Summerset is a strong advocate in the preservation and conservation of nature. This commitment is translated in its active involvement in eco-conservation. Great effort is expended to keep the flora and fauna in the resort's surroundings as pristine as possible.

MAGNIFICENT FLORA & FAUNA
Recognising the importance of nature as an essential component of Summerset Resort's development plan, the management of the eco-resort appointed the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) as nature advisor in 1999.

MNS has commended Summerset for its keen interest and enthusiasm about preserving the forested areas for people to enjoy and learn about the inter-relationship between man and nature.

The Summerset site is a unique habitat with vegetation that is different from other forested areas. Due to its naturally harsh condition, natural or artificial regeneration is extremely difficult.

The site, which was originally planned for a golf course, was shelved for a more eco-friendly development. The forward thinking of the management helped to conserve the environment and also to encourage appreciation of nature.

Summerset is a habitat to more than 162 species of plants. Three truly aquatic plants were sampled from three habitats, and two endemic (found only in this coastal region) tree species were found, the Glaucaus Holly (Ilex maingayi) and the Kelat Nenas (Syzygium politum).

A number of wildlife species makes the forests at Summerset their home. Birds are fairly rich here, and 77 different types of birds have been identified by sightings and identification of their calls. Some of the typical birds include flower-peckers, bulbulis, sunbirds, white-eyes, magpie robins, pink-necked pigeons, oriental pied hornbills, yellow-bellied prinia, oriental reed-warbler and also the white-throated and the stork-billed kingfishers.

Fishes are also in abundance in Summerset. The most common types of fish includes the common snakehead, three-spotted gouramy, the croaking gouramy, forest labeo, the patung, forest walking catfish, seluang and the fighting fish.

Nature-based tourism mainly concentrates on experiencing nature areas. For instance, a walk in the jungle is regarded as a nature-based tourism activity. Ecotourism, on the other hand, extracts the concept of nature-based tourism and gives it a boost by fastening the environment, culture, and conserving nature. Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism for preservation is the key concept.

Summerset colonial hotel and villas is currently based on the concept of ecotourism as it firmly believes in sustainable tourism and is actively promoting the environment and culture of its surroundings.

According to Hector Caballlos Lascurna (UCN ecotourism, consultancy programme in Mexico), who is regarded as the pioneer for ecotourism concept,
ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, has low negative visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local population.

Matching to this widely accepted definition, Summerset has strived to maintain the eco-tourism code of practice to ensure sustainable development of the resort and the surrounding flora and fauna.

According to Alvin Chew, Director of Department for Recreational and Entertainment at Summerset, generally, the resort itself does not pose any major harmful threat to the surrounding environment. All activities managed by the resort, especially those intensively involving nature such as jungle trekking, are taken care of to ensure no damage to the environment.

Summerset plays a strong role in respecting its surrounding nature by not damaging it through the use of chemicals, waste and development. All trails into forest reserves are kept to a minimum to prevent the loss of flora and fauna. Exotic plants are not introduced in the ecosystem and endemic plants and wildlife are not removed from their habitat.

The resort is constantly promoting conservation of the environment by either educating guests or undertaking nature projects. Guests who participate in activities are taught to care for and conserve nature and given detailed explanation of what consists of nature around the resort. Projects such as the turtle hatchery, which was the first project undertaken by the resort, promote the conservation of turtle eggs with the hope of increasing the turtle population and to avoid extinction. Its wetlands project serves as an active international tool to educate visitors on the surrounding peat swamp as well as promoting it to be unique for being untouched by foreign structures.

The Summerset resort managers control the number of visitors participating in activities involving nature. Nature-based activities (e.g. swamp exploration and canoeing) are guided by experts and the size of the visitor groups is controlled for monitoring purposes, thus reducing damage to nature.

The resort involves the local community by employing them as the bulk of the workforce. Guides for the nature-based activities are provided by the local people, for they provide a better understanding of the environment, its customs and its beliefs. Being a major source of employment, the resort also provides revenue for the local community seeking jobs. Most activities provided by Summerset are culture based. The building of a cultural and art centre further promotes cultural works of the locals. Furthermore, staff of Summerset perform cultural shows during the peak season. Ever so often, the local inhabitants or the "orang asli" provide visitors with a glimpse of the life of the aborigines by wondering into the resort premises and providing an excellent chance for first-hand observation.

The aborigines who live here are the Jakuns. They have been living off the land for centuries. They fish in the numerous ponds and collect wild plants for their subsistence, which they have been doing for hundreds of years.

### INTERESTING RAINFOREST ACTIVITIES

1. Design a rainforest conservation message  
   - for participants to express a personal response to an aspect of rainforest conservation.
2. Diamond ranking  
   - for participants to clarify their thoughts and feelings about a particular issue and to understand a range of options or alternatives to a problem or issue.
3. Making a futures wheel  
   - to understand the effect of development of rainforests.
4. Habitat game  
   - to understand how human activities affect the animals and the forest.
5. Guess the animal  
   - identifying animal and plant characteristics.
6. Value scales  
   - for participants to establish their own attitudes towards rainforests and rainforest issues.
7. What will happen if...?  
   - to determine the relationship between cause and effect, evaluate the effect of actions, see the different sides of an environmental issue and realise the importance of long-term planning.
8. Create a rainforest ecosystem  
   - to understand the relationships that form in a rainforest ecosystem.
9. Senses walk  
   - develop sensory awareness of the rainforest.
10. Role playing: Importance of the rainforest  
    - for the participants to explore conflicting values of the rainforest, see various sides of an issue and improve problem-solving skills.
A number of wildlife species makes the forests at Summerset their home. In line with the resort's belief in conserving nature, the management evaluates and controls all development. Intrusive and destructive development that damages the nature and prevents re-growth is prohibited. Development is only done to complement the natural surrounding of the swamp forest and beach as the management wants its natural beauty to remain undisturbed and valuable for future generations.

**TURTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT**

The dwindling number of turtles that land to nest on the beaches of the East Coast of West Malaysia is a major concern. The resort's beaches have recorded visits of more than two species and 300 nests last year. To ensure that these remarkable creatures do not become extinct, the resort has established its own hatchery near the resort, in collaboration with the Fisheries Department of Malaysia.

Summerset has been involved in the turtle conservation project since 2001. The main objective of this project is to conserve and protect the sea turtles from extinction by establishing specific management programmes with regards to hatching, hatching release, education and awareness, research and eco-tourism, vis-à-vis to making Summerset and the state of Pahang a tourist attraction for turtle watching. Currently, work is in progress to relocate the hatchery closer to the resort.

Armed with a permit to collect turtle eggs, trained volunteer staff have been combing the beaches to collect eggs for incubating in this hatchery. Hatchlings will eventually be released into the sea with the hope that some day the turtle population will be restored.

A six-month turtle conservation awareness campaign was organised in 2002. Some of the activities included were (also see Box: WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP TURTLE CONSERVATION):

- Turtle conservation exhibition held in the lobby for one month.
- Distribution of free car stickers & information on turtles.
- Screening of turtle conservation documentary.
- Daily turtle hatchery tour.
- Organised trip to turtle hatchery for schools.
- Contests & Games.
- Beach cleaning.
- Turtle tracking on remote islands

**WETLANDS PROJECT**

Wetlands are low-lying ecosystems where the water table is always at or near the surface. The wetlands are divided into estuarine and freshwater systems, which may be further subdivided by soil type and plant life into bogs, swamps and marshes.

Because wetlands have poor drainage, the area is characterised by sluggish or standing water that can create an open-water habitat for wildlife. Wetlands help to regulate the water cycle, filter the water supply, and prevent soil erosion.

More significantly, however, wetlands serve as spawning and feeding grounds for many endangered animal and plant species in Malaysia.

Only 5% of the earth's surface is wetlands, out of which more than 22 million square foot of land in Summerset is wetlands. Summerset's main role in the wetlands project is to promote appreciation and understanding of the vital role wetlands and coastal ecosystems play in the survival of life on this planet.

**CORAL REEFS PROJECT**

Another important natural beauty facing the threat of extinction is the coral reefs. Many people are not aware that coral reefs have many other useful aspects apart from being beautiful. They provide natural protection against waves, are a reservoir of medicinal value, and play a key role in the preservation of biodiversity and maintenance of marine resources.

Coral reefs play a major role as a wave-breaker to protect the shoreline from erosion. Dead corals are also broken down to form fine sand, which replace the ones washed away. Recent medical research has found that selected coral reefs contain chemicals to treat herpes and certain cancers. In fact, they have also been used as a substitute for bones since 1982.

 Destruction of these coral reefs may threaten the world's undiscovered biodiversity. We may lose many potential sources of food, chemicals and medicines. Apart from these, reefs being the breeding ground for many different types of marine species support the commercial fishing industry.
which supplies food and jobs to the people.

Summerset identifies with the important contributions of coral reefs to mankind and, therefore, seeks to restore this beautiful and amazing marine life form. It is currently working to stimulate the growth of artificial reefs off the coast of Summerset.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
Summerset provides environmental education to all its guests. These environmental education activities can be tailor-made for students, adults or as part of a team building activity. Some of the interesting rainforest activities can be seen in the Box on INTERESTING RAINFOREST ACTIVITIES.

VALUE FOR MONEY FOR THE EXPERIENCE
The Summerset resort is striving to be an environmentally conscious resort. It adheres itself well to the definition of ecotourism by respecting the surrounding nature as well as reaping economical benefits from its operation as a resort.

Activities and attractions at the resort are indeed environmentally friendly. Nevertheless, for as long as there is human contact with nature, effects would be present. This being the case, the resort tries its best to minimise the negative effect of its activities. However, a point to note is that Summerset should seek the advice on more ecological aspects and increase its abatement measures in order to go hand-in-hand with mitigation of abatement measures of flora and fauna.

The management at Summerset plays an important role in ensuring that the elements of safety, health and environment are present at the resort.

Chew believes that Summerset Colonial Hotel & Villas is dedicated to providing environmental solutions that will position it as a leader in the hotel industry of the 21st century.

“Our actions would demonstrate that we care about preserving the environment for future generations. We see no conflict between business goals and social and environmental needs. We believe the distinction between a good hotel and a great one is this: A good hotel delivers excellent hospitality services; a great one delivers excellent hospitality services and strives to make the world a better place”. The management of sensitive ecosystems in the ecotourism context can in one way protect a country’s heritage and make it available for local education and tourism. The investment in such facilities is usually repaid through tourists who come in larger numbers and stay longer because there are more things to see and do and, at the same time, be contented that the sustainability of the site has been looked into.

The environment is the resource base for tourism; without protection, the natural attraction that brings the tourist in the first place will be lost. Ecotourism is the leading edge of a change in tourism. With the new phenomena towards sustainable management, the business of ecotourism will be more important than ever.

Let us hope that more and more resorts would follow the noble approach of Summerset in making the world a better place for generations to come.
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Do's & Don'ts

Srikanth V. Nott
General Manager of Philips Consumer Electronics, Malaysia