



# Rare birds, coral reefs, ancient ruins, and boats: independent birding in Micronesia

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April 10-April 24, 2023

Northern Mariana Islands: Rota, Saipan, Tinian  
Guam

Federated States of Micronesia: Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae

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# Introduction

Rachael Kaiser (RK) works for the San Diego Zoo on the Aga Project, captive rearing and releasing critically endangered Mariana Crows. Doug Whitman (DW) is also a biologist, and Rachael's partner. RK lived on Rota for 8 months, with DW joining for the last month of that period. We both decided to travel back to the mainland together by way of Micronesia after realizing that RK's work was willing to pay her ticket for that route, allowing us to split the cost of one ticket. RK and DW both encourage the reader to message us with questions if you're planning a visit—either to our emails on the cover page, or to our Facebooks.

Micronesia isn't typically on the radar of independent birders, and it's barely on the radar of bird tour companies. It's far flung, it's expensive, and your species list is going to be an order of magnitude smaller than many other destinations. But if you're looking for incredibly unique, beautiful, enigmatic, and rare birds...or if you might enjoy snorkeling and diving some of the best coral reefs on the planet...or if you have even a passing interest in ancient stone cities, beautiful art, or fascinating local traditions and culture...Micronesia might be for you.

Our trip visited the islands of Rota, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Chuuk (Weno and Tol), Pohnpei, and Kosrae. There isn't a narrative on birding by day in Rota, since that's where we lived and started our trip from, but we are including detailed info on birding sites there. The only major areas that we did **not** visit on this trip were Palau and Yap. We managed to encounter nearly every species and subspecies we targeted—the only exceptions being the strange and poorly known Pohnpei Short-eared Owl, the possibly extinct Pohnpei Starling, and the widespread yet frustratingly-absent Long-tailed Koel. See the species index for more info, as well as a breakdown of species that we did see.

A few general notes: **CARRY CASH.** The currency is US Dollars, and outside of a few places that specifically cater to tourists and take card, you should have cash with you at all times. Related to this, there is an exit fee for leaving each island of usually \$20-\$30/person. In Chuuk and Kosrae this must be paid **in cash**. A second note: the culture between every single one of these islands is different. Don't go into Rota expecting Saipan, don't go into Chuuk expecting Rota, and don't go into Kosrae expecting Pohnpei. Finally: **respect local rules and advice.** As one example where this is important, in Chuuk and Pohnpei almost all if not all of the land is private and owned by families who have stewarded it for a long, long time. You might notice (especially on Pohnpei) the staggering amount of remaining primary forest. People are typically very friendly as long as you treat folks with respect, and ask someone if you want to do something. For example, on Pohnpei—folks are typically happy to show you around their land or give you the OK to look for birds on it—but always ask someone before you decide to wander down a trail or leave a road.

We hope this report remedies some of the utter lack of up to date info on the internet about birding these islands. We also hope this report encourages more birders to step off the beaten path of international destinations, and spurs more independent visits to Micronesia. Each island is unique, and some rank among the most beautiful and fascinating places either of us have been lucky enough to visit.

# Narrative

## April 10

After a late night of packing RK's 2 massive suitcases for her move back to the mainland, we made our final preparations and started heading to the airport on Rota. There isn't a narrative section for our time on Rota since RK spent 8 months there and DW 1 month, but we've written detailed descriptions of birding sites in the Rota section further down. The trip was off to a good start though, with our only **Great Egret** of the trip strolling down the grassy edge of the road on the way to the airport! A regular vagrant to these islands.

The flight to Saipan was short and smooth, as most interisland flights in the Marianas are—no security lines or arduous check in processes here—you typically show up, get weighed, and are assigned a seat on a small 8-seater plane for the typically ~30 minute flight. Our rental car was able to meet us at the airport and it was a very smooth process to get the car and head to the hotel. After relaxing at the hotel for a moment, we walked over to Marianas Creations in the afternoon, a very nice combination cafe/bar/local art shop where we got some much needed lunch. The walk through the neighborhood turned up DW's first lifer of the trip, a small group of introduced **Orange-cheeked Waxbill** bopping around in a hedgerow. While at Marianas Creations, a Chuukese post-doc that RK had met on Rota walked in, and we chatted to her a bit about our plans for the island, and she stressed again that if we were going to visit Tol, go with someone who has family there.

From Marianas Creations we headed up to **Route 320** to do some evening birding. This whole road is pretty decent (see Saipan section) but the main target here is the critically endangered **Saipan Reed Warbler**. We were very fortunate to hear one singing almost immediately at the first place we checked, at (15.25955, 145.79703). We played a bit of tape to see if the bird was interested in being seen, and he almost immediately flew in, and even perched in the open for a brief moment.





*A territorial Saipan Reed Warbler sings as the sun goes down. These guys' songs really are fantastic. RK managed a good recording that will be added to eBird and xeno-canto. Doug Whitman*

After briefly investigating the sound, our bird returned to singing further away and buried in foliage, seemingly making laps of his territory. We heard a second bird further down the road, and even got glimpses of 2 different very skulky (presumably) female birds moving low through the bushes while the males were off elsewhere singing away. All told we probably spent a bit more than an hour hanging out on the patch of road being serenaded by the reed warblers. They really are sharp birds, with a ridiculously long bill that they open so wide to sing that their feathers stretch and reveal the bare skin on their throat.

Reed warblers weren't the only bird on the road however, with **Golden White-eye**, **Bridled White-eye**, **Rufous Fantail**, **Micronesian Myzomela**, and **Micronesian Starling** all bouncing around in the trees nearby. **Mariana Fruit-Dove** was an ever-present sonic accompaniment to the reed warbler, and a few **White-throated Ground Doves** flew over as well. A very vocal family of **Mariana Kingfishers** would occasionally pipe up, and conservatively about a dozen **Mariana Swiftlet** were zipping around above us at any given time. A flock of about 40 **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** bathing in a puddle and a handful of **Philippine Collared-Doves** rounded out our list with the two notable introduced species, and as dusk fell we caught a few waterbirds off to roost—Brown Noddies, White Terns, and a singular Intermediate Egret and Yellow Bittern. All of this in about a half mile stretch of the road. Satisfied, we drove out, grabbed some food, and headed back to the hotel.



*Golden White-eyes absolutely glow. They also might be the most pish-able bird on the planet.*  
Doug Whitman

## **April 11**

Having already gotten nearly every bird we came for in Saipan on the first afternoon, and knowing that Sakura Marine Sports (our ride to Managaha Island) wouldn't open until at least 9:00, we slept in. After a leisurely morning getting up, packing our snorkel gear in addition to our birding gear, and grabbing a nice breakfast at a local cafe (Rota doesn't have many of those!) we set out to look for Sakura Marine Sports. The pin for it on Google Maps looked incredibly inaccurate—crammed into a tiny shack and completely blocked from the main road by the enormous Crowne Plaza Resort. We missed the road the first time, and both of us actually got out on foot to walk through the hotel and ask where the place was. The pin was indeed accurate—there was an absolutely miniscule road just past the north end of the Crowne's parking lot that takes you to the small building for Sakura. Seemed like possibly a sad case of a pre-existing small business refusing to give up for a giant hotel, and the hotel strangling access to the business.

Regardless, the folks there were very laid back and nice, and very willing to take us over to Managaha Island. Be aware that they will likely try to upsell you for a snorkel from the boat, or something similar. If you don't own your own snorkel gear it's worth renting some and then snorkeling from the island, but outside of that we'd recommend to be ready to be pretty firm



about just wanting a ride to the island and back. It was \$30/person for us for the ride (despite \$20 being quoted on the phone) and an additional \$10 admission once you're on the island, assuming you're not a citizen of the CNMI.

After waiting about an hour for their boat to be back, we hopped on and zipped over to Managaha. It's a tiny beach tourism island, but remarkably good birding. The island is home to several hundred **Black Noddy** nests, and it's extremely entertaining to watch them slap around on their tiny feet investigating twigs for material, or seeing a fuzzy baby staring at you from a tree branch. As we were marveling at the first of many noddy nesting trees we would see, our main target walked out from the forest: **Micronesian Megapode**. The ssp in the Mariana Islands is apparently pretty different from the one present in Palau. It's also almost entirely extirpated from the inhabited islands of the CNMI, with the bulk of the population being on uninhabited islands even further north than Saipan. However, a reintroduced population hangs on in a few places in Saipan after extirpation in the 1930s, and by far the most reliable of these is a pair on Managaha Island that wander the compost pile and in the evening peruse the restaurant's dining area for scraps.

We had ignorantly good looks at one bird, and even got to hear him vocalize a few times as he kicked around in some litter.



*This is uncropped. If I could give him more space, I would! Doug Whitman*

Satisfied with our looks at our main target, we watched the noddies for a little while longer before tearing ourselves away to go snorkel. The snorkeling was pretty decent, very pleasant water, pretty good diversity of fish and coral. You can kinda swim around wherever you want off the island, so we just asked the restaurant if they could stash our bags with our cameras and optics, and spent about an hour and a half enjoying the aquatic biodiversity before packing up and hopping back on the boat to Saipan at 2:00. All in all we spent a little over 4 hours on Managaha, which was about perfect, although we wouldn't have had any complaints about spending a bit more time with the noddies and megapode either.



*A young Black Noddy chick in its nest as a parent watches over. Rachael Kaiser*





*Two Longnose Filefish (Oxymonacanthus longirostris) checking out some Acropora coral branches offshore Managaha. This stunning little fish is tied to this genus of coral, which it feeds on. Rachael Kaiser.*

Back on Saipan, we relaxed a bit at the hotel before heading out to briefly check out some of the old WWII sites on the north end of the island. Most of the islands in this trip were at the very least occupied by Japan during WWII, but Saipan and Guam really got the brunt of it in the Marianas at least, being the sites of battles between the US and Japan with death tolls that are hard to comprehend. For this trip report, the only site that's worth talking about are the **Banzai Cliffs**. At the Northwest tip of the island, there's a stunning overlook over a rugged cliff face that drops into the ocean. There are a number of statues and memorials to the hundreds of soldiers and civilians who jumped to their death here at the conclusion of the Battle of Saipan. Many of these memorials and/or graves seem to be actively maintained so we'd encourage visitors to be mindful and respectful of anyone there if you visit. However, no one was present when we visited in the evening, and the cliff's position makes it excellent for seawatching. We spent about an hour scanning the ocean and had both noddies, Red-footed and Brown Boobies, White Terns, Red-tailed Tropicbirds, and most notably two light-morph **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** with good-by-seawatching-standards looks. It wouldn't be hard to imagine birds like Bulwer's Petrel or Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel being gettable here with winds a bit stronger out of the North.



*One of numerous memorials at the Banzai Cliffs on Saipan. The scale of the violence and bloodshed that happened on these islands 80 years ago is hard to comprehend. Doug Whitman*

Saipan has some really good restaurants, and we treated ourselves to a nice meal at Naked Fish Bar and Grill. Tuna sashimi and fresh parrotfish. Mmmm. Bedtime.

## **April 12**

Tinian day! Tickets have to be booked at the counter for STAR Marianas at the Saipan Airport. We arrived at the airport at 8:00 or so, booked our roundtrip tickets for a 9:00 flight over and a 3:00 flight back, hopped on the little 4-seater plane, and left. We arrived about 15 minutes later, and had our rental car in hand by 9:30. We rented from Avis and it was pretty smooth. By 10:30 we'd birded the **Tachogna Beach Nature Trail**, and had brilliant looks at a pair of **Tinian Monarch**. The forest was pretty neat—full of fish poison trees, a tree with odd boxy looking green fruits that can apparently be put in the water to stun fish. We walked back along the beach, which was pretty.





*Tinian Monarch, the only bird endemic to Tinian. Quite nice, and can be found in patches of remnant native forest. Doug Whitman*

There's really not that much good habitat to bird in on Tinian, and not that much to do generally, so we decided to dash up to the north end of the island and see some of the WWII sites there before meeting a local biologist who was working on the moorhen on Tinian, Rebecca Krasa, for lunch. The drive to the north end of the island takes longer than you'd imagine due to road conditions. We stopped by the atom bomb loading pits, now encased in steel and glass with small signs next to them. The atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were flown from Tinian. It was an eerie place. We saw a few more relics from the war on our quick drive out, and made it to JC Cafe for lunch at around noon. The food was good, the portions were huge, and it was nice to talk with the biologist about conservation on Tinian. The US military is worryingly attempting to scale up their presence on the island, and the customers at JC were mostly a mix of local Chamorro folks and US military types.

We managed to squeeze in one last stop before the airport, and with a visit to the House of Taga ruins—including the largest still standing latte stone in the Marianas. If you're gonna visit a historical site on Tinian, go here. The latte stones are huge and allegedly supported the home of Chief Taga, a person who may or may not have been a real historical figure, but struck us as occupying a place in the lore similar to Paul Bunyan in the US. Some say he was a great chief who fought the Spanish when they arrived, some say he was 20 feet tall and could jump from Saipan to Tinian and back, the folks on Tinian say he was from Tinian and this was his house, and the people on Rota say he was from Rota and was *almost* finished extracting Rota's large

latte stones when he won some sort of chief competition on Saipan and married the Saipan chief's daughter. Regardless of who Taga was or wasn't, the remaining latte stones and massive statue in his image are a lot cooler than an overgrown old airfield.



*DW and RK in front of the Taga House, and the largest still-standing latte stone in the Marianas*

Catching our flight back was a little close for comfort due to having to take a detour for Tinian's one singular gas station (where gas was an eye-popping \$7.80 on card or \$7.50 cash) for the rental, but once on the plane it was uneventful. Upon landing in Saipan DW caught a **Wood Sandpiper** flush that unfortunately RK missed on the other side of the plane. If you're jonesin' for shorebirds, the Saipan Airport is decent, and you can peek into the airport catchment pond at ~( $15.12614, 145.73454$ ). We had a few Whiskered Tern here, but nothing crazy. There is also a water treatment plant behind a Shell gas station where you can peak through a chainlink fence at about ( $15.22346, 145.73960$ ), which is where we picked up our first **Eurasian Moorhens** of the trip (a unique subspecies in the Mariana Islands).

