

IGUANA NEWSBRIEFS

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA SPINY-TAIL IGUANAS

Gasparilla Island is a barrier island on Florida's Gulf coast. The town of Boca Grande on the island is becoming known for more than its beaches. Spiny-tail iguanas are appearing more frequently sunning themselves along the bike paths and eating flower blossoms.

Several iguanas have found their way into resident's attics causing some excitement. While some residents have been upset and frightened, the iguanas have also acquired some supporters. Dolores Heimann, former director of Boca Grande's Friends of Wildlife, led a 1992 petition drive to get legal protection for the spiny-tails. This was a response to outsiders coming to the island to catch iguanas to sell. Over 800 signatures were presented to Lee County Commissioner John Manning, who had offered to try to come up with a county ordinance to protect the iguanas.

After studying Manning's proposal, county staff recommended that the county not consider enacting a law protecting the harmless lizards. The Florida Game and Fish Commission stated that it is highly unlikely that an exotic species can be offered protection under state law.

The Ctenosaurs were apparently brought to the island 14 years ago from Mexico. Photos were received from Capt. Ron Harrod in which the iguanas appear to be *Ctenosaura pectinata*. But the identity is not certain.

Source: Ron Harrod and Boca Beacon, 11 March 1994

GALAPAGOS ISLAND FIRE

A wildfire raged across southern Isabela, the largest of the Galapagos Islands, which lie 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador. More than 20,000 acres of forest on Isabela burned as a result of a fire that started in late April and burned for several weeks. Like another wildfire in 1985 that burned more than 50,000 acres, this one was started by humans.

Immigration from Ecuador is out of control in the islands, with increasing numbers of settlers arriving to seek jobs. Wages are higher in the islands than on the mainland. Unfortunately, the new arrivals have little knowledge or respect for the spectacular wildlife of the islands. In 1982 the census recorded 6,201 residents. Current estimates put the current Galapagos population at over 25,000 residents.

All the basic necessities of human life are in short supply. As the job market tightens and frustration

grows over living conditions, respect for nature has eroded.

The fires on Isabela were finally brought under control after drawing worldwide attention because it threatened the giant land tortoises and important nesting sites.

In February, settlers attacked a colony of tortoises east of the Sierra Negra volcano killing 31 tortoises. On 23 April, 1994, scientists found another eight tortoises remains which had been eaten. Historically, small numbers of tortoises have been killed on Isabela but recent events demonstrate how social tensions are threatening the protection of Galapagos wildlife.

In the April attack one of the tortoises was seriously injured. Darwin Station scientists wanted to fly a veterinarian from the University of Florida to amputate the animal's left rear foot. The park director refused to allow this. He feared angering local residents for operating on the tortoise in a human operating room in the Puerto Ayora Clinic. The tortoise was finally airlifted to University of Florida in Gainesville for treatment. I.I.S. member, Dr. Elliott Jacobson, a professor of veterinary medicine, performed surgery. It will be returned to the islands.

Populations of the land iguana, *Conolophus*

subcristatus, are extremely endangered on Isabela. No more than several hundred iguanas remain scattered among 2 or 3 populations. Many feral dogs have been eliminated, but feral cats are a serious threat and few hatchlings survive.

Source: Miami Herald, M. Hoyos

TURTLE HOSPITAL INSTRUMENTAL IN RESEARCH PROJECT

The Hidden Harbor Turtle Hospital in Marathon, Florida, site of the 1993 I.I.S. Iguana Conference, has made studies possible into the cause of a debilitating disease that has affected most of the world's endangered green sea turtles. The disease, fibropapillomas, has been identified as a virus as a result of four years of study by Dr. Larry Herbst and Dr. Elliott Jacobson of University of Florida, Gainesville.

These studies would not have been possible without the facilities at the Turtle Hospital and the contributions made by owner and I.I.S. member Richie Moretti and associate Capt. Tina Brown.

I.I.S. Board congratulates them.

Statement of Purpose

The International Iguana Society, Inc. is a non-profit, international organization dedicated to the preservation of the biological diversity of iguanas through habitat preservation, active conservation, research, captive breeding and the dissemination of information.

The Iguana Times, the newsletter of the society, is distributed quarterly to members and member organizations. Additional copies are available at a cost of \$6.00 including postage. Annual dues for The International Iguana Society are \$25.00 for individuals and \$30.00 for organizations which receive double copies of the newsletter.

Write to:

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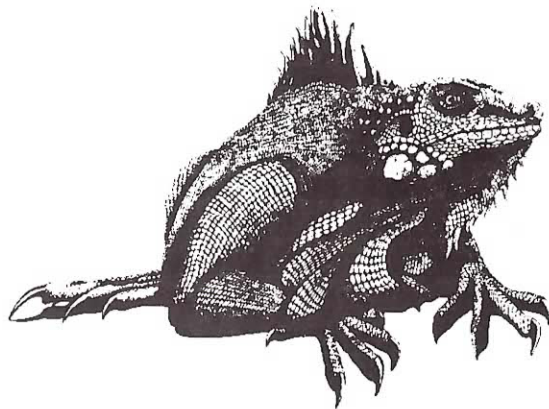
Solicitations

Members of the I.I.S. are encouraged to contribute articles for publication in the *Iguana Times*, following a format like that shown in the most recent issue of the newsletter. Articles can deal with any aspect of iguana biology, ecology, behavior, husbandry, systematics, etc. Manuscripts must be typed, DOUBLE-SPACED, with wide margins, on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Include your address and telephone number on the manuscript. Members are also welcome to submit letters to the Editor for publication in future issues of the newsletter. Authors of one page or more of print are entitled to three copies of the issue in which their article appears.

The Editors

Advertising policy of Iguana Times

We advertise only non-living products (except feeder insects). All products have been examined and been found to be high quality and fairly priced. Contact I.I.S., RT 3, Box 328, Big Pine Key, FL 33043, for more information.



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