

Ant-ventures: A 17-year-old Student's Unique Hobby

by Nicolas Kwek Yu Cheng

Diploma in Media, Arts and Design (Specialising in Story and Content Creation)

Singapore Polytechnic

For most people, ants are nothing more than pests. However, for 17-year-old student and Ant Hobbyist Junyang, they are fascinating creatures which serve as a fun hobby and serve as his gateway to the wonders of the natural world.



(Junyang reconnecting with nature on a trip to Australia, where he could enjoy his hobby and explore his passion. Photo by Jun Yang's Mother, Phay Ling)

Humble Beginnings

His unique interest first sparked on YouTube, where he came across a video by YouTuber AntsCanada, and watched it just for fun.

“So eventually, I caught on from his interest and I started to become interested in ants myself and I like to discover how they are such interesting insects as well.” he recalls.

Over time, his interest grew and diversified, and he began to dive deeper into the intricacies of ant behavior, looking at plants and how ants interact with the environment as a whole.

He is currently studying in Ngee Ann Polytechnic's Diploma in Landscape Design and Horticulture, a course which he was inspired to take thanks to his hobby.

A Memorable First Step

Among his many ant-related experiences, Junyang recalls his most memorable experience - a time he

travelled all the way to Yishun to visit an Ant shop, Just Ants.

“I believe it was the first time I was able to go out on my own... I never really went to any other place on my own.” he recounts, sharing about why this experience was sentimental to him.

Though he didn't buy anything, he found it interesting to look around and observe how the various ants work together in a colony.

Observing ants is one of the things which make the hobby unique for him as compared to other pastimes. When he observes ants, he feels relaxed and focused, and is able to take his mind off other things.

He is also part of a Telegram channel called Singapore Ants, sharing that despite not owning an ant colony, he still greatly enjoys watching other hobbyists discuss and share information, and has learned many new things from them.

How Ants shaped his World

Junyang's fascination with ants has also profoundly impacted his life.

In his course and CCA, the Horticulture Club, he met many like-minded people and close friends. He enjoys sharing his experiences with them, and learns new things from them too.

However, his unique hobby has not only helped him form meaningful friendships but also strengthened his interest in biology and the sciences.

“It really strengthened my interest in doing something, doing a course that is more outdoor.” he explained.

His love for observing ants has deepened his understanding and knowledge of such subjects. In his course, he is able to enjoy lessons which are not confined to the classroom and go on learning journeys, allowing him to truly explore his passion.

Challenges of a Unique Hobby

Having such a niche hobby also comes with its own set of challenges.

Junyang struggles to find rare ants as Singapore is highly urbanised, often venturing to nature reserves in order to find them. On one trip, he managed to spot a *Dynomyrmex Gigas*, a rare species of ants, showing that with determination, nothing is impossible.



(Photos of Weaver Ants taken by Junyang while observing ants. Photo by Jun Yang)

He also faces discrimination from others due to his peculiar hobby.

“So when people find it weird, sometimes they make fun of it. And I did get made fun of before when I was sharing about my hobby.” he says.

Sharing a piece of good life advice, he says that he eventually learned to disassociate himself with all the negative comments, hence not letting it affect him.

Looking Ahead

“I believe it's already diversified and perhaps it will just keep getting stronger”

Junyang plans to deepen his interest in the natural world, and has aspirations of continuing plant research, believing that his passion would continue growing stronger.

He also wishes to maintain his own ant colony, something which he has been unable to do due to his parent’s disapproval.

As climate change worsens and we become more technologically advanced, he emphasises on a strong need to keep up conservation efforts, sharing his hopes for the nation's future.

“(I) just hope that Singapore can continue to keep up with biodiversity and conservation efforts. I think that's definitely something that's really important”

Junyang’s interests are more than just a fun hobby for him - It symbolises his commitment and journey of self-discovery and learning.