

## Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic Bird Communities on Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong, Philippines

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**Abstract** - The study assessed the Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic bird communities of two mountains in Agusan del Norte – Canticol, Tubay and Mt. Hilong-hilong, Remedios T. Romualdes (RTR) from September to November, 2008 using eight-minute fixed-radius point counts. Habitat variables included vegetation structure, elevation, slope and incidence of anthropogenic disturbance. Non-linear regression analysis and AICc model selection were used to determine the habitat variables that influence the richness and abundance of endemics in the two sites. Canticol had lower mean density of large and medium trees and higher degree of anthropogenic disturbance than Mt. Hilong-hilong. There were 31 Philippine-endemic birds (four threatened) and three Mindanao-endemics (one threatened) on Canticol while there were 39 Philippine-endemics (seven threatened) and six Mindanao-endemics (three threatened) on Mt. Hilong-hilong. The diversity of endemics was significantly higher on Mt. Hilong-hilong ( $H'=2.31$ ). The study suggests that the two sites need conservation attention to prevent forest loss and endangerment of the threatened endemics. Vegetation structure and elevation had the greatest influence on the endemic bird communities in the two sites. Adequate regeneration of the disturbed sites in the region must also be prioritized as part of a long-term management strategy.

**Keywords** - richness, abundance, habitat, threatened, avian communities

## INTRODUCTION

South-East Asia has the highest relative rate of deforestation which has adversely affected its rich and unique biodiversity (Sodhi et al.,

2005). The Philippines exemplifies the dire situation for biodiversity in Southeast Asia (Posa et al., 2006), where the country's remarkably high endemism (Peterson et al., 2000, Peterson 2006) and extensive deforestation and severe loss of natural habitats has made the country a global conservation priority (Myers, 2000). The Philippines as a whole has lost 93% of its forests since 1900 (Onget et al., 2002) and the country ranks second in terms of its annual forest loss in South-East Asia and seventh in the world from 2000 to 2005 (Echanove, 2008). Land use changes such as deforestation, forest fragmentation and agricultural expansion resulting in habitat loss have been identified as major threats to avian biodiversity (Brooks et al., 2002 and Sodhi, 2004). Within the Philippines, Eastern Mindanao has been declared as one of the largest remaining blocks of tropical lowland rainforest (Conservation International, 2008). However, much of the remaining lowland dipterocarp forest is within logging concessions (75% of the country's timber comes from this area) while mining operations proliferate throughout the Eastern Mindanao Biodiversity Corridor (CEPF, 2001).

The Eastern Mindanao Biodiversity Corridor houses 196 bird species of which 91 (46%) are Philippine-endemics which is more than half (51%) of the country's total number of endemic birds and has 22 threatened species (PEF 2008). However, even basic quantitative assessments of habitat and impacts of forest loss and other habitat disturbances on the forest biota such as the Philippine and Mindanao-endemic avifauna have been scarce (Posa et al., 2006). The scarcity of the studies of these endemic bird communities makes it difficult to determine the response of these endemics and other forest inhabitants to various anthropogenic habitat alterations. Hence, in this study, the Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic bird communities were investigated on the two mountains in Agusan del Norte particularly Canticol, Tubay and Mt. Hilong-hilong, RTR which are expected to contain several endemics.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to (1) assess and compare the habitat characteristics of the two sites (2) determine and compare the species

richness, abundance, diversity, distribution and the status of the Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic birds of the two sites (3) determine the influence of the various habitat variables on the abundance and richness of the endemics and on the abundance of the various feeding guilds in the two sites and (4) determine the implications of the findings for conservation and land use management.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Areas

Study sites were located in Canticol in between Tubay and Santiago and on Mt. Hilong-hilong, RTR (Fig. 1). Both of the study areas were situated in Agusandel Norte, Region 13, CARAGA, Mindanao, Philippines. Canticol lies at the northwest of Agusan del Norte (09°13'17.1"N 125°38'47.2"E) facing the municipality of Santiago on its north and Dona Telesfora, Tubay on its south. Canticol is made up of heterogeneous vegetation including grassland (two sampling points), early secondary growth (nine points), advanced secondary growth (12 points) as well as old growth forest (17 points). There has been no documentation of the ecological, geographical and geological profile of Canticol including its flora and fauna. Our habitat classification is based on the dominance of large trees and the unique characteristics of stand structure including tree size, age and spacing of trees and the various stages of succession after logging (Gonzales-Salcedo, 2001). The areas surveyed had an altitude range of 1,030-1,505 m in Canticol.

