

IGUANA NEWSBRIEFS

The IIS at the ISG Meeting in the Turks & Caicos Islands

Joe Burgess, IIS Vice-president, represented the Society at the 2003 ISG Meeting in the Turks & Caicos Islands (see also the article on p. 27). He gave a short PowerPoint presentation highlighting IIS activities and projects over the past year and passed around the current issue of *IGUANA*. Both the presentation and the journal were well-received, with many commenting on improvements in the appearance and content of the journal.

The presentation featured the IIS participation in shows in Daytona (see Editors' Remarks, *IGUANA* 10(3), p. 96) and Seattle (see *Iguana Newsbriefs*, *IGUANA* 10(4), p. 155), where members promoted education and increased awareness regarding conservation and conservation specifically of iguanas, announced that the IIS would host the auction in Daytona in 2005, and reported fund raising efforts to support conservation through the sale of posters, t-shirts, mouse pads, and other products. A recent IIS donation to the Hope Zoo (Jamaica) renovation of the captive breeding and headstart facility for Jamaican Iguanas (*Cyclura collei*) is an example of the work supported.

The report on the IIS meeting on Utila and the problems facing *Ctenosaura bakeri* (see *Iguana Times* 9(3)) led to *C. bakeri* being added to the list of ISG funding priorities; with nesting beach acquisition and education as the main areas of concern.



IIS Vice-president Joe Burgess making a PowerPoint presentation at the 2003 ISG Meeting in the Turks & Caicos Islands.



Ctenosaura similis is well-established and widely distributed in Florida (see *IGUANA* 10(4):111-118). Photograph by Josiah H. Townsend.

Introduced Ctenosaurs on Florida island damaging ecosystem?

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service biologist Dennis Giardina has been collecting Spiny-tailed Iguanas (*Ctenosaura similis*) for investigations that will determine whether this non-native species has been impinging on native wildlife on Keewaydin Island, off the eastern coast of Florida. Recently captured and killed iguanas, along with other frozen specimens, are being sent to a laboratory at the University of Florida, Gainesville, where herpetologist Kenneth Krysko will be studying their stomach contents. At issue is whether these large lizards are eating the eggs or young of protected species of shore birds, sea turtles, and Gopher Tortoises. The origin of the Keewaydin Island iguana population is probably either a deliberate or accidental release. Releasing non-native species into the wild in Florida is a first-degree misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$1000 fine.

Source: Naples Daily News

Activists Call for a Reptile Museum to Close¹

Patrick Healy

New York Times — 27 November 2003

HICKSVILLE, N.Y., Nov. 26 — Animal activists said on Wednesday that

they were outraged by a history of problems at the Long Island Reptile Museum and called for the gallery of snakes, lizards, and turtles to be shut down.

The activists, who have visited the museum and taken some of its animals for rehabilitation, called conditions there the most deplorable they had ever seen. During a visit by the activists in the spring, they said, the reptiles were emaciated and dehydrated, some were covered with red and black mites, and some dead animals remained on display.

In addition, they said snakes and large lizards had escaped from their cages and were crawling around the rafters, a potential threat to visitors.

The museum's director, Steven Kates, while acknowledging that the museum had its flaws, said conditions had improved markedly in the last few months. But the reptile rescuers, who collected dozens of ailing animals from the museum (with Mr. Kates's permission), insisted the animals there were still at risk.

"I don't know what the place is still doing open," said Rusty Gilman, a reptile rescuer who said she had taken 18 animals from the museum for rehabilitation.

The Nassau County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has heard the complaints and is investigating the museum, which houses more than 200 snakes, lizards, and other reptiles.

"That has been a major problem for some time," said Harry Babb, deputy chief of the Nassau SPCA's Division of Law Enforcement. "We've had vets up there and experts from the animal world. They've been trying to meet the requirements that we've set for them, and it's been slow going."

This is not the first time the museum and Mr. Kates have run afoul of advocacy groups and the law. In April 2002, Mr. Kates and another man were charged with cruelty to animals after officials received a complaint that a lizard at the museum had had its jaw wired shut. In 1998, the Town of Oyster Bay took the museum to court, saying it was operating without the proper licenses.

Mr. Kates, who wrote the *Encyclopedia of Cockatoos* and calls his adversaries haters, opened the reptile

¹ Reprinted with permission.



