

# New bridge at Upper Bukit Timah Road for wildlife, pedestrians by 2026

Link aims to help minimise animal-vehicle collisions while expanding their habitat

**Zhaki Abdullah**

A new bridge will be built across Upper Bukit Timah Road by 2026, allowing both wildlife and pedestrians to cross between the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Western Water Catchment Area via Bukit Batok Nature Park.

Animals have been spotted crossing Upper Bukit Timah Road, occasionally resulting in collisions with vehicles, the National Parks Board (NParks) had said previously. The “eco-pedestrian bridge” is part of efforts to mitigate this, facilitating the safe movement of native species between green spaces and allowing them to expand their habitat.

The new bridge was announced by National Development Minister Desmond Lee at the Festival of Biodiversity, held at community hub Heartbeat@Bedok on Saturday.

The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Bukit Batok Nature Park are together home to more than 1,250 plant species and over 1,800 animal species, Mr Lee noted.

**The new bridge follows the success of the Eco-Link@BKE in reconnecting the forests of the Bukit Timah and Central Catchment nature reserves.**

The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve is home to a large proportion of Singapore’s native species, including 84 per cent of the Republic’s amphibian species, 59 per cent of the reptile species and 56 per cent of the mammal species.

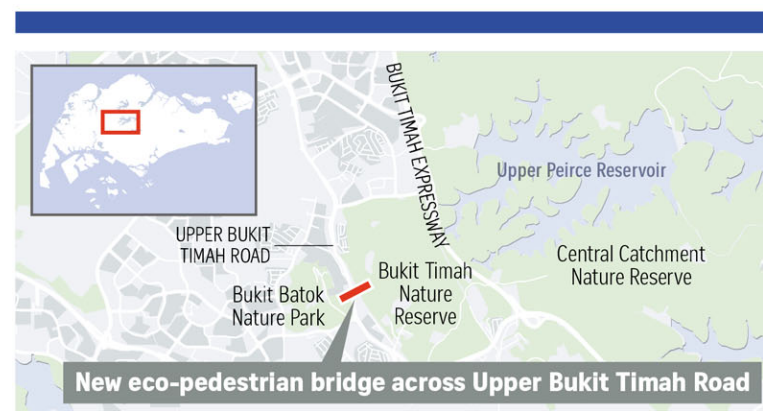
The new bridge follows the success of the Eco-Link@BKE in reconnecting the forests of the Bukit Timah and Central Catchment nature reserves.

Completed in 2013, the Eco-Link@BKE allows wildlife to cross between the two nature reserves, which were separated by the construction of the Bukit Timah Expressway (BKE) in 1986.

“Over the years, the Eco-Link has provided safe passage to around 100 species of fauna, including threatened butterfly species and the critically endangered Sunda pangolin,” said Mr Lee.

The bridge itself has also become a habitat for many species due to the thick forest covering it, he added.

In 2022, the Mandai Wildlife Group said that more than 70 species of animals – including the rare sambar deer – had been spotted using the Mandai Wildlife Bridge, which was completed in 2019 to allow wildlife to cross Mandai Lake



Source: NParks SUNDAY TIMES GRAPHICS

Road safely.

Mr Lee said that an islandwide exercise was completed last year to help better understand the ecological profile of green spaces here and their role in strengthening nature connectivity.

“The findings are helping us to establish new ecological corridors between these spaces, which in turn provide additional stepping stones for nature to traverse our island,” he said.

He noted that measures such as aerial rope bridges and underground culverts – structures that al-

low water to flow under a road, train track or trail – have already been introduced, linking core habitats around Thomson Nature Park and Rifle Range Nature Park.

Where it is not possible to facilitate wildlife crossings such as the Eco-Link, NParks has introduced measures such as fencing and hedge planting to divert wildlife away from roads, Mr Lee said.

In April, most of the fencing work was completed along the Mandai Road exit of the BKE, where animals such as Sunda pangolins and wild boars have been sighted cross-

An artist’s impression of the new bridge that will allow wildlife and pedestrians to cross between the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Western Water Catchment Area via Bukit Batok Nature Park. PHOTO: NATIONAL PARKS BOARD



ing the road to get to nearby forests. A hedge will be planted along the fence to serve as a natural visual barrier to deter wildlife from reaching the road, NParks said.

Through a partnership with Acres, Conservation International, Herpetological Society of Singapore, Jane Goodall Institute, Mandai Wildlife Group, National University of Singapore and Nature Society (Singapore), five other hot spots have been identified.

They are the Bukit Panjang and Dairy Farm Road exits on the BKE, and locations at Upper Bukit Timah Road, Old Mandai Road and Sembawang Road.

“NParks will monitor the efficacy of these mitigation measures at the Mandai Road exit and use the findings to guide the rollout at the other five hot spots and adjust and improve the measures as necessary,” it said.

It is also working closely with the Land Transport Authority to install signs reminding motorists to slow down and keep a lookout for animals.

“These measures help to ensure the safety of both motorists and our wildlife,” said Mr Lee.

azhaki@sph.com.sg