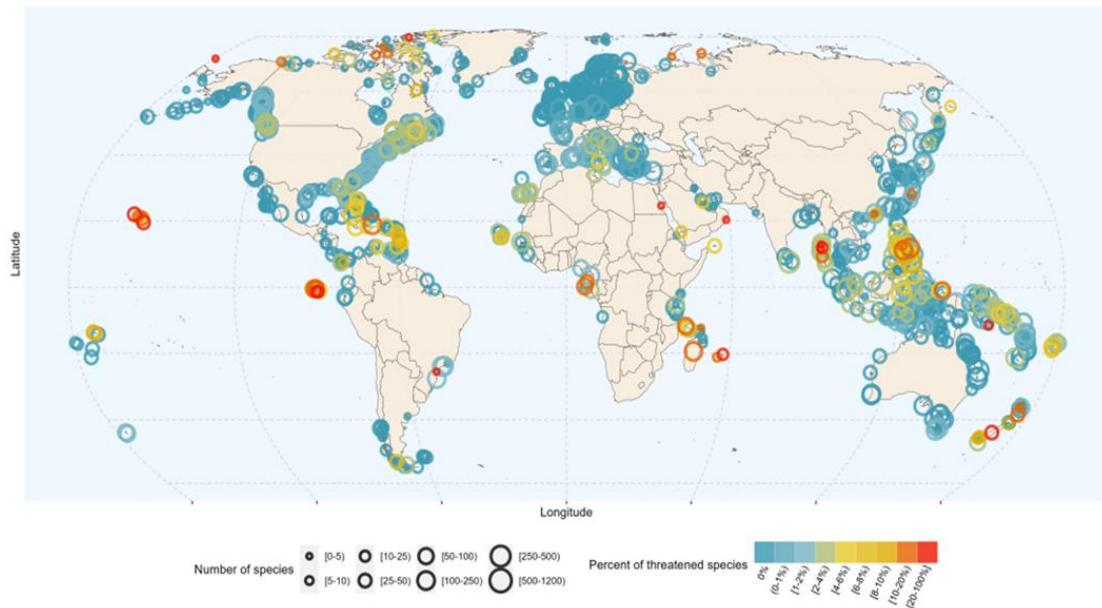


Master Thesis

Identifying Human Threats to Small-Range Species on Islands

Islands host a disproportionate share of the world's biodiversity but are also among the most severely impacted biotas globally. Nearly half of all island-endemic bird species are already extinct or currently threatened, reflecting the high vulnerability of insular species to human pressures. Island characteristics such as area, isolation, and environmental conditions shape species richness and are closely linked to the prevalence of small and isolated populations. Species with restricted geographic ranges, particularly common on islands, are therefore more sensitive to anthropogenic impacts, regardless of their current conservation status. Although many small-range species are classified as threatened under IUCN range-based criteria, the local human pressures they face are often poorly quantified.

This master's thesis project will assess how different human impacts influence the distribution and vulnerability of small-range bird species across islands. The student will work with a global dataset combining bird occurrence, IUCN Red List assessments, and detailed geographic, environmental, and land-use data. There will also be opportunities to integrate additional anthropogenic and socioeconomic information, including land-use change, human population density, connectivity infrastructure, and introduced species. The project aims to clarify how multiple human pressures shape extinction risk and inform more targeted conservation strategies.



Starting date: variable. For EEC students, the thesis can be combined with a specialisation module.

Prerequisites: Good understanding data handling and analyses in R. Experience with spatial data in R and macroecological analyses. Interest in Red List assessment process, island biogeography and conservation concepts. Good written and spoken English skills.

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