

Notes on the Breeding Season of Guam Rails (*Rallus owstoni*)

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The Guam rail (*Rallus owstoni* Rothschild; Fig. 2) is abundant throughout the roadside brush, jungle, and grassy fields of Guam. It is a flightless bird endemic to the island, with no closely related forms nearby (Baker, 1951). Because very little has been published on the breeding habits of Guam rails, perhaps the following notes are in order.

Seale (1901) reported capturing a young rail in July. Marshall (1949) is of the opinion that this bird breeds the year round, while Baker (1951) suggests that the mating season extends from spring to fall. From March 1961 to March 1967, field observation notes on rails were taken while staff biologists (Terry A.

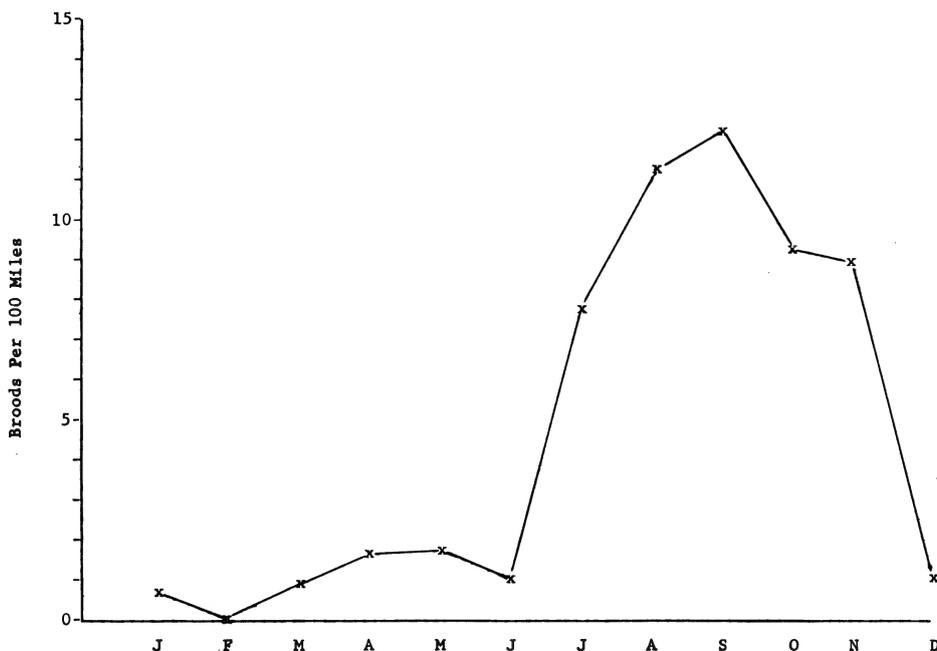


Fig. 1. Five-Year Average (1961-66) of 30-Mile Roadside Brood Counts. (Month values are as follows: J=0.07, F=0, M=1.0, A=1.7, M=1.7, J=1.0, J=7.7, A=11.3, S=12.3, O=9.3, N=9.0, D=1.0).

* The above observations were taken from the Guam rail study, which is a Federal Aid to Wild-life Restoration Project funded under the Pittman-Robertson Program.



Fig. 2-A. Guam Rail (*Rallus owstoni*).



Fig. 2-B. Guam Rail (*Rallus owstoni*), Held by Jack Fletcher of the College of Guam.

McGowan, Maurice H. Taylor, and Gerald S. A. Perez) were gathering routine research data for other projects. To supplement these field observations, weekly and bi-monthly brood counts were conducted over a five year period (1961-1966).

This six-year backlog of field notes* shows that rails are capable of breeding the year round. Broods were observed in all months of the year. However, the five-year roadside brood count (Fig. 1) indicated a gradual buildup of chick production in late winter, culminating at a peak production in late summer through fall. Paired rails were noted in all months of the year, with most pairs observed from early summer through fall. Males with enlarged gonads or females with eggs were observed in all seasons of the year.

Based on the above observations, it is suggested that Guam rails are capable of breeding throughout the year, with a peak breeding season probably occurring

in the summer and fall. Because of sampling inadequacies and discontinuity in observations, it is difficult to ascertain the degree and regularity of such a peak. It is likely that peak nesting will vary with ecological conditions in any particular year.

Literature Cited

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