



COMMONWEALTH of the  
NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS

• Farallon de Pajaros  
(Uracas)  
• Maug  
• Asuncion

• Agrihan

• Pagan

• Alamagan

• Guguan

• Sarigan

• Anatahan

• Farallon  
de Medinilla

• Salpan

• Tinian

• Aguiguan

• Rota

\* Distribution in the CNMI



PHOTOS BY GARY WILLES and SCOTT VOIGT



## NATIVE FOREST BIRD MICRONESIAN STARLING

Sali Mwií  
Chamorro Carolinian

### IDENTIFICATION

Micronesian starlings are glossy black birds that have short tails and distinct yellow rings around their eyes. Juvenile starlings have brown eyes and gray streaks on their breasts.

### HABITAT and FEEDING

Micronesian starlings exist only on the islands of Micronesia. They are very common and inhabit a variety of forest types including native forests, secondary forests and coconut forests. Starlings are particularly abundant on the northern islands of the CNMI where there is reduced competition from other birds.

The noisy starlings are usually found in groups. They are omnivores, feeding on a variety of fruits, seeds, bird eggs, insects and other smaller birds. Wild hot peppers are one of the Micronesian starlings favorite foods.

A common belief is that observing the bird will foretell the ripening of island fruit.

### REPRODUCTION

The starling builds its nest in cavities inside of trees and limestone cliffs. It also nests in

urbanized areas by hollowing out rotting wooden telephone poles. Females lay up to four greenish eggs and parents take turns incubating the eggs. Starling chicks are blind, naked and helpless when born. Both parents feed and protect the chicks until they are ready to leave the nest.

### THREATS and CONSERVATION

Threats to native forest birds, including Micronesian starlings, are habitat loss and degradation. They are especially vulnerable in areas where much of the forest has been altered by humans or introduced mammals.

Common predators of starlings are monitor lizards, cats, rats, pigs and dogs. Tree nesters like the starlings are extremely vulnerable to the Brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*), which eliminated their population on Guam. Efforts are being made to keep the Brown treesnake out of the CNMI.

The Micronesian starling is a protected native forest bird in the CNMI. 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.



*Aplonis opaca*

ARTIST  
DOUGLAS  
PRATT

## SOME LIKE IT HOT

The starling spreads hot pepper seeds, aiding a household industry in Tinian that produces hot pepper sauce.

**FACTOID!**



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