

## First record of the Ashy Minivet (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*), a passerine bird, for Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**— We observed a flock of four Ashy Minivets (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*) on northern Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), on multiple occasions from 6 November 2015 through 9 April 2016. We saw both male and female plumages among the flock members, and mist-netted one of each sex. This is the first record for the CNMI and only the second for Micronesia.

### Observations

A small flock of four Ashy Minivets (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*) was first observed in the Marpi area of northern Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), on 6 November 2015 (Fig. 1). The birds were in the canopy of a *Guamia mariannae*/*Cynometra ramiflora*-dominated forest near an open, grassy edge environment, less than 80 m from Route 322. Observers noted different identifying features on individual birds, which matched the sexually dimorphic plumage patterns of this species (MacKinnon & Phillipps 2000, Brazil 2009). Some birds were observed with an overall grey head, back, wings and tail; white or buffy throat, breast and flanks; a white or light-colored wing-bar; and black lores. At least one individual had a black hind crown/nape. The tail appeared relatively long, with a dark center that contrasted with white or pale outer retrices. All authors observed the birds as did Mallory Balsat and Chelsey Hunts (Colorado State University). Additional sightings were made during November 2015. On 24 December 2015, we caught one of the minivets during a morning mist-netting session near the location of the initial detection. This bird appeared in good health and was identified as a female, with an overall grey head, black lores and paler forehead (Fig. 2a, b), but lacking the black nape and hind crown characteristic of males (Brazil 2009). The primaries and secondaries exhibited some molt (Fig. 2c). The bird weighed 21g.

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Our field crew was not present on Saipan during January and February 2016, but when we resumed our field activities in March 2016, we encountered a group of four minivets at the same location. The birds likely overwintered on Saipan. On 8 March 2016, we mist-netted a second individual that we identified as male, based on its black nape and hindcrown (Brazil 2009; Fig. 2d). The head and tail were in molt. We last saw the minivets in the same general area in northern Saipan on 9 April 2016, and fieldwork continued in the area after this date.

The four birds formed a flock that moved through the canopy in and around the capture and resight area. Flock members would often call to each other, and perch on exposed branches 5-8 m above the ground at the top of the canopy. We never saw any individual away from the group. Our research activities occurred throughout most of the northern part of Saipan shown in Figure 1, but we never detected the birds outside of forest immediately around the capture and resighting location.

The Ashy Minivet is the farthest-ranging migrant in the cuckooshrike family Campephagidae (Taylor 2016), breeding in eastern Asia (eastern Siberia, China, Japan, Korea) and typically overwintering in Southeast Asia (including the Philippines) and parts of India (Brazil 2009). The only other report of this species from the Mariana Islands and Micronesia was a record from Guam, where one was seen during the winter of 2003-2004 (Wiles 2005; G. Wiles, personal communication). Our record is the first from Saipan and the CNMI.

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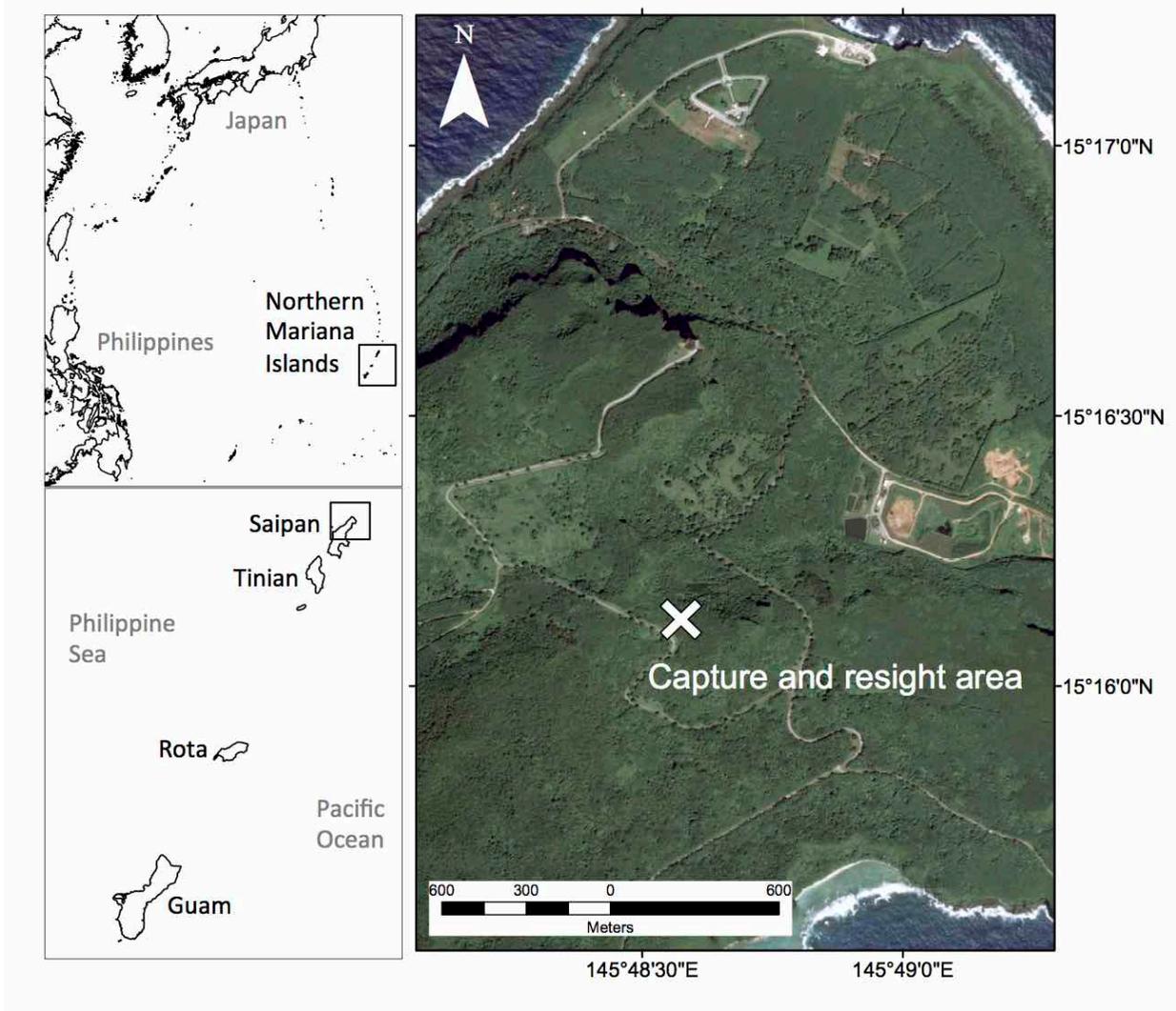


