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Coastal Hill Dipterocarp Forests: what can they us about the ecology, evolution and conservation of Asian tropical forest ecosystems?

Shawn Lum

Natural Sciences and Science Education Academic Group, National Institute of Education, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616

Coastal hill dipterocarp forests are a variant of the vast rainforest belt that once clothed the lowlands of the Sunda region, an example of which still survives in Singapore in the isolated forest fragment that is the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. A 2-ha long-term forest dynamics plot was set up in Bukit Timah in 1993 in an attempt to understand the viability of the forest, with an additional two hectares of secondary forest coming under study in 2004. The survey has now been extended to cover all large trees of the reserve, in an effort to better monitor the long-term dynamics of the forest. In addition to understanding the dynamics of core primary forest at Bukit Timah, the study has permitted an examination of the effects of forest fragmentation, patterns of forest succession and perhaps even the role that coastal hill dipterocarp forests may have in elucidating the evolutionary history and biogeography of the forests of the Sunda region.