That evening we took a stroll around the beach at the American Memorial Park and caught the sunset. Nothing too crazy birdwise here, but Whimbrels and Pacific Golden-Plover getting into their tuxedos are always fun. DW had **Golden White-eye**, **Bridled White-eye**, and a few of the more common and disturbance-tolerant songbirds here on his layover a month prior, but we didn't really spend much time looking for them this time.



## April 13

Flight to Guam that morning. Uneventful. We were going to be on Guam until our flight to Chuuk the next morning, so we decided to rent a car at the counter in the airport spur of the moment and poke around. Guam is absolutely horrific for birding. What the brown tree snake did to the avifauna of the island is very well known in conservation circles, but it's another thing entirely to see it in person. If you absolutely must go look for birds we had **Black Francolin**, **Eurasian Moorhen**, **Black-winged Stilt**, and a vagrant **Long-toed Stint** at the Layon Landfill. See Guam section for access.

The two recommendations we *do* have for Guam: go eat at Chamorro Island BBQ in Hagatna. DW absolutely destroyed a plate of chicken here. Stupid good. Really any Chamorro BBQ joint should have incredible food. Second, go snorkeling at Fish Eye. You don't need to pay to go out on the walkway or anything, we just waded in at shore and swam out. Where Guam lacks avian diversity it has done a fantastic job preserving its reefs and fish. Lots of coral, lots of big fish, real up close. Very fun.



*A very friendly Threadfin Butterflyfish (Chaetodon auriga). A common sight in the reefs of the Marianas. Rachael Kaiser*



*A beautifully healthy outcrop of soft corals right outside of Fisheye. Rachael Kaiser.*

## **April 14**

With the Marianas section of our trip concluded, it was time to board our first of many United flights through the Federated States of Micronesia. Chuuk is a fascinating location, and some background information that we'll attempt to cover as briefly as possible becomes relevant here before continuing. Chuuk is not one island, but a large lagoon containing numerous small islands all with their own cultures and traditions. The Chuukese have heavily resisted successive waves of Spanish, German, Japanese, and American imperialism over the centuries, and the islands maintain a lot of their traditions. There's an excellent thesis on Chuukese culture and history from William Jeffery of James Cook University that we've included a link to at the end of this report and encourage folks to browse, but part of why Chuuk was so successful for so long in resisting colonization was the frequent inter-island wars and disputes that would scare off visiting ships. The first recorded visit to the lagoon was in 1565 by a Spanish ship, and they were almost immediately chased off, with no additional visits to the island for another 134 years.

Although both of us loved Chuuk and could talk about Chuukese culture and history for quite a bit longer here, and we highly encourage folks to read up before visiting, it's beyond the scope of a trip report. The main things that are important to know are that each island in the lagoon is very different, family ties are *extremely* important, and different islands and families have had feuds with each other for potentially a very, very long time.

For this reason among others, we decided to stay at **Blue Lagoon Dive Resort** on the island of Weno for our time in Chuuk. Weno is the island the airport is located on, and the only island with any real (limited) tourist infrastructure. The owners of Blue Lagoon are the Aisek family, and the folks at Blue Lagoon hire people from, and therefore have connections on, many of the other islands in Chuuk Lagoon. The two biggest targets on Chuuk are the stunning **Truk Monarch** and **Truk White-eye**—both easiest on the island of Tol, and the white-eye *only* on Tol. Blue Lagoon we'd heard from another birder DW talked to was able to organize a boat to Tol to try for these birds.

We've included much more information including a map, pricing, and contact info in the **Mount Winipot, Tol South** section of birding sites at the bottom but it bears repeating here: there may be other ways to get over to Tol, by talking to boats in the harbor of Weno, or maybe through Truk Stop, one of the only other hotels on Weno. But **do not try to visit Tol without someone from that island with you**. And even if you do get someone from Tol, be careful and don't "rock the boat" too much—the same birder DW talked to had managed to organize a boat, get someone from Tol, and make the 16 mile crossing, but asked the operator to pull up at a different dock than where they had initially arrived and was greeted by "a nasty guy wielding a big knife." Luckily the chief arrived around then and smoothed things over, but the traditions and family ties between islands in Chuuk are much more complex than I think most visitors, us included, realize prior to actually being there.

Alright, with some background information in place, we'll jump back to April 14, 2023. We arrived at the airport after a smooth flight, but getting luggage was a bit of a madhouse. Chuuk is the most populous state in the FSM, and the number of people attempting to get luggage definitely corroborated that. Once we finally did get our luggage we went through customs and immigration. US citizens don't need a visa, and immigration and customs were very simple for us. We can't speak for how it would be for citizens of other countries, but we bumped into a few tourists from Korea and places who also seemed to have a fairly smooth time. Blue Lagoon Dive Resort offers a shuttle service to their hotel on the southern tip of Weno, and we'd recommend using it. It was very simple to find the guy outside the airport, load our stuff into the van, and be on our way. Sometimes the driver will stop at a store if you want, which is nice if you want to pick up some beer or something at a cheaper price than offered at the resort.





*A view from high on Mt Winipot, Tol, looking back across Chuuk Lagoon towards Weno far on the horizon and other islands in between. The cultures across different islands vary greatly within Chuuk Lagoon, and islands and families haven't always been on friendly terms with each other. Doug Whitman*

Checking in at the hotel was relatively simple, and we were shown to our room. Most of the reviews for the place were written pre-covid, and are definitely out of date. Blue Lagoon seems to have taken the lack of tourism as an opportunity to renovate, and our room was extremely nice—two beds, hot water, a fridge, and nice air conditioning. We had a balcony where we picked up **Caroline Islands Swiftlet** and **Caroline Reed Warbler** kicking around the grounds before even unpacking our things! Although we were itching to bird the grounds, after unpacking we headed straight for the dive shop a little after noon to get the ball rolling on attempting to organize a boat to Tol. DW had emailed the dive shop in advance to discuss organizing a boat for birdwatching, and had been told it was possible but better discussed in person based on weather conditions and other considerations.

We entered the dive shop and asked the first worker we saw there about the possibility of organizing a couple dives, and organizing a boat to Tol. The person's tone and body language changed dramatically when we mentioned going to Tol, saying something along the lines of "you know we are not friends, we do not have family on that island." DW mentioned knowing that boats had been organized to Tol through Blue Lagoon in the past, and it was like a dark cloud passed over the man's face as he gave a cold "let's talk about diving." Hint taken, and we pivoted to talking dives. The dive shop guy's mood seemed to improve slightly during that conversation, and he mentioned that we should maybe come back around 1:00 to talk to Rich about Tol instead of him. Fine by us. Off to lunch.

Returning to the dive shop at 1:00, we met Rich. This was a much friendlier experience—he knew what we wanted going to Tol, and said it might be possible. There was a security guard at Blue Lagoon from the island, and if we were willing to pay for the boat, and that guy was available, and the weather held up, we could make the crossing with him and a boat operator. We talked costs, and the first component of a later miscommunication happened here—Rich told us that the “gift” for “the guy” was usually around \$200, and that the price for hiring folks over on Tol was typically pretty minor. We incorrectly assumed this \$200 was for the security guard with the family connection. This will be important later. He told us to come back around 4:00 and he’d see what he could set up in the meantime.

Feeling hopeful about Tol, we decided to bird the grounds until 4:00. It was excellent. **Caroline Islands Swiftlets** zipped by constantly. A group of **Blue-faced Parrotfinch** hopped around the mowed areas alongside the more regular Pacific Golden-Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones. DW spotted the trip’s first **Oceanic Flycatcher** while RK was running to the room to grab her camera, and desperately waved for her to hurry back once the camera was acquired. A few large trees along the edge of the resort north of the entrance gate produced excellent looks at **Caroline Islands Ground Dove**, including a fledgling spotted by RK, and **Caroline Islands White-eye** and **Caroline Reed Warbler** were both kicking around alongside the ever-present **Micronesian Myzomela**. We had brief looks at our first **Purple-capped Fruit-Doves** of the trip, and even had a **Great Crested Tern** cruise by offshore. RK spotted a **Chuuk flying fox** hanging out in one of the palms, and we soaked up looks at this endemic mammal too.



*Bad photo of a mixed flock for the ages. Doug Whitman*





*Oceanic flycatcher has some crazy whiskers! Doug Whitman*



*Caroline Islands Ground Dove is a stunner. Doug Whitman*





*A young Caroline Islands Ground Dove, possibly one of the only photos of a juvenile.  
Rachael Kaiser*



*Caroline Reed Warbler was relatively common and obliging on the grounds of Blue Lagoon.  
Doug Whitman*

After our extremely enjoyable walk around the grounds, we returned to the dive shop at 4:00. The security guard was around, there was a boat available, and the weather window was the very next day. Tol was a go. The day wasn't over quite yet though—RK struck up a conversation with someone passing by who asked if we would like to attend a dedication for a plaque for US soldiers who had died in Chuuk Lagoon during WWII, and that there would be a performance of a traditional Chuukese stick dance at the ceremony. We absolutely would!

Turns out the Discovery Channel show *Expedition Unknown* was filming an episode about the WWII wrecks of Chuuk Lagoon, and the leaders of a project to repatriate US remains, the shows film crew, and a few Chuukese government officials were all unveiling a plaque and doing a memorial that evening. It was a touching ceremony—WWII and the horrors it brought to the Chuukese are clearly still fresh in the collective memory, and it was nice that the 200+ US citizens lying in the bottom of the lagoon were recognized and memorialized in Chuuk. That said, no one suffered in Chuuk in WWII more than the Chuukese, and although everyone present seemed fairly conscientious of this, it would be nice if that perspective was heard in the US more often.

The ceremony involved letting flowers go into the ocean, and if you happen to watch that episode and see two bozos sitting in the front row of the ceremony wearing binoculars fresh from our afternoon walk, that would be us. It also took everything we had to not take a quick peek at the shorebirds forming up just offshore behind the speakers at low tide, but we managed to resist. After the speeches and unveiling of the plaque, Chuukese dancers performed a traditional stick dance outside, a mesmerizing rhythmic athletic display, with sticks clacking together, dancers leaping over low swings, and a level of coordination that's hard to describe here. It was a privilege to see. We were treated to an excellent sunset over Chuuk Lagoon shortly after, as dozens of **Caroline sheath-tailed bats** and **Chuuk flying fox** wheeled overhead. Easily one of the best days of the trip.



*The Chuukese stick dance was an incredible display of art and athleticism unlike anything either of us had seen before. Doug Whitman*



**April 15**

Tol day. We got up early and grabbed our lunches we'd ordered the previous night from the restaurant, and headed over to the dive shop. After a bit of waiting and petting a particularly friendly dog we'd nicknamed "Beefy," our boat was ready and it was time to go at about 9:00. The ocean on the way over was relatively smooth, but we were both glad we'd packed our cameras in dry bags. We had a few birds on the way over, with **Black-naped Tern** being probably the most interesting seen from the boat.



*RK gives "Beefy" a good scratch on the grounds of Blue Lagoon. Doug Whitman*

We arrived at the dock on the east side of Tol south. For more details, we have included a map and additional info on prices and things in the **Mount Winipot, Tol South** section under Chuuk in the birding spots section. We were greeted by 6 mean looking dogs, and a pretty big, friendly guy, who seemed to live in the house at the dock. Our operator and security guard hopped out once the dogs had been wrangled, and talked things over in Chuukese for a while. We were eventually both given the all clear and hopped ashore. The operator grabbed DW and stressed the importance of needing to be back by 5:00 *absolute latest*. We agreed, walked past the house, and met up with the old man who would be our guide for the day who gave his name

as Mike. Mike was pretty intense, and among other things asked why we wanted so badly to come to Tol and go up the mountain. Fair question, honestly. He told us he'd be taking two helpers with us up the mountain, and we started the walk up through the scattered houses towards Winipot.

At the first place we stopped to grab one of Mike's helpers, DW caught a glimpse of a **Micronesian Imperial-Pigeon** rocketing overhead. It had vanished by the time RK turned to look, but RK caught another flyover shortly after gaining the SE ridge of Winipot later in the climb. The bird is still present on Tol it seems, so it's worth keeping an ear and an eye out for, but much more common on Pohnpei—don't worry if you miss it here. After collecting Mike's helpers we set out up the mountain, with one helper kindly carrying our lunch bag. The hike is no joke—steep and dense with the guides typically in front with machetes clearing a trail. The first bird we targeted was **Truk Monarch**. Mike told us after a brief conversation in Chuukese with his helpers that they had seen one recently in the area we were headed. DW chatted with Mike and learned the Chuukese name for the bird is **Uwaw**—onomatopoeic for the whistles pairs do back and forth to each other. When shown a picture of **Truk White-eye**, Mike said its name was also Uwaw, and that Uwaw came in white, black, and brown. This is true—male monarchs are white, females black, and juveniles brown, but at least from our conversation he didn't seem to register the brown Truk White-eye as being much different. It didn't matter though, since he knew spots for the monarch and was willing to take us high enough for the white-eye regardless.

RK had an asthma flareup on the hike up—the hike is seriously steep, and it isn't helped by the heat and near 100% humidity. Mike's second helper kindly offered to carry her bag. Mike seemed worried about us trusting them to carry it—maybe a visitor in the past had some sort of issue with the idea? Whatever, no worries for us, and we thanked them profusely for the help. DW was periodically taping for the monarch along the hike, with no responses yet. Eventually though, we heard a shout from Mike's helper in front and inferred that he had heard the bird. Sure enough, we could hear a semi-regular “uwaw” whistle up ahead. Tape can be useful for the bird, but honestly the whistle is fairly easily imitated, and seemed to work pretty well. After a nerve-wracking couple of minutes, DW and RK both managed looks at both a female and an absolute KNOCKOUT of a male **Truk Monarch** at (7.34035, 151.62690). Another 10 minutes of patiently waiting, falling up and down the mountain, and muttered cursing, gave photo ops.





