Debris in the Asia-Pacific Region.



MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION RULE OF LAW IN ASIA-PACIFIC WORKSHOP

Monday & Tuesday 19 & 20 October 2020 via Zoom

Register at: <https://bit.ly/3hyey1a> or scan the QR code

Closing date: 14 October 2020

Full Programme details at: <https://nus.edu.sg/SMU1024>

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region are still struggling to reduce their plastic debris in the ocean. The main sources of marine plastic debris are land-based, from urban and storm runoff, sewer overflows, beach visitors, inadequate waste disposal management, industrial activities, construction and illegal dumping. Ocean-based plastic originates mainly from the fishing industry, nautical activities, and aquaculture. There is an urgent need for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to learn best practices and challenges from each other in combating marine plastic debris in the area. Through this virtual workshop, we hope to explore how, why, when, and what forms of measures should be adopted to counter marine plastic debris in the Asia-Pacific region.

16th July 2020: *Closing the Gap Between the National and the Global: A Regional and Market-Based Approach to End Plastic Pollution*.

Participants discussed the merits of a proposed Global Architecture for Plastics Plus (GAP+)

3 July 2020: *Measures to Counter Marine Plastic Pollution*.

Participants debated forms of legal measures and governance comprising multiple stakeholders' roles in combating marine plastic debris

2nd June 2020: APCEL Visiting Researcher, Ms Ipshita Chaturvedi, wrote on *maritimeindia.org* about the *impact of COVID-19 on marine pollution in India*.

In Conversation

In December 2020, APCEL Research Apprentice, Nikhil Dutt Sundaraj, sat down with Mr. Lim Liang Jim, Group Director of the National Biodiversity Centre at the National Parks Board (NParks) for a conversation and presentation on Singapore's biodiversity conservation efforts. The video is [available online](#). Here are the highlights:



When did Singapore begin to prioritise conservation?

- Singapore's greening efforts predate independence, but were kickstarted by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew in 1963.

What are the government's main objectives in greening Singapore?

- To meet first world standards and improve our citizens' morale and well-being

What are the main thrusts of these conservation efforts?

- Conservation of key components + Connecting green areas + Protecting nature reserves with buffer habitats

What does NParks do to advocate conservation from multiple sectors?

- NParks makes sure that greening is an inherent consideration in cross-sectoral development plans

What are Singapore's key challenges in conservation?

- Climate change, Invasive species, Balancing competing goals of conservation and other aims

What educational initiatives are there?

- Intensifying nature in our gardens and parks
- Getting people to enjoy nature after the Circuit Breaker period
- Encouraging stewardship of nature

How is technology used to help with conservation efforts?

- Drones, acoustic sensors and night vision camera traps for wildlife surveys
- Environmental DNA to understand population sizes and dynamics
- Computer modelling to map animal and plant behaviour

What is Singapore's role on the international front in advocating for conservation?

- Thought leaders with a niche - We created The Cities Index for Biodiversity, also known as the Singapore Index
- A regional hub for research on conservation.

Fun Facts

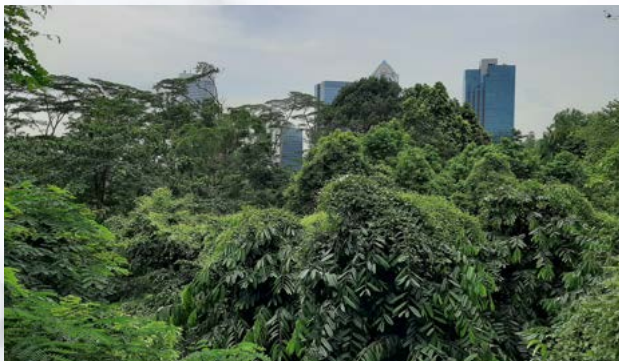
- The first tree in Singapore's greening efforts was planted in Holland Village in 1963 by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew
- Singapore is a hub on multiple migratory bird paths
- 250 hectares of green areas around nature reserves act as these 'buffer zones' between built and natural environments
- Singapore has had over 330 marine species, 80 land fauna species, and 100 land flora species discovered and rediscovered in the past 6 years
- Temperatures in Singapore could hit 40 degrees Celsius by 2045 if decisive action on climate change is not taken
- Singapore is home to the world's rarest crab species: *Johora singaporensis*
- Singapore has a sea turtle programme aimed at protecting nesting grounds at the Sisters Islands Marine Park

The Environment and the Corporate World

Sustainability in Other Sectors

Impact Assessments:

New biodiversity impact assessment guidelines have been introduced as part of a review of Singapore's Environmental Impact Assessment framework. The goal is to be more sensitive to Singapore's biodiversity. ([The Straits Times, 25th October 2020](#))



The Green Swan Initiative:

Visiting Researchers Eden Teoh, Li Xingyi and Bertand Seah secured an NUS Resilience and Innovation Grant 2020 to conduct research on sustainable finance and investment regulation in Singapore. Their project, [The Green Swan Initiative](#), aims to facilitate Singapore's financial shift to a low carbon economy.

