

**NOTE**  
**New Bird Records in the Mariana Islands**

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**Introduction**

We report new records of 23 bird species from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), that constitute 14 new island records, one new breeding record, three first Marianas records and 10 first island or Marianas specimen records, and one first Micronesian record. We include a few older records from 1989 that were overlooked by Stinson et al. (1991). Abbreviations for specimen numbers include CRCM (Charles R. Conner Museum, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington, USA), CFA (Celestino F. Aguon, Div. of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources, Guam), and DFW (CNMI Div. of Fish and Wildlife). Species names and taxonomic arrangement follows Sibley & Monroe (1990).

**Species Accounts**

**Common Teal** (*Anas crecca*)—MRL collected the first Common Teal specimen from Rota on 22 Oct. 1993 (CRCM 94-85). This bird was a young male with a wide white bar anterior to its green speculum. The legs were olive-gray and the bill was dull greenish-gray with an orange outer edge and was paler greenish orange toward the base. The plumage of the underside of its head, breast and belly was rust colored (possibly stained rust). Glass et al. (1990) reported seeing a mounted Common Teal on Rota. The species has also been reported

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from Saipan, Guam, and Pagan (Hachisuka et al. 1932, Wiles et al. 1987) and is considered a rare migrant in the Marianas (Stinson & Reichel, in prep.)

**Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)—The first record of migrant Mallards on Saipan was on 9 Nov. 1992 when DWS observed a drake and three hens at a seasonal pond in As Lito. The ducks were observed at about 60 m from a vantage point above the pond with a 40× telescope. The drake was not in full breeding plumage, but the green head feathers, yellow bill, and gray flank were clearly evident. The females were as large and bulky as the drake, and had the brown eyeline, orange and black bill and generally brown and buff plumage typical of the species (Madge & Burn 1988). The birds were observed again at the same location on 11 and 30 Nov. and at a seasonal pond on the Kagman peninsula on 3 Jan. 1993.

Though this is the first historic record of Mallards on Saipan, the species may have previously resided here. The extinct Mariana Mallard (*A. oustaleti*) is believed to have been a hybrid form of Mallard X Pacific Black Duck (*A. superciliosa*) (Reichel & Lemke 1994). Migrant Mallards have also been reported from Sarigan and Pagan (Glass et al. 1990). Pratt et al. (1987) list several unconfirmed reports of vagrant Mallards elsewhere in the tropical Pacific.

**Spot-billed Duck** (*Anas poecilorhyncha*)—The first CNMI record of a Spot-billed Duck was observed by DWS at As Lito Pond on 9 and 11 Nov. 1992. A single drake was observed with the four Mallards. It had the distinctive bill with a yellow distal end, as well as the facial stripes, blue speculum, and gray-brown plumage. The plumage color closely resembled the illustration in Wild Bird Society of Japan (1982:43), and was typical of the "Chinese Spotbill" (*A.p. zonorhyncha*) (Madge & Burn 1988:220). Interestingly, this drake exhibited the precopulatory head-pump display to the three hen Mallards. This species is considered by some authorities to be conspecific with the Pacific Black Duck, which hybridized with Mallards to produce the Mariana Mallard (Madge & Burn 1988, Pratt et al. 1987). The only other Marianas record of the Spot-billed Duck is from Guam (Wiles et al. 1987).

**Northern Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*)—MRL collected the first shoveler seen on Rota on 28 Oct. 1993 (CRCM 94-81). The bird was a female and appeared to be a first year bird because its secondaries were brownish with a narrow white stripe without a blue speculum. Shovelers have been recorded on Guam, Tinian, Saipan, and Pagan, and are a rare migrant in the Marianas (Hachisuka et al. 1932, Marshall 1949, Drahos 1977, Glass et al. 1990). Vagrant shovelers occasionally reach New Guinea (Beehler et al. 1986).

**Fork-tailed Swift** (*Apus pacificus*)—R. J. Craig obtained the first record of a Fork-tailed Swift on Rota on 25 Oct. 1992. A sketch and field notes (on file at DFW) indicate this dull black bird had a white rump and forked tail, and was about one third larger than the native Guam Swiftlet (*Collocalia [vanikorensis] bartschi*) [= *Aerodramus vanikorensis*]. There are records of this species from Guam and Saipan (Glass et al. 1990, Wiles et al. 1993). The Fork-tailed Swift breeds in eastern Asia and Japan and migrates to Australia and New Guinea (Pizzey 1980).

**Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)**—The first Rota record of a Short-eared Owl was obtained when a bird was found shot at the Rota airport on 6 Mar. 1992 (CRCM #93-572). This bird was distinguished from the Ural Owl (*Strix uralensis*), the only similar species, by its small size (wing length 294 mm, weight 339 g), yellow iris, and black bill (Dement'ev et al. 1966). There are additional records of Short-eared Owls from Guam, Tinian, Saipan, and Pagan (Hachisuka et al. 1942, Baker 1951, Drahos 1977, Glass et al. 1990).

**Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)**—A Common Coot was observed on Lake Susupe, Saipan on 1–2 Jan. 1993 by DWS, G. J. Wiles, K. D. Orcutt, C. M. Stinson, H. Rons and others. It was observed with 40× scopes at about 90 m, as it rested on the surface between foraging dives. This bird was larger than the Mariana Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus guami*) commonly seen at the lake and exhibited a white bill and frontal shield. This is the first Saipan record for the species. There are much older records from Tinian (Hachisuka et al. 1932) and Guam (Hartert 1898).

**Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)**—The first Marianas specimen of this species was collected on 6 Oct. 1989 by J. D. Reichel at the Saipan airport (CRCM 90-10). This bird was an adult (feathers of upperparts have brown centers with whitish, not buff, edgings; feathers of neck and breast not washed with buffy brown) in non-breeding plumage (upperparts brownish gray, underparts whitish, except neck and breast gray brown with small brown streaks) (Prater et al. 1977). The rump and lower back had alternate dark brown and white bars and the axillaries had alternating gray-brown and slightly narrower white bars. These features indicate the bird belonged to the race *L. l. baueri*, which breeds in Siberia and Alaska. The sex was not determined during preparation, but bill length (100 mm) indicated it was probably a female (Hayman et al. 1986). This species is a rare but regular migrant to the Marianas (Stinson, Wiles & Reichel, in prep.).

**Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)**—CGR observed a Common Redshank on a rocky shore on Agrihan on 31 May 1992. According to his field notes, the bird had a straight bill with orange at its base, a dark gray-black mottled back with a scalloped pattern. The head and upper chest were dark gray and there were small fine white crescents above and below the eye. Redshanks have been recorded on Guam and Saipan (Glass et al. 1990, Wiles et al. 1987, 1993).

**Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*)**—The first Marianas specimen was collected by DWS at the Saipan airport on 6 Oct. 1989 (CRCM #90-7). The bird was a female with gray-brown upperparts and yellow-green legs typical of non-breeding plumage. It was distinguished from most other *Tringa* by its white rump and back and leg color. The slender black bill and shorter wing (137.8 mm) and tail (54.0) separated it from the Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*). Marsh Sandpipers were first recorded in the Marianas by Engbring & Owen (1981) on Saipan and by Beck (1985) on Guam. In recent years they have been seen annually in small numbers during migration (Stinson et al. in prep.).

**Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)**—DWS and G. J. Wiles observed a Common Sandpiper at Taga Beach, Tinian on 9 Apr. 1994. The bird was identified by its small size relative to a nearby Gray-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*), brown

upperparts, and white belly with white showing in front of the folded wing that contrasted with a brownish throat and upper breast. The bird exhibited the typical bobbing gait, alternately flying and alighting on the rocky shore and it gave the high-pitched *twee-wee-wee* call. The Common Sandpiper is an uncommon but annual migrant and winter visitor in the Marianas (Stinson et al. in prep.). It has previously been recorded from Guam, Rota, Saipan, Anatahan, and Pagan (Reichel & Glass 1991).

**Black-winged Stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*)—A male stilt was observed by E. M. Taisacan at the Rota airport on 10 Sep. 1992. MRL collected the first stilt from Rota on 5 Oct. 1993 (CRCM 94-86). The bird was a first-winter male of the nominate race, with a dark dusky gray cap and lighter dusky gray hindneck. The upperwing plumage was gray-black with fine edges of white or buff. The scapulars were brown and edged with light buff, giving a scalloped appearance. The legs were pale pink. Stilts have been reported in recent years from Saipan and Guam and are considered a rare migrant (Glass et al. 1990, Wiles et al. 1993, Stinson et al. in prep.).