*By no means good photos, but somehow possibly the best photos of a female Truk Monarch. Doug Whitman*





*A gleaming white bombshell. Male Truk Monarch shines through the canopy, and the blue-black iridescence on the throat is a nice touch. Doug Whitman*

We all relaxed for a bit, elated at the monarch and maybe wishfully thinking the white-eye might decide today was the day to descend from its montane haunts above the cliff band. With the white-eye nowhere to be seen after about 15 minutes, DW pushed to head up higher, and off we went. Where we were at for the monarch was below a cliff band, and we needed to head south along it to get somewhere we could gain the SE ridge. Recommend having a topo map on your phone, although our guides knew the way pretty well. It was a slog. Of note we passed a cave that seemed to be a nesting colony for **Caroline sheath-tailed bats** at (7.33865, 151.62752), with maybe 7-10 bats fluttering around outside it as we passed by. If the slog south was bad, gaining the ridge was somehow worse—in some sections one of Mike's helpers would occasionally cut a vine and dangle it down to us to use like a rope on the steepest parts. It should be noted that the hike that we were huffing and puffing to do in boots was being done barefoot and without breaking a sweat by the locals of Tol.

Thankfully the terrain got flatter and less dense once gaining the ridge. We also heard here a seemingly slightly out-of-habitat and slightly-low **Truk White-eye**, but never got visuals, sadly. Onwards and upwards. We reached a rocky overlook back over Chuuk Lagoon at (7.33822, 151.62701) and stopped here to admire the view and take a much needed rest, as well as drink a bit of water and coconut that one of Mike's helpers grabbed from a palm on our route. Not wanting to waste too much time, and with the forest composition looking like it was beginning to change above the overlook, we pushed upwards.

Around here DW started trolling tape for the white-eye. It wasn't too long after leaving the overlook that we came to an old Japanese tunnel gaping out of the overgrown mountainside at (7.33829, 151.62644). It was also here that DW spotted a dark bird shoot into a huge tree directly in front of the tunnel. Quick glance in the bins. **TRUK WHITE-EYE**. To hear RK tell it, DW knocked her down the mountain trying to spin her around fast enough to get on the bird in case it left. Thankfully, we both soaked in incredible views. It was responsive to tape, with a pair coming in to investigate and give a few warbles and whistles back at us. The bird is bizarre—it's considerably bigger than a typical white-eye, being much closer in size to the monarch than the **Caroline Islands White-eyes** we'd seen earlier in the climb. It also foraged and behaved like a white-eye that had gotten huge and then decided it wanted to convergently evolve with a nuthatch. Seemingly refusing to perch normally, it almost exclusively clung to vines, and the pair even started creeping on the trunk of a large tree during our observation. The bright orange legs and white teardrop mark on its face are both very apparent, and the black nail polish on orange feet is an excellent detail. The birds were even cooperative enough that we gave Mike and his helpers our bins to have a look for themselves while we took photos. What a bird.







*Working this hard for a bird makes it one of the sweetest lifers either of us has ever gotten, and our experience with it was beyond special. It helps that the bird is incredibly good looking, with a fascinating life history—apparently tied to the Panaw, or Chuuk poison tree, that we could find next to no info about online. Photos Doug Whitman*



With both birds seen, we felt no inclination to push further up the mountain. We walked back down to the overlook where we finally ate our lunch, and Mike and his helpers enjoyed looking back down at the village and across the lagoon with our binoculars. The hike down was a lot quicker than the hike up, and we made it back to the base pretty quickly, even stopping to try the tart pink mountain apple fruit growing on one of Mike's helper's trees.



*RK, DW, Mike, Mike's two helpers, and a friend. Post white-eye on the overlook*

Our only snag came in the form of payment—we were under the false impression that the ~\$200 Rich had talked about went to the security guard who had family on Tol. This was incorrect. No money went to him, outside of whatever Blue Lagoon was paying him, and the \$20 tip we gave him. We asked Mike about payment and he said “5.” This seemed really low—we’d assumed whatever deal he’d worked out with the guard and with Blue Lagoon would be more than that, so we asked again and clarified. He said 5 again, so feeling very weird and confused, we gave him a

\$10 bill and told him to keep it. He got pretty upset, understandably, and clarified that he'd meant **\$500**. OH. We apologized profusely. The problem came that we knew he'd been paid \$200 or \$350 in the past, but any chance to negotiate and have it be seen in good faith was completely blown up with our previous insultingly low offer of \$10. Ugh. We paid him the \$500, and asked how much for his two helpers. \$25 apiece. Well that seemed *extra* unfair given his cut, so we gave each helper \$40. Honestly they probably deserved a bit more than \$40, and were we not nearly completely out of cash we might've done \$50 or so. A more fair price for Mike probably would've been \$200-\$350, but at least everyone got paid and no one left angry. Plus, the people on Tol are under no obligation at all to take random foreigners up their mountain, which is important to remember.

Despite the miscommunication at the end, we all seemed to leave on good terms with each other, and Mike was interested in DW sending him pictures over Facebook, and asked if we would tell more birdwatchers to come over to Tol. DW said sure. DW attempted to add his Facebook and send him the pictures, but we're not sure if he ever got them—so if one of you reading this ever finds yourselves on Tol with Mike, let him know we tried.

The boat ride back to Weno was bone-rattling. The ocean had picked up a bit, but we were just happy to have seen our birds and be on our way back by 3:30, even if we were a little bit bitter about the overpayment. Back on Weno we took some much needed showers, and relaxed for the rest of the evening.



*The beauty in Chuuk can't be overstated. Doug Whitman*



## April 16

We didn't do anything. We'd thought about diving, but were both exhausted from the previous day. Slept in, ate a nice breakfast, and caught up on random work and logistical things for the both of us. Checked out the giftshop, which had some nice local art in addition to snack foods for purchase. In the afternoon we snorkeled for a couple hours across from our room, and had some pretty good fish diversity and a lot of coral. Highlights were probably some clownfish and a moray eel. It was nice. In the evening we took a stroll around the grounds, and were treated to one of the most spectacular sunsets either of us had ever seen. Bedtime, and packing for Pohnpei.



*Orsak flatworm (Maiazoon orsaki). Rachael Kaiser*



*One of many Red-and-Black Anemonefish (Amphiprion melanopus) present in the lagoon, right on resort grounds! Rachael Kaiser*

## **April 17**

Flight to Pohnpei! We got up, settled up our bill for the hotel, and ate breakfast before catching the hotel's shuttle to the airport. The airport was as crowded as ever, but folks were as friendly as always. Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae all have exit taxes of \$20-\$30 per person before you can leave. On Chuuk this must be paid in **cash**. The flight to Pohnpei was pretty smooth, and the airport was a stark contrast to Chuuk—much more modern and streamlined, which makes sense since Pohnpei sees more tourism than Chuuk does. We picked up our rental from Sunset View Car Rental without issue. We had reserved an SUV at \$60/day, but found a regular car waiting for us at \$55/day. We probably could have asked for this to be changed, but didn't think it'd be necessary and drove off towards our hotel.



We stayed at Mangrove Bay Hotel, which was extremely nice. Good rooms, AC, hot water, and a restaurant open for lunch and dinner in the parking lot. When we arrived a water pipe was being fixed so we didn't have water for our first afternoon, but this was resolved quickly and doesn't seem to be the norm. After settling in and getting our lifer **Mottled Munias** in the hotel parking lot, we grabbed lunch from a pretty good and cheap food stand in the main town, hit the ATM at Bank of Guam (the only functioning ATM during our visit, apparently) and decided to drive up to **Sokeh's Rock** for some late afternoon birding.

Shortly after arriving and hopping out of our car on the lower section of the road, RK heard a **Micronesian Imperial-Pigeon** singing somewhere. We taped for it and RK eventually spotted it high in a tree above us. We were under the impression that this bird was pretty hard, and seemingly in the past it was—maybe hunting pressure has decreased or something, because on our short afternoon of birding on Sokeh's Rock we racked up 11 individual pigeons!



*A handsome Micronesian Imperial-Pigeon cranes his neck to investigate something or another. Doug Whitman*

Other good birds on the trail included good looks at **Purple-capped Fruit-Dove**, **Pohnpei White-eye**, **Pohnpei Kingfisher**, and **Pohnpei Fantail**. If you're wondering when we're going to mention the gorgeous maroon lorikeet, don't worry—**Pohnpei Lorikeet** is *everywhere* and we had close to 40 birds just on our first little afternoon walk.



*Pohnpei White-eye is pretty cute, and a common sight in most birding spots on the island Doug Whitman*

Our primary reason for heading to Sokeh's Rock in the evening was to scan for **Tropical Shearwater** at dusk. This poorly understood species (**Micronesian Shearwater**, if you ask Howell) nests on Pohnpei, and our research suggested that Sokeh's Rock was a decent place to spot one. Dusk had fallen and we'd almost given up when at 6:50 or so RK heard one wailing closeby, and we both got decent looks as a tiny, Black Noddy sized *Puffinus* shearwater cruised overhead over the jungle. An unreal experience, followed by high fives and hugs. This spot is apparently also not a bad place to scan for the extremely poorly known **Pohnpei Short-eared Owl**, although we had no luck with that particular subspecies. See the species index for suggestions on where to potentially look for it.

We were all set for a nice dinner and an early bedtime, but on our drive out we found a chain had been strung across the road. Sure that it must be dummy-locked DW went to check. It was not dummy locked. Now what? A car came up the road and we asked the driver what to do—he informed us that the chain went up at 6:00, and to walk down a side road to knock on a house there to have them unlock it. The house had no one home. At a loss, we walked down the road looking for help or someone to unlock the gate, but stopped when a group of mean-looking guard dogs blocked our way. As a last resort, DW turned his phone off airplane mode and made a call to Lisa Ranahan Andon, a contact we'd made prior to arriving in Pohnpei. She was incredibly helpful, and gave us the number of her father John Ranahan, who very kindly drove to where we were and gave us a ride back to our hotel. This was our first lesson on how to do

things on Pohnpei: all the land is private, and there are unwritten rules that the locals know and visitors do not. Even if something seems simple logistically, **always ask a local about an area before you decide to go there.** The people are fairly friendly, but there are rules that need to be respected, and typically all you need to do is ask about a location first.



*DW investigates the chain that goes across the road up to Sokeh's Rock at 6:00 every day. If you plan to visit in the evening to look for shearwaters, park **before** the pavement ends.*

*Rachael Kaiser.*

## **April 18**

The folks at the hotel tried to help us the prior evening, calling the municipal police to see if they had a key to the gate, but they didn't. Apparently a former congressman lived up there, and only he had the key. Whatever. We'd taken our stuff from the car, and the chain would have to be opened at *some point* on the 18th. RK was coming down with a cold, so she slept in while DW embarked on the mission to retrieve the car. I walked from the parking lot of the hotel towards the main road looking for a taxi, and found one pretty easily. Short taxi rides in Pohnpei are typically \$1, but I only had 20s and the driver didn't have enough change, so I paid him \$5 and got my \$15 change all in \$1s, which was fine. The driver took me up the road to Sokeh's Rock and explained (maybe correctly, or maybe just a rumor) that the congressman who lived there had lost re-election the first time he came up, and was mad at the local community, which is what had inspired him to start locking the place off at night. Correct or not, the chain was still up when we arrived, and the taxi driver suggested I wait until he had to head out to take his kid to school around 8:00 and leave then. After a couple hours of loitering around with the local Pohnpei Lorikeets and white-eyes, a truck finally came up the road and unlocked the chain, freeing our rental.



With the rental in hand and RK well-rested, we *finally* got some breakfast and got out to check out some birding sites. We first drove up to the road by **Dolen Kahmar Ridge**. eBird pins suggested this area might be good for **Pohnpei Flycatcher**, **Long-billed White-eye**, and **Common (Pohnpei) Cicadabird** in addition to the other species we'd seen at Sokeh's Rock the previous evening. On the drive up to the area we were going to bird, we spotted a single **Caroline Islands White-eye** dart over the road and land in a small tree in the more scrubby habitat before the power plant. This bird can apparently be tricky on Pohnpei, and is a different subspecies than the birds in Chuuk. We had an excellent time birding, starting with a responsive pair of **Pohnpei Flycatchers** singing and foraging near us at (6.92149, 158.20907) shortly after parking the car. Further up the road we heard the distinctive down slurred "tew" notes of a group of **Long-billed White-eyes**, which readily came down to investigate us after a little bit of tape at (6.9233, 158.20973). These birds were incredibly personable, and after their initial investigation decided to hang around, forage, and do a cute little group preen session. The group looked to be two adults and one fledgling still sporting its baby gape. No luck on the cicadabird on this visit.



*A Pohnpei Flycatcher with a recently decapitated katydid Doug Whitman*



*Long-billed White-eyes are so silly. The baby on the right caught a little bug after his exit from the family cuddle and preen session. Doug Whitman*

From here we got some lunch from our trusty food stand in Kolonia, and headed over to the west side of the island in an attempt to visit the Pilen Seleur eel pools (more on that on April 19), but after asking around with our cans of mackerel in hand, the woman whose land the eel pools were on explained that it was high tide and that the eels didn't like salt water—come back tomorrow morning, and bring our mackerel. Debating what to do for the rest of the day, we decided to drive the island loop road and explore a bit.

The island loop road is a long drive, and there are very few places to pull off and bird that wouldn't involve talking to folks and asking, and we weren't committed or motivated enough with cicadabird as our only remaining target to try that, so we mainly just drove. We eventually reached the turn off for the ruins of **Nan Madol**, and realizing we were already there, had time, and didn't want to make the long drive here the next day as we'd previously planned, we decided to visit. Thankfully we'd asked a local at the hotel how to visit Nan Madol earlier in the day, and were prepared.

Like everywhere else in Pohnpei, Nan Madol is private property. You turn down the road to Nan Madol and there's a signpost stating the "visitor's center" is one direction, and the trail to the ruins the other direction. This "visitor's center" does not exist. Straight up. Do not turn down this road. We had been warned in advance, and took the fork towards "trail." From here you reach a spot where the road runs through a woman's yard. She'll typically come out and ask you



to pay \$1/person as a fee for going through her property. Fair enough. A little further on you'll reach the house of the people whose property Nan Madol is on. A girl about the age of 12 came out and asked us for \$3/person, and pointed us to the trail that leads to the ruins. \$8 all told for visiting some mind blowing ruins ain't a bad deal.

