

LIZARD LETTERS

June 13, 1998

Dear Editors,

Issues of *Iguana Times* continue to be excellent. The natural history articles, research papers, and observational studies of wild iguana behavior are all very fine. Of special interest are the "Youth in Science" articles which give hope for the future of education and conservation. And of course, the photographs are fantastic!

One of my favorite pieces is the one about Tee Beau (Vol. 4, #1): "Living with Tee Beau: Sharing Your Life and Home with a 26-year-old Rhino Iguana." Another favorite is John Bendon's story about Pinkie, from "Lizard Letters" (Vol. 3, #1?): "The Beast of Andros—My Two Years Cohabitation with a Cycluran iguana." Both pieces are engaging, and a great pleasure to read. With beautiful detail, they show the character of individual, captive iguanas, and of particular importance they show what the iguanas mean to their keepers: Tee Beau's keeper Monty says "I don't believe that I could have accomplished what I have without the companionship of a half-hateful iguana named Tee Beau." And Bendon writes of his "Caribbean friend" Pinkie "...I feel that however much I did for him, he gave me much more than I ever gave him." These pieces each get the reader caring about the iguanas partly by showing their charming—if moody—behavior; their unique and endearing "lizardly ways." They reveal a rapport between human and iguana. I showed the story of Pinkie to a friend who remarked "I never thought of an iguana as a pet you could love." While that may be a sappy statement to a Ph.D. in iguanine biology, there are a lot of people who aren't Ph.D.s; who aren't going to appreciate iguanas as objects of study. Perhaps instead they could be encouraged to view iguanas as equally worthy of affection—and so, protection—as pandas, lions, whales, bluebirds, baby seals, dolphins, zebras.

On that note, I propose that *Iguana Times* editors consider delegating a regular feature for "anecdotes": observational/experiential "true stories" of living with pet iguanas—greens, chuckawallas, *Cyclurus* spp., etc. That way, the science articles and papers can be separated from the anecdotes. I bet a lot of iguana keepers would send in very readable, moving stories about their beloved pets. (Ouch!) If space is limited, the features could be kept to 500 words or less, and include one "snapshot."

Thanks—and thanks again for *Iguana Times*

Sincerely,
Wendy Townsend

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Delicatissima Stamps Issued on Anguilla

Anguilla's sparse wildlife (fauna) population has been expanded in recent years with the re-emergence of the illusive *Iguana delicatissima*.

The Island's appointed custodian of its Marine, fauna, flora, and historical heritage, the Anguilla National Trust, has spearheaded a thrust to ensure the propagation of the iguana.

It is in promotion of this interest that the Anguilla General Post Office has issued a set of four postage stamps to assist in making the public aware of the importance of protecting this endangered reptile.

The stamp issue endorsed by the "World Wildlife Fund for Nature" (WWF) depicts the *Iguana delicatissima* in four environment settings and the artist's interpretation of the subject is strikingly realistic.

Iguanas were historically abundant on every island from Anguilla to Martinique. Over the years this situation has changed dramatically due to loss of forest, hunting for food and as well the impact of predators such as dogs, mongoose, cats, and grazers like goats who compete for food and damage the forest.

As a result of these pressures, the Lesser Antillean iguanas are threatened with extinction across their range and many islands such as St. Kitts, Nevis and Antigua no longer have iguanas.

On Anguilla the small iguana population inhabits a relatively small section of the northern coast living in rock crevices. The reptiles

feed mainly on shrubs such as Chink, Cattle Tongue, Mutton Polly, Antigua Balsam and White Cedar.

To enhance the chances for juvenile survival, the Anguilla National Trust is considering captive breeding of the *Iguana delicatissima*, a move which would significantly help to ensure the survival of this endangered species.



Source: <http://web.ai/stamps/iguana.html>

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October 30, 1998

***Cyclura Iguana* Smuggling Indictments**

Thomas E. Scott, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Lois J. Schiffer, Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and Jorge Picon, Resident Agent in Charge for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Miami, announced that a federal Grand Jury sitting in Miami has returned an 11 count indictment charging Dwayne D. Cunningham, 41 of Pembroke Pines, and Patricia E. Cunningham, 35 and Robert A. Lawracy, 32, both of West Palm Beach, Florida with illegally trafficking in reptiles protected under domestic and international [law] in violation of the Lacey Act (the Federal anti-wildlife trafficking statute) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as charging the defendants with conspiracy and smuggling. Each of the ten felony charges in the indictment are punishable by up to 5 years in jail and up to a \$250,000 fine, while the single misdemeanor, the ESA violation, is punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$100,000 fine. Dwayne Cunningham is named in seven felony charges and a single misdemeanor; Patricia Cunningham faces four felony charges and a single misdemeanor; and Robert Lawracy faces four felony charges. Lawracy surrendered to federal authorities today. According to statements in Court, arrest warrants are pending against the remaining two defendants.