Mt. Hilong-hilong lies on the boundaries of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur and Surigao del Sur provinces, in the northern portion of the Diwata range of northeast Mindanao (9°06'N 125°43'E) (Birdlife International 2008). The mountain includes mostly montane forests however lowland forests can also be found (Mallari et al., 2001). The climate of Mt. Hilong-hilong is characterized by no pronounced dry season (PEF 2008). Since Mt. Hilong-hilong is too wide to be sampled rapidly, sampling was only done in the RTR section, Agusan del Norte (09°05'20.3' N 125°42'03.2" E). All of the 44 sample points on Mt. Hilong-hilong were classified as old growth with an elevation range of 1,115-1,810 m.

## Bird Surveys

A preliminary survey was conducted in the two study areas during June – August, 2008 to gain familiarity with the habitat characteristics, existing bird species and to establish survey points. A total of four, 2-km lines were established in each study area. Each line was divided into 10-11 sampling points placed every 200 m. There were 40 sampling points on Canticol which covered various habitat types while there were 44 sampling points on Mt. Hilong-hilong which covered only the old growth.

Surveys were conducted in September to November 2008. Eight-minute fixed-radius point counts were used in each study area between 500 to 800 hours when the bird activity was assumed to be highest. Each survey was carried out under similar weather conditions i.e. no strong winds and no heavy rain (Venegas, 2000). At every sampling point, all birds encountered (either seen or heard) within 30-m radius were recorded by the same two observers as above. Upon arrival at the sampling point, an additional minute was allotted for resting before commencing the count. Each point was surveyed twice whereby counts were repeated the following day in reverse order, starting from the farthest end of the line at dawn to minimize bias associated with time of day. Bird species were recorded, and the abundance of birds at each sampling point from the two surveys was summed.

Species richness and similarity of endemic bird communities in the two sites was determined by calculating Sorensen's similarity (abundance-based) using SPADE software (Chao & Shen, 2009). Diversity in each sampling point in the two sites was determined using Species Diversity and Richness Software (Heanderson & Seaby, 2001). Shannon-Wiener index was used to represent the bird species diversity because it is the most commonly used diversity index (Cheng, 1999). Mann-Whitney U tests were used to compare mean differences between the two mountains in the richness, abundance and diversity of the pooled Philippine-endemics and Mindanao-endemics only. Moreover, the endemics were classified according to feeding guilds following Round et al. (2006).

## Habitat Assessment

Nine variables were measured including the number of trees >40 cm diameter at breast height (dbh), 21-40 cm dbh, 10-20 cm dbh, percentage of shrubs, percentage of herbs, percentage of bamboo, elevation, slope, and presence/absence (+/-) of disturbance (defined below). Habitat measurements were taken at every sampling point using a modified habitat assessment procedure of Heaney (1986). Vegetation measurements were recorded within 10 m and 20 m radius circular plots. The number of trees within a specific size (dbh) group was quantified in each sampling point using a dbh tape measure. The tree size range that was assessed within 20 m radius circular plots at each sampling point was >40 cm dbh and the tree size ranges that were assessed within the 10 m radius circular plots: 21-40 cm dbh and, 10-20 cm dbh. The percent cover of shrubs, herbs and bamboo were assessed by estimating their percentage cover within a 10-m radius of each sampling point. The elevation of each sampling point was determined using an altimeter. The geographic coordinates of each sampling point were recorded using an etrex Vista HCx Garmin GPS. The degree of slope at the sampling points was determined using a clinometer. The specific type of site disturbance was identified through visual observation and interviews with local people. Presence or absence of disturbance was recorded as 0 = undisturbed and 1 = disturbed. The specific type of forest disturbance (e.g. mining, logging, burning of trees, etc.) was also noted.

Mann-Whitney U-tests were used to test for significant differences between the two sites for all of the above habitat variables. The percentage data (shrubs, herbs and bamboo) was arcsine transformed prior to analysis. We used a Z-test to compare the degree of disturbance (the proportion of sites disturbed) between the two sites (Sheskin, 2000).

## Habitat models

Non-linear regression (Poisson family) was used to determine the habitat variables that most influenced the species richness and negative binomial family of non-linear regression to assess the habitat effects on abundance of the Philippine-endemics and Mindanao-endemics.



The habitat and the endemic bird data from Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong were pooled for the non-linear regression analysis. Candidate models were defined for the species richness and abundance of the endemics by using Akaike’s Information Criterion corrected for small samples (AICc) (Burnham and Anderson, 1998). Explanatory variables were entered into models in the following combinations: (1) each of the individual variables run separately to determine the influence of each individual variable, (2) vegetation variables only, (3) vegetation and topographic variables, and (4) vegetation, topographic and disturbance variables. The top models were evaluated based on the lowest AICc scores and the strength of evidence indicated by the model weights,  $w_i$  (Johnson et al., 2004). We evaluated models by using differences in AICc values, with  $\Delta AICc < 2$  indicating nearly equivalent support between models (Burnham and Anderson, 1998). Relative importance weights were determined by summing AIC weights of all models containing each respective variable and comparing these sums proportionally (Burnham and Anderson, 1998).