The hike down the trail goes through some pretty nice mangrove forest, filled with birds, fish, and little aquatic critters. We didn't linger too long as we were cutting it a bit close with sunset, but it'd be worth exploring a bit if you've got the time. The view as we rounded the bend and reached the ruins was spectacular—incredibly massive stones stacked in an architecture style unlike anything else either of us had seen before. An ancient artificial city complete with canals. You need to wade across one of these canals to enter the ruins, so it's important to visit at low tide and wearing sandals.



*RK walks past one of the walls of Nan Madol, shortly after wading across the canal in the foreground Doug Whitman*

Listen, the birding here isn't amazing. There are **Pohnpei Kingfishers**, **Pohnpei Lorikeets**, and a good-for-Pohnpei flyby Common Tern. RK spotted a few more **Caroline Islands White-eyes** as flyovers. But you should **absolutely** make time to visit this site. Having free reign to explore an ancient stone city built out of the ocean, the tide flowing in and out of the artificial canals, and the mangrove forest slowly reclaiming it...its otherworldly. The drive back to Kolonia continuing anti-clockwise took an ungodly long time only going 20 mph, and when we finally arrived back at our hotel we pretty quickly got some dinner and crashed.



**April 19**

We got up early and headed back to the road on the west side of **Dolen Kahmar Ridge** for another unsuccessful look for **Common (Pohnpei) Cicadabird**. Blech. This bird was proving to be extremely difficult—reports of it range from the highest watershed forests down into lowland mangrove forests, but it seemed to us like it's possibly pretty low density across that range—or we were there at a bad time of year. Fed up with the cicadabird, we decided to head back over to the Pilen Seleur Eel Pools since it was low tide.

The eel pools are fantastic. One of the clans on Pohnpei consider **Mottled Eels** sacred, so they don't hunt or eat them. These eels grow huge! And if you ask around on the southwest side of the island, you'll eventually be pointed to a short path to a house where if you bring your own cans of mackerel, the family there will feed the eels and let you watch, sometimes but not always for a small fee (plus the price of a can of mackerel). We took a pin (6.84998, 158.16075) at the start of the path to the house with the eel pool, but you should still ask some locals around the area of the pin to make sure. It's a short and fun diversion, and the mottled eels really are gorgeous.



*The mottled eels go CRAZY for a tasty can of mackerel, and some of them are 3 or 4 feet long!  
Rachael Kaiser*

Eels fed and cicadabird dipped, we decided to head back to the hotel and relax for a bit and make a plan for the afternoon. As we pulled into the parking lot we noticed a **Pohnpei Lorikeet** quietly feeding in a coconut palm. Although we'd seen (and especially heard) these guys all over the place, this was the first halfway decent photo op we'd had at one. The grass on the parking lot edge also proved to be good for **Mottled Munias**, and we spent around 20 minutes going for shots.



*Pohnpei Lorikeet, or Serehd, is mostly a beautiful rich maroon, and thankfully pretty common. The yellow of their tail seems to match coconut palm blossoms, and the color of the body seems to match the terminal bud on banana plants. Coincidence? Probably. But it's very cool. Doug Whitman*





*Nothing a munia likes more than some good seedling grass. Doug Whitman*

In the afternoon we birded the big mangrove forests along Nett Point on a thought that maybe trying something different would produce a cicadabird. No luck, although the forest was very pretty. That evening we ate at the hotel restaurant again, had probably a few too many drinks at the bar, and hit the sack.

## **April 20**

Day whatever of looking for the damn cicadabird. We got up early and headed back to the Dolen Kahmar road, with the plan to leave and try the trail above Lidududuhniap Waterfall if we weren't successful, since there seemed to be a few old reports up there. However, this proved to be unnecessary. Shortly after starting birding the road, a man with a machete clearing blowdown from the previous night's storm walked by, and asked what we were up to. We explained we were looking at birds, and promised to stay on the road (all land in Pohnpei is private). He seemed surprised we didn't want to head up to the ridge, as that was where there were more birds, and he explained that it was his property and he'd be happy to take us up.

Why not? He led us to a short but steep and muddy trail that headed up onto Dolen Kahmar, and marked a few trees along the way to follow the trail back. It was a good big forest up there, and we quickly bumped into a fledgling **Pohnpei Flycatcher** being fed by its parents. RK had a possible cicadabird shoot by, but was bitten on her foot by a spider and an ant at that exact

moment, and neither of us got a look. Eventually the man went back down to keep clearing the road, but told us we'd be welcome to look around as long as we liked. We both had a good feeling about the place, and birded the area for another hour or so, when we heard the distinctive squeaky calls of distant **Common Cicadabirds!** (6.92437, 158.21138).

RK got a halfway decent look for a second or two at a male and female and fledgling sitting high up and maybe 50 meters away, while DW only caught them fly in and fly out again, but it was good enough. We descended the ridge and found the man's house, where we thanked him for letting us bird on his property, and asked if we could pay him. He refused any payment and said we were welcome any time. For the reason of respect to the property owner, we're not including the pin for the trail up Dolen Kahmar, but the man was very friendly, and we encourage visitors to ask permission and go up, and offer to pay a small amount of money as thanks.

With the bird seen we returned to our hotel and took showers (that trail was MUDDY, and we were sweaty) and relaxed for a bit. We got some lunch at the restaurant for Ocean View Plaza Hotel, which was decent with a great view and some cute cats hanging out at our feet.



*Kitty cat. Rachael Kaiser*



In the parking lot, someone asked us if we were going to watch the solar eclipse. THE WHAT?! Turns out there was a 95% solar eclipse over Pohnpei that day! If we had been in Kosrae a day earlier, we'd have been in the path of totality but hey, 95% ain't bad. We picked up some beverages from the store and watched the eclipse from our balcony, before doing a little mini watch of the bay as dusk fell, picking up Common Tern, Black-naped Tern, and just after dusk, **Tropical Shearwaters** fluttering past the edge of Sokeh's Rock. The rest of the night was spent packing our things for the flight to Kosrae, and getting a good night's rest.



*The peak of the solar eclipse, with 95% coverage, shot through some heavy cloud cover. Doug Whitman*

## **April 21**

Our flight to Kosrae was at 1:30. We slept in, grabbed our stuff, and got to the airport by 11:30. Returning the rental car was very easy at the airport. Checking in for the flight, paying the exit tax (payable by card, here), and going through immigration took a little bit of time, but nothing crazy. The waiting area had a few snacks and coffee for sale, and the TV was playing a pretty enjoyable compilation of various countries' auditions for their own versions of The Voice. The flight into Kosrae was smooth and uneventful, although the flight attendants seemed shocked that we had hopped on in Pohnpei and were getting off in Kosrae. Kosrae is a very sleepy place, with a small population that has gotten smaller as folks move off island.

Getting our bags was easy, clearing immigration was easy, and finding our shuttle to Kosrae Nautilus was easy. On the way to the hotel we passed by the **Bird Cave** and saw a number of **Caroline Islands Swiftlets** circling around outside of it. Our driver was also a scuba instructor, and we chatted to him a bit about diving on Kosrae, since RK's head cold and an awful run of weather had tanked our plans to dive on Pohnpei. He said the coral was excellent, and the small fish were great, but that in the past few years many of the large fish had been fished out by large trawlers. The FSM has had issues protecting its fisheries from large powerful foreign countries—perhaps this was an example of that in action.

Checking into the hotel was easy too, and the rooms were nice enough. We quickly grabbed lunch at the restaurant, put the meal on our room, and wandered out to the **road west of hotels**. Kosrae is a much friendlier island in some ways than the others we'd visited, and reminded us both of Rota. Everyone waves and smiles. You should wave and smile back. Within 15 minutes we'd seen both of our target birds: **Kosrae White-eye** and **Kosrae Fruit-Dove**. We strolled back to the large dock that extends out over the Blue Hole near the hotels, saw a **Reticulated Puffer** swimming around in the water (possible range expansion?), and watched the sunset. The sunset was made even better seeing a large colony of **Kosrae flying foxes** roosting on a small islet at (5.33503, 163.02022) get up and start flying around to begin their evening activities. Easy day.



*Kosrae is quiet, laid back, easy, and very pretty. Doug Whitman*

We talked to the (somewhat strange and rude) owner of the place about diving the next day—apparently local custom made diving on Sundays frowned upon (Kosrae is very religiously Christian and socially conservative), and so the next morning, Saturday, would be our window. Early bed time to rest up for diving.



## April 22

With a two tank dive only costing \$135 including gear, we were pretty excited to get out in the water. Most of the dives in Kosrae are wall dives, which is fine by us, and we were pumped to see some good coral. However, you get what you pay for, and the process to dive with Kosrae Nautilus wasn't very smooth. Driving to the boat was easy, and the boat was fine, but gear on the boat had multiple issues. The first tank given to RK was missing an O-ring, causing a leak of air which was initially brushed off before we insisted it be fixed. To the boat driver's (not the owner's) credit, there were a few spares on the boat which were able to be slotted in. There were also issues with weight belts, and issues with attaching the BCDs to the tank. One regulator leaked air, which is manageable but annoying. After many delays and a lot of double checking, we did finally get in the water and had a fun dive. The coral really is spectacular, and the diversity of small fish and christmas tree worms, and in particular the abundance of anemones and clownfish, was very cool.



*A group of Christmas Tree Worms from our Kosrae dives. Rachael Kaiser*

On the second dive, DW hooked up his second tank to realize it'd never been refilled, and was still at 50 bars from the last dive, whenever that was. Thankfully there was a spare but...still. This dive was very similar to the last, but DW ran into an issue—either due to personal error or a miscalibrated dive computer, there was a warning to make emergency stops on ascent to avoid decompression sickness. The owner did not know what this meant on the watch, which DW had to decipher himself. The dive was neat though, and this one also had a **green sea turtle**.



I guess our final notes on diving with Kosrae Nautilus is that it's a decent price, but plan to have your own gear, or at the very least be willing to advocate for yourself—like RK with the missing O-ring, or DW refusing to ascend until the required decompression stop was complete. We don't have great confidence in the owner's ability to handle a situation where something actually does go very wrong.

On arriving back at the hotel, we relaxed a bit, and then decided to stroll down to a grocery store for some snacks, and visit the Nan Madol-like **Lelu Ruins**. It was a nice walk, the grocery store was well-stocked (for a tiny pacific island), and the cashier pointed us to the entrance to the ruins at (5.33130, 163.02403). The ruins were cool—not as impressive as Nan Madol, but definitely in the same style, and with a few small interpretive signs around. There was no entrance fee on our visits, but we wouldn't be surprised if occasionally someone mans an entrance station and asks for a modest amount of cash.



*Nan Madol's influence can be clearly seen in the architectural style at Lelu. Doug Whitman*

More pertinent to us, a large ficus was fruiting in the corner of the ruins behind the grocery store, and we soaked up excellent looks at **Kosrae Fruit-Doves** enjoying the bounty. **Kosrae White-eyes** were also common, and we recommend going here over the road west of the hotel if you only have time for one.



We decided to walk up to Bully's restaurant behind Pacific Treelodge for dinner for a change of pace, and it was a very pretty spot with decent food. Note that Bully's is cash only. We walked back to the hotel, bought a bottle of wine for the next day since nowhere in Kosrae sells alcohol on Sunday, and went to bed.



*A Micronesian Myzomela stretches its wings. The lack of species diversity on Kosrae means an abundance of these fiery little birds. Rachael Kaiser*

## April 23

We slept in, got breakfast, and debated seeing if we could rent a car. DW asked the owner about it, and it was a very casual \$60/day, so we went for it. A car isn't needed here, but we wanted a bit more flexibility. The car was a Japanese model with steering wheel on the right side, which was fine. The car also seemed to have a good number of roaches living in it, which was less fine, but whatever. We drove over to the ATM at Bank of Guam and got some cash, both for Bully's, and in case the exit fee the next day was cash only (good call—it was). We also swung by the **Tofol Gymnasium and Ponds**, where there was nothing in the ponds and we heard a couple of distant **Blue-faced Parrotfinch**.

From here we headed to the store and back to Lelu Ruins, but the store was closed (Sunday—of course) so we went straight for the ruins to try for better photos of the fruit-dove and white-eye. DW got some alright photos, but RK's camera screen had broken on Chuuk—leaving the camera functional, but unable to review settings until the photos were on a computer and being looked at after the fact. A slipped thumb had put RK's shutter speed at 1/4000 on the dark cloudy day in the jungle, and the photos were completely unsalvageable. Still having our car, and with the ruins a 5 minute drive, we headed back for a third time and finally both got decent shots of the island's two endemic birds.



*Kosrae White-eye is a bit more blue-gray to our eyes than the brown-gray of Pohnpei White-eye. A cute little dude. Doug Whitman*

Photos finally acquired, RK had the idea to spend the last bit of time before sunset doing a brief seawatch across from Pacific Treelodge and seeing what an approaching storm might blow close to shore. We had hundreds of noddies of both species, but the real highlight was a couple of distant **Short-tailed Shearwaters** gliding and rocking by. The storm rolled in quicker than we'd anticipated, and before long we had to take shelter in our car and wait for it to pass before dashing in for dinner at Bully's. A nice end to our last night in Micronesia.





*Kosrae Fruit-Dove looks great—the huge fluffy yellow pants are hilarious. Their song is also excellent, a weird hiccuping syncopated series of hoots. Doug Whitman*



*A fledgling Kosrae Fruit-Dove completely surrounded by fruit—exactly where he wants to be. Doug Whitman*

## April 24

Our flight out of Kosrae was at 2:45, so we slept in, had breakfast, settled up our payment for our dives, room, and food, and made sure everything was packed up extra well for the long haul. Around 12:30 we took our shuttle back to the airport, where we checked in, moved some seats around, and sat down to wait. We paid our final cash departure tax, but security didn't open for a while yet, so DW had a coffee while we both watched the rain pouring down on the runway. When security finally did open, it was shockingly thorough. Every item in our carry-on bags were unloaded and inspected. Very different from our previous several flights. The flight was delayed, as the tail-end of the island hopper route often is, but we did finally manage to board and be on our way.

The flight swings through Kwajalein and Majuro in the Marshall Islands before making for Honolulu, and these stops are incredibly boring and frustrating. These are not fun flights. We did manage to tick a handful of **Pacific Golden-Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, and White Terns** from the window on Kwajalein, but it was dark by the time we'd reached Majuro.