**Mongolian Plover** (*Charadrius mongolus*)—A Mongolian Plover was observed on the sandy shore of the lower lake on Pagan by DWS and J. D. Reichel on 28 Nov. 1989. The bird was identified by its small size, chunky plover shape, and light gray-brown upperparts. It also had a short black bill and dark leg; a white belly, throat, and eyebrow; and a gray-brown breast band. It lacked the white collar of the rarer Common Ringed Plover (*C. hiaticula*). Mongolian Plovers appear annually on Saipan and Guam and are considered an uncommon migrant in the Marianas (Stinson et al. in prep.). This was the first record for Pagan.

**Long-tailed Jaeger** (*Stercorarius longicaudis*)—DTA observed a Long-tailed Jaeger 5 km north of Saipan on 2 Aug. 1993. This bird appeared to be an adult in molt and had the distinctive long central tail feathers, long pointed wings, dark underwing, white belly and throat, and gray chest band (Harrison 1985:132). It lacked the white underwing patches of the Parasitic Jaeger (*S. parasiticus*). This is the first Marianas record of this species. The only other Micronesian record is from Palau (Engbring & Owen 1981).

**Chinese Goshawk** (*Accipiter soloensis*)—H. King obtained a dead Chinese Goshawk on Tinian on 21 Sep. 1992 (CRCM # 93-571). This was the first record of this species for the island. It was an emaciated bird in immature plumage (dark brown above and white underparts with heavy brown streaks). This bird was distinguished from the Japanese Sparrowhawk (*A. gularis*) by its unbarred wing linings, short tarsus (42.7 mm), and long culmen (17 mm with cere). A Chinese Goshawk specimen (DFW # 462) was obtained on Rota on about the same date when another emaciated bird was picked up alive from a beach, but died in-hand. Hachisuka et al. (1942) reported an earlier Rota collection. DWS observed additional individuals on Saipan on 19 Sep. and 3 Oct. These were among several sightings and second-hand reports of small accipiters in the Marianas during autumn 1992 (Wiles et al. 1993). A major migration of this species occurs from Korea to Taiwan via Kyushu and the Ryukyus that peaks in mid-

September (Brazil 1991). Tropical Storm Ryan passed over Japan 12–13 Sep. 1992 and may have disrupted this normal migration pattern. Pratt et al. (1987) reports records from Yap and Palau.

**Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)**—MRL photographed one of two Great Egrets (Fig. 1) on Rota on 5 Oct. 1993, a new island record. These birds were present on Rota until at least 21 Oct. They were distinguished from the Intermediate Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) by their long stout bills, very long neck, larger size, blue-green lores, and dark gape lines (Fig. 1: inset) that extended posterior to the eyes (Hancock and Kushlan 1984). Great Egrets have been seen several times on Saipan in recent years since Glass et al. (1990), including by DWS on 14 and 22 Dec. 1992, 2 and 14 Jan., 6 Nov., and 4 Dec. 1993. Three birds were observed catching fish (probably tilapia) at Lake Susupe on 18 Dec. 1993. Recent Guam records include 19 Dec 1992 and 20–21 Feb 1993. This widespread species migrates from Japan and Korea to the Philippines, and from Australia to New Guinea (McClure 1974).

**Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)**—Though Cattle Egrets have been the most common migrant Ardeid in the Marianas in recent years (Stinson & Reichel, in prep.), no specimen collections have been reported. We report three recent specimens for the island chain. The first was a carcass found by DWS in Mar. 1990 at a seasonal pond on Saipan (CRCM #90–19); a second Saipan bird was collected by DWS on 7 Mar. 1991 (DFW #467). Another specimen was collected at Apra Harbor, Guam, by C. F. Aguon on 5 Oct. 1991 (CFA # 1991–01). Cattle Egrets seem to have increased in Micronesia since about 1950, when Baker (1951) reported only a single record from Palau. They are now a common visitor to western and central Micronesia and a vagrant to the Marshalls (Pratt et al. 1987).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)**—The first record of this species from Rota was obtained when E. M. Taisacan was given a fresh road-kill on 29 Nov. 1990 (CRCM #91–144). The bird was an emaciated male in juvenile plumage (upperparts brown with light streaks, underparts white with brown streaks). It was distinguished from a juvenile Rufous Night-Heron (*N. caledonicus*) by an orange (vs. yellow) iris. This species is a rare visitor to the Marianas with earlier records from Guam, Tinian, and Saipan (Marshall 1949, Glass et al. 1990, Wiles et al. 1993). There are also records from Palau, Yap, Chuuk, and Pohnpei (Pratt et al. 1987).

**Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*)**—The first documented breeding record for frigatebirds in the Marianas was obtained on 2 Jun. 1992 by CGR when large nestlings or young fledgelings were observed in nests on West Maug. The following notes were made “. . . dark brown body, white neck and shoulder, russet cap and cheeks.” These juveniles cannot with absolute certainty be assigned to this species, but nearly all adult frigatebirds present were *F. minor* and their known breeding locations (including Fanna and Helen I., Palau) are geographically closer to the Marianas than *F. ariel* (Pratt et al. 1987). This validates an earlier undocumented report of breeding on Maug (Summerhays et al. 1977 in Reichel & Glass 1991).

**Lesser Frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)**—CGR observed a male Lesser Frigatebird on Maug on 2 Jun. 1992, confirming an earlier undocumented report for the



Figure 1. Great Egret on Rota, 5 Oct. 1993. Inset shows the dark gape line extending posterior to the eye.

island (Summerhays et al. 1977) that Reichel & Glass (1991) listed as hypothetical. This bird had a distinct axial extension of its white breast patch (Harrison 1985:126). This species has also been recorded at Guam, Rota, Saipan, and Guguan (Glass et al. 1990; Reichel & Glass 1991).

**Short-tailed Shearwater** (*Puffinus tenuirostris*)—A dead Short-tailed Shearwater was found on Tewksbury Beach, Rota by A. Manglona in Feb. 1993 (CRCM 94-89). Its upper parts were all slate brown, and underparts were dark gray brown with lighter gray axillaries. Its legs and feet were mostly brown, with horn-colored interior sides. Measurements of the bill (exposed culmen 30.1 mm), wing (251 mm), tarsus (47.5 mm) and tail (83.1) confirmed the species identification. The Sooty Shearwater (*P. griseus*), which has not been recorded in the Marianas, is similar in appearance but has a longer bill (exposed culmen = 38–47.3 mm, wing = 280–318 mm) (Loomis 1918, Murphy 1930). Short-tailed Shearwaters have been recorded from Guam and Saipan and migrate through the area in moderate numbers each May (G. J. Wiles, pers.comm.) on their way from breeding grounds off Australia to Arctic waters (Harrison 1985).

**Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma castro*)—DTA observed two Band-rumped Storm-Petrels about 6 and 18 km north-north west of Saipan on 4 Oct. 1993. The birds were observed with 10 × 50 binoculars at only 10 m. These dark brown storm-petrels had slightly forked tails, clear white rumps extending onto the lateral undertail coverts, and slightly lighter colored secondary wing coverts. These features distinguished the birds from the similar Leach's Storm-Petrel (*O. leucorhoa*), which typically has a white rump divided by a dark band, little extension of white onto the lateral undertail coverts, and a more distinctive diagonal band on the upper wings (Harrison 1985:88). This sighting is the first in the Marianas, but there is one Micronesian record from the Marshalls (Pratt et al. 1987). The nearest known breeding locations include offshore islands of Honshu, Japan and on Kauai, Hawaii (Harrison 1985, Pratt et al. 1987).

**Black-backed Wagtail** (*Motacilla lugens*)—DWS observed a Black-backed Wagtail at a seasonal freshwater pond on Saipan on 4 Jan. 1991, and on 5 Jan. with R. J. Craig. The bird was observed for several minutes with a 40× scope at about 40 m. The bird exhibited a long white-edged tail, black bib and undulating flight. Its white chin, primarily white wings, and dark gray back distinguished it from the White Wagtail (*M. alba*) (National Geographic Society 1987:342). This is the first certain record for this species in Micronesia, though there are two earlier Guam records of white and gray colored wagtails (*M. alba* or *lugens*) (Wiles et al. 1987, G. J. Wiles, pers. comm.).

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