L. Macmillan.
UVEA. 1938.

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MAMMALS:- UVEA Is., LOYALTY GROUP. 1938.

Apart from introduced domestic mammals Uvea only has the following mammals.

1 species of rat + no introduced rats.
1 species of mouse + no introduced mice.
1 species of fruit bat.
1 known (but possibly more) species of insectivorous bat.

The following notes were made on each.

1. RAT. This rat lives in forests to a limited extent, is common about native gardens + coconut groves. Appears to be a purely vegetable feeder living on native garden produce yams, sweet potatoes, etc. + on the meat of the coconut + the navika or spongy like interior growth pow found in coconuts which have commenced to sprout. It apparently never eats its way into coconuts itself to obtain the meat, the shell possibly being too hard for it, but eats the coconut meat etc. after the nut has been split by natives + put in the sun to dry (to become copra). It is noticeable the rat does not often attack the meat clinging to the opened nut half but seems to prefer the small splinters of coconut + pieces of coconut meat broken off by the axe in the cutting open of the nut, or the sponge like heart or growth in sprouting nuts, this latter being by far its favourite fruit. It does not appear to attack maize or seeds though it may, nor to rob nesting birds etc though that is also doubtful. The species appears too timid + shy + retiring to be inclined to attack anything. It will eat finished copra + come into houses where such is stored (dockside) but seldom or never into occupied human dwellings, native or otherwise (though its occurrence is rare, but more frequent in native than European dwellings). When a stack of bags of copra in which it has been living is shifted it makes only slow attempts at escape, seldom going far if unchased + will crouch down shivering along side a small stick of wood or against a wall or almost anywhere + even in the open. If natives have been cutting open coconuts to make copra + anywhere near the spot a heap of rubbish, dry coconut leaves, old coconut shells etc. is present, if this is searched one will nearly always find one or more rats in the heap. Breeds in holes in the ground amongst ferns + vegetation (grass + herbs etc.), holes are shallow + erratic in direction + invariably the nest chamber is little below the surface of the ground, thus forming an escape by bursting upwards if an enemy such as a snake who is advancing along the burrow. Burrow is generally between 2 + 3 ft long sometimes longer, but never straight, + more often than not nest cavity is very close to the actual entrance of the burrow. It lives + probably breeds in cavities in the coral rock limestone, though burrows are to be found in areas where rock holes appear to supply unlimited nesting sights, seemingly pointing to their not liking rock holes for breeding or to a fear of being trapped by snakes in such burrows.

2 MOUSE. This mouse appears to live mostly in native gardens + about coconuts + in the forests. It does visit + occasionally lives in the grass thatch of native houses but only to a limited extent. Old abandoned or seldom used native houses are more frequently used by it. It seldom visits + does not stay about European dwellings unless these have a grass thatch roof. It lives on vegetable foods mostly, native garden products + seeds, paw paw etc + I believe does eat refuse + carrion, human faeces, dead birds etc.

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MAMMALS (CONT)

2. CONT. It breeds in holes in the ground in rotten stumps, limbs of fallen trees, in the butts of fallen coconuts & in holes in coral rocks & lays commonly in thatch of native houses, generally unoccupied. Its main object seemingly, being to get a little height for drainage & warmth & dryness for the nest site. It appears to avoid swamps & low lying areas always, for (rats do not seem to worry about so much) & is only rarely seen in such places even in dry weather. It is seldom seen at any time being shy but is bolder than the rat generally speaking. Like the rat it frequents places where copra is being made & feeds on the meat & sponge centre of the coconut & on finished copra like the rat. It also may generally be found in heaps of coconut leaves etc in & about coconuts & especially near sites of recent or current copra making.

3. FRUIT BAT. This species is not plentiful on the island & compared with most tropical islands is rare. It camps most of the time deep in the tall original forest areas of the island in banyans & other large trees, apparently having no set fixed camps but shifting about the island according to food supplies. Feeds much in coconut palms on Uvea at all seasons of the year, & on small banyan figs, pawpaws & other fruits when these are in season. Generally speaking its food supplies are scanty on Uvea & the island cannot support large numbers of them. At times of scarcity it moves to other islands but appears to return to Uvea to breed if born on that island. It is to be found on the islands of the western chain (Pleiades, both north & south) & to Beaupre Is farther westward.

4. INSECTIVOROUS BAT. Lives in caves in the coral limestone rock everywhere found on the island, even in small cavities at ground level or a little below, pot holes with overhanging ledges etc. Especially in the abrupt coral outcrops of the south & east coasts where caves in the sheer faces are common is it plentiful. First ones appear before dark but not before sunset, none appear about at dawn even in the first grey light. It feeds much about swamps etc & during the mosquitoe season (Jan – April) it is to be seen in great numbers all over the island feeding on the clouds of mosquitoes which come out of the swamps. During this season it is often to be seen hawking over the sea up to half a mile & more from the land feeding on the mosquitoes which often go that far out to sea especially if a slight wind is present to carry them. At all seasons the bat is fairly plentiful but at the mosquitoe season it is more so, almost indicating an influx from elsewhere. I know of only one species, but bats are so plentiful & caves etc for habitat that many different species may occur.

SAMPLES OF ALL MAMMALS COLLECTED.