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Front Cover

Two parent white terns (*Gygis alba*) oversee their soon-to-fledge chick (middle). Hatched from an egg precariously balanced on the limb of an ironwood tree (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), here it has grown almost to full size, this through the watchful care and regular feeding given by its parents. Read about our seabirds and our coastal strand plants in Chapter 16. Read about our efforts to save them and all of our islands' avifauna species from the dire threat of the Brown Treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*) in Chapter 28, and from the loss of their habitat in Chapter 29. *Photograph courtesy of Herpetologist Scott Vogt, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife.*

Middle Spine

Taken many years ago in the Spring of 1973 during a severe drought, following a then-little-understood El Niño event, this recently declassified visual shows the Southernmost Mariana Islands of Guam (bottom), Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. The Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) satellite is in a circumpolar orbit, about 450 nautical miles above the earth. The image shows our islands in a line surrounded by small white patches of fair weather cumulus clouds and the multi-aqua hues of the waters of our Northwest Pacific. Read about our archipelago's geography in Chapter 3. Read about our region's weather and oceanography in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. *Image courtesy of Meteorologist Charles 'Chip' Guard, Water and Environment Research Institute, University of Guam.*

Back

Scientific diver and enforcement officer for the CNMI's Inter-agency Marine Monitoring Team, Carlos Ketenengbang, has monitored the health of our coral reefs for many years using a variety of methods. Here he surveys the abundance of corals, sponges, algae, and other benthic life forms using a point intercept quadrat. Read about the ecology of our coral reefs in Chapters 13 and 14. Read about our Commonwealth and Federal agencies' joint efforts to monitor and protect them in Chapter 15 and throughout Unit 5. *Photograph courtesy of Public Information Officer Michael Wright, CNMI Division of Environmental Quality.*

Funding Notices

Our book and its ancillary materials are productions of **Northern Marianas College Press**, via a printing grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This project received the generous support of several CNMI and Federal resource management agencies over a period of nine years. We also received extensive support from individuals, private companies, and nonprofit organizations. Our funding sources are not liable for this book's content. Opinions expressed are solely the responsibility of our various chapter authors.

Project development funding was received from the US Department of the Interior—Office of Insular Affairs; the US Environmental Protection Agency—Office of Pacific Islands Programs; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—University of Hawaii Sea Grant Extension Service—and the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management; the US Department of Agriculture—Forest Service; the University of Guam—Water and Environment Research Institute; the Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture; and the Office of former Congresswoman Ms. Brigida Ichihara, then Chairwoman of the CNMI House of Representatives Committee on Education. Significant direct project development support was also received from NMC's College Research, Extension, and Educational Services Program and the Northern Marianas College Bookstore. Without everyone's help, this project could not have been possible. We, the authors, extend to each and every one of our supporters our warmest appreciation.