

PALAU OWL, PALAU GROUND DOVE, AND PALAU FANTAIL FLYCATCHER

The Palau owl, Palau ground dove and Palau fantail flycatcher are species of birds endemic to Palau, an archipelago in the tropical western Pacific that was a Trust Territory of the U.S., and therefore subject to federal law, including the Endangered Species Act (ESA), until its independence in 1994. The 1985 delisting of these three birds under ESA represent the first three species claimed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) as recovered over their entire habitat due to the act.

There are five main issues surrounding the conservation of these three birds.

- Most importantly, three birds are clearly cases of data error. This means they never merited the ESA's protection because at the time of their listing, which also coincided with the act's passage in 1973, their populations were too large and healthy to merit the law's protection.
- The process by which the FWS listed these birds provides insight into how and why they were erroneously listed.
- Political factors likely heavily influenced the listing of these birds.
- The FWS delayed delisting for political reasons.
- Essentially no conservation under the auspices of the ESA occurred for these birds despite FWS claims to the contrary.