



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



PHOTOS BY SIZANNE CHACON



ENDANGERED • ENDEMIC

MARIANA CROW

Aga *Chamorro* Mwii'lup *Carolinian*

IDENTIFICATION

The Mariana crow is an all black bird with a bluish-black tail. The adult weighs about nine ounces (250g) and is about fifteen inches (38cm) long.

HABITAT and FEEDING

Mariana crows are rare forest birds that are endemic to the Mariana Islands. This species is a source of pride because it only exists on Guam and Rota. The crow population on Guam is almost eliminated. On Rota, a small population remains.

They live in native and secondary forests where they use emergent trees. Crows are omnivorous, feeding on both plants and animals. They eat fruits, seeds and flowers. They forage for insects on the ground and in trees, using their beaks to break off bark to expose the insects. They also feed on lizards, birds, eggs, hermit crab, shrews and rats.

REPRODUCTION

The Mariana crow is a long-lived bird that takes a lot of time to raise young and care for each other. Mating pairs and family groups of Mariana crows will often be seen together foraging for food and grooming one another.

Crows like to nest in the native forest trees such as *Premna* (Ahgao), *Neisosperma* (Fago) and *Elaeocarpus* (Yogga). Mating pairs build nests that are quite complex, consisting of a

platform built between branches of trees with the real nest on top. Both the male and female spend time sitting on the eggs until the chicks hatch. The usual clutch size is one to two eggs. They are territorial and become agitated and often squawk loudly when an intruder approaches the nest. Young crows will stay with their parents for up to a year before they leave on their own. This is an unusually long period of parental care.

THREATS and CONSERVATION

Threats to Mariana crows are habitat loss and degradation. They are vulnerable in areas where much of the native forest has had mammals introduced or been altered by humans. Crows are very sensitive to environmental change because of their fairly specific habitat requirements. Predators such as rats, cats and monitor lizards reduce crow nesting success.

The Mariana crow is a protected native forest bird in the CNMI. Snake traps and detection dogs aid in keeping the Brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*) from invading the islands. To keep the Mariana crow from becoming extinct, its habitat needs to be protected and attempts must be made to encourage the population to grow. To help revitalize the Guam population, several eggs or chicks are donated to Guam's captive breeding program from Rota each year. Protection from predators and setting aside crow habitat are two projects starting in 2003 that will help to save Rota's unique bird.



ARTIST DOUGLAS PRATT

Corvus kubaryi

FLOWN THE COUP

Sensitive to the slightest disturbance, crows have been known to abandon up to 8 nests during one breeding season.

FACTOID!



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