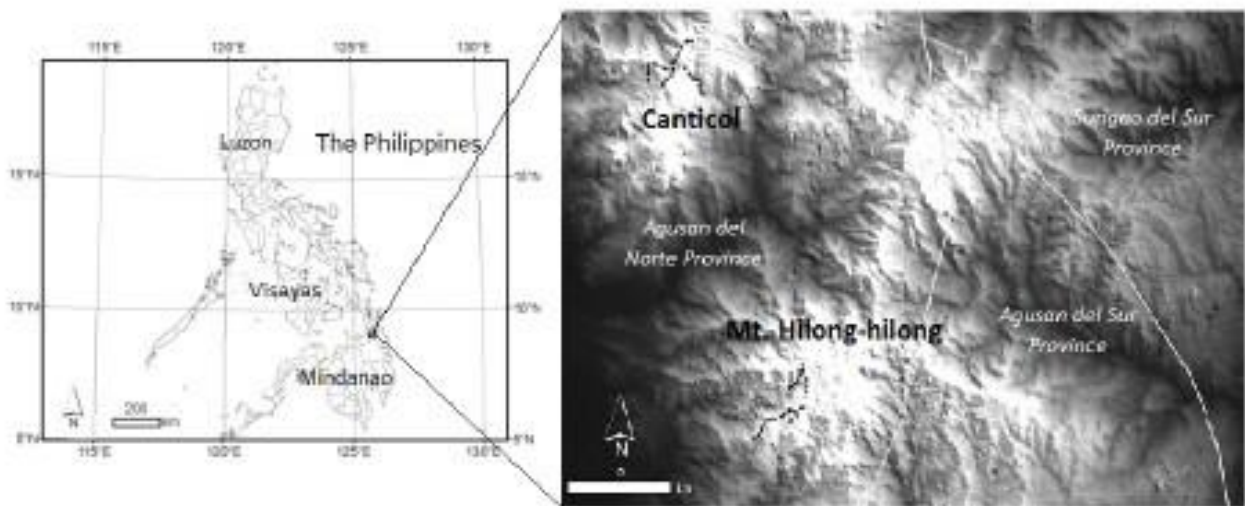


Fig. 1. Map showing the two sampling sites, Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Habitat characteristics

Four of the six vegetation variables tested were significantly different between Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong (Table 1). Mt. Hilong-Hilong

had significantly higher mean densities of large trees (>40 cm dbh) and medium-sized trees (21-40 cm dbh). There were no trees >160 cm dbh recorded in Canticol. Mt. Hilong-hilong had significantly greater values for percent herb cover ( $P = 0.003$ ) and bamboo ( $P = 0.025$ ). In terms of the topographic attributes, Mt. Hilong-hilong was at significantly higher elevation than Canticol. The two sites showed no significant difference in mean density for small diameter trees (10-20 cm dbh), percentage shrub cover and slope. The significantly lower mean value for large trees (>40 cm dbh) and medium trees (20-40 cm dbh), the absence of >160 cm dbh trees in Canticol and the disturbance index implied recent tree extraction and that more sites were in early stages of regeneration and generally more disturbed relative to Mt. Hilong-hilong. The variability of the vegetation characteristics between Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong can be attributed to the varying topographic characteristics and types and extent of anthropogenic disturbances in the two sites.

Moreover, Canticol is significantly lower in elevation compared to that of Mt. Hilong-hilong making it more accessible to local people which is especially important as this is a mineral-rich area. Hence, the results revealed that there was a significantly lower incidence of disturbed points on Mt. Hilong-hilong than on Canticol (Table 1). The anthropogenic disturbances (70% of the points) identified in Canticol included small-scale gold mining operations such as tunneling and gold panning, cutting of trees for mining tunnels, firewood and for houses of the miners and bird hunting.

The increasing human population on Canticol if not given due attention, would most likely increase the level of tree extraction in the remaining forest especially the advanced secondary growth and the old growth. Additionally, the people in the area were also observed resorting to bird hunting for food (D. Abrinica pers. comm. 2008). This might eventually harm the bird community as well as the habitat for other forms of wildlife.

On the other hand, Mt. Hilong-hilong is explicitly more well-known than Canticol. Aside from being the largest block of the country's remaining dipterocarp forests and one of the important bird areas in the country, it is also part of the Eastern Mindanao Biodiversity Corridor and it is one of the priority biodiversity conservation areas



in the Philippines (PEF 2008). Although Senate Bill 1066 declaring Mt. Hilong-hilong as a protected area is pending (DENR-Caraga unpublished), restrictive management has been imposed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Caraga in the said area. Hence, only very minimal anthropogenic disturbance (39% of the sampling points) was observed such as abaca stripping (due to abundant wild abacca on the lower montane areas), rattan collection and selective tree cutting to provide the locals with firewood and housing materials. Moreover, the inaccessibility of Mt. Hilong-hilong probably also accounts for the lesser anthropogenic pressures in the area including the absence of large-scale logging or small-scale mining activities.

