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Food items of Oriental Pied Hornbills *Anthracoceros albirostris* discovered from their faeces indicate their adaptability and potential human interaction in Datai, Langkawi

Teik-Yuan Soo, Ravinder Kaur & Felicia Chung

Summary Report:
Observations were conducted at Teluk Datai, Langkawi, Malaysia in 2023. The main aim of staying around Teluk Datai area for two weeks was to collect Oriental Pied hornbill's (OPH) *Anthracoceros albirostris* faeces in addition to observing their behaviour. The period of observation was within the post-breeding season of the OPH.

The study site was nestled within a rainforest where animals seem to be already habituated to the presence of humans. The team observed animals such as the Monitor Lizard, Dusky Langur, OPH, Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*, and others could move as close as two meters to human beings. Hence, several resting spots for the OPH to perch were easily located just within the study site instead of venturing deep into the forest.

We found two locations with faeces and eaten fruit on leaves or the pathways. Through the two weeks, a total of six samples were collected; four wet samples and two dry samples (Plate 1).

Plate 1: An example of OPH faeces in wet (left) or fresh and dry (right) conditions

During the field study period, not many observations were observed in terms of adult OPHs feeding their juveniles. One foraging behaviour observed was OPHs eating the fruit of the Fishtail Palm *Caryota mitis*. On the other hand, from shotgun sequencing carried out on faecal samples, a method that unbiasedly sequences all DNA found in samples, we found that during nonbreeding season, they consume more plants instead of small animals (such as insects, reptiles, amphibians or other birds). The two most popular plant families found in faecal samples were of Moraceae (fig family) and Malvaceae (non-fig family). Some insects, such as aphids and fig wasps, were also detected, but they may have been accidentally consumed when the OPHs were feeding on the fruits from the plants. Interestingly, common foods eaten by humans such as rice, wild grape, white mulberry, wheat, and white yam were also detected from their faeces. This indicates that OPH might be consuming food from the garbage dump with food waste or from hand feeding; the former circumstance being more likely.

By knowing the diet or favourite food of animals, not limited to OPH, conservation and replantation of those specific trees may facilitate the population growth with abundant food sources. These valuable findings could be used by the forestry department and wildlife conservation teams, or serve as feeding guidelines for captive breeding programmes by zoos. This method to understand the OPH diet may be useful for other genus such as the more endangered species such as Helmeted Hornbills *Buceros vigil*, Wrinkled Hornbills *Rhabdotorrhinus corrugatus* and others.

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