Corporate Sustainability

Voluntary Sustainability

Standards:

APCEL visiting researcher Danielle Mendes Thame Denny [researches the diffuse effects of corporate decisions](#). These can influence government policies, set the international agenda and increase the space for private environmental governance, for example, though the adoption of voluntary sustainability standards by companies or non-governmental organizations.

ESG Reporting and Soft Law:

APCEL visiting researcher Tee Ming Zee's research looks at the intersection of environmental law, financial regulation, sustainability and ESG reporting. Drawing on the literature around soft law and voluntary standards, she hopes to analyse the normative force of climate risk disclosure frameworks such as the TCFD, CDSB and SASB, and their impact in guiding net-zero aligned action.

Acknowledgements and Further Information

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Useful links

NParks:

<https://www.nparks.gov.sg/>

The Green Swan Initiative:

<https://www.greenswansg.org/>

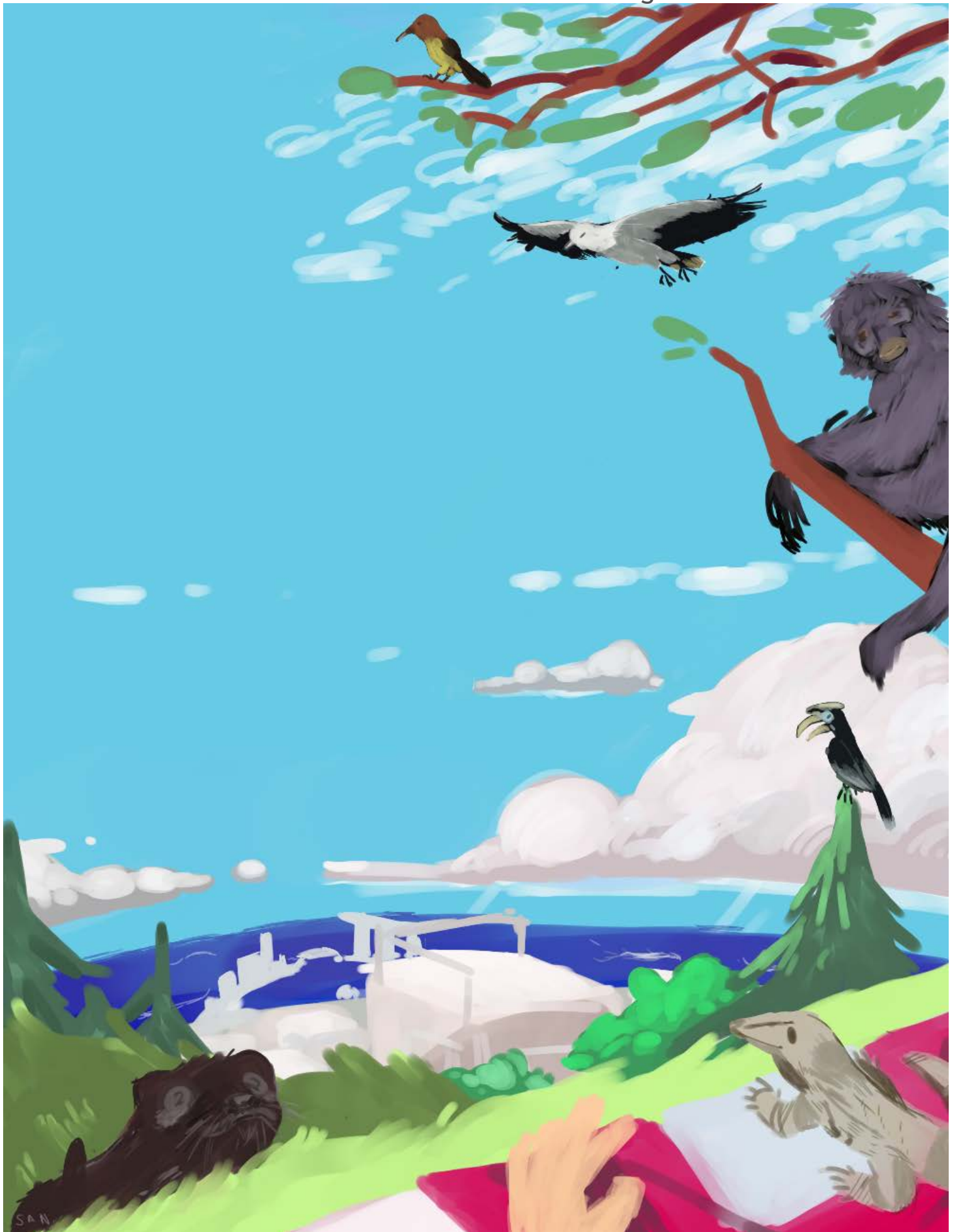
Climate Change Litigation Initiative (C2LI):

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/labsincubators/climatechange/litigationinitiative/>

Global Pandemic Network (GPN):

<https://www.globalpandemicnetwork.org/>

Cover artist: Sekar Anandati Nugroho



About the artist: Sekar Anandati Nugroho (S.A.N) is a young aspiring artist of 14 years old. Her goals are to enrol in a design school and be an animator. Sekar actively partakes in drawing competitions; her most recent award being the Bronze prize from the Singapore Philathelic Museum Stamp Drawing Competition, 2020. She currently lives in Singapore with her Mom, Dad, and little brother.