Table 1. Untransformed (means ± standard deviations) habitat characteristic measures in Canticol (n = 40 sampling points) and Mt. Hilong-hilong (n = 44 sampling points), September–November, 2008

Habitat Variables	Canticol	Mt. Hilong-hilong	Mann-Whitney (P)
>40 cm dbh trees	5.3±5.0	11.5 ± 7.2	<0.001
21-40 cm dbh trees	7.8 ± 5.9	21.3±10.3	<0.001
10-20 cm dbh trees	15.6± 10.6	16.1± 10.2	0.736
Shrubs (%)	55.8 ± 11.1	54.1 ± 10.9	0.791
Herbs (%)	38.2 ± 10.8	47.0 ± 12.1	0.003
Bamboo (%)	8.8 ±16.2	9.6 ± 9.3	0.025
Elevation (m)	1248.8 ± 156.1	1353.6 ± 173.3	0.007
Slope (degree)	27.1 ± 12.0	28.3 ± 7.7	0.774
Incidence of disturbance	28/40 = 70%	17/44 = 38.6%	0.004 <sub>a</sub>

<sup>a</sup> Test for comparing two proportions Z = 2.87

### Bird Community

Canticol and Mt.Hilong-hilong had a total of 51 endemics of which 43 were Philippine-endemics and eight were Mindanao-endemics (Table 2). There were a total of 733 individuals detected on Canticol

of which, 674 detections were Philippine-endemics and 59 were Mindanao-endemics and there were a total of 830 individuals detected on Mt. Hilong-hilong of which, 657 detections were Philippine-endemics and 173 detections were Mindanao-endemics. Using abundance-based Sorensen's index, the similarity of the endemic bird communities in the two sites was 94.6% with 28 bird species shared between the two sites with a lower estimated number of endemic species on Canticol (Chao1 =  $37 \pm 2.5$  species, 95% CI: 35.3–48.3 species) than Mt. Hilong-Hilong (Chao1 =  $47 \pm 2.6$  species 95% CI: 45.3–59.4), although the difference was not statistically significant.

There were three species of near-threatened Philippine-endemic birds, one near-threatened Mindanao-endemic and one vulnerable Philippine-endemic on Canticol. On Mt. Hilong-hilong, there were three near-threatened Philippine-endemics, two near-threatened Mindanao-endemics, three vulnerable Philippine-endemics, one vulnerable Mindanao-endemic, and one endangered Mindanao endemic observed (Table 2). *Buceros hydrocorax* (0.54%) had the highest relative abundance among the threatened Philippine-endemics on Canticol, and there was only one observation of the threatened Mindanao endemic, *Otus mirus* (0.14%) on Canticol. *Buceros hydrocorax* (2.2%) had the highest relative abundance among the threatened Philippine-endemics while *Phapitreron brunneiceps* (0.84%) had the highest

Table 2. List of Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic bird species recorded, number of individuals, habitat types and feeding guilds on Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong during September to November 2008.

Habitat Type	OG	OG	OG	OG	-	OG	OG	0	OG
Mt. Hilong-hilong Relative Abundance %	0.12	1.70	0.60	0.48	0	2.20	0.72	0	4.00
Number of Individuals	1	14	5	4	0	18	6	0	33
Habitat Type	-	EESG,ASG,OG	ESG,OG	-	ESG	ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG
Canticol Relative Abundance %	0	1.80	0.41	0	0.14	0.54	0.68	0.27	3.30
Number of Individuals	0	13	3	0	1	4	5	2	24
IUCN, 2011 Category	NT	LC	LC	LC	LC	NT	LC	LC	LC
Feeding Guild (Round et al., 2006)		insectivore/omnivore/arbore/arivore	insectivore/omnivore/arbore/arivore	insectivore/omnivore/arbore/arivore	insectivore/omnivore/arbore/arivore	arboreal insectivore	terrestrial feeder	terrestrial feeder	insectivore
Scientific Names	Aethopyga boltoniae Mearns 1905	Aethopyga pulcherrima Sharpe 1876	Aethopyga shelleyi Sharpe 1876	Parachnoetheres carae Sharpe 1890	Bradypterus caudatus Buehl 1895	Centropus melanotos Lesson 1830	Centropus viridis Scopoli 1786	Collocalia troglodytes G.R. Gray 1845	

OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	-	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG
0.72	0.96	1.80	1.70	0.72	0	2.30	0.84	0.60	0.24	0.12	0.48	12.80	0.24	
6	8	15	14	6	0	19	7	5	2	1	4	106	2	
-	ASG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	GRL,ESG,ASG,OG	-	-	-	-	ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	
0	0.27	1.90	1.40	1.90	0.27	2.2	0	0	0	0	0.68	4.10	1.80	
0	2	14	10	14	2	16	0	0	0	0	5	30	13	
LC	NT	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	V	NT	V	V	LC	LC	LC	
insectivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	sallying insectivore	terrestrial feeder	insectivore	insectivore	arboreal frugivore	
Dendrocopos maculatus	Dicaeum anthonyi	Dicaeum anthonyi	Dicaeum anthonyi	Dicaeum anthonyi	Dicaeum anthonyi	Dicaeum anthonyi	Ducula carola	Ducula carola	Ficedula basile	Gallicolumba criniger	Harpactes ardens	Hypocryptadius cinnamomeus	Hypsipetes everetti	
1786	1914	1783	1783	1783	1783	1783	1854	1844	1877	1853	1826	1903	1877	

Table 2 continued

-	OG	OG	-	OG	-	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG
0	9.80	6.50	0	9.60	0	0.24	13.60	0.12	1.30	0.48	0.84	0.84	2.90
0	81	54	0	80	0	2	113	1	11	4	7	7	24
ASG	GRL,ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ASG	ESG,ASG,OG	OG	-	ESG,ASG,OG	-	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	-	ESG,ASG
0.14	9.40	3.80	0.14	26.9	0.14	0	25.10	0	1.20	0	0.81	0	1.10
1	69	28	1	198	1	0	185	0	9	0	6	0	8
NT	LC	LC	LC	LC	NT	LC	LC	LC	LC	E	LC	E	LC
sallying insectivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	insectivore raptor	insectivore	insectivore	insectivore	insectivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore

Table 2  
 continued

Hypsipetes philippinus  
 1903  
 Hypothymis helenae  
 1890

Lophozosterops goodfellowi  
 1903  
 Loriculus philippensis  
 1776

Hartert Macronotus philippensis  
 1877

Otus minor  
 1894

Pachycephala leucotis  
 1894

Pachycephala homeyeri  
 1890

Pachycephala philippinensis  
 1872

Walkamethys affinis  
 1877

Phapitreron amethystina  
 1856

Phapitreron leucotis  
 1823

Bournoniops Temminck  
 1823

OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG	OG
3.40	6.30	0.36	1.10	0.84	0.12	0.48	0.48	0.24	0.72	1.70	0.48
28	52	3	9	7	1	4	4	2	6	14	4
ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG	ESG,ASG,OG 0	ESG,OG	ASG,OG	-	0	0	ASG	0	OG	ASG
5.20	1.4	0	0.27	0.95	0	0	0	0.27	0	0.95	0.27
38	10	0	2	7	0	0	0	2	0	7	2
LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	NT	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC
	arboreal insectivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	insectivore	arboreal frugivore	arboreal frugivore	sallying insectivore	arboreal insectivore/fru- givore	arboreal insectivore	arboreal insectivore/fru- givore	arboreal insectivore/ frugivore
Phylloscopus olivaceus 1891	Prioniturus discurus 1822	Ptilinopus sechellius 1855	Ptilocichla indanensis Bourcier 1899	Ptilinopus occipitalis Gray and Mitchell 1894	Phylloscopus leucogenis Grant 1895	Rhinomyias goodfellowi Grant 1905	Chabortonia ornatus Grant 1895	Abdornis ogilvi 1886	Abdornis temminckii 1825	Rhipidura nigrocinnamomea Hartert 1903	Rhipidura supercliaris Sharpe 1877
											Sarcops calvus Linnaeus 1876



OG	OG		
0.36	2.04	100	
3	17	830	
ASG	-		
0.14	0	100	
1	0	733	
V	LC		
Raptor	insectivore		
Spizaetus philippensis Gould 1863	Stachyris capitalis Tweeddale 1877		Total # of endemic species of the two sites = 52 (7 <sup>a</sup> and 45 <sup>b</sup> ) Total # of threatened endemics of the two sites = 14 (Canticol= 4 NT (8 ind); 2 V (5 ind) ; Mt.Hilong-hilong = 5 NT (36 ind.), 4V (13 ind) , 2 E (11 ind)
	Total		

Mindanao-endemic;  
<sup>b</sup>Philippine-endemic  
 (those in bold are threatened endemics)  
 ESG – Early Secondary Growth

V-  
 Vulnerable  
 OG - Old Growth

LC – Least concern  
 E - Endangered

ASG – Advanced Secondary Growth  
 NT – Near threatened

<sup>a</sup>

relative abundance among the threatened Mindanao-endemics on Mt. Hilong-hilong. It was also found that there were more species and individuals of threatened endemics on Mt. Hilong-hilong (10 species with 55 individuals) than on Canticol (five species with 7 individuals).

