

THE INDIANAPOLIS ZOO'S CYCLURA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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The Indianapolis Zoo's involvement with *Cyclura* began in 1982, when we imported 2.3 adult Cuban ground iguana *Cyclura n. nubila* from Isla Magueyes, Puerto Rico. This was my first introduction to the genus. I may have seen Rhinoceros iguanas at other facilities at other times, but had not really paid much attention to, or knew much about, them. I had prepared adequately for their arrival from Puerto Rico. I had a large exhibit area ready for them, complete with identification labels. After acclimation and quarantine the exhibit would be opened and ready for public viewing. As always with something that is greatly anticipated, there was a snafu with their arrival. They supposedly arrived too late at the Indianapolis International Airport for me to pick them up until the next day, or so the air cargo clerk told me. This was unacceptable to me. So my boss

called his boss and things got worked out so that I was able to pick them up late that night. These were magnificent animals; large; heavy bodied; and they had red eyes! So began my professional work with this very interesting genus. My boss Julian Duval, had worked with Rhinoceros and Ricord iguanas while working at ZOODOM, the national zoo in the Dominican Republic. His interest soon rubbed off on me.

We apparently had done okay with our new exhibit, because we received two clutches of eggs and successfully hatched Cuban ground iguanas. The interesting thing about this is that this occurred in an indoor enclosure. To our knowledge, that was the first indoor reproduction of a *Cyclura* species. We continued to work with this species for the next several years, trying to perfect indoor management of them. We had some



Hatchling Cuban iguana, *Cyclura nubila nubila*. Photograph: Bill Christie



Captive exhibit at zoo, *Cyclura nubila nubila*. Photograph: Bill Christie

success and some failures, but continued to learn. In 1987 we succeeded in breeding one of our 1982 hatched females. We were recognized by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums for this feat and received a significant achievement award. Jeff Wines, (who attended the International Iguana Society meeting in 1993) started with the zoo at this time and began his introduction to *Cyclura*. Apparently some of my interest had rubbed off on him.

Simultaneously to all this, the Indianapolis Zoo was in the process of designing and constructing a brand new zoo near the cities downtown area. We decided to make a major commitment to *Cyclura* and design into the new facility, some major holding and exhibit space for these lizards. The accompanying diagram shows some of our *Cyclura* space. We also have an additional building in which we hold 1.3 Grand Cayman iguana *Cyclura n. lewisi*. We have continued to work with the Cuban iguana and in 1993 hatched 11 of them.

In our attempts to broaden our knowledge and experience with *Cyclura* we imported valuable founder Rhinoceros and Ricord iguanas from the

Dominican Republic. These are now exhibited in our Living Deserts of the World Exhibit. Ricord iguana *Cyclura ricordi* are not often seen and not well studied. With the Rhinoceros iguana they are the only sympatric species of the *Cyclura* and are exhibited together at the zoo. Both of these have reproduced for us in the indoor setting. We have also received fertile eggs from our Grand Cayman iguanas but have not been able to hatch them as of yet.

Some of our other *Cyclura* endeavors include receiving a grant from the Nixon Griffis Fund for Zoological Research in conjunction with Texas A&M University to continue research entitled "Subspecific Identification of the Grand Cayman Iguana." This allowed us to clear up the subspecific hybrid problem that existed in the *Cyclura nubila* subspecies captive population. I have been named the studbook keeper for the genus *Cyclura* by our parent organization. This, I am finding out is a more formidable task than what I had envisioned! We have also financially aided Jamaican iguana *Cyclura collei* field research. In conjunction with this we have also helped fund, sponsor and participated in the Jamaican iguana

Population and Habitat Viability Analysis Workshop in Kingston, Jamaica. This was a workshop that brought together experts in West Indian island ecology, local government officials, *Cyclura* experts and population biologists to study the newly rediscovered Jamaican iguana. Together, we tried to formulate a plan that would help insure the survival of this unique lizard. Part of the plan is to remove some of the hatchlings from the Hope Zoo in Kingston, Jamaica so as to not have “all of our eggs in one basket” so to speak. To this end the Indianapolis Zoo has applied for the necessary USDI permit to import 12 juvenile *Cyclura collei*. These will be distributed between us, the Fort Worth Zoo and The Gladys Porter Zoo in Texas. We continue to support the Jamaican iguana program financially. The Fort Worth Zoo is spearheading the construction of head start facilities for hatchlings in Jamaica. All this will hopefully allow the continued existence of the Jamaican iguana in the wild.

I am proud of the Indianapolis Zoo’s accomplishments with *Cyclura*. It is not easy for a Northern zoo to be active in intensive *Cyclura* management, and this I believe has steered some institutions away from these interesting lizards. We have been successful with this program despite doing everything indoors, without the benefit of natural UV lighting. We have had animals live normal lives, reproduce into the second generation and continue to thrive in our conditions. Our philosophy of giving adequate

space, proper diet and the right social settings seem to be on the right track, and hopefully Jeff, Julian and I will continue to expand our knowledge and the Indianapolis Zoo’s involvement with these magnificent creatures in the years to come.

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