# IGUANA NEWSBRIEFS

## The IIS Contributes to Conservation

Contributions from International Iguana Society members have made it possible for the IIS to provide assistance to several ongoing projects. Within the past year, the Society has made contributions to: (1) the Blue Iguana Recovery Program on Grand Cayman Island (with special thanks to the Pacific Northwest Herpetological Society for their generous donation), (2) graduate student Rachel Goodman to support her Blue Iguana (*Cyclura lewisi*) research, (3) new cages for headstarting *Ctenosaura bakeri* at the Iguana Research and Breeding Station on Utila, Honduras, and (4) shipping mongoose traps to Jamaica, where they will be used to trap mongooses that prey on Jamaican Iguanas, *Cyclura collei*.

The IIS plans to continue support for the implementation of the Blue Iguana Recovery Plan (see www.Cyclura.com) and is actively engaged in fundraising to help purchase critical *Ctenosaura bakeri* nesting habitat on Utila (see Letter from the President, p. 59). Your membership dues and contributions help the IIS make a difference for endangered iguanas in the wild. We appreciate your continuing support.

## A New Fossil Iguana from Fiji

**Gregory K. Pregill** and **Trevor H. Worthy** (2003. *Herpetologica* 59:57–67) described *Lapitiguana impensa* based on fossil remains found in late Quaternary sediments on Viti Levu, the main island of Fiji. The differences between this spectacularly large (SVL ca. 500 mm) iguana and extant Fiji iguanas in the genus *Brachylophus* were sufficiently substantive that the authors placed this new discovery in a separate genus. Like *Brachylophus,* however, this iguana appears to be basal among the Iguanidae, although exact relationships cannot be resolved with the available evidence. This giant form probably became extinct soon after humans first colonized the islands about 3000 years ago.

The new generic name derives from *Lapita,* a proper name given to the distinctive pottery associated with the first human settlers of Fiji, who disappeared from the archaeological record soon thereafter, and *iguana,* an aboriginal Amerindian name apparently designating a kind of lizard. The species name is from the Latin *impensa* (= ample or large), in reference to the large body size of this lizard.

The Grand Cayman Blue Iguana (*Cyclura lewisi*) is functionally extinct in the wild. The IIS is promoting and supporting the Blue Iguana Recovery Program (see Profile, p. 53).

Although the data are sparse, they do not seem to support a sister-taxon relationship between *Lapitiguana* and *Brachylophus,* suggesting that Fiji might have been colonized twice by iguanid lizards. The authors also suggest that *Brachylophus* was able to coexist with humans primarily due to its cryptic, arboreal lifestyle. In contrast, *Lapitiguana,* which was most certainly a conspicuous, terrestrial form, became extinct as a direct result of human agency soon after the Lapita people arrived in Fiji.

## IIS Member Wins Science Fair

IIS member **Nicholas Jones** of Little Rock, Arkansas recently won first place in zoology at his school Science Fair for research on the use of color vision in food selection by Green Iguanas. In further competition, Nicholas's research paper again placed first at both the Central Arkansas Regional Science Fair and the Arkansas Junior Academy of Sciences.

In an earlier experiment, in which the same foods were presented to a Green Iguana on different colored plates, Nicholas's iguana, Frank, had selected food presented on a red plate four times as frequently as that presented on a black plate. In the current experiment, Frank was presented with hibiscus flowers in two different colors. Both a red blossom and a pale yellow or white blossom were offered to the iguana 23 separate times and records kept of which blossom he chose to eat first. At each feeding, the placement of the blossoms was switched to eliminate the possibility that the iguana was just eating on the same side of the cage. Frank chose to eat the red blossoms first in 18 of the

23 trials, leading Nicholas to conclude that his iguana was indeed using color vision in selecting food.

Nicholas now goes on to compete in the national Discovery Channel Science Challenge. We wish him the best of luck and hope he continues his scientific pursuits!

## CHS Works to Help Iguanas

The **Chicago Herpetological Society** conservation booth at the annual CHS Reptile Fest (April 5–6) was a huge success. IIS members **Lori King** and **Betsy Davis** were on hand to educate people about Grand Cayman Blue Iguanas and Utila Iguanas, as well as Massassauga Rattlesnakes. Lori's juvenile *Ctenosaura bakeri,* Nagual, made his first public appearance and proved to be the star of the show. A variety of general merchandise such as Utila Iguana T-shirts, Christmas ornaments, bookplates, and stuffed animals worked like magnets to draw every child to the table — with parent in tow, begging for a stuffed animal. Altogether, the effort raised $1,505 for the Utila Iguana nesting property fund. Of incalculable value, however, was the opportunity to explain the plight of these exquisite animals to every visitor to the table.