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Wild life at their doorstep

Residents at Pasir Panjang Apartments enjoy living close to nature. But sometimes, it's too close for comfort

By Teh Jen Lee
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BE one with nature, the brochure for the new condominium says.

But how close do you really want to get?

Try living at Pasir Panjang Apartments, off Pasir Panjang Road.

Picture/ MOHD ISHAK

From their windows, residents can see flocks of birds and the occasional hornbill in the trees on the premises.

Sandwiched between the ferry terminal and power plant, the apartments used to house government engineers who worked at the plant.

Many of them grew edible shrubs and fruit trees that have since become refuge for creatures great and small.

Kingfishers and orioles fill the air with their distinct calls. On the ground, iguanas, monitor lizards and snakes slither merrily.

Mr Krishnan G, 45, a manager, who has been renting an apartment for 13 years, has seen his fair share of snakes.

He said: 'I drove over one by mistake and I felt a bump because the snake was over 12cm in diameter.

'It wasn't hurt and just carried on.'

The apartments, which used to be power station quarters, are now private property. But that has not affected the wildlife, which just carries on.

Recently, a 1.2m black cobra was found in a tool shed by a part-time cleaner, Madam Pushpa Samy. It took the pest control company two hours to get the snake.

In the past three months, Madam Pushpa, 59, has

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also seen two smaller cobras and thinks there's a nest of them somewhere in the drains.

'I'm okay with other snakes like pythons but I'm scared of cobras. Even the small ones will rear their heads and hiss,' she said in Malay.

'But people who live here don't mind the animals.'

Indeed, resident Phillip Conn, 56, who runs an architectural firm, said: 'Anywhere near a bit of forest you will get animals. But if you leave them alone, they don't hurt anyone.'

Ms Sylvia Low, 38, an IT consultant who has lived in Pasir Panjang Apartments for three years, said she is not bothered by snakes.

She just avoids walking among the shrubs at night.

She said: 'This place is special because I can see many birds from my eighth-floor apartment. Whenever my friends visit, I sit them down with binoculars.'

Of the 50 families living in the apartments, about 80 per cent of them are expatriates.

Mr Krishnan said they like the quiet and the greenery and the 'central' location - not far from Pasir Panjang Centre and Alexandra Road.

And they are all excited about the animals they share the grounds with.

One lady resident said: 'If you're lucky, you may see the hornbill.'

Well, we didn't, but Mr Krishnan, an avid photographer, showed us a picture of the rare bird that he took from his apartment window.

His balcony faces the sea, so spectacular sunsets are a regular affair. No wonder he doesn't see himself moving out.

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