Figure 1. Map showing location of new record for Ashy Minivets in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Top left - Location of the CNMI in the Western Pacific, Bottom left - Location of Saipan within the CNMI, Right - Satellite image from 2013 of the northern part of Saipan including the capture and resight locations marked with a white X.

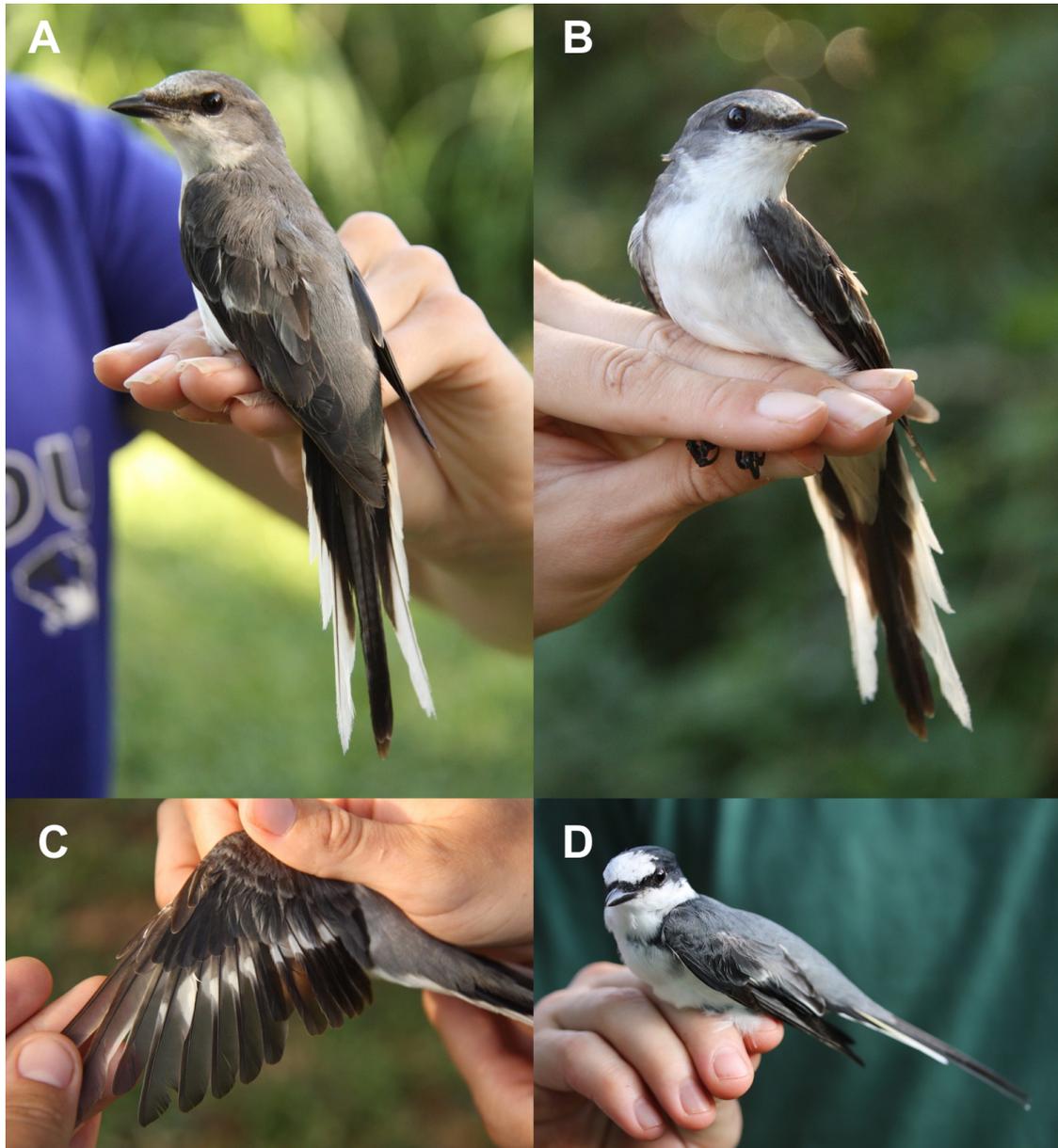


Figure 2. Ashy Minivets (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*) mistnetted on Saipan. A. and B. Female, C. Female wing, D. Male (photos A-C, K. Beer; D. J. Chojnacki).