Project Update: March 2023

We faced significant delays in receiving our research permits, allowing us to begin data collection only in March 2022, instead of October 2021. Despite this, I am happy to share with you the progress and insights we have gained so far:

1. As mentioned in our proposal, we identified 27 trails in South Andaman Island, across forest types and disturbance levels.

2. We sampled each of these trails seven times from March to May 2022 to estimate bird densities, bringing our sampling effort to a total of 94.5 km.

3. From this data, we were able to estimate densities of several important frugivorous and endemic birds across evergreen and deciduous forest types. Furthermore, we were able to analyse patterns of occurrence of 32 commonly encountered bird species and draw correlations with forest type and level of (timber/woody plant) extraction.

4. Our initial results find that although the two forest types (evergreen and deciduous) are spatially adjacent/close to each other, their composition of birds differ marginally. While some birds (such as, Andaman treepie and white-headed starling) are present in higher densities in deciduous forests (also logged and extracted), birds such as Asian fairy-bluebird are more abundant in evergreen forests.

5. We have two team members on board who are from the local community. They have been well trained in bird identification and field methods. They are an integral part of the field team and collect data with us. As part of capacity building, we have also mentored one intern, and one masters' student from the islands, who completed his MSc dissertation with us the previous year.

6. Our second session of data collection began after the monsoon rains, in November 2022. We are now collecting information on plant-frugivore interactions (through tree watches), fruit availability and woody plant density. We are also continuing to monitor a subset of the bird trails. We will continue data collection until the monsoon rains in May 2023.