

SPECIES

Scientists estimate that millions of species of flora and fauna remain unknown, especially in this region. A vast number are constantly being discovered. From this week, the National Parks Board and the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research will reveal what they've uncovered here



PHOTO: NPARKS

NATIVE TO SINGAPORE: The last surviving Sealingwax Palm (*Cyrtostachys renda*) was found in a small swamp in the western part of the island.

"AS THE emblem of the Singapore Botanic Gardens, the Sealingwax Palm is an icon for the nation. The last surviving one here has been discovered in a small swamp in the western part of the island, but its exact location is being kept under wraps. For many years, it was uncertain if this palm was really native to Singapore, even though it is commonly grown as an ornamental plant.

But a German drawing published in 1876 showed it growing about 130 years ago in swamps at Changi. The palm found recently is also believed to be native as it is growing together with a cluster of other very rare plants characteristic of peat swamps. Most swamps here, previously at Kranji, Jurong, Mandai and Tuas, are now gone, which may mean there are no others. NParks hopes to harvest its seeds, so it can ensure that the genetic stock of the species survives long into the future."

SENIOR BIODIVERSITY OFFICER YANG SHUFEN, Biodiversity Centre, NParks