

NEWSBRIEFS

Mexican Herpetological Society Meeting

The Mexican Herpetological Society and the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL) School of Biological Sciences are pleased to announce the Ninth Reunión Nacional de Herpetología México on 6–9 November 2006. The meeting will be held in the Raúl Rangel Frías Library, located on the campus of UANL, Monterrey, Nuevo León, México. Participation and attendance is open to all parties interested in the study of Mexican herpetofauna. Papers and posters on Mexican herpetofaunal systematics, biogeographic analysis, faunistics, ecology, conservation, reproduction, and development are welcome.



For further information contact:
www.sociedadherpetologicamexicana.com
 or www.fcb.uanl.mx

Exotic Snakes in Australia

Keith Larner, senior investigator at the Department of Sustainability and Environment in Victoria, Australia reports that, in the past four years, the DSE has found 340 “exotic” reptiles in Victoria, including 55 Boa Constrictors (*Boa constrictor*) and 63 Corn Snakes (*Elaphe guttata*). He believes that these invaders pose a serious threat to the ecosystem.

Many of the interlopers are discovered by DSE officers executing search warrants, and often are found in the homes of suspected drug dealers. In a recent search, “We gathered enough information for a search warrant, and, as a result, we found a massive amount of stolen machinery, computers, telephones, there were signs of intravenous drug use, a quantity of drugs was seized and a quantity of ammunition,” Mr. Larner said.

A profile compiled by the DSE suggests that a person most likely to be keep-



SUZANNE L. COLLINS, CMNH



ROBERT POWELL

Corn Snakes (*Elaphe guttata*, top) and Red-eared Slider Turtles (*Trachemys scripta*) are invasive species in Australia that might pose serious threats to native ecosystems.

ing exotic reptiles illegally is: 18 to 35 years old, living in the western suburbs or Geelong, a blue-collar worker or unemployed, licensed to keep native wildlife, and a *Cannabis* grower. The DSE says drugs and exotic reptiles go together because *Cannabis* is sold to pay for electricity to keep the snakes warm. Some also believe that a large Boa Constrictor is more of a deterrent to thieves than a dog.

Since 11 September, the postal service has been closely monitored, so reptile smugglers are turning to couriers. “A person from Sydney was recently apprehended at the airport with cobras strapped to his legs,” Mr. Larner said. “Some of these snakes might only be eight inches [20 cm] long, but they can still deliver venom. There’s a whole network of people out there who have these deadly snakes and they’re quite proud of it.”

Of more concern is the fact that people are breeding venomous snakes

rather than just importing them. As well as the threat to the ecosystem from voracious Corn Snakes and Red-eared Slider Turtles (*Trachemys scripta*), people could be bitten, and little or no antivenom is available for these species in Australia. “These are an environmental pest. We can’t do anything about it unless people tell us what’s happening out there.” The DSE is happy to negotiate with anybody wanting to surrender these animals.

theage.com.au
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SWIG Program is Being Harmed

Please take action by contacting your United States Senators and letting them know that you oppose cuts to the State Wildlife Grants Program, which recently passed in the House of Representatives. Partner-driven and results-oriented, the State Wildlife Grants Program is an

innovative program that is already producing on-the-ground conservation benefits for amphibian and reptilian habitat across the country. Please let your lawmakers know how much more could be done if they support full funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program.

State Wildlife Grants support cost-effective and proactive approaches to wildlife conservation, conserving wildlife and their habitat before they become endangered and hence more difficult and costly to conserve. Robust State Wildlife Grants funding is needed to implement each state's Wildlife Action Plan, each of which was a collaborative effort aimed at outlining the conservation priorities for each state, and without appropriate levels of State Wildlife Grant funding, the plans will remain just that, plans.

To write your lawmakers and urge them to support full funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program, see: <http://www.congressweb.com/cweb4/index.cfm?orgcode=iwla&hotissue=11>

Geckophiles Gather in Texas

With an accomplished lineup of speakers and a weekend of exciting gecko-related events, the first annual Geckophile Gathering took place from 9–11 June in Austin, Texas. The festivities began on Friday night, with an informal icebreaker sponsored by Rep-Cal.

