

December 15, 1990

Dear Richard:

I would first like to congratulate you and the rest of the staff who helped put out the first issue of the Iguana Times. I was very much impressed with the format as well as the content of the newsletter.

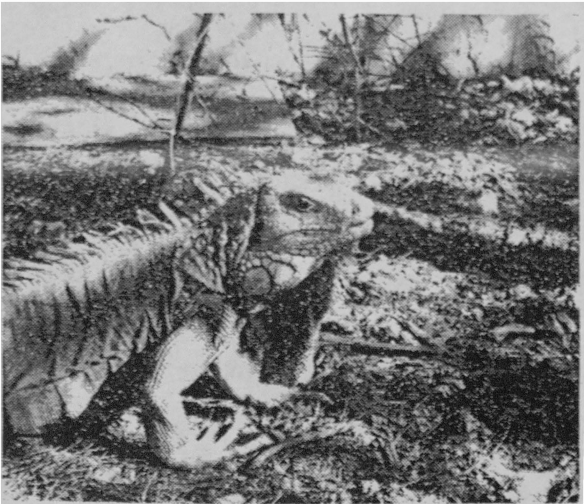
My primary reason for writing is to make a few suggestions concerning future issues. I'd like to see coverage of subjects such as probing of iguanas and breeding/incubation information in addition to conservation articles. As a private individual I have little exposure to the professional side of iguana breeding except through the phone. I'm sure that as the society grows, members such as myself will look to the society for help. Maybe a help network can be established whereby members can call other more knowledgeable members for assistance.

It's great to see that people are finally taking an active stance regarding iguana conservation. Hopefully, these efforts aren't too late to save some of the more endangered animals. Again, keep up the good work! I look forward to receiving the next newsletter.

Sincerely,
Stephen Hummel

Dear Stephen:

Thank you for your letter. The I.I.S. definitely plans to publish detailed articles on all aspects of the captive husbandry of iguanas so that all members who maintain these lizards will receive useful information. Your suggestion for a help network is a good one and will be discussed further at an upcoming meeting of I.I.S. officers. Several members of I.I.S. are accomplished keepers of iguanas with much valuable knowledge and experience to share with others. Hopefully we can develop an effective plan which will facilitate communication among members.



Sincerely yours,
The Editor

Dear Editor:

We are writing to report that there are iguanas (*Cyclura cychlura*) on North Andros, Bahamas!

Andros Island is located about 150 km east of south Florida; it is about 150 km long and 60 km wide, and is flat, rising to about 10 m above sea level on the east coast. Most of the island is Caribbean pine forest (*Pinus caribbeana*), with the exception of vast salt-water inundated "swash" to the west. Islands of broad-leaved trees (coppices) occur throughout the pine forests and on the eastern coast. The island is divided in half by a shallow bight, and South Andros is less populated, less exploited, and is reported by field biologists to have abundant iguana populations, especially on remote pine-covered islets. North Andros has a more dense human population, and a history of development for farming and logging. Owens-Illinois extensively logged most of North Andros. The operation left a network of roads, which made remote areas accessible to hunters, "bush" farmers, and naturalists.

We spent 6 days between January 1990 and March 1991 in an area called "Twin Lakes," on the north bank of Fresh Creek roughly in the center of North Andros, conducting research on mosquito fish (*Gambusia manni*) for an Earthwatch project. Twin Lakes itself was a large farm, complete with an airstrip and housing, that was abandoned in the mid-1970's; it is a bumpy hour and a half drive from the main road. The entire area is very flat. Fresh water is abundant in roadside ditches, the creek, and in blue holes. The vegetation is mainly Caribbean pine with an understory of *Thrinax* and *Coccoloba*. In open areas, Coco-plum (*Cryobalanus icaca*), and poison wood (*Metopium toxiferum*) are abundant. On the farm itself, guava (*Psidium guajava*), coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) and various feral crops grow. Wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*) appear to be very dense, and are hunted by locals and people from the nearby AUTECH base. On every trip remains of freshly killed pigs were found.

On several occasions we saw sub-adult and mature iguanas. In May 1990 in mid-afternoon, a large iguana (approximately 1.5 m) was seen stationary in the middle of the road. We stopped the vehicle about 50 m away, and watched for several minutes. When we opened the doors, the iguana took off into the bush. In August, also at mid-day, we saw an iguana more than 100 m away crossing the road. It was too far away to guess the size. Several days later, a small (0.75 m) individual crossed the road a few meters in front of the van. It climbed onto a brush-covered pile of broken limestone next to the road, and remained stationary while 10 people approached within 3 meters. Then it moved slowly away.

The closest encounter with an iguana occurred in March 1991, when a group of 10 people followed a large iguana down a path next to a blue hole. The iguana remained in the area for 2 hours, while the group worked on a project, often approaching to 2 meters away from the group. Because of its brightly colored crest, it was thought to be an adult male.

Although few and far between, iguanas have been sighted on almost every trip to this area. We are curious as to why an area with recent habitat disturbance and an abundance of wild pigs and hunters also seems to have a population of relatively fearless iguanas. Pigs are thought to be a threat to iguana nests, and feral dogs and cats have been known to destroy iguana populations. Locals hunt iguanas with dogs in this area, despite the laws against it. However, because sub-adults and adults were seen, nesting and survival of hatchlings probably occur.

The Twin Lakes iguana population is probably in trouble, but seems to be hanging on. If iguanas are to remain on North Andros, this and other populations need to be studied and protected. Large-scale development for agriculture and tourism threatens the biological diversity of North Andros. Increasing human density will lead to destruction and fragmentation of the remaining iguana habitat, increasing feral predator populations, and disturbance in remote areas by hunters. However, conservation-based tourism could benefit from an iguana conservation project on North Andros, as would blue hole, coppice, mangrove, and pine forest ecosystems.

Sincerely,
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and
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Dear Editor:

March 27, 1991

I am writing to congratulate the founding members of the International Iguana Society, Inc., for the creation of the society and for a superb production job on the first issue of the Iguana Times. As a subscriber to many specialized publications, and as an editor of two, I appreciate the planning and care that went into this first issue; I look forward to many outstanding future issues.

The article on the Hellshire Hills of Jamaica struck me as especially well-written, and was as accurate and detailed a description as I can remember; having visited the area for botanical reconnaissance, I was particularly impressed by the thoroughness of the plant list.

As native ecosystems are being destroyed throughout the world, it is imperative that detailed observations be made on the basic producers and shapers of those ecosystems - the plants. When a species such as Cyclura collei is so close to the extinction, any and all field observations become relevant, and since the diet of this species is tied to native plants, the detailed species list becomes even more significant. Hellshire Hills is in need of urgent protection. There are woodcutters encroaching on prime iguana areas, reducing native habitat to charcoal fuel.

Letters written by those in the academic and professional community should be sent to the proper agencies in Jamaica, encouraging establishment and protection for a "Hellshire Hills National Park." Jobs would be created for park wardens and guides; the viability of "eco-tourism" in other areas of the neotropics has been clearly demonstrated.

Finally, the great lizards have a voice, through the forum of humans who care about their plight.

Sincerely,
Richard Moyroud

Letters to the Editor

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