

UPDATE

Iguana delicatissima

January 2001

Report from Richard Gibson of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
Jersey, Channel Islands

In 1997, *Iguana delicatissima* hatched out in captivity for the first time (*Iguana Times* Vol. 6 #2). This occurred at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, now known as the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust after its founder, the late Gerald Durrell. In 2000, a second clutch of eight eggs produced eight hatchlings. This was a real coup, and Richard Gibson, curator of reptiles, reports on how conditions differed for this hatching.

“The original hatchling from 1997 now fares very well. Though it had a very slow and poor start in life and grew very slowly for the first year or so, it improved dramatically after having three juvenile *Basiliscus plumifrons* added to its vivarium. I had always believed that the solitary existence and lack of social cues was negatively affecting this animal, and it seems I was right. This seems quite understandable when one thinks of baby iguanas hatching en masse and hanging out together. This animal is rapidly developing adult coloration and is over one meter long.

“Last year, in November, we hatched eight out of eight eggs after an extended incubation period of 93 or more days. The 1997 period was 73 days! All eight fared extremely well from day one, feeding on almost anything we offered them,

and still loving hibiscus flowers. Within two months they have doubled their body weight and have grown by more than 8 cm in total length. I think the difference between this group and the 1997 singleton is for two reasons: firstly, the social aspect provides competitive cues for basking and feeding; secondly, I suspect the 1997 animal hatched a little too early with a significant yolk reserve and was therefore reluctant to feed in the first week or so, whereas the year 2000 hatchlings hatched perhaps a little late and with basically no yolk reserve and were hungry from day one.

“I also hope we can repeat our recent success. The original pair has been mating recently and the

female is swelling. It’s possible that either Memphis or San Diego Zoo will swap a pair with us so we can try our techniques on a second pair and get some more animals represented at F₁. [Ed. note: F₁ = all of the first generation offspring of a particular parental pair].

“Any serious questions and enquiries about *I. delicatissima* can be emailed to me at zooherps@durrell.org the subject title being Reptile Dept (DWCT) or at rgibson@durrell.org.”

Good luck to the Durrell Trust. No doubt we will hear more of this success story in the future.



A newly hatched *Iguana delicatissima* at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (formerly known as the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust). Photograph: Richard Gibson