The lectures began on Saturday, with a beautiful slideshow and DVD presentation by Joe Furman. He shared his experiences studying Namibian geckos and other herps in the field. Ron Tremper, who talked about his decades of work with leopard geckos, impressed attendees with all of the interesting morphs he has created over the years. Paul Freed then gave a humor-filled talk about geckos and other herpetofauna of Australia, leaving participants hungry for more photos and information about such unique species. After lunch, Tony Gamble discussed his research efforts in Brazil, including his activities to collect geckos and other herps in the field. Daniel Scantlebury, a local University of Texas student and lifelong gecko lover, shared his extensive knowledge about the form, function, and diversity of gecko feet. Dr. Paddy Ryan had the audience in stitches with his lecture about herpetological conservation in New Zealand,



Green Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) have become phenomenally abundant in the San Juan area of Puerto Rico, to the extent of causing problems at the Luis Muñoz International Airport. This individual was photographed near the airport in a stand of Red Mangroves (*Rhizophora mangle*), which are heavily exploited by this introduced population.

which was peppered with hilarious anecdotes and fun facts about the region, and illustrated with some incredible photos of New Zealand geckos and the Tuatara. Finally, one of the most anticipated speakers of the day, Aaron Bauer, shared his exhaustive research of New Caledonian geckos and tried to make sense of forty new species by examining and explaining recent taxonomic and systematic changes within the diverse group of geckos from that region.

After a full day of intense and exciting talks, attendees met for a Tex-Mex style dinner followed by a charity auction to benefit the International Reptile Conservation Foundation. The IRCF graciously donated funds and dry goods for the symposium and auction, and everyone made sure to dig deep to give something back to an organization and a cause they care about passionately. Attendees and many well-known companies in the herp industry offered some fantastic dry goods for the auction. The auction raised hundreds of dollars for the IRCF, and everyone had a great time at the dinner.

Nathan Hall

Puerto Rico To Rid Airport Runways Of Basking Iguanas

Green Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) basking on runways at Puerto Rico's largest interna-

tional airport have become such a hazard that this U.S. Caribbean territory plans to rid the area of the invasive reptile species, an official said Friday. Javier Velez Arocho, secretary of the island's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, said he hopes that teams can soon begin killing or capturing the iguanas, which he described as "a plague," at the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport near the capital of San Juan.

An effort to capture the iguanas alive was under consideration, Velez said at a news conference, but authorities also were discussing other options: flooding burrows where the iguanas lay their eggs or sending teams armed with .22-caliber rifles to shoot the adult reptiles, which can grow to be more than a meter long.

Flight landings and takeoffs have been delayed because of the reptiles, which are sold in Puerto Rico as exotic pets. The lizards also create traffic hazards as they soak up the sun on roads near the airport. Carla Capalli, of the Humane Society of Puerto Rico, said she recognized that the iguanas posed safety problems, but questioned some of the methods Velez suggested to eradicate them. "I understand that they have become a plague, a danger, and a threat, and that they must be removed from the area, but .22-caliber rifles are also a public security danger," Capalli said.

Endangered Jamaican Iguanas Hatched at the Indianapolis Zoo

First Time Hatching Outside of Jamaica

Exciting News for Conservation

The Indianapolis Zoo is extremely excited to announce that for the first time ever endangered Jamaican Iguanas (*Cyclura collei*) have been hatched outside of their native island nation. Two baby iguanas hatched at the Zoo on 29 August, and a third emerged on 30 August. "Chester," age 15, and "Myrtle," 14, are the parents of the first three hatchlings, which are not only the first Jamaican Iguanas to hatch outside of Jamaica, but the first to hatch via artificial incubation.

This first clutch contained a total of 14 eggs of which six were fertile. Three fertile eggs died at various stages of development.

The zoo has a second clutch of 20 viable eggs (total clutch size of 21 included one infertile egg) that began hatching on 2 September. As of 4 September, seven have hatched from this second clutch. The female that laid this clutch is "Gertrude," age 15.

Hatchling total length ranged from 20.2–22.2 cm. Body masses ranged from 22.4–33.0 g. The first clutch began hatching after an 81-day incubation period, whereas the second clutch started hatching after 77 days.

In 1994, the Indianapolis Zoo was one of only three zoos in North America to receive juvenile Jamaican Iguanas as part of the overall conservation program, which included establishing a breeding population in the U.S. Each year, the Zoo staff has made strides in developing an in-house captive breeding program. This successful hatching is a terrific development that offers hope for the continued survival of these lizards.

In addition to the captive breeding aspect, Indianapolis Zoo has provided support to the "Jamaican Iguana Head Start" Program since the early 1990s.

If all the expected eggs hatch, these hatchlings will double the population of Jamaican Iguanas in North America zoos.

Lynne Villers and Richard Reams
Indianapolis Zoo



First hatchling Jamaican Iguana born outside of Jamaica; the second egg is "pipping."



Neonate Jamaican Iguana "pipping" from the egg.



Sire and Dam of the first Jamaican Iguanas to hatch via artificial incubation.