

IRCF ON THE MOVE

Exo Terra Supports the Protection of Threatened Reptiles and Their Habitats by Becoming a General Sponsor of the International Reptile Conservation Foundation

Exo Terra, a global market leader in terrarium products, has become a strategic sponsor of the International Reptile Conservation Foundation (IRCF). "Exo Terra is committed to conservation and, after a long search, we felt that the IRCF was by far the conservation organization most closely aligned with our goals," says Emmanuel Van Heygen, lead product developer of Exo Terra. "Our products tend toward more realistic and naturalistic terrarium designs, but nothing can replace the amazing beauty of the natural world. We all need to do our part to help preserve it." "Exo Terra's investment in the IRCF will help the IRCF by reaching out to a larger community of supporters and in turn expanding our ability to help species and habitats in need," says Michael Kern, IRCF Chief Operating Officer. "Corporate investment is a strategic component of how the IRCF operates, and we are happy to see Exo Terra join us in our cause."

As a General Sponsor, Exo Terra will make a cash donation to the IRCF that will be used to enhance *Iguana*, the quarterly journal distributed to all IRCF members. Specifically, the journal will incorporate a four-page color spread sponsored by Exo Terra. "The more color in the journal, the larger the audience we can reach. Since most of our money is raised through memberships, the more members we can attract, the more money we can raise, the more ecosystems we can help protect," says Sandy Binns, IRCF Chief Financial Officer.

Additionally, Exo Terra and its parent company, Hagen Inc., will look for opportunities to use its market-leading presence in the reptile and pet communities to increase awareness of the IRCF and the conservation needs of reptiles and amphibians around the world. Says Rolf Hagen, President and CEO of Rolf C. Hagen, Inc.: "We believe we can help the IRCF get its conservation message out to a broader audience. Whether through web-site linkage, trade show presence, or strategic product labeling, we believe this relationship creates great opportunities for Exo Terra and the IRCF, and, most importantly, supports the fragile reptile-rich ecosystems of the world."

"We are happy to have Exo Terra as a sponsoring partner of the IRCF," says John Binns, IRCF founder and CEO. "Exo Terra is truly an innovative company with market-leading products and a unique philosophy of aligning its market activities to the natural world."

The June 2008 issue of *Iguana* will be the first to incorporate the Exo Terra-sponsored color enhancements.

About the IRCF

The principal aim of the IRCF is to support conservation and research programs that contribute to the survival of threatened reptiles and their habitats. IRCF support may include fundraising, land acquisition, logistical support, communications and promotion of species awareness, publications, and volunteer coordination. Programs supported to date include Project Heloderma (Guatemala), Blue Iguana Recovery Program (Grand Cayman), Project Palearis (Guatemala), Gharial Multi Task Force (India), Argentine Sand Dune Lizard, Fijian Crested Iguana, Chinese Alligator Fund, Jamaican Iguana Recovery, an IIF-supported program, Anegada Iguana Recovery Program (British Virgin Islands), Ricord's Iguana (Dominican Republic), Conservation Project Utila Iguana (Honduras), Turtle Survival Alliance, Rhinoceros Iguana (Dominican Republic), and the Turks and Caicos Iguana Relocation Program. The IRCF is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

About Exo Terra

Exo Terra, a global leader in terrarium products, is a brand division of Rolf C. Hagen Inc. Exo Terra's product line caters to almost any species of reptile or amphibian from almost any specialized habitat. Thanks to Exo Terra's natural approach, the terrarium hobby has evolved tremendously over the past few years. All Exo Terra products and components have been designed to work together, helping hobbyists create and establish a harmonized natural-looking microhabitat.

About Rolf C. Hagen Inc.

Rolf C. Hagen Inc. has its international headquarters in Montreal, Quebec, Canada and has wholly owned subsidiaries in the United States, England, France, Germany, and Malaysia. The company has joint ventures in Spain, Japan, Korea, Thailand, and South Africa, and additional long-standing partnership agreements in Mexico, Italy, Australia, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, Portugal, and New Zealand. Rolf C. Hagen Inc.'s distribution capacity spans the globe to provide the very best in pet supplies.



Critical Conservation Foothold Established in Guatemala's Motagua Valley

Surrounded by the Sierra de las Minas, Guatemala's Motagua Valley receives the least rainfall in all of Central America. The lack of moisture is responsible for one of the world's unique ecosystems. With its distinctive thornscrub and semi-arid forest zones, this area is home to many indigenous plants and animals. Unfortunately, it is also under intense pressure from human development, and has been identified as critically endangered by the World Wildlife Federation. Until now, the region has had no conservation protection and much of the area has already been converted into farm- or ranchland. In December 2007, a consortium of Zootropic, Zoo Atlanta, and the International Reptile Conservation Foundation (IRCF) purchased a tract of land known to be the home of two of the most critically endangered endemic reptilian species: the Guatemalan Beaded Lizard (*Heloderma horridum charlesbogerti*) and the Guatemalan Black



Iguana (*Ctenosaura palearis*). This land deal is intended to provide a strategic foothold for the protection of this unique region's flora and fauna.

Leading to this point and working under the moniker of "Project Heloderma," the three partners, Zootropic, Zoo Atlanta, and the IRCF initially focused their conservation efforts on the Guatemalan Beaded Lizard. Conservation synergies were soon identified with the Guatemalan Black Iguana. The combined emphasis continues today through the efforts to conserve both species and the habitat in which they live.

Initial conservation activities were directed toward the education of the local population, who had regarded the lizards as either dangerous, a food source, or an opportunity to engage in illegal trade in exotic animals. Concurrently, fundraising efforts were initiated, and the species studied in order to establish an effective conservation and educational program. Early in 2007, the project team identified a critical piece of property. The owner, sympathetic to the conservation cause and Project Heloderma, came to terms and a land deal for 139 acres was consummated in December of that year.

Although considerable work has already been invested, the land purchase isn't an end in itself. For Project Heloderma, it is simply the end of the beginning — for now, real conservation work can begin: the establishment of protected areas for the animals, building of a breeding facility to help reestablish the diminished populations of these species, and an education/research center to facilitate both ongoing research into the species and the education of the local human population regarding the benefits and importance of these creatures and the



MICHAEL KEHN

In December 2007, Project Heloderma acquired critical habitat for the conservation of the Guatemalan Beaded Lizard (*Heloderma horridum charlesbogerti*) and the Guatemalan Black Iguana (*Ctenosaura palearis*). From left: Daniel Ariano, Zootropic, Luis Alvarado, Zootropic, Brad Lock, Zoo Atlanta, Mr. Paiz, previous landowner, Rodrigo Botran, Zootropic, and John Binns, IRCF.

land in which they live. Ideally, protection of these species will require more land, so fundraising and the search for additional strategic parcels continues.

In time, Project Heloderma believes that the Motagua Valley can become an important eco-destination, one that serves to build additional support for the species and provide economic benefits to the region, together encouraging a path of conservation instead of exploitation. Set against the diverse color, customs, and culture of the region, this ideal is clearly attainable.



MICHAEL KEHN



MICHAEL KEHN

The subtropical dry forests of the Motagua Valley provide habitat for critically endangered Guatemalan Beaded Lizards (*Heloderma horridum charlesbogerti*; right) and Guatemalan Black Iguanas (*Ctenosaura palearis*; not illustrated).