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Mammalian wildlife diversity in rubber and oil palm plantations

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Abstract

In the face of globally diminishing natural habitats in biodiversity-rich regions, agricultural landscapes around protected areas have increasingly gained importance as extended habitat for wildlife species. Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) and oil palm (*Elais guineensis*) plantations are two of the dominant land-use systems in Southeast Asia that have seen a tremendous expansion over the last decades. Despite far-reaching ecological consequences of these intensively cropped monocultures on natural ecosystems, relatively little is known about their utilization by wildlife populations. With this review we want to give an overview of mammalian diversity in rubber and oil palm plantations with reference to human-wildlife conflicts occurring as a result of overlapping resource use. We searched the literature for studies on wild mammalian diversity in rubber and oil palm plantations and found 17 publications. We considered 29 additional publications that provided information on single species in such plantations. We discuss the potential of 'wildlife-friendly' farming for mammalian assemblages in plantations and its importance in the case of rubber and oil palm production. Our review showed that most wild mammal species found in these plantations were likely to be visitors that use cultivated landscapes as fringe habitat but some adapted well to plantations and few even became resident. We conclude that although plantations in the tropics and subtropics cannot substitute for forests and the preservation of natural habitats is indispensable, the reality of ongoing forest degradation and transformation into plantations will make wildlife-friendly farming a key strategy in maintaining mammalian diversity, particularly in land-use matrices surrounding natural habitats.