

"This was a red alert," Mr. Burton said. The Department of Agriculture was contacted and officers took another dog trap to the park to go with the one already on the premises. On Monday night the traps were set and Mr. Burton waited until the iguanas went into their retreats. Slugger liked to spend the night under a plywood ramp leading to public toilets near the iguana facility and Mr. Burton saw him go there around sundown.

It rained Tuesday night and the bait probably washed out of the dog traps, he said. On Tuesday morning, Chris Carr came early to check the traps. Instead, he saw digging marks by the ramp. He checked more closely and saw two dogs under the toilet building with an iguana. Mr. Carr was able to retrieve the iguana. It was Slugger, and he was dead.

Mr. Burton said Slugger would not have been afraid of the dogs, probably

never having seen one before. "He was the dominant male in the area. He would have stayed and fought," he said. Although he was the largest iguana in the park at over 17 pounds, he was no match for the dogs. "If we succeed in catching the dogs, we'll have to put them down," Mr. Burton said. It was not clear whether they belonged to anyone. They did not have collars and did not act as if they had any training, he indicated.

But along with the dogs, irresponsible pet owners are causing another monstrous problem for the wildlife in the park. "Well-meaning people are bringing animals to the park and abandoning them, thinking park staff will be kind to animals. We have found kittens, full-grown cats, puppies, and Green Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*), and we have absolutely no option but to trap them and remove them. "They have no place here and

they're damaging the native wildlife we're trying so hard to protect," Mr. Burton said.

Especially worrisome are the Green Iguanas. People think they're cute when they're little. But then they grow into big lizards and the owner doesn't want them any more. The Green Iguanas – with definite black stripes on the tail – are not native to Cayman, he emphasized. They don't belong here and they are a threat to the vulnerable Blues.

If anything good can come out of this experience, maybe it could be people's increased awareness of what happens when they allow their pets to roam or when they drop off unwanted animals. "Please don't bring animals to the park. It's not a home for them," he urged.

Carol Winker

Cayman Webnet, 7 June 2006

O B I T U A R Y

Ronald Goellner (1945–2006)

With great sadness I report the death of Ron Goellner, Director of Animal Collections at the Saint Louis Zoo. Ron passed away early in the morning of 26 February 2006, in the comfort of his home and with his loving wife Karen at his side. The entire Saint Louis Zoo community is profoundly saddened by the loss of a man who touched the lives of so many, yet we know that Ron would be the first to tell us to "keep smilin'." You cannot conjure memories of Ron and not follow his advice, because he sowed smiles wherever he went.



Ron Goellner, here holding a Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*), founded the Center for Hellbender Conservation. Photograph courtesy of the St. Louis Zoo.

Born 4 November 1945, Ron's career at the Saint Louis Zoo spanned 35 years. He started in the Reptile House in 1970 as a keeper and, within a few years, was promoted to Curator of Reptiles, a position he held until 1995. For the past ten years, Ron served as the Director of Animal Collections for the zoo. Although Ron was intensely interested in all reptiles and amphibians, his true passions were Tuataras and Hellbenders. In 1980, Ron traveled to Stephen's Island in New Zealand to collect environmental data that could be utilized in the construction of a new off-exhibit enclosure for the Zoo's Tuatara group, which has been in the collection since 1973. In recent years, Ron founded the Center for Hellbender Conservation, which included the construction of a dedicated off-exhibit facility for captive propagation efforts. In addition, he established valuable links with the Missouri Department of Conservation and researchers at universities in order to implement cooperative *in situ* initiatives for the Hellbender in Missouri.

Ron was an avid gardener and had built several ponds around his house to attract local amphibians. He enjoyed a wide array of outdoor activities and particularly loved camping in the Big Bend region of Texas and the mountains of southeastern Arizona.

Ron was my mentor and colleague, but most of all he was a dear friend whom I will miss very much.

Jeff Ertling

Curator of Herpetology
Saint Louis Zoo