According to the indictment, from 1992 through December 1997, the defendants engaged in

trafficking reptile species that originated on various West Indies islands and that are protected under an international treaty known as CITES, the Convention On International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora, which is implemented in the United States through the Endangered Species Act. Several species of *Cyclura* (Ground Iguanas), including the Exuma Island Rock Iguana and the Virgin Island Rock Iguana and Red-footed Tortoises, are alleged to have been smuggled into the United States aboard cruise ships touring the Caribbean and the Bahamas that employed Dwayne Cunningham and Lawracy. The species of *Cyclura* listed in the indictment, are species currently threatened with extinction, and listed on Appendix I of CITES, the highest level of protection available under the treaty. According to the allegations in the indictment, the defendants held none of the required documents for the species they imported, possessed and sold.

The indictment further alleges that in an effort to conceal the smuggling of Exuma Island Rock Iguanas, the Cunninghams procured from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service a permit for the captive breeding of species listed under the Endangered Species Act to create the impression their sale of these reptiles stemmed from a viable domestic breeding program rather than smuggling of wild-caught animals. Moreover, the indictment also charges that in furtherance of the conspiracy to trade in smuggled Caribbean reptiles, Dwayne Cunningham and Lawracy stole mature red footed tortoises in 1995 from the Curacao Zoo and smuggled them to

the United States.

A second part of the indictment centers on the smuggling of highly protected Madagascan Tree Boas, Madagascan Ground Boas, Radiated Tortoises and Spider Tortoises, from Madagascar into Germany, and ultimately into Florida. The Cunninghams are alleged in the indictment to have been couriers, purchasers and sellers of these reptiles. Other members of this smuggling ring, including several German citizens, have already been the subject of indictments in the Middle District of Florida.

Mr. Scott commended the work of Special Agent Chip Bepko of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for his work on the case.

The United States was represented in this matter by Thomas Watts-Fitzgerald, Chief of the Environmental Crimes Section at the U.S. Attorney's Office and Peter J. Murtha, Senior Trial Attorney, United States Department of Justice, Wildlife and Marine Resources

Green Iguanas Float Into Biological History

The journal *Nature* recently published the first clear-cut evidence of iguanas naturally colonizing a new oceanic island. Fifteen green iguanas were documented arriving on the Lesser Antilles island of Anguilla. The iguanas landed on Anguilla in October 1995 on a clump of trees and vegetation that floated 200 miles from the island of Guadelupe. Hurricane Luis tracked near Guadelupe in September 1995 and probably caused trees with iguanas in them to wash into the sea. Strong ocean

currents moved the vegetation raft into the open sea and a month or so later onto the Anguilla shoreland. While iguanas rafting and dispersing to a new island home is generally accepted by most biologists, this recent incident is clear proof that rafting is a viable means of transportation for iguanas. Iguanas are excellent organisms for this mode of transportation. They are able to survive long periods without fresh water and would be able to eat many species of plants on these rafts. This is often cited as how iguanas colonized remote islands such as Fiji.

Dr. Ellen J. Censky is lead author of the paper and director of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History. Dr. Censky and Dr. Judy Dudley and Karim Hodge interviewed witnesses of the iguana landing and tracked and monitored the dispersal of the iguanas. The arrival of 15 animals was verified. Anguilla is also home to a small population of *Iguana delicatissima*. Though the arriving green iguanas were weak and dehydrated, they survived. In March researchers found an apparently gravid female green iguana which signaled a successful colonization of a new species.

It seems likely that the iguanas have established themselves on Anguilla. This could prove problematic for the *Iguana delicatissima* which have a lower reproductive output and have been out competed by *Iguana iguana* on other islands.

The two species may also hybridize.

Rafting is a major explanation for the distribution of animals on islands in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Over the millions of years

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there have been many storms capable of producing similar events and transporting many species to new islands. Reptiles are excellent candidates for this type of dispersal because of their ability to survive long trips under harsh conditions.