Here the story really ends—the flights were long and boring, we were confined to the plane, and we eventually reached Honolulu very sleep deprived and hungry. Despite this, we pushed through and tried to get RK as many lifers as we could on a 10 hour layover starting at dawn, with some success. We barely made our flight to San Francisco due to some crazy incompetence on United's end, and the Honolulu airport was a madhouse, but hey, welcome back to air travel in the US! Jet lag back in Cleveland was crazy, we both slept a lot, and wrote this report. We hope the level of detail included in this report (and the ctrl+f function) helps any of you reading this plan your own independent trip to a really special part of the world.



## Flights and Itinerary

We won't lie. Logistics for this are TOUGH. The first and main crux is laying out flights, which we'll discuss below. The only other particularly tough thing to do is get to the island of Tol within Chuuk for **Truk White-eye** and **Truk Monarch** (see section on Chuuk birding sites). This being said, expect to bump into logistical difficulties. The itinerary involves a lot of plane flights in areas with dramatic weather changes, not to mention general issues you can run into on each island.

Inter-island flights through the Marianas are booked through STAR Marianas. These are small eight-seater planes that are used for the short flights between the CNMI and Guam. Security and check in are very quick and laid back, typically you and your bags are weighed and you are given a card assigning your seat number. Flights between Rota-Saipan and Saipan-Rota can be booked online. Flight times vary throughout the week and are constantly changing, but the ticket cost is relatively consistent. A 20-lb bag is free to carry on the plane, larger bags or bags over the 20-lb limit cost \$1 per pound. Staff are occasionally lax about the baggage weights and cost and will lower the cost a bit.

Flights to Tinian are only through Saipan and must be booked at the counter in-person, and cannot be booked online. Tickets can be purchased one hour before a scheduled flight to Tinian. Flights run roughly hourly throughout the week, but again are subject to change. Since Saipan has other international flights at the airport, domestic flights can be found at the shipping containers east of the main building.

Flights in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) are done through a flight known as the United Airlines Island Hopper. This schedule passes through each island every few days, running Guam-Chuuk-Pohnpei-Kosrae-Kwajalein-Majuro-Honolulu, or vice-versa. This route, if booked as a direct flight, runs about \$1800, with ~1hr layovers on each island, where you are confined to the plane. This is an excellent idea, if you are a masochist who enjoys the misery of hours on end of cramped air-travel. Booking each flight individually greatly increases the cost-the best option is to book a **multi-city flight** through United Airlines. To do this, you will select 'advanced search' at the bottom of the booking options, and then select the 'multi-city' tab. Flights from Guam-Chuuk and Chuuk-Pohnpei run Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (and Saturday for about three times the price). Flights from Pohnpei-Kosrae run on Friday and Monday. Kosrae to Honolulu runs Monday, Tuesday, and Friday (and again Saturday for three times the price). We booked our first flight as Saipan-Chuuk, which allowed for our overnight layover in Guam. We used the multi-city booking to schedule our flights as follows:

**April 13** Saipan-Chuuk  
(Saipan-Guam on the 13th, flew to Chuuk early the 14th)

**April 17** Chuuk-Pohnpei

**April 21** Pohnpei-Kosrae

**April 24** Kosrae-Cleveland

(Flight path will go through the Marshall Islands, stopping at Kwajalein and Majuro, to Honolulu, and then you can transfer to your final destination )

If it was possible to skip the Marshall Islands portion (Kwajalein and Majuro) we would recommend it, but it seems to be an inevitable downfall of the schedule at this time. Either way, using the multi-city booking feature will bring the flight cost back down to around \$1800, compared to \$2800 if you were to book each flight individually. To be direct, these flights are not at all enjoyable. A large plane (Boeing-737) is used for these flights, and it's almost always packed. The flights are crowded, overhead space is always limited, and people are never in their assigned seats, which delays the flight. Nevertheless this is the only option for travel between islands in the FSM, and airport time and the flight itself tend to be fast and smooth.

## Accommodations

Location	Hotel	Cost	Comments
Rota	Hotel Valentino Coral Gardens	N/A	Hotel Recommendations from RK: Hotel Valentino and Coral Gardens. Both are located almost next to each other in Songsong, and are the best options for lodging in Rota. Restaurants and stores are located within walking distance from the hotels. Hotel Valentino starts at about \$84/night, and has a cafe located in the building. Coral Gardens starts at \$54/night.
Saipan	Songsong Manglona Inn	\$84/night*	Cost was hotel/rental car package, price includes both*. AirBnB's are another less expensive lodging option for Saipan.  *Package is offered through RK's landlord on Rota as a special for tenants, so cost may be different or not offered through the hotel.



Tinian	N/A	N/A	Overnight stay is not necessary or recommended for Tinian.
Guam	Days Inn by Wyndham	\$90/night	It's fine. Very close to the airport. Hotel recommended and covered through RK's work.
Chuuk	Blue Lagoon Resort	\$150/night	<p>Worth the cost—there are only a few hotels in Chuuk, and the grounds of the resort are by far the easiest place to see <b>White-throated Ground Dove, Blue-faced Parrotfinch, and Caroline Reed Warbler</b>. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, Blue Lagoon's dive shop seems to be the easiest way to organize a boat over to Tol for <b>Truk White-eye</b> and <b>Truk Monarch</b>.</p> <p>Restaurant on the grounds of the resort serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Breakfast is offered at “birder time” since the diver clientele is often out pretty early. You can also arrange boxed lunches. All meals can be placed on the room tab, which can be paid at the end of your stay using a card.</p> <p>A few drinks and (mostly expired) snacks are available through the gift shop, cash only.</p>
Pohnpei	Mangrove Bay Hotel	\$120/night	Most hotels in Pohnpei are pricey like this, but Mangrove let us book online, and it is quite nice. Our best looks at <b>Mottled Munia</b> were in the parking lot

			<p>here, and it's possible to watch Sokeh's Rock from the room at dusk and see <b>Tropical Shearwater</b> from the hotel (although it's better from Sokeh's Rock proper). Furthermore, there's a dive/hike/snorkel etc tourism outfit downstairs, where if nothing else you can talk to folks and get contacts and general beta for wherever you'd like to visit. This type of resource should not be overlooked in Pohnpei.</p> <p>A restaurant is located just outside of the hotel for lunch and dinner, and Oceanview restaurant is a short walk up the road and does breakfast</p>
Kosrae	Kosrae Nautilus Resort	\$125/night	<p>Free shuttle to and from the airport. Pacific Treelodge Resort is also very close by, and we might recommend checking it out as well. Kosrae Nautilus is fine, but the owner is an Australian guy who won the hotel in a raffle(???) that we weren't a huge fan of. We did rent a car from Nautilus for \$60/day for one day (although you can easily get the targets without one), but we believe this is possible from Pacific Treelodge too.</p> <p>Restaurant located at the hotel. Meal package is offered at \$50/day but is not necessary. Kosrae Ace grocery store is located a mile away in Lelu, which can provide snacks or an easy breakfast/lunch. Bully's is a restaurant located directly behind</p>



			<p>Pacific Treelodge about 1/2 mile away from Nautilus which has decent food as well (cash only).</p> <p>All purchases through the hotel (meals, diving, etc) can be placed on your room tab and paid at the end of your stay using card.</p>
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## Travel & Transportation

Rental Cars			
Location	Agency	Cost	Comments
Rota	N/A	N/A	<p>No rental needed for us on Rota since RK had a work vehicle, but it is necessary for visitors. Islander Rent-A-Car is the primary rental agency on Rota and has a variety of vehicles, from subcompact cars for \$50/day up to pickup trucks for \$100/day. Rentals are offered through the airport as well, potentially for cheaper, but we don't know the prices.</p> <p>Minimum of a small SUV type car is recommended (or larger vehicle) as some birding sites are not accessible via a small car. Driving South Road (including road to the <b>Rota White-eye</b> spot) and As Matmos Fishing Cliffs would be tough without an SUV. See Rota Birding section for more detail.</p>

Saipan	Enterprise	\$84/day*	<p>Car rental, cost was hotel/rental car package, price includes both.</p> <p>*Package is offered through RK's landlord on Rota as a special for tenants, so cost may be different or not offered through the hotel.</p>
Tinian	Avis Rental Car	\$34/day (plus young driver fee for us), plus the absurd cost of gas on Tinian.	Tank needs filling before returning to the rental agency, gas is -very- expensive on Tinian, as the island only has one singular gas station. For us it was \$7.50/gal with cash, or an even worse \$7.80/gal with card.
Guam	Budget Car Rental	\$67/day	Booked in the airport after our flight landed. Definitely recommend renting a car for the day if you want to bird at all on Guam.
Chuuk	N/A	N/A	Not only is renting a car not necessary on Chuuk, we don't even recommend it. Chuuk is a collection of small islands, and the best birding on Weno (island with the airport) is at Blue Lagoon. Just use the airport shuttle to and from Blue Lagoon. Something like \$6.50/person tacked onto your room.
Pohnpei	Sunset View Car Rental	\$60/day	Easy to work with. Shoot them an email and they'll meet you at their stand at the airport when you arrive. Pohnpei is the only island in the FSM that we visited where a car rental is essentially mandatory. Recommend an SUV for \$60/day as some of the roads are a bit spicy, but we made do with a compact for \$55/day.
Kosrae	Kosrae Nautilus Resort	\$60/day	Day use rental through Nautilus Resort. Very casual. Not necessary for any target birds, but can be nice.



Other Transportation			
Location	Agency	Cost	Comments
Chuuk (Weno to Tol)	Blue Lagoon Dive Shop	\$355 for boat and operator	We chartered the small speed boat without a canopy. Larger (still not large) boats with a canopy are \$655. This cost is <b>for the boat</b> , not <b>per person</b> , so it came to ~\$180/person for us. Doing this as a 3-4 person trip would significantly reduce the per person cost, and doing it solo would double the per person cost.
Saipan to Managaha	Sakura Marine Sports	\$30/person	Ferry to Managaha Island, easily the best location for <b>Micronesian Megapode</b> . Location of Sakura on Google Maps is correct. Tiny road between the Crowne Plaza Resort and Hyatt Regency leads to a parking lot and small building where the center is. Impossible to book in advance, so get there pretty early and ask. Might be worth calling in advance, too.
Tinian	STAR Marianas	\$111/person roundtrip from Saipan	Flight from Saipan to Tinian, only current operator. Tickets cannot be bought online, book at the counter in Saipan.

## Weather

Weather is about as expected when visiting tropical pacific islands. Typically in the 80's (27C), high humidity (70-90%) and frequently rainy, despite late spring being the start of the dry season. Most birding can be done in shorts, sandals and a t-shirt (or whatever you find comfortable in hot humid weather). Raincoats are beneficial to have. Some birding requires pants and hiking boots- Primarily Tol South on Chuuk, and a few trails on Rota. All other birding we did in shorts and sandals, but is ultimately personal preference. Also recommend having a **dry bag** that can fit at least a camera and phone. Rain is intense and unpredictable, and our trip involved two wet and bumpy rides on tiny boats over the ocean, to **Managaha Island** and to **Mt Winipot, Tol South**.

## Locations & Birding Sites

### Rota

- **Bird Sanctuary and Rail Trail.** *Note—Guam Rail is not on this trail.* Bird Sanctuary, also known as I'Chenchon Bird Sanctuary, is a public park located on the southeast cliffs of the island (14.15391, 145.26715). A sidewalk here leads up to a small gazebo and short walkway along the cliff face, and provides an easily accessible option to see the Brown Booby and Red-Footed Booby colonies at sunset. About 200m before the sanctuary is the beginning of the Rail Trail (14.15532, 145.26634), which provides the opportunity for **Abbott's Booby** and **Mariana Crow**. The Abbott's Booby is a vagrant female that has been living on Rota since 2007, and is occasionally seen flying high along this cliff band. The crow can be anywhere along this route—in the trees along the trail, flying along the cliff, or down in Lower Bird Sanctuary. A small colony of **Masked Boobies** has formed on the island, and are sometimes seen along the trail. The trail also allows easier viewing of **Great Frigatebird**, and the potential for a wandering **Lesser Frigatebird** (several records in the last few years).

The road cut to the Rail Trail is located at (14.15532, 145.26634). About 100m up this path the trail starts on the right (14.15616, 145.26595). The trail is currently marked by a pepsi can on a tree branch, and will lead into the jungle tracking roughly parallel along the cliffs. Trail is relatively well maintained and marked with pink flagging, with some orange/silver flagging mixed in as well, although parts can be tricky to follow if you aren't paying attention. The trail cuts towards the cliff at about ½ mile in and the first overlooks to the colony are at about ¾ of a mile on the trail. There are four main overlooks people go to, but any opening along the cliff once the trail cuts in can provide good viewing opportunities. The overlooks are as follows: Overlook 1 (14.15744, 145.27384), Overlook 2 (14.15818, 145.27468), Overlook 3 (14.15878, 145.27556), and Overlook 4 (14.16079, 145.27909). RK viewed the Abbott's Booby fly by from the second overlook, but the bird has been seen from all four. Trail is about 1.5 miles one way from the start to the fourth overlook, on pretty flat terrain. Pants and close-toed shoes are recommended but not necessary, mostly for protection from the sun, thorns, and various stinging or biting insects. If you are able to get in contact with a local, or a member of the Aga Recovery Project, I would recommend seeing if anyone would accompany you on the trail. Some of the flagging gets confusing and poorly marked before the overlooks, and it is easy to get off trail in this area.





