

TINIAN MONARCH

The Tinian monarch is a small species of bird from the island of Tinian in the western tropical Pacific Ocean, which came under U.S. jurisdiction following World War II. There are five main issues pertaining to the Tinian monarch and the ESA that will be discussed.

- The Tinian monarch is clearly a case of data error because its population was too large and healthy to merit protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service listed the monarch under the assumption that it still suffered from massive population destruction associated with World War II, which included heavy fighting and construction of the airfield from which the U.S. launched bombing raids on Japan, including the two that dropped atomic bombs. Yet the monarch in all likelihood survived the war with a healthy population, and in the decades following the war the population gradually increased. By the time of the monarch's listing under the ESA, which also coincided with the law's passage in 1973, the bird's population was so large and healthy it did not merit the act's protection.
- The FWS listed the monarch based on the flimsiest of evidence; a discursive account by a soldier stationed on Tinian during World War II. This account was uncritically accepted into scientific literature, which the FWS in turn uncritically accepted. Had the FWS bothered, it would have been easy to examine the soldier's account because it was published in a widely available journal.
- The FWS appears to have distorted the historic literature on the monarch so as to make the bird's listing appear justified.
- The FWS unnecessarily delayed delisting the monarch due to political reasons.
- The ESA played an essentially insignificant role in the monarch's conservation.