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Fire on the reserve side of the wetlands.

# Fire in the Salina Reserve, Grand Cayman

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Mid-May brought an unexpected threat to the Blue Iguana Recovery Program (BIRP) in the form of a large-scale fire that started in a small agricultural plot and swept out of control into the Salina Reserve's sedge wetlands. There, it burned fiercely along the southern margins of the swamp, fueled by green *Cladium* leaves, and then unexpectedly started to spread east into the dry forest where Hurricane Ivan had left large amounts of dead wood on the forest floor in 2004. Local fire services are not equipped to deal with blazes in remote areas, and were initially inclined to let it burn, but when the flames worked around the east end of the Salina wetland and started to threaten the Blue Iguana (*Cyclura lewisi*) release site, action had to be taken. With considerable support from the Department of Environment (DOE), BIRP managed to get permission for a helicopter to airlift staff and volunteers into the fire zone. This brought the fire services on board, and a joint team effectively tackled the blaze with a water bucket chain, shovels, and machetes. The main fire was doused quickly, and residual smolderings were eventually extinguished using "water bombs" dropped from the government's mosquito spray plane. The Cayman Islands' dry forests are not a fire-adapted ecosystem, and it is rare for fires to spread so far beyond the man-made grasslands where this fire began. Ground-nesting birds, terrestrial and epiphytic orchids, and small reptiles are among the forest flora and fauna which are likely to have been impacted. In contrast, the sedge community around the margins of the Salina wetland do burn once every few years, and the critically endangered endemic wildflower *Agalinis kingsii* often thrives in the year after a major burn. The Blue Iguana habitat, fortunately, escaped all harm.



West Indian Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) in the aftermath.

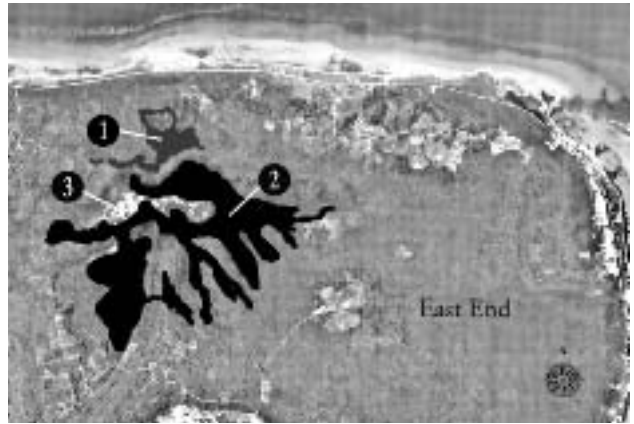


Fred Burton, Blue Iguana Recovery Program, working toward the fire line to assess the situation.



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Small hot spots often reignited in the heat of the day.



Map of the Salina Reserve showing extent of the fire in relation to the Blue Iguana release site. 1 = Salina Blue release site; 2 = area burned; 3 = wetlands.



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Burned out area.



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Recent fire area aftermath.



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Recently released Blue Iguana (*Cyclura lewisi*) in the Salina Reserve.

## HORNED LIZARD WORKING GROUP MEETING

The next meeting of the Horned Lizard Working Group will be held September 15 - 17, 2006, on a private Ranch near Snyder, Texas. The meeting will include presentations about recent research, discussions of management and research priorities, and a field trip. The meeting will be held at the Windmill Ranch (<http://www.windmillranchp-reserve.com/>), which has accommodations for staying overnight, presentations and food service. Additional accommodations are available in Snyder, less than 10 miles away.

We are currently working on the program for the meeting. If you would like to present or just participate, please contact Dr. Wendy Hodges ([hodges\\_w@utpb.edu](mailto:hodges_w@utpb.edu)) or Dr. Gad Perry ([Gad.Perry@ttu.edu](mailto:Gad.Perry@ttu.edu)), as soon as possible. If you would like to speak, please indicate so and provide a tentative title.

Hope you can make it.

Wendy Hodges

University of Texas – Permian Basin

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