

EDITORIAL

More than a year has passed since Professor Navjot Sodhi, a profound researcher and outspoken lecturer who championed conservation ecology for more than a decade at the National University of Singapore (NUS), lost his battle to blood lymphoma on the 12 Jun.2011. The great loss of this beloved colleague, a fearless spokesperson of tropical and global conservation, was echoed by numerous leading ecologists and conservationists, many of whom were either his former students or colleagues (see <http://www.facebook.com/RememberingNavjotSodhi>). Navjot had the peculiar habit of wearing his cap backwards, but in truth he was always looking forward and had great foresight in conservation biology research. The greatest example is that he always believed that “conservation biology” was meant “for all” and so he did just that by making a book of the same name he co-edited freely available to the public (see <http://www.mongabay.com/conservation-biology-for-all.html>). This is particularly important in the face of global climate change and its influence on socioeconomics and ecosystems, and how governments and individuals can and should react.

In this special issue of the Raffles Bulletin of Zoology, we honour his work with 24 research articles and reviews, penned by colleagues as well as former and present students of Navjot. These represent a glimpse of the broad and diverse spectra of Navjot’s approach to conservation biology: from ecology and taxonomy to social sciences and policy making that affects various biomes (e.g., forests and mangroves) and includes a diverse array of organisms such as snails, giant clams, insects, crustaceans, birds, fishes, and man.

Two of us (Lian Pin and Tien Ming), who have been fortunate to be mentored closely by Navjot, wrote an obituary outlining his outstanding achievements and contributions to conservation science. Maribeth Erb, a colleague and sociologist at NUS, provides a review on how different types of “environmentality”, such as governance, influence different environmentalisms, the philosophies and social movements associated with conservation, in Eastern Indonesia.

The remaining papers have been broadly categorised under two main research areas, namely conservation ecology and taxonomy. Liow Lee Hsiang, a former student, describes how an empirically driven paleobiological model can have important implications for conservation. Giam Xingli (another former student) and David Wilcove (a collaborator) examine the geographical bias and illustrate the scale of international collaborations in conservation research within Southeast Asia. Iris Motzke, Thomas Wanger (a former student), Teja Tschamtker (a collaborator) and others examine the impact of socio-economic conditions on biodiversity conservation in Cambodia. Daniel Friess, N. Sivasothi, Edward Webb (all colleagues) and others describe the zoological and wider ecological importance of the research conducted in Mandai mangrove forest, northwest of Singapore.

Neo Mei Lin and Peter Todd (a colleague) look at the history of giant clams in Singapore, examining the various anthropogenic factors that cause a decline of giant clam population, and discuss conservation strategies to protect them. Jeffery Kwik (a colleague) studies the effectiveness of culling as a controversial approach of population control in intertidal venomous marine fishes on Sentosa Island, Singapore. Brett Scheffers (a current student), Cynthia Paszkowski (Navjot’s post-doctoral mentor) and colleagues evaluate the influence of spatial configuration and scale on pond-breeding frog species distribution in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Lochran Traill, Thomas Wanger, and David Kidd study the life history, ecological and anthropogenic correlates of bovid population declines worldwide.

Lee Wan-Jean, a former student, highlights the threats to the sedimentary benthic habitats of the Southeast Asian region. Zeehan Jaafar, Darren Yeo, Tan Heok Hui, and Ruth O’Riordan (all colleagues) evaluate the status of estuarine and marine non-indigenous species and examine the three most important pathways of their introduction in Singapore. James Guest, Chou Loke Ming, and Beverly Goh (all colleagues) investigate the reproductive seasonality of Singapore’s coral reefs in response to environmental variation. Adrian Loo (a colleague) led his students to look at the widely-known intimate relationship among ants, rattans, and aphids but otherwise previously undocumented association on a Singapore context.

In addition, Enoka Kudavidanage, Lan Qie, and Janice Lee (all former students) examine the impacts of habitat disturbance and resulting changes in biodiversity on ecosystem function, focusing on Southeast Asian dung beetles from Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore. Lan Qie, Susan Lim (a collaborator) and other workers explore the viability in the radical approach of assisted dispersal and colonisation by introducing dung beetles into previously uninhabited area in a fragmented forest system at Lake Kenyir, Peninsular Malaysia. Yong Dingli (a former student), David Lohman (a former post-doctoral student), and colleagues compare butterfly diversity of land-bridge islands and control sites at Lake Kenyir, Peninsular Malaysia.

The following papers focus on Navjot's primary research organisms: the birds. Allison Begley, Brian Gray, and Cynthia Paszkowski evaluate whether avian species richness and assemblages differ between natural and restored wetlands in the Aspen Parkland region of Saskatchewan 3–8 years post restoration. Chong Kwek-Yan, Subaraj Rajathurai (a collaborator), Lim Haw Chuan (a former student) and Hugh Tan (a colleague) examine human impacts on avian communities by looking at decadal changes in urban bird populations in Singapore. Berton Harris (a former student), Frederick Sheldon (a collaborator) and colleagues find that several avian species on Mount Kinabalu, East Malaysia shift their elevational range based on historical and current data of bird distributions from diverse data sources. Kelvin Peh, Malcom Soh, Charlotte Yap (former students), and Cagan Sekercioglu (a collaborator) assess the relative importance of various species traits (e.g., breeding phenology and clutch size) in determining the altitudinal specialisation of Southeast Asian tropical birds.

The final four papers are on taxonomy, where three have honoured Navjot by naming new species and genera after him. Reuben Clements (a former student) and Tan Siong Kiat describe a new genus and species of land snail from Peninsular Malaysia. Peter Ng (a colleague) diagnoses a new sesarmid species from Guam. Darren Yeo and Peter Ng establish a new genus for three species of freshwater crabs from South Asia. Tan Heok Hui describes a new tiger barb fish species from Central Kalimantan, Borneo, Indonesia.

Navjot's hard work and persistence is not in vain; he leaves behind a strong legacy, and will always be an inspiration to fellow researchers and students, future conservationists and biologists. Although conservation biology has lost a crusader in Navjot, we hope that this collection of papers will serve as an inspiration for scientific research in all fields of ecology and conservation science.

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Editors