Other notable species include Red-Tailed Tropicbird, White-tailed Tropicbird, Brown Noddy, **Micronesian Starling** (often nesting in cliff face cavities), the common jungle birds, and **Mariana Fruit Bat**. A large colony is currently located at (14.15876, 145.27952), below the cliff at Overlook 3 in lower Bird Sanctuary among the nesting boobies. The fruit bats are extremely sensitive to disturbance (mainly the smell of humans). Behavior of the bats should be noted if visiting the colony or watching birds from the overlook above the colony. If disturbed the bats will begin to loudly vocalize and squeal and will begin flying away from the colony. **Limit time around the fruit bat colonies and move away if the bats seem disturbed.**

- Rota White-eye Trail.** This location follows an unnamed road off of the island's south road (turn at 14.11837, 145.17101) to a trailhead. The trail begins in open cattle fields (trailhead at 14.12493, 145.18196), but turns into primary forest about 400m in. The primary forest allows good views for **Rota White-eye**. The white-eye can often be heard vocalizing while moving quickly through the canopy in groups, but birds will occasionally pause within the trees and allow for views. Previous birding trips that visit Rota have struggled with the white-eye, but the bird has had a population increase in recent years and is now quite abundant along many steep forested areas on the island. This location is just the easiest to access. **Rufous Fantail** and **Micronesian Myzomela** are common along the trail, and **Mariana Kingfishers** are among the open fields at the start of the trail. **Mariana Fruit-Dove** can be heard all along the trail, but look for fruiting trees for best viewing. Our last visit to the white eye spot had numerous fruiting trees along the road before the start of the trail, and we had a conservative count of 20+ fruit-doves feeding on them.

Although the road is unnamed, it is easy to see on a map. EBird has several pins around this location. several points along the trail can be wet and muddy, especially during the rainy season.

- **North Shore Road.** Birding along this section of road, the Philippine Sea Road and Moching Beach Road allow for the easiest and most accessible views of **Mariana Crow**. Birds can be seen anywhere between (14.18043, 145.20768) and (14.19944, 145.25013). Continued viewing potential along As Matmos Cliff Park Road, along the way to the Fishing Cliffs.
- **Dugi Road.** Section of road on Rota where the **Guam Rail** has been released and established. The rail can potentially be seen anywhere along the road, from past the airport (14.17301, 145.25437) up to Dugi house (14.18769, 145.27766). We recommend arriving at this stretch of road pre-dawn to search for the rails, and driving along the stretches of road in hopes of an individual foraging on the roadside. Cooler, foggy mornings are best.
- **As Matmos Fishing Cliffs.** Great location to watch the boobies fly in at sunset. Large groups of Red-footed Boobies and Brown Boobies fly close to the cliffs, as well as the occasional Masked Booby or Great Frigatebird. An excellent place for a seawatch on stormy days with strong NE winds. RK and DW had a **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** a few weeks prior to the trip, and RK did a seawatch in December 2022 that turned up **Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel**, **Bulwer's Petrel**, and **Gray-backed Tern**. Continue along North Shore Road until reaching As Matmos Rd. A sign marks the turn. Road ends around (14.19461, 145.27825) which is a good location for seawatching and booby flight. A small SUV or larger vehicle is recommended for these roads.
- **Rota Airport Fields.** When the airport fields are mowed, good shorebirding is possible at these airport fields. A road can be found at (14.17317, 145.25421) off of Route 103, which leads to the outer fence of the airport property. Airport fence can be driven in its entirety, but best birding is typically on the east end, where you drive in. Mostly Pacific Golden-Plover and Whimbrel, but vagrants such as **Common Snipe** and Swinhoe's/Pintail Snipe are yearly. Minimum of a small SUV recommended.
- **Pinatang Park.** An abandoned waterpark right outside the town of Songsong. The shoreline just east of the park can be viewed from the parking lot or bridge, and occasionally has good shorebirds foraging along it, including vagrant **Lesser Sand-Plover** and **Terek Sandpiper**. White Terns nest and Pacific Reef-Herons roost on the island across the bridge, where the waterpark itself is located.
- **Tweksberry Beach.** A closed off lagoon and beach along the north shore of Wedding Cake Conservation Area, cut off by a road leading to Little Island (14.13563, 145.13195). Reliable location for **Black Noddy** on Rota, with a colony along the northern cliffs of Wedding Cake. Often seen flying in groups along the reef edge of the lagoon. Along the reef edge, the beach, and in open grassy areas have potential for vagrant species.



**A note on Rota Resort and Country Club:** This location is listed as the top hotspot for Rota on ebird. The resort closed permanently in September of 2022. The golf course was formerly a great place to bird, but since closing the area has not been maintained. The course is now overgrown making birds difficult to impossible to see. The crows do nest in the coastal forest behind the golf course, and can be seen/heard on occasion. The retention ponds are still visible and occasionally have good birds show up in them, but overall the main attraction of birding the resort no longer exists.

## Saipan

- **Route 320.** A dirt road stretching across some mid-elevation scrubby habitat and secondary forest, on the NW end of the island. One of the few remaining sections of good habitat for **Saipan Reed Warbler**, which we had two pairs of at (15.25552, 145.79237). The reed warbler can be seen all along this road leading up to the Saipan Country Club. Other notable CNMI species were abundant along this road, including **Golden White-eye**, **Bridled White-eye**, **Mariana Swiftlet**, **Mariana Fruit-Dove**, and **Orange-cheeked Waxbill**. The White-eyes and waxbill are abundant across the island, including in developed areas, and are easy to find. The swiftlet is primarily seen at higher elevations, but are abundant once you get up into any of the mountains. The fruit-doves are more skittish on Saipan in comparison to Rota, but we had several along this road that would sit more or less out in the open.
- **Mañagaha Island.** A small island off the coast of Garapan, Saipan. Ferries run to the island daily, we went through Sakura Marine Sports. Location of Sakura on Google Maps is correct, but development in the area has made finding their business more difficult. Tiny road between the Crowne Plaza Resort and Hyatt Regency leads to a parking lot and small building on the beach. A small building and covered picnic table marks their location. The island allows for the easiest views of **Micronesian Megapode**. Just two individuals currently live on this very small island, and can be found foraging in the fenced off and forested rubble pile that takes up much of the area. Bird was seen about 15 minutes after arrival at (15.24087, 145.71185), foraging along the white chain fence and along the trail leading into the forested rubble patch. Also of note are the hundreds of nesting **Black Noddies** and occasional **White Tern** with a fuzzy chick. A great location for snorkeling if that appeals to anyone.
- **Banzai Cliffs.** A memorial park at the northernmost area of Saipan, which allows for some great seawatching when the north winds are strong. Not many birds on land at the park, but great activity out on the water, with two **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** being the highlight of our time at the park. RK also had **Bulwer's Petrel** and a flock of unidentifiable *Puffinus* shearwaters a few months prior.
- **Puerto Rico Water Treatment Plant.** Behind a shell station, and possible to peek through a chainlink fence at around (15.22346, 145.73960). Good for the Mariana ssp of **Eurasian Moorhen**, with the possibility of other vagrant shorebirds or waterfowl.

## Tinian

- **Tachogña Beach Nature Trail.** Parking for a nice little trail through some good forest right across from Tinian Oceanview hotel. **Tinian Monarch** will use pretty much any patch of decent native forest, but there's not a ton of it on the island and this is probably the easiest spot. We had a very cooperative pair of birds at (14.95197, 145.63213). There are also a few old Latte Stones a little further along the trail that can be neat to see. **Rufous Fantail**, **Mariana Fruit-Dove**, and **Bridled White-eye** also present here.

## Guam (what birding?)

- **Layon Landfill** can be good for moorhens, waterbirds, vagrant shorebirds, etc. Gates close at 3:30, and make sure you sign in at the office. A few ponds to check along the road that turns out to the right just past the office buildings.
- Guam is legitimately the most depressing place for birding either of us have ever seen. There are no songbirds once you leave the city where a few drongos and tree sparrows are hanging on. Recommend going to Fish-Eye and doing some snorkeling instead to see the pretty amazing reef and fish life, and to try and forget what the brown tree snake did to the island's former avifauna.

## Chuuk

- **Blue Lagoon Dive Resort.** The grounds at Blue Lagoon are remarkably good birding, and the only place on the trip where we encountered **Caroline Islands Ground Dove**. This bird in particular seems to be *extremely* difficult in other areas, and we didn't see a trace of them on Pohnpei. We saw 3 individual birds, 2 adults and 1 fledgling, on 2 separate days. They were generally hanging out in a few large trees near the edge of the resort, north of the entrance gate at approximately (7.41338, 151.84302). Other good birds seen on the grounds included **Blue-faced Parrotfinch**, **Caroline Reed Warbler**, **Caroline Islands White-eye**, **Oceanic Flycatcher**, and **Purple-capped Fruit-Dove**. Also of note was **Chuuk flying fox**, and **Caroline sheath-tailed bat** (a subspecies of pacific sheath-tailed bat) at dusk. In fact, the only Chuuk specialties that *can't* be seen on the grounds are Truk Monarch and Truk White-eye. There are usually a handful of Pacific Golden-Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, and Whimbrels on or just offshore of the grounds as well, although other more interesting shorebirds could easily drop in.
- **Mt Winipot, Tol South.** Accessing this site and getting the birds is probably the logistical, physical, and financial crux of the entire trip. Tol sits 16 miles across the lagoon from Weno, and has no tourist infrastructure. It is also the only location to see **Truk White-eye**, and one of the best locations to see **Truk Monarch**. We also had a brief flyover **Micronesian Imperial-Pigeon** towards the beginning of our climb, but this bird shouldn't be expected and is much easier on Pohnpei. The islands in Chuuk Lagoon are better thought of as their own entities, and it can be downright dangerous to visit Tol without someone who has family there accompanying you. Seriously. Even



Chuukese folks from other islands are reluctant or will refuse to go. At Blue Lagoon Dive Shop, talk to Rich. Rich has set up boats for birders to go over there before, and understood what we wanted. One of the employees (a security guard) of Blue Lagoon has family on Tol, and Rich was able to set us up with a boat, operator, and that guy for \$355. Once on Tol, you'll meet up with a local. It's a steep hike, and we recommend taking a minimum 2 liters of water per person, and wearing hiking boots and long pants. Experiences vary by trip report, but we went up with a fairly brusque old man, Epas Machuo ("Mike") and two other folks. Mike had taken birders up before, and although he didn't seem to quite "get" birding, he definitely seemed interested in the money and becoming the go-to guy for taking birders up the mountain. Mike speaks fluent english which is helpful on Tol if you don't know Chuukese, and at the very least he or one of his helpers knew a decent route up the mountain, knew a spot for **Truk Monarch** (7.34035, 151.62690), and knew what they sound like (Chuukese name is Uwaw—onomatopoeia for the whistles pairs do back and forth). We also passed a probable **Caroline sheath-tailed bat** colony at (7.33865, 151.62752). Mike and his helpers were great, clearing the trail when necessary, one of them carrying some food we'd brought for lunch, and the another helping RK with her pack after an asthma flare up on the steep ascent. All 3 people seemed a bit less familiar with **Truk White-eye**, whistling monarch calls as we ascended into their range, but had no problem taking us as high as we wanted to see them. We encountered **Truk White-eye** at (7.33829, 151.62644) directly in front of an old Japanese tunnel. The birds came in for tape, and were remarkably responsive and curious. We recommend that you start seriously searching for the white-eye once you gain the SE ridge, although the real good habitat seems to start a bit higher around the overlook back over Chuuk Lagoon.



Once we were down we ran into (remarkably) the only real snag of the experience—due to a miscommunication, we offered Mike far too low of a payment, and after we'd apologized profusely and realized the actual number he was asking it was too late to negotiate a lower amount without it seeming to be in bad faith. We paid Mike \$500—which was probably an overpayment. In the past taking birders up it seems like he

usually charged \$200-\$350. Mike also told us it was \$25 each to the helpers, but that seemed drastically unfair to them given his personal price, so we gave each of them \$40 for a total of \$580—or \$290 per person. Mike and his helpers were excellent, but \$200-\$350 is probably a more fair price for Mike. That said, the people who live on Tol aren't obligated to let birders visit at all so...take that as you will.

- **Tonoas/Dublon.** The island directly SE of Weno. We didn't visit here, but it seems that **Truk Monarch** is around if you don't feel like the endeavor or the cost of getting over to Tol. Presumably Blue Lagoon Dive Shop (probably Rich would be the one to talk to) would be able to understand what you want and organize this.
- **Japanese Gun.** We didn't visit here, but the old Japanese Gun on Weno at ~(-7.4455, 151.8502) seems to be a decent backup spot for **Blue-faced Parrotfinch** and **Caroline Islands Ground Dove**, as well as providing an overlook into some adjacent wetlands. Wetlands are a rare commodity in Micronesia, and always worthwhile to check out for things like **Eurasian Moorhen**, and any possible vagrants. Had we been able to spend more time researching logistics that *weren't* getting over to Tol, we'd have probably made time to visit.

## Pohnpei

- **Sokeh's Rock.** A large outcropped mountain just west of Kolonia. Japanese Rd. starts at the base of the mountain and leads to an overlook at (6.96743, 158.19176). After this overlook, Telecom Rd. can be hiked on foot to the top of the mountain. Birding along the road up to the overlook was great, with several **Micronesian Imperial-Pigeons**, Purple-capped Fruit-Doves, **Pohnpei Fantails**, Caroline Island Swiftlets, and **Pohnpei White-eyes**. The Imperial-Pigeon is scarce and difficult to see elsewhere in the FSM, this road is by far the best opportunity to see and hear the bird. Hunting pressure seems to have decreased on this bird, and they were much easier on Pohnpei for us than previous trip reports suggested. Several **Pohnpei Lorikeets** were seen along the road, and a large roost formed right by the overlook as the sun began to set. About 15 minutes after sunset, **Tropical Shearwaters** could be seen and heard around the mountain, including one individual flying just over the ridge and vocalizing near us.  
**Important Access Note:** All land on Pohnpei is private property, including the upper elevation of Sokeh's Rock. Shortly before the overlook where the pavement turns into a dirt road is a chain. This chain is locked by a local politician at 18:00 every day. We recommend parking behind the chain and walking up to the overlook.
- **Dolen Kahmar.** A small mountain just SE of Kolonia, with an unnamed road that follows around the mountain. We pulled off onto the side of the road and parked just before the turn towards Lududuhniap Falls at (6.91994, 158.20943). From here we birded on foot until (6.92769, 158.20796). Our first day had notable species along the road, including **Pohnpei Kingfisher**, Micronesian Imperial-Pigeon, Purple-capped Fruit-Dove, a nest building Pohnpei Fantail, Pohnpei Lorikeet, **Pohnpei Flycatcher**, Caroline Islands White-eye, Pohnpei White-eye, and **Long-billed White-eye**.

