



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 DFW and SCOTT VOIGT



ENDANGERED · ENDEMIC
MICRONESIAN MEGAPODE

Sasangat Chamorro Sasangal Carolinian

IDENTIFICATION

Megapodes are slightly smaller than chickens and have long, yellow legs with black claws. They have dark body plumage, yellow bills, and red areas around their eyes that are exposed areas of skin where their feathers are sparse. Their average weight is about twelve ounces (350 grams).

They have three loud calls that sound like combinations of high-pitched “kek” and “keek” sounds. One Megapode will begin with the call and others in the near vicinity will answer.

HABITAT and FEEDING

Very small populations can be found in the southern, populated islands of the CNMI but megapodes are more abundant in the northern islands. Megapodes are found mainly in native forests and sometimes in secondary forests. They are omnivores, feeding on a variety of plant and animal material on the forest floor. Megapodes forage by scratching on the ground, exposing food items such as insects and seeds. They usually feed and move around in pairs.

REPRODUCTION

Megapodes are unique birds in that they do not sit on their eggs or take care of their young. Sometimes they build a large nest mound where several pairs lay their eggs. There is some indication that parents stay and

guard the nest mounds after the eggs are laid. The female will lay one, large egg, often in a deep pit near a warm area such as a thermal vent from volcanic activity, or in dark volcanic sand warmed by the sun. The chick must kick its way out of the egg and dig itself out of the mound. It is able to forage immediately upon emerging from the nest, with no care from the parents.

THREATS and CONSERVATION

Threats to megapodes include habitat degradation by feral mammals, human consumption of their eggs, commercial and residential development, competition of introduced species and predation. Common predators of megapodes are monitor lizards, cats, rats, pigs and dogs. Megapodes may also be threatened by natural disasters.

The Micronesian megapode is listed as an endangered species both locally and federally and is protected under CNMI law. It is illegal to hunt, kill, or possess this bird or its eggs without a permit issued by the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife. Megapodes are protected from persecution by humans and feral animals on the northern islands of Asuncion, Guguan and Maug. Megapodes nest on the ground and are therefore vulnerable to attacks from the Brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*), so keeping this snake out of the CNMI is extremely important for the welfare of this bird.



ARTIST
DOUGLAS
PRATT

Megapodius laparouse

HOT STUFF

Called “incubator birds”, they rely on solar energy, volcanic thermal vents and decomposition of plants as heat sources to incubate their eggs.

FACTOID!



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