There was a total of 57 species including non-endemics, 45 genera, 21 families and 11 orders of birds with a total of 1,155 detections recorded on Canticol. There were 31 species (54.4%) of Philippine endemics, three species (5.3%) of Mindanao endemics, and 23 species (40.4%) were not endemics. Among the non-endemic birds, 19 species were resident breeders, one species was a resident migrant and three species were migrants or winter visitors (Fig. 2).

On the other hand, 82 bird species belonging to 57 genera, 31 families and 10 orders with a total 1,205 individual detections were recorded on Mt. Hilong-hilong. Of the total species encountered on Mt. Hilong-hilong, 39 species (47.6%) were Philippine-endemics, six species (7.3%) were Mindanao-endemics, and 37 species (45.1%) were non-endemics. Among the non-endemics, 35 species were resident-breeders and two species were migrants. There were no resident-migrant species recorded during the study in this area.

The species richness and abundance of endemics per sample point on Mt. Hilong-hilong was not different from Canticol (Mann-Whitney  $U = 876.5, 861.5, P = 0.89, 0.97$  respectively). However, the diversity per point on Mt. Hilong-Hilong (mean  $2.83 \pm SE 0.05$ ) was significantly higher than on Canticol (mean  $2.31 \pm SE 0.04$ ) (Mann-Whitney  $U = 156.5, P < 0.001$ ). The significantly lower diversity of endemics in Canticol could be explained by its higher incidence of anthropogenic disturbance (70%). The identified disturbances in Canticol are forms of biomass extraction which may cause significant changes in forest structure and plant composition (Sagar & Singh, 2004) which in turn may affect species composition of endemic avifauna and lower bird diversity in disturbed sites (Shahabuddin & Kumar, 2006). Birds with small geographical ranges have been shown to decline in abundance following disturbance more significantly than other groups (Gray et al., 2007) and island-endemic birds are thought to seldom use disturbed habitats due to their evolved morphological and behavioral characteristics resulting in their specialized preference for specific

natural forest resources (Blonde, 2000). Habitat disturbances in Caticol might adversely affect the vegetation structure, which in turn affect the diversity of endemic birds by reducing overall habitat quality and food availability. For example in Sri Linka, Wijesinghe and Brook (2005) indicated that endemic species had a distinct preference for the less disturbed forest while the non-endemic species manifested greater ability to utilize human-modified habitats. The significantly higher density of large trees >40 cm dbh may have perhaps contributed to the complexity of the vegetation structure on Mt. Hilong-hilong which according to Leito et al. (2006), can increase niche diversity of birds. The results indicate the need to regularly monitor the level of disturbance on Caticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong. Moreover, the sensitivity of the endemic birds to the specific type and extent of the habitat disturbance needs be investigated further.

Forest species and many specialist endemic species with high conservation priority are highly intolerant of disturbance (Martin & Blackburn, 2010). In this study, Caticol had higher richness and abundance of threatened endemics than Mt. Hilong-hilong and it was found that most of the threatened endemics were observed in the advanced secondary and old growth forests in both sites. Likewise, in Karakelang, Talaud Islands, Indonesia, Riley (2003) found that all endemic and threatened birds occurred at higher densities in primary forests suggesting the need for conservation efforts on these areas. According to Posa (2006), knowing that forest disturbance negatively affects endemics, preserving mature forests should be the primary concern of Philippine conservation efforts. A huge part of this tropical landscape is already degraded and now requires urgent actions for the mitigation of human impacts on tropical forest birds as well as other groups of organisms (Sodhi et al., 2008).