We returned to this same stretch of road the next day in search of the Cicadabird, and were quickly met by a man clearing debris from the heavy rain the night before. We informed him we were looking for birds, and he offered to take us up a trail on his property on Dolen Kahmar. We followed him up a short but steep trail that he actively worked on clearing up to the ridge of Dolen Kahmar. He was kind enough to show us around the upper portion of the mountain for a bit before returning to the road, continuing to clear and mark the trail as he went down. Species were about as expected, Fruit-Doves vocalizing in the distance, Pohnpei and Long-billed White-eyes and Micronesian Myzomela passing through, an occasional Pohnpei Kingfisher or Pohnpei Fantail. Close to our cicadabird stakeout on the ridge was a pair of **Pohnpei Flycatchers** with a fuzzy fledgling sitting in a nearby tree. The fledgling remained in its tree as the parents foraged and repeatedly fed the fledgling. We remained in a short ~50m stretch up on the mountain for about and worked along it for about an hour and a half. Finally three **Common Cicadabirds** appeared, two adults and a recent fledgling. The fledgling loudly begged from a nearby perch as the adults bopped around and vocalized before collecting the young bird and flying away. A very short but incredible and worthwhile moment with the bird. The trail was well marked by the landowner and we had no issue getting back down. We returned to his house to let him know we were leaving. He was very kind to us, and turned down payment for his help. **One recommendation** for anyone who may try to access this trail- We both were dressed in sandals and shorts expecting to just walk on the road, and were not particularly prepared for the hike. Both DW and RK were bit/stung repeatedly by large ants, with a bonus spider bite for RK on her feet. Close-toed shoes would definitely be beneficial when hiking off the road.

**Important Access Note:** Again, all land is private property on Pohnpei. Stay on the roads, don't wander onto the locals' land, and don't linger outside people's houses. Out of respect for this, we will not pin the exact location of the trail up Dolen Kahmar. The man who owns the land was very friendly and seemed eager to help us look for birds. His house is located roughly at (6.92652, 158.20865), the first house on the right just past the banana plantation as you walk the road. He said that he had shown birders around his land before.

## Kosrae

- **Lelu Ruins.** Ancient stone ruins in the town of Lelu about a mile south from Kosrae Nautilus Resort. 15-20 minute walk from the hotel. Entrance is at (5.33130, 163.02403), directly next to the grocery store. Site is forested and has a few very large ficus trees. On our 3 visits to the site we had knockout looks at **Kosrae White-eye** and **Kosrae Fruit-Dove** each time. No admission fee when we went, although it wouldn't shock us if a local there occasionally mans the place and asks for a modest fee. It's possible that the fruit-dove isn't always reliable here, but a huge ficus in the corner as you turn left once you enter the ruins was fruiting during our visit, which made our views extended and luxurious. The ruins themselves are also worth a visit on their own—smaller, but built in the same style as the more famous Nan Madol on Pohnpei. There are a few basic



interpretive signs to read here too. In between the hotel and Lelu Ruins, you'll pass a small island at (5.33503, 163.02022) that houses a large roost of **Kosrae flying fox**.

- **Road west of hotels.** There is a road that runs north past the hotels on the west side of the mangrove channel that Kosrae Nautilus and Pacific Treelodge sit on the east side of. The turn onto this road is at (5.34039, 163.01726), just over the bridge. We only walked up this road a little ways on our first afternoon, but had both **Kosrae White-eye** and **Kosrae Fruit-Dove** along it. It seems to track the edge of some good forest in the interior, so it is worth checking out in the unlikely scenario that you end up struggling with either target at Lelu Ruins.
- **Bird Cave.** As you head along the road from the airport to a hotel, you'll notice a large gaping cave entrance in the cliff face at ~(5.36835, 162.99908). Usually there are a number of **Caroline Islands Swiftlets** flying around outside the entrance. Apparently you can go inside and see the swiftlet colony up close, but we didn't feel like bothering them.
- **Tofol Gymnasium and Ponds.** There is a large area of weedy, shrubby fields and a few mowed lawns in the vicinity of (5.32750, 163.01144). There are also some mucky ponds around there at (5.32704, 163.013359). The fields can be good for **Blue-faced Parrotfinch**, which on Kosrae is a different subspecies than Chuuk and Pohnpei (interestingly, the nominate subspecies). We didn't have much luck, only hearing a few twittering distantly with no visuals, and no water birds at all on the ponds. But they're worth a look, and crap weather may have played a role in our lack of parrotfinch visuals here.

# Species Index

## Target Species

### **Micronesian Megapode** (*Megapodius laperouse*)

Rare to extirpated from the majority of the Mariana's now and primarily located on the uninhabited northern islands. A few from a re-introduced population remain on Saipan and possibly Tinian. A pair is located on the island of Managaha off the coast of Saipan, which we targeted on this trip.

### **Guam Rail** (*Gallirallus owstoni*)

Very hard. Introduced population on Dugi rd. east of the airport on the east side of the island. Does not use primary forest, most often encountered in dense impenetrable grass and shrubs. Initial introduction in 1996 has been supplemented by additional releases in the same area every year or two, until September of 2020. Very little done to monitor status of population, and habitat has had a recent influx of stray dogs and cats. Bird seems to have become more difficult to encounter since pause of releases. Best bet is to cruise roads on east side of the island predawn and try and catch one crossing. Heard only for us, and only on 2 out of 10-12 visits.

### **Caroline Islands Ground Dove** (*Alopecoenas kubaryi*)

3 birds, including one fledgling, seen on the grounds of Blue Lagoon Dive Resort, Chuuk. Seen on both days we birded the grounds. Seems to be extremely difficult outside of this location—not very vocal (no audio exists to our knowledge) and was not seen on Tol in Chuuk, or at all on Pohnpei. Is said to prefer extensive mangrove forest in Pohnpei. Name is a bit misleading—we never saw this bird on the ground, and our sightings were in some of the large trees on the grounds of Blue Lagoon.

### **White-throated Ground Dove** (*Alopecoenas xanthonurus*)

Abundant but quiet and somewhat skittish in the CNMI. Seen in a variety of habitats as long as there is decent tree or ground cover. Despite the name, frequently seen sitting and foraging in trees.

### **Purple-capped Fruit-Dove** (*Ptilinopus ponapensis*)

Abundant on Chuuk and Pohnpei, but like most Fruit-Doves, are skittish and are more often heard than seen. Mostly in primary forest, but will use secondary and edge habitat. Tend to sit higher in trees with good cover.

**Mariana Fruit-Dove** (*Ptilinopus roseicapilla*)

Abundant on Rota and Saipan and very vocal, but birds are much more skittish and harder to view in Saipan. Much easier to view in Rota, and easiest around fruiting trees. Present in all forested habitat. See Rota birding section for more details.

**Micronesian Imperial-Pigeon** (*Ducula oceanica*)

Not present in CNMI, and very difficult on Chuuk and Kosrae. Two birds seen as brief flyovers on Tol in Chuuk Lagoon. Surprisingly common on Pohnpei, particularly on the road up Sokeh's Rock. Previously difficult on Pohnpei due to hunting pressure, but seems to have improved in recent years. One afternoon walk on the road up Sokeh's Rock had 11(!) individual birds, in addition to encounters on Dolen Kahmar, and as flyovers while driving the circum-island road. Note that the subspecies encountered in the FSM (*oceanica*) is different than (*monacha*) found in Palau.

**Mariana Swiftlet** (*Aerodramus bartschi*)

Abundant on higher elevations in Saipan, present but difficult in Guam, extirpated from Rota. Driving or hiking through any elevated terrain on Saipan will have the birds flying overhead.

**Caroline Islands Swiftlet** (*Aerodramus inquietus*)

Abundant on Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae. Seen flying in just about any open space. Most frequently in the early morning and late evening, when activity picks up. Slightly harder on Kosrae, see information about the Bird Cave. 3 different subspecies between the 3 different islands.

**Eurasian Moorhen** (*Callinula chloropus*)

Endangered subspecies in the Marianas, Infrequent on Rota and Saipan, endangered on Tinian. Potential to see on any still freshwater, marshes, retention ponds, etc. Present on Rota in the country club ponds, see Rota birding section for further details. Seen on Saipan at Puerto Rico Water Treatment Plant, see Saipan birding section for further details.

**Tropical Shearwater** (*Puffinus bailloni*)

Nests on high ridges and cliffs across smaller pacific islands, easiest to view and only encountered on Pohnpei during this trip. Seen and heard flying above the ridge of Sokeh's Mountain after dark, from the viewpoint along the road to the ridge, right before the dirt road turns into a hiking trail. Also possible to scope from Mangrove Bay Hotel balconies, flying around Sokeh's Rock in the evening. Important disclaimers about Pohnpei birding and Sokeh's Rock, see Pohnpei birding section for more details.



**Abbott's Booby** (*Sula Abbotti*)

Single continuing individual that has resided on Rota since 2007. Difficult but possible to see when visiting, specifically along the Rail Trail overlooks near Bird Sanctuary (See Rota section for further details). Bird often flies high along the cliff band, and is significantly larger than the Brown, Masked, and Red-footed Boobies.

**Mariana Crow** (*Corvus kubaryi*)

Endemic to Rota. Small population composed of wild and released birds. Birds prefer primary forest and tend to remain there but can be found in second growth. Easiest places to see the crows are along the Rail Trail near Bird Sanctuary, as well as the dirt road tracing the northern edge of the island (Philippine Sea Rd., Moching Beach Rd., As Matmos Rd., north of the now-abandoned Rota Country Club).

**Pohnpei Kingfisher** (*Trichoglossus rubiginosus*)

Endemic to Pohnpei. Uses a variety of forests, from mangroves to lowland forest and altered habitats. Tends to perch in the understory, where it is often heard before seen. will sit out in the open as well.

**Mariana Kingfisher** (*Todiramphus albicilla*)

Abundant on all of CNMI. Seen in variety of habitats across islands, from developed areas to deep in primary forests. Very charismatic and vocal birds, recommend extended observations of pairs in developed areas if possible. Rota birds visually distinct from birds on Saipan and Tinian. Saipan and Tinian birds have ghastly pale heads that Rota birds lack.

**Pohnpei Lorikeet** (*Trichoglossus rubiginosis*)

Abundant on Pohnpei, seen every time we stepped outside. You will be hard pressed to miss this bird.

**Micronesian Myzomela** (*Myzomela rubratra*)

Abundant on all of CNMI and FSM, both in developed and forested areas. Subspecific variation between islands is fun to see. Tends to be vocal.

**Common Cicadabird** (*Edolisoma tenuirostre*)

Often split out as Pohnpei Cicadabird, difficult on Pohnpei. Seen briefly and poorly once on Dolen Kahmar ridge after 2 days of unsuccessful searching in other locations. Our thoughts are that the bird is widespread but low density in relatively undisturbed habitat, as there are scattered reports ranging from the high watershed forests down into the mangrove preserves. See write-up for April 20 for details on our one encounter.

**Rufous Fantail** (*Rhipidura rufifrons*)

Abundant in first and second growth forests in the CNMI. Seen several times on Rota, Saipan, and Tinian (although suitable habitat on Tinian is thin on the ground). Tends to stay low in denser understory but will move higher as well. Very vocal.

**Pohnpei Fantail** (*Phipidura kubaryi*)

Habits similar to Rufous Fantail. Encountered in most forested areas on Pohnpei. Vocal and responsive. One pair nest-building during our trip.

**Truk Monarch** (*Metabolus rugensis*)

Endemic to Chuuk, most common in good forest on the high elevation islands of the lagoon, but will apparently use other habitats such as mangrove forest and even strand forest on small atolls. Several heard along the hike up Mt. Winipot on Tol. Vocal and responsive. To our knowledge, not present on the island of Weno. Recommend searching on Tol South, and apparently also gettable on the island of Tonoas/Dublon.

**Tinian Monarch** (*Monarcha takatsukasae*)

Endemic to Tinian. Will use any decent patch of native forest, which is mostly restricted to the northern end of the island.

**Pohnpei Flycatcher** (*Myiagra pluto*)

Endemic to Pohnpei. Uses the understory and edge of forest, can be difficult to find. Not particularly vocal but can be responsive. One pair seen along the road by Dolen Kahmar, and one pair with a fledgling seen on Dolen Kahmar ridge.

**Oceanic Flycatcher** (*Myiagra oceanica*)

Endemic to Chuuk. A handful of individuals seen on Weno and Tol. Uses a variety of forested and edge habitat. Vocal and responsive, but can be difficult to spot the actual bird as it moves through the canopy.

**Saipan Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus hiwae*)

Endemic to Saipan. Uses dense reedy scrubby habitat often along the forest edge. Majority of this type of habitat has been cleared for development. Primarily found in the northern extent of the island, on slightly higher elevation. Several pairs along Route 320, which has some of the best remaining habitat on the island.

**Caroline Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus syrinx*)

Abundant in secondary growth and edge habitat on Chuuk, difficult on other islands. Uses tall grasses, open garden spaces, and shrubby edge habitat. Bird only seen on Chuuk and was missed on the other islands for this trip.

**Golden White-eye** (*Cleptornis marchei*)

Endemic to Saipan and Aguijan. Reservoir populations on the uninhabited northern islands of the Marianas. Abundant and uses a variety of habitats, usually moving in pairs or small groups low in the understory. Extremely responsive to phishing.

**Truk White-eye** (*Rukia ruki*)

Endemic to Chuuk, on the Faichuk islands. Restricted to old-growth forests above 400 ft, may be tied to the native poison tree (“Panaw” in Chuukese). One bird heard vocalizing in the forest, one pair seen at 900 ft on Mt. Winipot. Bird can be very difficult to find and there is a real chance of missing the bird even if you get up the mountain.

**Long-billed White-eye** (*Rukia longirostra*)

Endemic to Pohnpei. Uses primary and secondary forest above 600 ft. Moves quickly through the canopy, often in groups. A handful were seen and several heard along the Dolen Kahmar road, where the topography and habitat of the area causes them to sometimes venture lower. Also apparently present high on the Sokeh’s Rock ridge, although we didn’t make it high enough there.

**Pohnpei White-eye** (*Zosterops ponapensis*)

Endemic to Pohnpei. Abundant in most habitats across the island. Often moving quickly in pairs or small groups.

