



## SIHEK (Micronesian kingfisher)

*Halcyon cinnamomina cinnamomina*

**Endangered Species**  
**Subspecies endemic to Guam**

**Extinct in the wild**

Known as "sihek" in Chamorro, the Micronesian kingfisher is a colorful bird once very common on Guam. Predation by kulepbla (brown tree snakes) has brought about the extinction of the sihek population in the wild. The last sighting of a sihek in the wild was reported in 1989. A captive breeding program to save this bird from extinction began in 1984. As of early 1996, there are about 50 sihek in captivity at various zoos throughout the United States.

Kingfishers often are called "woodpeckers." They build nests by using their bills to hammer a hole in a tree trunk. Both parents raise two babies in the nest hole. The babies are fed juicy prey like lizards, crabs and insects. The parents kill their prey by banging it against a branch. Despite its common name, these kingfishers do not hunt fish. They are brave and will attack larger animals which get too close to their nest. Female sihek have a white breast while males have a tan breast.

Chamorro stories tell of a village woman who was always talking loudly and making trouble. She wore an orange kerchief and a blue dress with a white apron. An angry "tãotãomo'na" (spirit of Chamorro ancestors) turned the woman into the first sihek. Her clothing became the colors of the female sihek. Now, the unhappy bird calls loudly when people are near.

The Guam subspecies of sihek is endemic, which means it is found nowhere else in the world but on Guam. Other subspecies still remain in Palau and Pohnpei. Another species, the collared kingfisher (*Halcyon chloris*), occurs on many of the neighboring Mariana Islands. The sihek is protected by local and federal laws.