

Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Develop and Implement Conservation and Management Actions in Support of Recovery Actions for the Mariana Crow and Mariana Fruit Bat on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands

Discipline: Natural
Type of Project: Research/Education
Funding Agency: Department of Defense
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana
Effective Dates: 9/28/2011 - 3/31/2013
Funding Amount: \$198,172

Investigators and Agency Representative:
DoD Contact:

Investigator: Scott Mills, Professor of Wildlife Population Ecology, College of Forestry and Conservation, University of Montana, Missoula, Mt 59812; 46-243-5552; lscott.mills.umontana.edu

Researcher: Tammy Mildenstein, College of Forestry and Conservation, University of Montana, Missoula, Mt 59812; 406-214-1563; tammy.mildenstein@umconnect.umt.edu

Project Abstract:

The Mariana fruit bat (*Pteropus mariannus*; commonly, and from here forth "fanihi") is a federally-listed threatened species across its range in the Mariana Islands. Although this species has been of concern for nearly three decades, fanihi populations in the Mariana Islands are largely unknown making it difficult to identify recovery goals and target management actions. In addition, many local communities that have traditionally valued fanihi as a resource are unsupportive of U.S. government efforts to recover this species, because they do not believe that fanihi populations are threatened nor understand federal management goals. For on-the-ground fanihi conservation efforts to be effective in reversing trends and recovering this species, managers need assistance identifying and justifying recovery priorities, tracking fanihi populations over time, and garnering public support and involvement.

The Department of the Navy is promoting the long-term survival and recovery of the Mariana fruit bat by providing funds to initiate recovery actions aligned with the Draft Revised Recovery Plan for the Mariana Fruit Bat or Fanihi (Recovery Plan; USFWS 2009). We propose to strengthen Mariana fruit bat conservation with this valuable support by 1) conducting much-needed biological and ecological research, 2) developing a standardized monitoring protocol, and 3) encouraging education and awareness about fanihi in local communities. The research and community education will take place on Rota Island, which is the last stronghold for fanihi in the southern Mariana Islands and where strong public opinion is at odds with recovery. Our proposal directly addresses 3 recovery criteria by implementing 10 of the Recovery Actions outlined in the Recovery Plan. The results of our project will provide a basis for promoting fanihi recovery by using scientific research to identify fruit bat conservation priorities and to establish a defensible method of evaluating when recovery criteria are met, and by building local support for fanihi conservation through education and involvement in fanihi's recovery.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: Final Report - February 25, 2012

Keywords: Mariana fruit bat, Mariana crow, conservation, management actions, community outreach, island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands
Department of the Navy, University of Montana