



PHOTOS BY MERLIN TUTTLE of BAT CONSERVATION INT'L



COMMONWEALTH of the
NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS

Farallon de Pajaros (Uracas)

Maug
Asuncion

Agrihan

Pagan

Alamagan

Guguan

Sarigan

Anatahan

Farallon de Medinilla

Saipan
Tinian
Aguiguan

Rota

* Distribution in the CNMI

* Locally extinct

ENDANGERED

MARIANA FRUIT BAT

Fanihi
Chamorro

Pai'Scheei
Carolinian

IDENTIFICATION

Adult Mariana fruit bats weigh about one pound with a wingspan of about three feet. They have dark brown to black wings. Their heads are brown with a gold or pale brown neck region.

HABITAT and FEEDING

Endemic to the Mariana Islands and Ulithi Atoll, the fruit bat forages and roosts in native forests and other forest habitats. Fruit bats are social animals that live in colonies consisting of up to several hundred members. They spend their days resting upside-down and grooming one another. They depart their colony around dusk and forage until dawn.

Mariana fruit bats feed on the fruits of many native trees including pandanas (Kafu), breadfruit (Lemai and Dukduk), *Neisosperma* (Fagot) and cycads (Fadang). They also feed on the flowers of many plants including kapok, coconut and coral trees (Gaogao).

REPRODUCTION

Mating occurs throughout the year in established regular roosting territories. Females take about eighteen months to reach sexual maturity. They produce only one young at a time after a seven month gestation period. Mothers nurse their young for at least three months from nipples located in their armpits.

THREATS and CONSERVATION

Illegal hunting is a significant threat to the Fanihi as they have been a traditional cultural delicacy in the CNMI for over one thousand years. The introduction of firearms made it much easier to hunt the Fanihi.

The Mariana fruit bat is sensitive to human disturbances. In areas where they are hunted, bats have been observed abandoning their roosts due to poachers. When the colony is disturbed by gunshot, young bats clinging to their mothers accidentally fall off as the bats frantically scatter.

Habitat destruction is another factor in the decline of the Fanihi population. Feral goats, pigs and cows are destroying native vegetation. Development has also cleared native forest that was used for foraging and roosting.

The Mariana fruit bat is locally listed as an endangered species due to the decline in population. Under local law it is illegal to hunt the fruit bat anywhere in the CNMI. It is also illegal to discharge any weapon within five hundred meters of a known, occupied bat roost. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to have the Mariana fruit bat listed as a Federally threatened species and efforts for conservation are being made.



Pteropus mariannus

PHOTO BY SCOTT YOGT

BAT OR BEE?

The fruit bat is an important pollinator and seed disperser in the native forests.

FACTOID!



This project was funded by a grant under the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, administered by the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Lands and Natural Resources. For further information contact CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife, Lower Base, P.O. Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950; 670-664-6000.