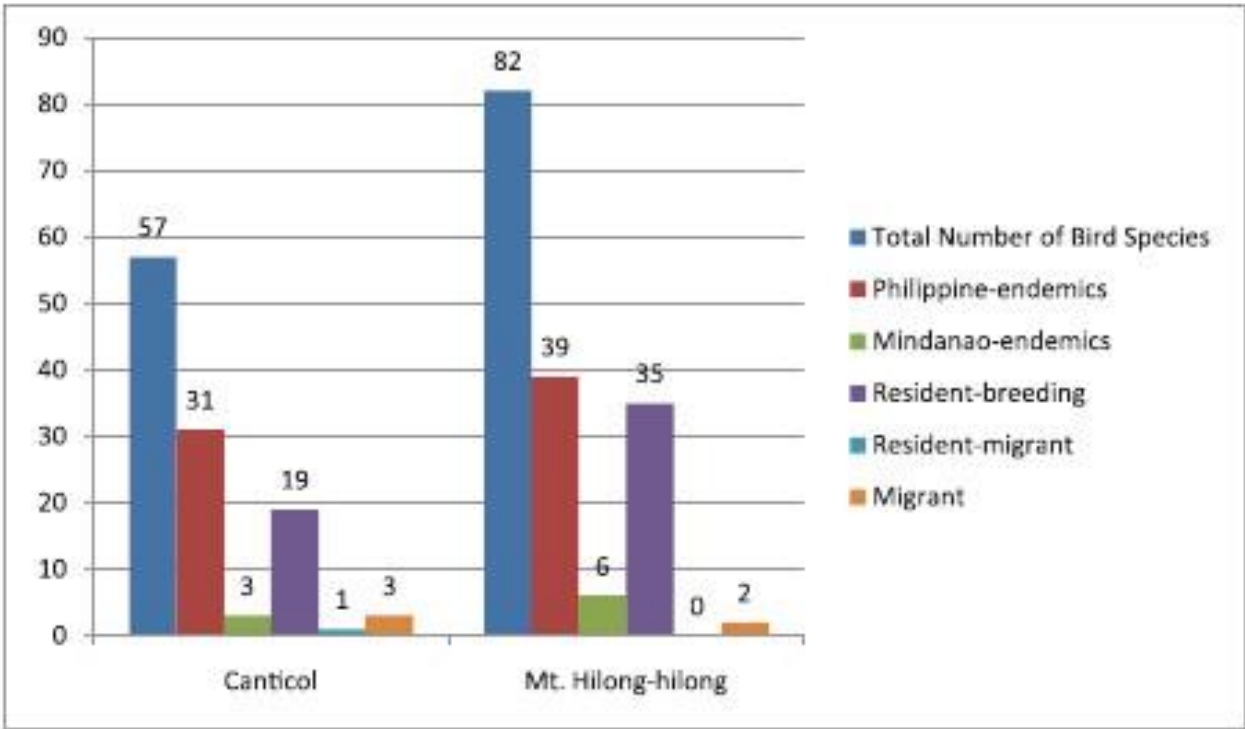


Fig.2. Bird community measures (total number of species, number of Philippine-endemics, Mindanao-endemics and the non-endemics) of Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong

Habitat Selection Models

Model selection indicated that the best models included elevation and trees >40 cm dbh suggesting that increasing number of large trees was associated with increased species richness and abundance while increasing elevation was associated with decreasing richness of endemic birds (Table 3 & 4). Based on AIC weights, elevation had the highest relative importance with regards to the species richness of endemic birds while number of trees (10-20 cm dbh) and (>40 cm dbh) had the highest weights respectively in regards to endemic bird abundance.

Table 3. Non-linear regression models of habitat attributes influencing the species richness and abundance of Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic birds of the two mountains, Caticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong

Species richness' models	$\Delta AICc$	$w_i$
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.20 (>40 \text{ cm dbh}) - 2.04(\text{elev})$	0.00	0.22
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.07(\text{shr}) + 0.48(\text{her}) + 0.35(\text{bam}) - 1.51(\text{elev})$	1.47	0.10
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.07(\text{shr}) + 0.38(\text{her}) + 0.52(\text{bam})$	1.51	0.10
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.20(>40 \text{ cm dbh}) - 2.0(\text{elev}) + 0.13(\text{slop})$	1.84	0.09
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.26(\text{shr}) + 2.58 (\text{her}) + 1.61 (\text{bam}) - 7.68(\text{elev}) + 0.59(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	2.06	0.08
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.08(\text{shr}) + 0.39(\text{her}) + 0.46(\text{bam}) + 0.12(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	2.24	0.07
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.21(\text{dist}) + 0.17(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	2.33	0.07
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.01(\text{shr}) + 0.46 (\text{her}) + 0.82 (\text{bam}) - 1.82 (\text{elev}) - 0.16 (\text{dist})$	2.35	0.07
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.01(\text{shr}) + 0.48 (\text{her}) + 0.13 (\text{bam}) + 0.14 (10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh}) - 1.92(\text{elev}) - 0.18 (\text{dist})$	3.34	0.04
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.22(\text{dist})$	3.34	0.04
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.20 (>40 \text{ cm dbh})$	3.37	0.04
Abundance' models		
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.45 (>40 \text{ cm dbh})$	0.00	0.29
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.35(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	0.82	0.19
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.45(>40 \text{ cm dbh}) - 0.95(\text{elev})$	1.64	0.13
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.17(\text{dist}) + 0.36(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	2.07	0.10
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.41(\text{shr}) + 0.35(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	2.35	0.09
$Y = \beta_0 - 0.40(\text{shr}) + 0.63(\text{her}) + 0.35(10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	2.98	0.07
$Y = \beta_0 + 0.45(>40 \text{ cm dbh}) - 1.03(\text{elev}) - 0.1(\text{slop})$	3.78	0.04
$Y = \beta_0 - (\text{shr}) + (\text{her}) + (\text{bam}) + (10\text{-}20 \text{ cm dbh})$	4.04	0.04

dbh = diameter breast height; elev = elevation; shr = shrubs; her = herbs; bam = bamboo; slop = slope ; dist = disturbance)

