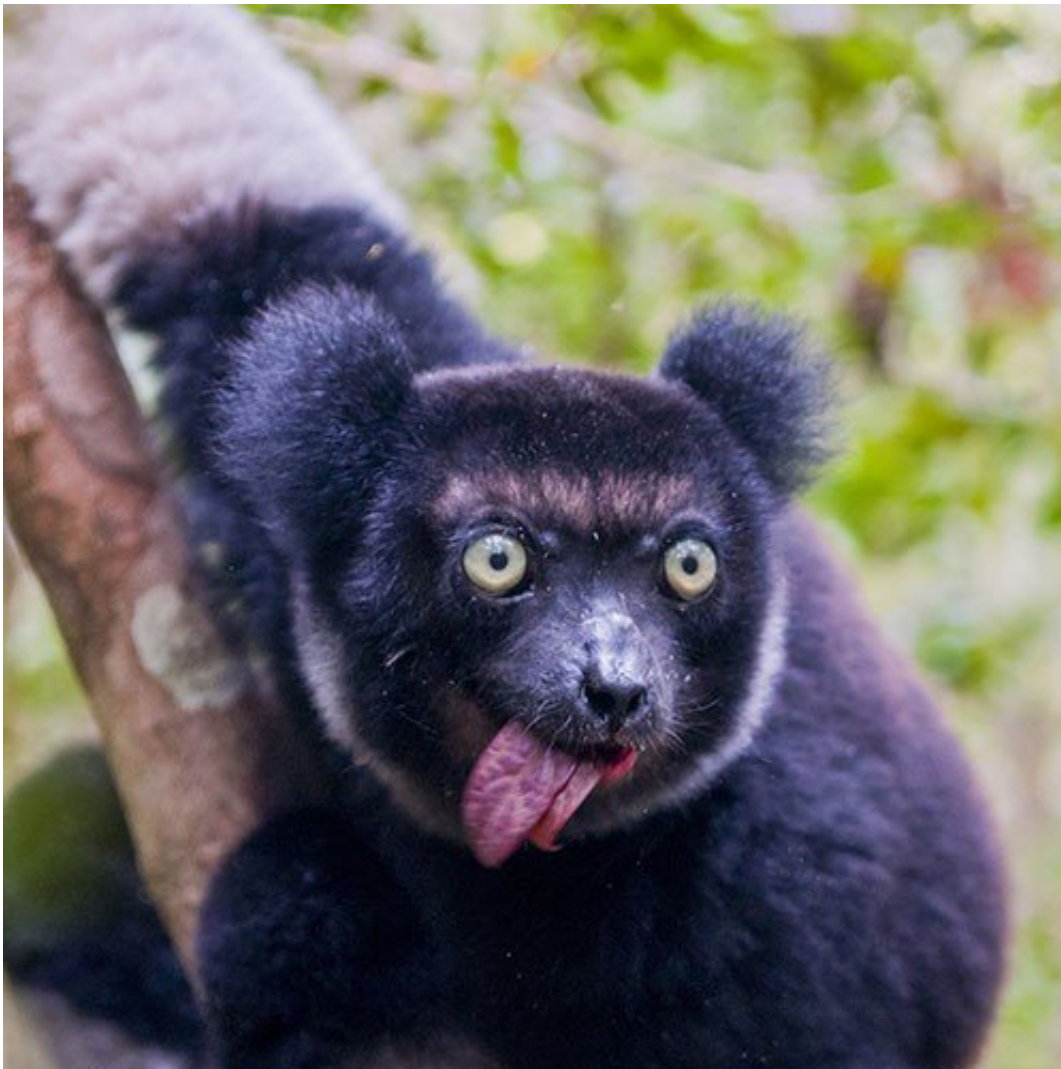# Scientists, wildlife DJ, hip-hop archivists create 'BeastBox'

February 26 2018, by Hugh Powell

Indris located on Madagascar. Credit: Cornell University

Musicians have long drawn inspiration from nature, but a new online game is taking that connection one step further. "[Beastbox](#)" takes sound clips from real wild animals, transforms them into loops, and allows users to mix and match them into an endless variety of beats, breaks and drops. Along the way, players learn about the animals and the ecosystems they belong to.

The free game is the result of a collaboration among the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Cornell Hip Hop Collection and Ben Mirin, a sound artist and beatboxer whose career as a "wildlife DJ" inspired the project.

"'BeastBox' is a surprise mashup brought to you by scientists, musicians, designers, animators and coders," says Mya Thompson, leader of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Bird Academy project. "It's dedicated to the idea that we could all use a few minutes to appreciate our musical planet. When I first met Ben Mirin, I knew we could take his wildlife DJ concept to a new level – and 'BeastBox' is what came out."

By bringing [animals](#) from the same ecosystem together on the virtual stage, players can unlock "Beastmode" and control the moves of animal characters as they dance to Mirin's music. Each bonus track is created exclusively from sounds recorded in six ecosystems including the Madagascar rainforest, the Great Barrier Reef and the Sonoran desert. Fun for all ages, "BeastBox" celebrates the musicality and biodiversity of our planet and encourages fans of music to become fans of wildlife.

"BeastBox" highlights two of Cornell's world-renowned collections: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library and the Cornell Hip Hop Collection. The Macaulay Library is the world's premier scientific archive of natural history audio, video and photographs. Many of the sounds players encounter in the game are archived in the library. Players who complete at least one ecosystem puzzle win the opportunity to download 20 wild animal sounds from the Macaulay Library [collection](#).

Founded in 2007, Cornell's Hip Hop Collection is the largest research archive on hip-hop culture in the world and is part of Cornell University Library's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. "BeastBox" players are encouraged to browse the archive to better understand the cultural roots of beatboxing and hip-hop.

Provided by Cornell University