

IGUANA NEWSBRIEFS

New *Cyclura* Residence at the Bristol Zoo

Although Green Iguanas remain popular pets, interest in iguanas in England is minimal, and opportunities to see them are virtually non-existent. The genus *Cyclura* is represented solely by *Cyclura cornuta*, the Hispaniolan Rhinoceros Iguana, and British zoo policy permits concentration on only that species. Rhinoceros Iguanas represent what the British refer to as "large iguanas." The Royal Zoological Society in London and Chester Zoo (North of England Zoological Society) both have colonies of "Rhinos," as does the Bristol Zoo in the southwest of England.

The Bristol Zoological Gardens were founded in 1835 by a group of local citizens and opened to the public in 1836. It is the fifth oldest zoo in the world and the oldest not in a capital city. Over 200 shareholders contributed the capital that enabled the land purchase and zoo construction. Some of the descendants of the original shareholders remain connected with the zoo, but their only benefit is free admission. Buildings are scattered across pleasant gardens, a lake enhances the landscape, and winding pathways connect one animal area to another. Principal attractions include okapis, gorillas, tapirs, seals, penguins, and flamingos.

Tim Skelton, Head of Amphibians and Reptiles, spent five years at the Edinburgh Zoo and has been at Bristol for the same length of time. As recently as 2001, two large *Cyclura* were housed in a large room and two smaller individuals were held in a separate, smaller cage. The larger animals were suffering from skin problems, likely due to insufficient access to direct sunlight and an inappropriate substrate.

The pair of large Rhinoceros Iguanas both hatched in February 1980, the female at the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia, and the male in the Dominican Republic (later sent to Taronga). Both were received from Taronga in November 1986. The female has laid eggs, most recently three years ago; all were infertile. The sub-adults are both four-year old males that were hatched at the Prague Zoo. Efforts to house all four together were not successful, as the older pair would not tolerate the younger individuals.



Adult male *Cyclura cornuta* in the new indoor pen. Photograph by John Bendon.



The entire outdoor enclosure; the large male *Cyclura cornuta* and an Aldabra Tortoise are visible. Photograph by John Bendon.

A plan to build new outdoor and indoor enclosures for the large iguanas and three Aldabra Tortoises (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis* = *Geochelone gigantea*) is now complete. The new house is approximately 30 m² in size and is landscaped with tropical plants. It is thermostatically heated and has a cool fan for hotter days. Windows are automatically controlled and the pool has a waterfall. Water is kept at 25°C. The outdoor enclosure is roughly 130 m². Both adult iguanas and the giant tor-

toises have access to this area through wide "hospital" flaps of thick, transparent plastic; these keep the heat in when the animals come and go. The cost of this elaborate project was in excess of £50,000 (\$82,000), a magnificent sum of money to spend on iguanas and tortoises, but the result is a fine new exhibit that greatly enhances the visibility of both species.

The keepers have indicated that the iguanas' skin problems are rapidly disappearing, and that outdoor access

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has led to dramatic behavioral changes — both animals are considerably more active and alert, and their appetite has increased sharply. Hopefully, access to direct sunlight will also trigger successful breeding behavior.

John S. Bendon

Kansas City Herpetological Society Supports Jamaican Iguana Conservation

Shortly after the rediscovery of the Jamaican Iguana (*Cyclura collei*) in 1991, the Kansas City Herpetological Society (KCHS) donated funds to the Hope Zoo to facilitate the creation of a captive breeding program for this critically endangered species. This year, the KCHS donated \$1500 in continued support of this species and this important project. The KCHS would like to encourage other regional societies to get involved with important long-term conservation projects and continue to support them over time.

David Nieves, KCHS

Anegada Iguana Releases

On 5–12 October 2003, 24 Stout Iguanas (*Cyclura pinguis*) headstarted at the Anegada Headstart Facility, British Virgin Islands, were released into two very distinct habitat types. The first cohort of 12 (6.6) was released into dense forest over a reef limestone substrate on Middle Cay. The area supports a population of iguanas, including many large adults. The second group of 12 was released in the Bones Bight area near the Faulkner House, a well-known landmark on Anegada. This area supports a fairly robust (by Anegada standards) population of iguanas with numerous burrows and nests. These releases and subsequent monitoring are being funded by the International Iguana Foundation (IIF).

Principals involved with the releases were Rick Hudson (Fort Worth Zoo), Kelly Bradley (Dallas Zoo), who, with Glenn Gerber (San Diego Zoo CRES), is responsible for monitoring the iguanas post-release, Lee Pagni, an Education Specialist hired by the San Diego Zoo to canvas local opinions and



An adult *Cyclura collei* in the breeding facility at Hope Zoo in Jamaica. Successful breeding remains a challenge, but the proposed upgrade to these enclosures holds promise for the future. Photograph by John Binns.

develop a proactive Education plan, Jeff Lemm (San Diego Zoo CRES), and Joe Wasilewski (International Iguana Society), who filmed the event.

