

Meet the Board...

For those I.I.S. members curious about "who we are," the following is a brief introduction to the 1998 I.I.S. Board of Directors, most of whom also help get each issue of *Iguana Times* to your mailbox.



1998 I.I.S. Board of Directors: Seated (left to right): Joe Wasilewski and AJ Gutman with friend. Standing (left to right): Michael Ripca, Robert W. Ehrig, Chuck Knapp, and Carl Fuhri. Photograph by Janet Fuhri.

Joe Wasilewski, I.I.S.'s new President, was born and raised in Chicago, IL. He moved to Miami, FL in 1973 and went to work for Bill Haast at the Miami Serpentarium where he was introduced to *Cyclura* residing at the tourist attraction. Since then his fascination with these incredible creatures has grown a great deal.

Joe received his B.S. degree in Biology from Florida International University in Miami, and became director of Natural Selections in 1981. His travels and studies have taken him through the Everglades, Central America, and the Caribbean. The subjects of his biological studies include American crocodiles, alligators, diamondback terrapins, rattlesnakes, as well as non-reptiles such as the everglades mink, osprey and southern bald eagle.

Joe is dedicated to bringing the plight of many species of animals to the attention of the general public. He reaches out in a big way, and is

now consulting with major television productions such as *National Geographic Explorer*, *CNN*, *The Today Show*, and *Bill Nye the Science Guy...* just to name a few.

AJ Gutman, Recording and Correspondence Secretary, and Membership Coordinator, has a background in both Computer Science and Classical Literature. She prefers, however, to call herself an existentialist zookeeper, operating the Connecticut Iguana Sanctuary in West Hartford where she lives with her emergency physician husband, Michael, and sons, Joshua and Elijah.

AJ joined the I.I.S. in 1995 upon receiving her first green iguana as a gift from her sons. Since that first little iguana who refused to thrive, AJ has acquired a fair degree of expertise in nutrition and indoor habitat design, as well as the physiological and psychological aspects of iguana rehabilitation.

She often lectures on these subjects, as well as on endangered iguanas and the conservation work of the I.I.S.

As Membership Coordinator, AJ manages the I.I.S. membership database, as well as coordinating mailings of *Iguana Times*, and other promotions. A native Canadian, she tries her best to keep her colleagues from abusing the English language with her editorial suggestions for *Iguana Times*.

Michael Ripca, Director, and Production Coordinator of *Iguana Times*. Mike is a graphic designer, and Macintosh computer consultant, who has a heavy interest in lizards, particularly iguanas. He works for the American College of Physicians in Philadelphia as their Electronic Prepress Specialist in the Graphic Services department.

After joining the I.I.S. in March 1992, he and his wife, Janet (an advertising designer), offered to redesign *Iguana Times* and take over the duties of layout, design, typesetting, and print coordination. Since then, they have also added some editorial, advertising and promotions assistance, and Web site design to the list as well. They live in Drexel Hill, PA with their daughter, Olivia.

Robert W. Ehrig, Founder and Vice President of the I.I.S., and Managing Editor of *Iguana Times*, was born in the 1950s in South Philadelphia, and saw his first dinosaur at the Pennsylvania Academy of Natural Sciences at the age of four. After moving to rural Pennsylvania, he discovered the woods, and rarely came out. He bought his first iguana at age ten.

In 1970, Bob spent time in Hawaii discovering the Tropics—things were never quite the same for him after that. He traveled to Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Yucatan, Mexico, and Belize, before visiting Florida for the first time in 1972.

He spent most of the '70's traveling between the Florida Keys and Pennsylvania, working as an operating room technician and bartending. He moved to Big Pine Key permanently in 1978. There Bob established Finca Cyclura to breed rhinoceros iguanas, which became the largest producer of that species in the U.S. He has had 12 years of successful, continuous breeding to-date. He founded Native Landscape, a native plant nursery and tree-planting business, which operated from 1980 to 1989.

Throughout the 1980s and early '90's, he traveled to Costa Rica and the Caribbean many times, and became involved with iguanas in the Bahamas.

In addition, he worked for the Florida Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and as a biological consultant. In 1989, he started the Invasive Exotic Vegetation Control Program for the National Key Deer Refuge, and in August 1990, founded the International Iguana Society Inc. with the help of some of the most renowned iguana biologists of that time.

In 1995, Bob established The Red Creek Biological Reserve with his wife, Marcie and long-time friend, Richard Moyroud. Adjacent to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in the Stann Creek District in Belize, it now stands at 605 acres of prime wildlife habitat in an important corridor in one of the most diverse ecosystems still in existence in the world.

Chuck Knapp, Director, has an undergraduate background in Zoology. His biological interests have predominantly been aquatic vertebrates and ecosystems. He became interested (read: obsessed) in iguanas while working at the John G. Shedd Aquarium. At the Aquarium he worked with two species of rock iguana, *Cyclura nubila caymanensis* and *C. n. lewisi*. His fascination for the iguanas influenced him to initiate and implement annual field surveys of *Cyclura cyclura figginsii* using the Aquarium's research vessel and public participation.

He is currently employed part-time by the Aquarium while earning his Master's degree in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the University of Florida. His Master's work involves studying the population dynamics of an introduced colony of *C. c. inornata* in the Exumas, Bahamas.

Carl Fuhri, Treasurer of the I.I.S., has been turning rocks and beating the bushes looking for reptiles for over fifty years. In 1986 he moved to South Florida with his family and shortly thereafter joined the newly formed Everglades Herpetological Society. At that time his interest was mainly in snakes. In 1989 he bought his first iguana. It has been a love affair ever since.

Carl now breeds *Iguana iguana*, *Cyclura nubila*, *Cyclura cornuta* and several other species of Australian lizards with his wife, Janet, at Dragon's Glade in Bonita Springs. Carl is an amateur herpetoculturist, who enjoys using vacation time to assist scientists with iguana research in the Caribbean. He has been a member of the International Iguana Society since the first year of its inception.