Results imply that the community structure of Philippine-endemic birds on Caticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong is influenced by vegetation

structure and elevation. Results suggested that as the number of large trees increased, richness of Philippine-endemics also increased. Large trees may also provide a variety of resources for birds such as arthropods in bark, dead woody tissues and in the dense epiphytic layer that covers most of the tall branches (Silleet, 1994) as well as their flowers and fruits. While understory structure (shrub, herb, and bamboo cover) was positively associated with species richness and abundance as shown elsewhere (Reid et al., 2004; Chettri et al., 2005; Scott et al., 2005). The disappearance of the undergrowth vegetation due to clearing and disturbance can result in significant habitat limitations for birds (Camprodon & Brotons, 2006). This suggests the importance of trees in structuring forest habitats and in providing trophic resources such that the combination of both large and small tree class sizes along with a complex understory may produce increased foliage height diversity, diverse microhabitats and niches, higher overall resource availability and shelter from weather and predators that cater to the greatest number of species and a greater abundance of endemic birds (MacArthur and MacArthur, 1961; Hildén, 1965; Hulbert, 2004; and Kessler et al., 2005).

It was also found that increasing elevation was associated with decreasing species richness which corroborates with studies of Terborgh (1971, 1977) and Kattan & Franco (2004). Declines in forest area, abundance of invertebrates, changes in environmental conditions, extent of competition, types of resources and community composition at increasing elevations can explain declines in species richness (Terborgh, 1971; Beehler, 1981; Janes 1994; Blake & Loiselle, 2000). Towards higher elevations, the height of woody vegetation decreases which can reduce the extent of vertical stratification of vegetation structure which most likely reduce the diversity of microhabitats available to birds (Klosius, 2008). Likewise, Goerck (1999) found that the forests at lower elevations were structurally more complex and more diverse in plant species than those along the slopes and at higher elevations and the structurally more complex forest at low elevations along the Atlantic forest of Brazil contained the most diverse avifauna, including several of the rarest and most threatened species.



Table 4. Summary of relative importance weight of eight variables influencing the species richness and abundance of Philippine and Mindanao-endemic birds of the two mountains, Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong

Parameters	Richness	Abundance
>40 cm dbh trees	0.35	0.46
10-20 cm dbh trees	0.33	0.48
Shrubs	0.50	0.19
Herbs	0.49	0.10
Bamboo	0.46	0.04
Slope	0.09	0.04
Elevation	0.60	0.17
Disturbance	0.22	0.10

### CONCLUSION

The presence of the threatened Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic birds in Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong indicates the conservation value of both areas. The study revealed that vegetation structure and elevation influence the endemic bird communities in the two sites. Canticol which was found to have significantly higher incidence of anthropogenic disturbance still houses five threatened Philippine-endemics and one threatened Mindanao-endemic and therefore, needs conservation attention to prevent loss of forest cover and threatened endemics. Equally important, adequate regeneration of the disturbed sites in the region must also be prioritized as part of a long-term management strategy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey may be considered a baseline study on Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic birds which could be used for more specific and more intensive bird-habitat studies in the CARAGA region and in the country. Understanding the effects of forest habitat heterogeneity and structural complexity on different guilds of endemic

birds and specialized habitat choice, specific sensitivity and tolerance of the threatened endemics to various disturbances may help facilitate the formulation of a more robust conservation management plan.

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Fig. 3. Panoramic View of Canticol, Tubay, Agusan del Norte.



Fig. 4. Panoramic View of Mt. Hilong-hilong, RTR, Agusan del Norte.



Fig. 5. Habitat Assessment in one of the sampling points on Canticol.

Some Philippine-endemic and Mindanao-endemic Birds on Canticol and Mt. Hilong-hilong, Philippines



Fig. 6. Macronous striaticeps (Philippine-endemic)  
Brown-tit Babbler





Fig.7. *Aethopyga boltoni* (Near-threatened Mindanao-endemic)  
Apo Sunbird



Fig. 8. *Rhipidura nigrocinnamomea* (Philippine-endemic)  
Black and Cinnamon Fantail



Fig. 9. *Rhabdornis inornatus* (Philippine-endemic)  
Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis



Fig. 10. *Centropus viridis* (Philippine-endemic)  
Philippine Coucal





Fig. 11. Harpactes ardens (Philippine-endemic)  
Philippine trogon



Fig. 12. Parus elegans (Philippine-endemic)  
Elegant Tit



Fig. 13. *Sarcops calvus* (Philippine-endemic)  
Coletto



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