A veterinary team from the Fort Worth Zoo had previously implanted transmitters in the abdominal cavities of the 24 iguanas. The releases went well and seeing some local residents assist with the releases was gratifying. The National Parks Trust staff was there with the local media. Coverage in the local

newspapers was good, and international coverage included CNN News Online.

Bradley and Lemm remained on-site for several days after the releases and they reported visual sightings of the iguanas every other day. The iguanas appear to be settling in and not moving far (except for two). Rondell Smith (Trust employee) will track the animals weekly while Bradley is off-island.

This event was significant in that the headstart program has now come



Post-release *Cyclura pinguis* surveying his surroundings from a dead Loblolly Tree on Middle Cay. Photograph by Rick Hudson.

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Jeff Lemm and Kelly Bradley are shown tracking newly released *Cyclura pinguis* from the back of a truck for elevation in the Bones Bight area. Photograph by Rick Hudson.

full circle: one of the three iguanas initially placed in the headstart facility by Hudson and Lemm in 1997 was one of the first animals released. The plan is to establish a regular cycle in which iguanas are released each year to accommodate the new hatchlings collected in October. This year just over 20 hatchlings from marked nests were placed in the facility.

The headstart facility is in excellent condition. The iguanas appear robust, healthy, and well-fed. The gardens are well-kept, with lots of iguana food being grown by the primary caretaker, Lee Vanterpool, who also collects native iguana food plants to supplement their diet.

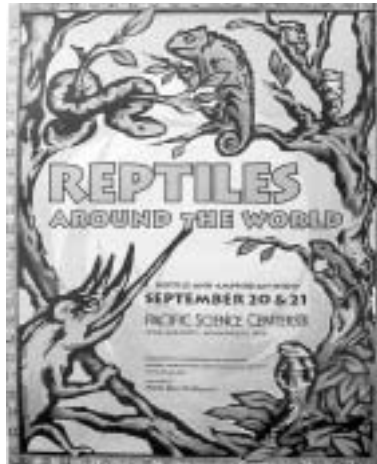
Rick Hudson, Co-chair
Iguana Specialist Group

The IIS in Seattle

Joe Wasilewski, Joe Burgess, and John Binns represented the IIS this fall at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle for the Northwest Herpetological Society's "Reptiles Around the World." The two-day educational event was attended by reptile enthusiasts, beginners, and the curious. The IIS contingent promoted iguana conservation and responsible pet ownership. Izzy, John's large Cuban Iguana (*Cyclura*



The IIS table at the Pacific Science Center.



The IIS contingent in Seattle: Izzy, John Binns, Joe Wasilewski, and Joe Burgess (left to right).

nubila), became the star of the event, drawing admirers to learn more about this spectacular animal. Joe W. conducted several reptile shows for museum guests and demonstrated how a cute little iguana or snake can grow to be a powerful animal that can rapidly outgrow its home. He also discussed what types of reptiles would or wouldn't make good pets and graphically described the consequences of an impulse buy.

Mexican Iguana Group is Online

Information about the activities of the Subcomité Técnico Consultivo para la Conservación, Manejo y Aprovechamiento Sustentable de las Iguanas in México (Advisory Technical Subcommittee for the Conservation, Management, and Utilization of Iguanas in Mexico) is available on the Subcommittee's new webpage (<http://www.subcomitedeiguanas.org/>).

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Quincy is one of a record 84 Blue Iguanas hatched this year at the captive breeding facility on Grand Cayman. *Photograph by Fred Burton.*

First Blue Iguana Sponsored in 2003

The John Gray Recyclers, a high school club on Grand Cayman Island, became the first sponsor of a Blue Iguana (*Cyclura lewisi*) hatched this year. The club, which promotes recycling, raised over US \$900 to name and sponsor "Quincy" for a year. The name comes from "quincentennial," acknowledging the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of the Cayman Islands, which is being celebrated in 2003.

Quincy, who will keep the name permanently, is a very special little iguana; he was born with an incomplete forelimb on one side. The money raised will help support Quincy and his siblings as part of the Blue Iguana Recovery Program and help ensure the survival of the most endangered reptilian species on earth. For more information on the sponsorship program, see www.blueiguana.ky.

The IIS and Iguana Education

IIS members John and Sandy Binns visited the Boys & Girls Club of the Peninsula in East Palo Alto, California and shared the iguana experience with over 140 children ranging in age from 6–14 years. Topics included a general overview of reptiles, daily struggles specific lizards face both in the wild and captivity, human perceptions, and conservation efforts in the past, present, and future. The children were excited and full of questions, as many of them had never seen or even heard of these animals. Each child had the opportunity for an up-close encounter with several different species including Green, Cuban, and Rhino iguanas, Spiny-tailed Dwarf Monitor, Uromastyx, Chuckwalla, and Blue-tongued Skink.

Sandy Binns



The Boys & Girls Club of East Palo Alto, California were delighted by a visit from John Binns (front row, holding an iguana) and Sandy Binns (front row, right).