Stephen Kates of the beleaguered Long Island Reptile Museum holds Digger, a Cuban Iguana.

museum in July 1995. The museum has slightly fewer than 300 spaces for animals, and soon after Mr. Kates began accepting donated animals from the public, he found himself overwhelmed.

People would drive by the museum and hurl their sick and unwanted pets — ranging from reptiles to guinea pigs to rabbits — from their cars and onto Mr. Kates’s doorstep, he said in an interview Wednesday afternoon. He said he found himself with 60 boa constrictors and 50 iguanas, though he only had room for a few of each.

“I thought I could handle it, and I really couldn’t,” he said.

Mr. Kates said he had hired one of his fiercest critics to improve conditions

at the museum. That critic, Lori Green, said she had set up a rehabilitation program for the animals and spent time training the staff, which she described as dedicated and caring.

On Wednesday, the snakes, turtles, and lizards seemed content enough with their heat lamps and plexiglass-encased lives at the museum. They could be seen snapping at goldfish, eyeing each other for mating, and doing what reptiles do best, which is to say, not much.

“I maintain order there,” Ms. Green said. “The place is what it is, but it’s a major improvement.”

Educational Signs for St. Eustatius

In light of the precarious status of the Lesser Antillean Iguana (*Iguana delicatissima*) on St. Eustatius (see *Iguana Times* 6(3):51–56 and 8(1):3–6 and abstracts of reports at this year’s ISG meeting, p. 37), the IIS, in cooperation with the St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation (STENAPA), has produced educational signs that are to be posted at STENAPA headquarters, the botanical garden, trail heads, the airport, the tourist bureau, and local hotels and dive shops. The iguana graphic was adapted from a John Binns photograph by Joel Friesch.

Donations Assist with Conservation Work

The IIS has received a donation of \$3000 from Mr. Donald Tuttle and the Tuttle Charitable Trust of Beaux Arts, Washington. This generous gift will assist in our efforts to support *Cyclura cyclura figginsi* in the Exuma Islands, *Cyclura lewisi* on Grand Cayman Island, and *Ctenosaura bakeri* on Utila, Honduras, among others.


At the urging of 16-year old Iguana advocate, Jayna Fowler, the Pacific Northwest Herpetological Society has donated \$500 towards the Utila Iguana nesting property fund.



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An example of our cage products is illustrated in the husbandry article, which begins on p. 39.



Erratum: On p. 150, *IGUANA* 10(4), the caption to the photo of Franz Werner erroneously stated that he was holding a *Boa constrictor*, when, in fact, he was holding a Reticulated Python (*Python reticulatus*).



12 December 2003

International Iguana Society
A.J. Gutman, Secretary
133 Steele Road
W. Hartford, CT 06119

Dear AJ:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the International Iguana Foundation we want to thank the IIS for their generous contribution to the Hope Zoo iguana management program for *Cyclura collei*. We have been frustrated for some time now that, despite a very successful headstarting program, the existing facilities for the adult breeding-sized iguanas were not conducive for successful captive reproduction. Over the years we have tried tweaking the enclosures by various methods but problems persisted, primarily attributable to improper nesting substrate and inadequate basking and thermoregulatory opportunities (too much shade).

In response to this situation the IIF sent Jeff Lemm to Kingston to conduct a thorough on site evaluation of the various iguana facilities, and to make recommendations to improve the program. Jeff's report indicated a need for a near-complete overhaul of the three large facilities for adult iguanas. Enhancements will include tree trimming to permit better sun penetration, provision of better basking areas, removal of large rocks that prevent eggs from being retrieved, a new and dependable reptile egg incubator, and most importantly adding new soil substrate.

The costs of all these improvements came to over \$10,000, which is more than the IIF can currently allocate given our other commitments to iguana conservation in Anegada, Grand Cayman, Dominican Republic, Jamaica and St Lucia. So it is with extreme enthusiasm that I accept IIS's \$2,000 donation towards this worthy project. Please convey this message to your Board, and let them know that the IIF genuinely looks forward to a productive working relationship with the IIS in the future. We need to expand our collaborations and partnerships, and I believe this officially signals the beginning of that process. Best of luck in all of your endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Hudson".

Rick Hudson
IIF Program Officer
Conservation Biologist
Fort Worth Zoo