

Patrick Cannon AMRSB**Borneo Rainforest Project - Danum Valley field centre, Sabah, Malaysian Borneo**

Thanks to the Royal Society of Biology's travel grant, I have spent the last three months working as a research assistant for the Borneo Rainforest Project within Danum Valley Conservation Area (DVCA). At 130 million years old, the lowland dipterocarp forests of Danum Valley are amongst the oldest and most complex in the world. Home to a plethora of fauna and flora, including a stunning diversity of Borneo's 400 plus resident bird species, the area spans both primary and selectively logged forest, offering a unique chance to study the effects of logging on this hyper-diverse ecosystem.



Entering its third year, the project headed by Dr David Edwards, aims to determine (1) the impacts of logging on long-term biodiversity value; and (2) the impacts of logging on the reproductive physiology of birds.

Left: Black and crimson Pitta (Erythropitta ussheri)

This work is essential in addressing how populations retained within logged forests will change over time. Whether the majority of populations persist and recolonise, rebuilding intact forest community composition or merely decline. Broadening our understanding of the lasting conservation value of logged forest and its use within conservation, is vital to the preservation of these hyper-diverse ecosystems and their wealth of biodiversity that currently seems to be moving inexorably towards extinction.

Additionally, the project has proved highly valuable for my personal development. The significant duration of the project and experienced team enabled me to drastically enhance my prior mist-netting skills. Including set-up, running of nets, extracting, handling and identification of birds, all within a research orientated environment. Furthermore, I gained additional skills in aging and sexing of individuals using plumage, feather condition, brood pattern and cloacal condition. The skills and experience gained from this project have enabled me to become a competent and independent member of an experienced research team, culminating in an invitation to be involved in the projects 2017 field season.

During the season, the project was included in a documentary series by Discovery channel Asia incorporating our work and those of others concerned with the decline in Borneo's wildlife. This experience, including a one-on-one interview, provided a superb opportunity to communicate science to a far reaching audience.

Despite numerous 04:00 starts, a close encounter with a bull elephant and waking up to a Malay weasel in my bed, the experience has been utterly brilliant. I thank the Royal Society of Biology for their generous funding, for which this experience would not have been possible, and highly recommend that anyone wanting to experience a taste of biological research apply for a 2017 travel grant.

