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Bird Species Diversity along a Successional Gradient in a Costa Rican Cloud Forest

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**BIRD SPECIES DIVERSITY ALONG A
SUCCESSIONAL GRADIENT IN A COSTA RICAN CLOUD FOREST**

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Bird species diversity differs from habitat to habitat, and a number of methods have been employed to explore the reasons for the variations. The purpose of this study was to document bird species diversity in four study sites of different stages of succession. The hypothesis was that highest bird species diversity would be found in the most structurally complex habitat. A detailed census of life forms, canopy height, DBH's, and bird species was conducted during November, 1998. The average number of life forms, the mean total abundance of life forms, percent ground cover, canopy height, DBH size classes, and bird diversity were all found to vary significantly from site to site. A positive correlation was found between the successional stage and bird species diversity. Canopy height, life form variety, and habitat heterogeneity seemed to have the biggest effect on bird diversity. These results have implications for various conservation practices, specifically those involving land being maintained as secondary growth.