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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 Kettenengbang, 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.*

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