Source: New York Times

U.S. Reptile Dealer Faces Wildlife Smuggling and Conspiracy Charges

A 5-year investigation by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents of illegal international trade in reptiles resulted in the August 6 arrest of Tommy Edward Crutchfield. Crutchfield, a U.S. reptile dealer, is charged with wildlife smuggling, conspiracy, and money laundering. He is the 18th person charged to date in this wide-reaching case involving wildlife trafficking that spans six continents.

Crutchfield was apprehended by Federal authorities in Miami as he returned to the United States after being expelled from Belize. The former Florida businessman has spent the last 5 months in jail in Belize fighting that country's February 28 expulsion order. He now faces U.S. charges based on his alleged involvement in a major international reptile smuggling ring.

Last October, a Federal grand jury in Orlando, Florida, returned a multi-count indictment against Crutchfield, his wife, two former employees, and two other individuals based on the Service's ongoing scrutiny of the highly lucrative black market reptile trade. The indictment alleges that the six

were part of an international smuggling ring that is believed to have brought hundreds of rare and endangered snakes and tortoises out of Madagascar into Germany. From there, the animals, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, were smuggled into the United States and Canada where they were sold to wildlife dealers and private collectors. Protected reptiles from Australia, Indonesia, and various South American and Caribbean countries were also traded.

The smuggled reptiles, which were typically concealed in suitcases and transported aboard commercial airline flights, include highly prized Madagascar tree and ground boas, radiated tortoises, and spider tortoises—species that occur naturally only in Madagascar, an island off the southeastern coast of Africa. These animals, and the other reptiles allegedly smuggled, purchased, and sold, are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)—a global agreement that regulates world wildlife trade.

Crutchfield, who was named in all 10 counts of the indictment returned by the grand jury in October, is charged with multiple offenses of smuggling, violations of the Lacey Act (a Federal statute that allows the United States to prosecute individuals for violating international wildlife protection laws, including CITES), conspiracy, and money laundering.

If found guilty, Crutchfield could be sentenced to up to 5 years in prison and fined as much as \$250,000 on each smuggling and Lacey

Act count. Conviction on the money laundering charges could result in prison terms of up to 20 years and penalties as high as \$500,000 per count.

Crutchfield, formerly the president of Tom Crutchfield's Reptile Enterprises, Inc., located in Lake Panasoffkee, Florida, was generally considered one of the largest reptile importer/exporters in the United States before he left the country in the spring of 1997. He was on supervised release following completion of a 5-month prison sentence for a 1995 conviction for smuggling endangered Fiji Island iguanas when he fled to Belize after being notified by the Justice Department that he was under investigation. He also faces potential penalties for violating the supervised release.

The reptile investigation has already produced significant results, according to Service law enforcement officials. In addition to the charges against Crutchfield and his associates, four individuals from Germany, South Africa, Canada, and Japan have been arrested and successfully prosecuted in the United States. Of these, German citizen Wolfgang Michael Kloe received the stiffest sentence—a \$10,000 fine and 46-month prison term—after pleading guilty to six counts including conspiracy, smuggling, money laundering, attempted escape, and Lacey Act violations. Three other Germans charged in the case remain at large.

The Service's investigation of the illegal reptile trade has also led to charges in the United States against three Florida residents and a European for dealing in reptiles. One of the Florida residents, Matthew Lerer,

was sentenced June 25 to 6 months electronically monitored home detention, 100 hours of community service, and 3 years' probation. Friedrich Karl Artur Postma of The Netherlands, who was stopped at Orlando International Airport last August when he tried to smuggle in 13 radiated tortoises stuffed inside 5 socks, was sentenced to 1 year in jail and a \$3,000 fine.

In addition to these charges in the U.S., authorities in Germany and Canada have taken legal action against two Germans, a South African, and a Canadian for their involvement in illegal reptile trade.

"As the world's largest importer of wildlife, the United States has a special responsibility to prevent the illegal exploitation of all imperiled species," Clark said. "The record of indictments, arrests, and prosecutions for reptile smuggling from the past 2 years shows that the Service, the Department of Justice, and many of our international counterparts are committed to finding and stopping those who try to profit from protected wildlife. I would like to thank law enforcement authorities in Canada, Germany, The Netherlands, and now Belize for their assistance in and support of this investigation.

