

LIZARD LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the article by John Bendon in your most recent issue of the *Iguana Times* regarding the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust's Lesser Antilles iguanas *Iguana delicatissima*. Primarily I wish to update your readers as to the progress of the juvenile but would first like to correct one or two slight inaccuracies.

I do not remember discussing the evolutionary history of *Cyclura* and *Iguana* with John Bendon. I am not an authority on the ancestry of West Indian iguanines but did mention to John that some changes were possible in the future regarding the taxonomy of these animals, partly as a result of recent work carried out on *I. delicatissima* in the field. I hope the hackles of iguana taxonomists have not been raised by this slightly elaborated statement on iguana evolution.

At no time since the hatching of the worlds first did I put it through the stressful and traumatic experience of daily measuring and weighing. It was weighed and measured on the day it was moved from it's incubation container to it's vivarium (wt = 20g, svl = 7.5 mm, tail = 208 mm) and has only been measured subsequently on a weekly basis for the first month during which it did not feed and was given a weekly tube feeding of fruit puree and vitamins and monthly thereafter. Vitamin D₃ is administered by mouth on a monthly basis using D₃ suspended in oil as produced by Woodstocks Nutritional Supplements.

Finally, though I work long and hard, and spend much of my own time here in the Department, I do not spend ALL day EVERY day here!!

Now to the baby. After the first traumatic (for us that was) month it finally began feeding voluntarily when a flowering hibiscus plant was placed inside it's vivarium. Initially only the stamen from each flower was eaten, possibly targeting the protein rich pollen at the end. Following this breakthrough other food items have been gradually added to the diet, the next item accepted being freshly sprouted sweet potatoe leaves.

He or she (we haven't yet attempted to sex it) is now dining daily on a variety of greens and some fruits including: hibiscus flowers, nasturtium leaves and flowers, dandelion leaves, watercress, endive, chicory, romaine lettuce, sweet potatoe leaves, apple, pear, and papaya. All fruits are offered finely chopped and sprinkled with a multi-vitamin and mineral supplement. Oral D₃ dosing takes place once per month and is followed by the provision of large quantities of ground cuttle fish at the next feed. Water is permanently available in a bowl but the baby only drinks during daily spraying with warm water.

The vivarium is furnished with various plants for cover and humidity, climbing branches and a bark chipping substrate. A 60W incandescent bulb provides a basking spot in excess of 32°C while the ambient temperature varies from 25-30°C during the day and about 22-25°C at night. The vivarium is lit with a Trulite fluorescent tube and a Philips Blacklite for additional UV, mostly UVA. Under this regime the baby iguana, now nearly six months old, has grown by more than 25% in both weight and body and tail length.

I look forward to being able to bring you more news from this exciting breeding experiment in the future.

Sincerely

Richard C. Gibson, Herpetology Department Head

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

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STOP THE DEMISE... OF BARTSCHI'S ROCK IGUANA !!!



This beautiful iguana, *cyclura carinata bartschi*, lives on one tiny little island, a cay, in the Carribean, no more than 2km x 1 km (1.2 miles x 0.6 mile). It is the only place that it lives.

There are only 200 left!!! Local residents of the much larger island of Mayaguana put their goats on the little island, known as Booby Cay, to graze. This saves them building any fences. There is a danger of the goats eating up all the vegetation there, thus depriving this very rare iguana of the food it needs to survive. A project is under way to permanently remove the goats and put them back on the main island, fenced in. The International Iguana Society is appealing for funds to buy materials and build this fence, but time is running out. These iguanas must have this island, their only habitat, to themselves. Without that provision, they will surely die out.

Your contribution, however small, will go towards the cost of the project. Please help.



THE INTERNATIONAL IGUANA SOCIETY INC.
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This poster was circulated at herp shows in England this Summer and was responsible for generating a sizable donation to I.I.S. for the project.