

Project Update July 2025

Rufford I.D.: 43907-1

Project Title: The Role of Evolutionary Potential to the Conservation of Frugivorous Birds and Its Implications for Seed Dispersal in the Atlantic Forest

Update: It took me a little longer than expected to write this update because I've been focused on my PhD qualifying exam, which involves presenting a paper. In my case, I wrote about the relationship between evolutionary potential and species' responses to anthropogenic change. I hope to publish it next year.

Now, regarding the fieldwork: one of my campaigns was covered by a Brazilian TV network (TV TEM, an affiliate of Rede Globo). It was a very enriching experience and helped bring the project beyond academic circles. The report is available at this link: <https://globoplay.globo.com/v/13678624/>. The monthly campaigns are ongoing and have been successful. Since April 2025, I've been setting up the banding stations in public areas with low to moderate foot traffic, which has facilitated direct engagement with the local community. This strategy worked especially well in May (photos attached), and we have already carried out some bird releases with visiting groups (video also attached).

Now that I am finalising the qualifying exam, I would like to better structure these activities aimed at visitors and schools. Given the positive response so far, I have developed a proposal to expand scientific and environmental outreach activities in the Serra do Japi, where the existing infrastructure makes this more feasible. This idea emerged through conversations with the superintendent of the Serra and the person in charge of scheduling visits, both of whom expressed interest in a partnership between my work and the environmental education team at the reserve. Although this wasn't part of the original plan, I believe it's an incredible opportunity, as the site already has an established structure and the team is very open to collaboration. For visitors walking the trails with accredited guides, the plan is to maintain open dialogue and distribute a leaflet on conservation. This material would cover four topics: bird banding, evolution and conservation, why the Serra do Japi should be protected, and which bird species are commonly seen in the region.

In addition, I was informed that school visits to the Serra have become rare due to lack of funds for transport, which reflects a broader structural inequality in Brazil. With this in mind, I would like to develop a specific initiative aimed at public schools. The local team shared the case of Guardinha de Jundiá, an institution that supports

adolescents and young people aged 14 to 22 who are in vulnerable or high-risk situations. The target audience includes students or former students from public schools who have gone through youth social programmes, are recipients of income support policies such as Bolsa Família, have experienced child labour, or have disabilities. More information is available on their website: <https://guardinhajundiai.com.br/quem-somos/>.

Over the course of a few days, we expect to welcome around 400 young people from the institution. Since the Serra do Japi already has a well-organised structure, this initiative would be carried out with support from the local team. They have already provided a preliminary estimate of transport costs and are willing to coordinate all the logistics. This greatly reduces my workload and makes the proposal feasible within the scope of the project.

The idea is to integrate this activity into the existing programmes run by the Serra's management. The students would be split into two groups. One would join me for bird banding and an introduction to the scientific method, while the other would take part in guided walks led by the Serra team. In addition to showcasing the handling and release of birds, the aim is to involve them in practical activities such as bird identification, data recording, and understanding how and why this information is used in research. This is particularly relevant for this audience, who are in transition to higher education or the job market, and for whom contact with science and conservation is still quite distant. Exposing them to these possibilities can help open new perspectives for education and career paths.

The budget adjustment request stems from two points. First, I've secured additional funding from the British Ecological Society and Idea Wild, which made some of the originally planned equipment unnecessary. This allows me to reallocate those resources to the outreach component. Second, the results of the pilot work indicated that sampling effort needed to be increased. I am now working with 20 nets and the support of an experienced assistant, and we have also been increasing the number of days in the field each month. This has been particularly necessary in urban areas, where capture rates are lower and the dynamics change monthly in challenging ways. Once the July campaign is completed, I plan to build species accumulation curves to assess whether further adjustments will be needed.