



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



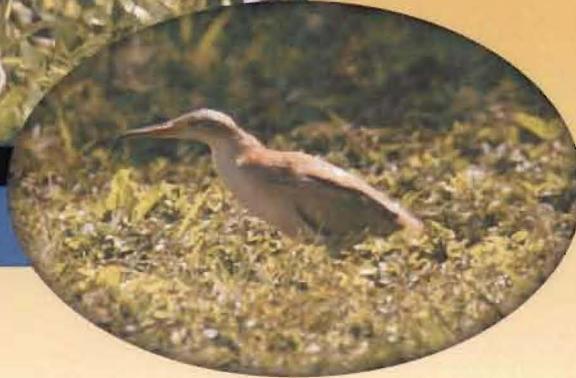
ARTIST
DOUGLAS
PRATT

Ixobrychus sinensis

MASTER OF DISGUISE
Bitterns use their colors to blend in with their environment. As predators approach, they point their beaks upward and stand very still, mimicking nearby plants.
FACTOID!



PHOTOS BY P. SCOTT VOGT



RESIDENT WADING BIRD
YELLOW BITTERN

Kakkak Chamorro
Kakkaak Carolinian

IDENTIFICATION

Yellow bitterns are medium-sized, pale yellow birds with black wing stripes. They appear awkward in flight, with their legs trailing behind their bodies and their necks folded into an S-shape. Their local name “kakkak” refers to the loud call that they make when startled.

HABITAT and FEEDING

Yellow bitterns can be found throughout the Marianas and Micronesian islands, as well as in Asia. They are found in forests, wetlands, savannas and most urbanized areas. They feed on geckos, skinks, snails, fish and insects. They are solitary hunters that perch in silence, ready to snatch passing prey with their long bills. They are more active at dawn and dusk than at other times during the day.

REPRODUCTION

To obtain a mate, males perform a breeding display accompanied by a song. They also make slow flight circuits to attract a female. They nest in a variety of locations such as low shrubs, trees, offshore islets and among reeds in freshwater wetlands. Females lay three or

four white eggs. Parents share in incubation duties. Once the eggs hatch, both parents feed digested food to the chicks. After about two weeks, the chicks are ready to leave the nest.

THREATS and CONSERVATION

Primary threats to native birds, including Yellow bitterns are habitat loss and degradation. They are especially vulnerable in wetlands that continue to decrease due to dredging, construction and agricultural practices. Much of their habitat has been altered by humans or introduced mammals.

Other threats to the Yellow bittern are pesticides, predation and human disturbances. Overuse of pesticides may kill the bittern's prey and can also harm the health of the birds. Predators that feed on Yellow bittern chicks and/or eggs are monitor lizards, rats, cats and dogs. Juveniles are particularly vulnerable to disturbances while hunting because they take a long time to learn and master the difficult task of stalking their prey.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers follows a “no net loss” policy for Mariana wetlands that helps to conserve the habitat of this species.



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.