



## CHICHIRIKA (rufous fantail) Extinct

Endangered Species

*Rhipidura rufifrons uraniae*

Subspecies endemic to Guam

The "chichirika" as it was known in Chamorro, used to be found all over Guam, but they became extinct in the mid-1980s due to predation by the introduced brown tree snake.

Its common name, rufous fantail, came from its red-brown feathers and the habit of spreading its tail like a fan. When two male chichirika met, they challenged each other by jumping from branch to branch and flashing their tails. A male chichirika would show off for a female bird the same way.

Until the mid-80s, chichirika could be heard in the deep jungle singing beautiful songs. The songs were meant not only to help keep chichirika families together but also to warn strange chichirika to stay away. They often spent most of the day pecking bugs off leaves or flying out suddenly to grab insects in the air. Small bristles on the sides of their bills helped direct insects into their mouths.

Pairs of chichirika would build small nests of grasses, ironwood needles and spider webs, about ten feet above the ground. They would glue the nest together with their saliva. The eggs were cared for by both parents, who would often raise two families a year. The babies were born naked, but became fully feathered and could fly in about 15 days. Although similar chichirika are found elsewhere in the Mariana Islands, this subspecies was endemic to, or found nowhere else but, on Guam.

The chichirika has been confused with the introduced Eurasian Tree Sparrow, a small brown bird with a black chin and ear patches which is common throughout the island. Because its color and size were similar to the chichirika, and because it was never given a local name, the sparrow has come to be known as the chichirika.