

O B I T U A R Y

In Memoriam: Peter Vogel¹

Herpetologist Peter Vogel, a leading advocate for preserving Jamaica's wildlife, was found dead in his home on 19 July 2007. Police are investigating his death as a homicide. To date, the crime remains unsolved.

Dr. Vogel, who was Swiss born, was the 2006 recipient of the Gleaner Honour Award for Science and Technology. A major area of his work revolved around the discovery of the Jamaican Iguana (*Cyclura collei*) in the Hellshire Hills of St. Catherine. He also was a recipient of the Institute of Jamaica's special Silver Award for science in 2001. Vogel initially arrived in Jamaica in 1979, spending a year at the University of the West Indies collecting data on anoline lizards for the University of Bochum, Germany. He subsequently completed his Ph.D. in animal behavior and ecology from the University of Basel in Switzerland. When he returned to Jamaica in 1985 to conduct a two-year research project on anoline lizards, he was hired as a lecturer in the Department of Life Sciences at a time when the country had been without a locally based herpetologist for several decades. This became especially critical in 1990, when the Jamaican Iguana was rediscovered in the remote Hellshire Hills. Peter was the obvious person to become chairman of the rapidly formed Jamaican Iguana Research and Conservation Group (JIRCG), and his speedy response to an emergency conservation issue probably served to avert the otherwise likely extinction of the island's largest land animal. In addition to implementing critical conservation activities, Peter kept the JIRCG going for many years, making it possible for other iguana conservationists to continue the effort.

Vogel's research interests focused on the ecology and conservation of land vertebrates and their habitats. He was involved in various biodiversity projects, including studies of communities of amphibians, reptiles, and birds in the Cockpit Country, the Blue and John Crow Mountains, and the dry forests of the southern coast. An important element of these projects was to assess threat factors, and to identify and implement conservation measures. Dr. Vogel also served extensively on boards of environmental NGOs. He was an executive member of BirdLife

Jamaica, the Jamaican Iguana Research and Conservation Group, and the Game Bird Research Committee. Peter's quiet resolve and understanding of the conservation climate in Jamaica inspired a generation of local conservationists, and the success of those efforts will ultimately be a fitting tribute to his love and concern for Jamaica's endemic reptiles.

He is remembered by his widow, Parlan, and three children. May he rest in peace.



JOHN BINNS

Peter Vogel at the Main Camp in the rugged Hellshire Hills of Jamaica in June 2002.

¹ Adapted from a news release and an obituary by Byron Wilson, current JIRCG Director, that appeared in *Reptiles* magazine.



BYRON WILSON

The survival of the Jamaican Iguana (*Cyclura collei*) and the Jamaican Iguana Research and Conservation Group are two of Peter Vogel's ongoing legacies.