This case should send a clear message to those who traffic in rare and endangered reptiles that profiteering at the expense of wildlife will not be tolerated by the United States or by the world community."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats

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for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service's nearly 93 million acres include 514 national wildlife refuges, 78 ecological services field stations, 66 national fish hatcheries, 50 wildlife coordination areas, and 38 wetland management districts with waterfowl production areas.

The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes Federal excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. This program is a cornerstone of the Nation's wildlife management efforts, funding fish and wildlife restoration, boating access, hunter education, shooting ranges, and related projects across America. -FWS-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Law Enforcement requested that I notify CITES-L readers that a press release has been issued (Aug. 7, 1998) regarding the arrest of U.S. reptile dealer Tommy Edward Crutchfield (dba: Tom Crutchfield Reptile Enterprises; Lake Panasoffkee, Florida). Mr. Crutchfield was recently expelled from Belize and arrested as he returned to the United States on August 6, 1998. According to the press release, Mr. Crutchfield stood indicted since October 1997 in relation to his alleged involvement in a major international live reptile smuggling ring. Mr. Crutchfield is currently jailed, awaiting further legal

proceedings in the United States.

The press release also makes note of the recent sentencing of Florida resident Matthew Lerer, and Dutch citizen Karl Artur "Eddy" Postma (dba: Sauria Holland), in relation to their illegal activities involving the live reptile trade. Two German citizens, one South African, and one Canadian citizen have also been prosecuted for their involvement in this case by their respective governments, and the U.S. government has arrested and prosecuted four individuals from Germany, South Africa, Canada and Japan.

The USFWS press release can be found on the Service's Internet Website at <www.fws.gov>.

Please contact Sandra Cleva (703) 358-1949 or Mitch Snow (202) 208-5634 if you have questions regarding the press release. I can be contacted for general questions related to CITES implementation or other similar issues.

Thank you.

Bruce J. Weissgold, CITES Policy Specialist U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Management Authority 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 700 Arlington, Virginia 22203 Tel: (703) 358-1917 Fax: (703) 358-2298 E-mail: Bruce_Weissgold@mail.fws.gov

More Jamaican Iguanas Released

On 14 February 1998 a third group of Jamaican iguanas (*Cyclura collei*) was released into the Hellshire Hills of southeastern Jamaica as part of an ongoing effort to reestablish this species in its native habitat. The Hellshire Hills ecosystem supports the remnant population of this critically endangered iguana and provides the only two nesting areas known to exist. Rediscovered in 1990, the Jamaican iguana has been the subject of an intensive recovery program supported largely through the efforts of the AZA Limd TAG and participating U.S. zoos. To date, nearly 20 more have contributed resources to this important project.

These recent six releases bring to 14 the total number of iguanas released since 1996; an additional six will be released in June 1998. The iguanas are collected as hatchlings and then headstarted for five to six years at the Hope Zoo in Kingston until large enough to avoid predation by the introduced mongoose. The field project, which also entails protection of nesting sites, predator control and monitoring of released iguanas and the wild population, is currently being funded, in part, by two AZA Conservation Endowment Fund (CEF) grants.

The recent releases were coordinated by staff from the Fort Worth Zoo and involved personnel from the University of West Indies, Hope Zoo, Natural Resources Conservation Authority, and the Indianapolis and Sedgwick County Zoos. The iguanas were fitted with radio

transmitters and will be monitored for movements and survival over the next six months. All previous releases are believed to still survive indicating that headstarted iguanas are excellent candidates for restocking/repatriation efforts.

Source: Rick Hudson, Chair, Lizard Advisory Group Rock Iguana SSP Coordinator Fort Worth Zoo

Navassa Island Iguana NOT rediscovered!

Despite rumors to the contrary, the Navassa island rhinoceros iguana, *Cyclura cornuta onchiopis* has NOT been rediscovered.

In August, a research group organized by the Center for Marine Conservation spent two weeks at Navassa Island. The 5.2 sq. kilometer (3 sq. mile) island lies 35 miles southwest of the SW tip of Haiti, between Cuba and Hispaniola. The isolated island was mined for deposits of guano in the last century, which at that time was used as a fertilizer ingredient. The lower elevations were cleared, but most of the island between 120-270 ft was not disturbed. The iguana was last seen alive around the turn of the century. Mike Smith searched the island for the iguana, the endemic boa, and curlytail lizard. None of these species were found.

The island is a US possession, which Haiti has tried to recently claim.

Source: Mike Smith, Center for Marine Conservation