**Rota White-eye** (*Zosterops rotensis*)

Endemic to Rota. Restricted to upper elevation, using tall trees in primary forest. Seems to prefer steep forested slopes. Moves quickly among the canopy, but small groups occasionally stop in trees for a few minutes. Seems to like steep forested slopes. Critically endangered, but the population seems to be doing well and actually recovering a good bit. Not as hard now as it was when a few older trip reports struggled with it.

**Bridled White-eye** (*Zosterops conspicillatus*)

Abundant on Saipan and Tinian. Found in green spaces in developed areas and shrubby and secondary forests. Often moving through areas quickly and in groups.



### **Caroline Islands White-eye** (*Zosterops semperi*)

Found on Palau, Chuuk, and Pohnpei, each with their own distinct subspecies. Uses a variety of forest habitat and scrub. Seen frequently on Chuuk, traveling quickly in small groups. Tougher on Pohnpei, but seems to prefer scrubbiest habitat than Long-billed or Pohnpei White-eyes. Seen briefly once shortly before the power plant on the way to Dolen Kahmar road, and RK had a small group fly over at Nan Madol.

### **Micronesian Starling** (*Aplonis opaca*)

Abundant throughout the CNMI and Micronesia, will use virtually any habitat. In developed areas of Guam.

### **Blue-faced Parrotfinch** (*Erythura trichroa*)

Found across the Pacific Islands, one subspecies on Chuuk and Pohnpei, and a second on Kosrae (interestingly, the nominate). Found in a variety of habitats- in montane forests, forest edge, scrub, and open grassy areas. Decent numbers seen on Chuuk, including three foraging on the grounds of Blue Lagoon Resort. Difficult on Pohnpei, none seen on this trip. Two heard at Tofol Gymnasium and Ponds in Kosrae.

## **Widespread, Migratory, and Vagrant Species**

### **Black-winged Stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*)

Frequent visitor to Guam, less frequent in the CNMI. Prefers still freshwater and open grassy habitats. Three seen at the Layon Landfill in Guam.

### **Black-bellied Plover** (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Yearly but low-density winter migrant to Micronesia, utilizes rocky coastlines. One individual found at Jeff's Pirate Cove in Guam.

### **Pacific Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*)

Excessively abundant shorebird throughout Micronesia. Seen in grassy or coastal habitat on all islands visited.

### **Lesser Sand-Plover** (*Charadrius mongolus*)

Yearly visitor to the CNMI and Guam. Four overwintering birds on the shoreline east of Pinatang Park on Rota, and two more individuals seen at Jeff's Pirate Cove in Guam.

**Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

A common shorebird seen throughout the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Found in open grassy fields, mudflats, and rocky coastlines. Birds seen on Rota, Guam, and Chuuk.

**Ruddy Turnstone** (*Arenaria interpres*)

Abundant shorebird in the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Seen often in grassy fields or on rocky coastlines.

**Long-toed Stint** (*Calidris subminuta*)

A rare vagrant to all of Micronesia. Continuing individual at Layon Landfill, Guam.

**Common Sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Abundant shorebird in the CNMI. Seen primarily on rocky coastlines.

**Gray-tailed Tattler** (*Tringa brevipes*)

Abundant shorebird in the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Often seen along coastlines.

**Wandering Tattler** (*Tringa incana*)

Less common than Gray-tailed Tattler in this region, but possibly underreported due to the challenge of IDing winter plumaged tattlers. Our only for sure Wandering was on Pohnpei seen from our room at Mangrove Bay, but we had probable ones on Kosrae too.

**Wood Sandpiper** (*Tringa glareola*)

One seen at the Saipan International Airport upon landing. Regular vagrant to the Mariana Islands and Guam during spring and fall migration.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** (*Phaethon lepturus*)

Frequently seen resident in the CNMI and Micronesia, along cliffs, on upper elevation ridges, or over the ocean. Only seen on Rota and Pohnpei on this trip.

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** (*Phaethon rubricauda*)

Resident to the CNMI. Uses coral atolls and sea cliffs, primarily seen along rocky shores and over the ocean. Seen on Rota typically at Bird Sanctuary and on Saipan at the Banzai Cliffs.

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** (*Ardenna pacifica*)

Regular in pelagic waters of the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Infrequently seen from shore under right ocean and wind conditions. Two seen off the Banzai Cliffs in Saipan.

**Short-tailed Shearwater** (*Ardenna tenuirostris*)

A couple seen cruising by ahead of a storm while seawatching from out front of Pacific Treelodge on Kosrae. Seems like we might have been in the migration window for the species.

**Great Frigatebird** (*Fregata minor*)

Seen throughout the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia, but only seen on Rota during this trip. Abundant on Rota, can be seen along any shore, but primarily at the Fishing Cliffs and the Bird Sanctuary.

**Lesser Frigatebird** (*Fregata ariel*)

Infrequent visitor to the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. One 2nd-cycle individual on Rota, seemingly continuing individual for a few months. Individual seen along the Rail Trail.

**Masked Booby** (*Sula dactylatra*)

Only resident on Rota and Saipan, rare elsewhere in Micronesia. Colony at the northern end of Rota, close to Bird Sanctuary. Seen along the Rail Trail of Bird Sanctuary and at the Fishing Cliffs.

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*)

Abundant on Rota, infrequent and harder on the rest of CNMI and Micronesia. Large booby colony inhabits the northeast side of Rota, and birds frequent the steep cliffs on the northern end of the island. Colony can be seen from the overlooks of Rail Trail, or seen flying close to shore at As Matmos Fishing Cliffs. Rota colony is primarily Red-footed booby, but Brown Boobies nest along cliffs and fly through the colony and offshore. Can be seen offshore on the rest of the CNMI and Micronesia at select locations.

**Red-footed Booby** (*Sula sula*)

Abundant on Rota, infrequent and harder on the rest of CNMI and Micronesia. Same information under Brown Booby applies to Red-footed Booby. Red-footed inhabits the majority of the booby colony, nesting in the trees below.

**Yellow Bittern** (*Ixobrychus sinensis*)

Abundant but somewhat skulky in the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Most often seen in flight or when flushed, in shrubby habitat or second growth forest.



**Pacific Reef-Heron** (*Egretta sacra*)

Abundant in the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Seen along rocky coastal shores and low tidal areas.

**Great Egret** (*Ardea alba*)

An infrequent vagrant to the Micronesian area of the Pacific. Australian or Eurasian subspecies, bill is black and facial skin is green when in breeding plumage. One seen on the side of the road in front of the Rota Public Library.

**Intermediate Egret** (*Ardea intermedia*)

Abundant resident throughout the CNMI. Often in open grassy fields and retention ponds.

**Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)

A frequent visitor to the CNMI. Can be seen in open grassy areas and at retention ponds. Two residing at the Rota Resort and Country Club prior to leaving the island.

**Introduced Species**

**Black Francolin** (*Francolinus francolinus*)

Established population on Guam. Five seen at the Layon Landfill.

**Rock Pigeon** (*Columba livia*)

Established in developed areas on Saipan and Guam. Seen driving around larger developed cities.

**Philippine Collared-Dove** (*Streptopelia dussumieri*)

Introduced on Rota, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. Most abundant on Rota, seen in virtually all habitats, mostly in developed areas and shrubby habitat. Endangered and difficult to see in the Philippines, a good pick up in the CNMI.

**Black Drongo** (*Dicrurus macrocercus*)

Introduced on Rota, extremely common in most areas, primarily developed and shrubby habitat. Hard to miss as they loudly ruckus and sit on telephone lines.

**Mottled Munia** (*Longchura hunsteini*)

Established population on Pohnpei. Native to New Ireland, so a nice one to see on Pohnpei. Very sharp looking. Relatively common in developed areas and shrubby habitat. Seen at Mangrove Bay Hotel and Spanish Wall Park.

**Orange-cheeked Waxbill** (*Estrilda melpoda*)

Established population on Saipan. Abundant in developed and shrubby habitat.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** (*Passer montanus*)

Introduced throughout all the CNMI, Guam, and Micronesia. Abundant in all developed and shrubby habitat.

**Missed Species**

**Short-eared Owl (Pohnpei)** (*Asio flammeus ponapensis*)

Poorly known sedentary population. Looks similar to the more widespread and migratory asian subspecies, but wings are 20-40mm shorter. Some reports that it's more often seen in the daytime than other subspecies of Short-eared Owl. Uses scrubby grassy areas—formerly there was more of this along the coast, but a good bit has been developed. Now inhabits grassland and scrub on a few flat-topped mountains. Our best bet to look for it would be on top of Dolen Nett/Pohnlehr at approximately (6.95962, 158.23113). Like everywhere else in Pohnpei, you would likely need to ask around and pay a small fee to a landowner to take you up, preferably closer to dusk.

**Pohnpei Starling** (*Aplonis pelzelni*)

Possibly, (probably?) extinct. However, the last specimen of the bird was taken by a hunter as recently as 1995, and the higher elevations of the mountains in the interior of the island are incredibly rugged and inaccessible, with no roads even coming close. Add to that the amount of good forest cover that still exists on Pohnpei, and the bird's continued existence seems more plausible. It's likely not something a birder visiting for a short period could do, but if an expedition *did* get up there, worked with local hunters, and found one, neither of us would be completely shocked. We're both less convinced of its extinction than we were before, having now spent some time on the island.

**Long-tailed Koel** (*Urodynamis taitensis*)

Honestly a surprising miss. Widespread throughout Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia during the austral winter when it arrives from New Zealand, but abundance varies by island. Call is extremely distinctive, and we were listening carefully but never bumped into one. Keep an eye (and an ear!) out.

# Species Names

## English

## Chamorro

Micronesian Megapode .....	Sasangat
Guam Rail .....	Ko'ko or ko'ko' bird
White-throated Ground Dove .....	Paluman apaka
Mariana Fruit-Dove .....	Paluman totut or totut ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Totot ( <i>Guam</i> )
Mariana Swiftlet .....	Chachaguak ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Yayaguak ( <i>Guam</i> )
Eurasian Moorehen .....	Pulattat
Whimbrel .....	Kalalang
Plovers and sandpipers .....	Dulili
Brown Noddy .....	Fahang dankolo ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Fahang ( <i>Guam</i> )
Black Noddy .....	Fahang dikike' ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Fahang ( <i>Guam</i> )
White Tern .....	Chunge'
Wedge-tailed Shearwater .....	Lifa'ru ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Paya'ya ( <i>Guam</i> )
Frigatebird .....	Paya'ya ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Ga'ga' manglo ( <i>Guam</i> )
Brown Booby .....	Lu'ao
Red-footed Booby .....	Lu'ao talisai
Yellow Bittern .....	Kakkak
Pacific Reef-Heron .....	Chuchuko atilong
Mariana Crow .....	Åga
Mariana Kingfisher .....	Sihek
Micronesian Myzomela .....	Egigi ( <i>Guam</i> )
Rufous Fantail .....	Naabak ( <i>CNMI</i> )
	Chichirika ( <i>Guam</i> )
Tinian Monarch .....	Chichirikan
Saipan Reed Warbler.....	Gaga karisu
Golden White-eye .....	Canario
Bridled White-eye .....	Nosa'
Rota White-eye .....	Nosa' Luta
Micronesian Starling.....	Sali

Up to date names used currently in the Marianas



## English

## Carolinian

Caroline Islands Ground Dove .....	peluhs ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Purple-capped Fruit-Dove .....	witiwit ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	kiniwed ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Kosrae Fruit-Dove .....	ule, ule suhpah ( <i>Kosraean</i> ) **
Micronesia Imperial-Pigeon .....	mwuuré ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	mwuroi ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Caroline Islands Swiftlet .....	niinu ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	kelipak ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
	kalkacf ( <i>Kosraean</i> ) **
Brown Noddy .....	pwooniik ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	paret ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Black Noddy .....	rech ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	atet ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
White Tern .....	esies ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	kahke ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
White-tailed Tropicbird .....	sikh ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Tropical Shearwater .....	chúrúkak ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	lipahrok ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Great Frigatebird .....	asaf ( <i>Caroline Islands</i> )
	kasap ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Brown Booby .....	aamóó ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	kupwur ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Red-footed Booby .....	aapwang ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	kupwur ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Yellow Bittern .....	nichchaw, nimmang ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
Pacific Reef-Heron.....	kawakaw ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	kewelik ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Pohnpei Kingfisher .....	kutoahr ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Pohnpei Lorikeet .....	serehd ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Micronesia Myzomela .....	niteikapar, niták ( <i>Chuukese</i> ) ***
	pwiliet ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Common Cicadabird .....	totopai ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Pohnpei Fantail .....	likepisir ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Truk Monarch .....	uwaw ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Pohnpei Flycatcher .....	koikoi ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Oceanic Flycatcher .....	ménúráán, níké múréchu ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
Caroline Reed Warbler .....	lichok ( <i>Chuukese</i> )
	limwehdi ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Truk White-eye.....	nikomor, wáán pééngaas, nimesounúpwún, wáán éúr ( <i>Chuukese</i> ) ***
Long-billed White-eye .....	tiht ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Pohnpei White-eye .....	tiht ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )

Kosrae White-eye .....	srihsr ( <i>Kosraean</i> ) **
Caroline Islands White-eye.....	miimi, nichéénafor ( <i>Chuukese</i> ) *** tiht ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )
Micronesian Starling.....	ángá, mwii ( <i>Chuukese</i> ) *** sioahk ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> ) wac ( <i>Kosraean</i> ) **
Blue-faced Parrotfinch.....	nimesepwún, nikittúrrúng ( <i>Chuukese</i> )*** likedipwahpwa ( <i>Pohnpeian</i> )

\*\* Best estimates of Kosraean bird names based on a previous paper cited in resources.

\*\*\* Similar but varying names based on islands throughout Chuuk. Based on paper cited in resources.

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## Annotated Bibliography

Davis, A. E. (n.d.). *A Preliminary List of Animal Names in the Chuuk District, Micronesia*.

A useful resource for Chuukese language and names for things, that does a good job also explaining the variability in names. We used the birds section starting on page 171, but the whole paper is interesting and a good resource.

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A fairly thorough history of Chuuk and Chuukese culture. A very interesting read for the parts that we have read, and helpful for understanding Chuuk.

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