

Cayman Update

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands has embarked on a captive breeding program for the Grand Cayman blue iguana, *Cyclura nubila lewisi*. Last fall, the Trust hatched 8 iguanas produced by a pair of animals imported from Florida. Unfortunately, the Trust now suspects that some genetic contamination of *Cyclura nubila lewisi* with *Cyclura nubila caymanensis* has occurred in the captive population. Thus all ten animals are suspect and the program has become all the more difficult and complicated.

Edward Louis of Texas A&M University plans to collect blood samples of all *Cyclura nubila lewisi* in captivity on Grand Cayman. Blood samples from *Cyclura nubila caymanensis* on Little Cayman will also be collected. Hopefully analysis of the samples will result in the identification of reliable markers to distinguish the two subspecies.

The National Trust is currently incubating 9 eggs from a wild-caught female that I.I.S. president, Robert Ehrig, was able to acquire for the Trust from a private party on his April 1991 visit to Grand Cayman.

The problems facing the iguana include habitat fragmentation and degradation, predation of hatchlings by feral cats and dogs, and isolated instances of poaching. Despite its rarity on the island (current estimate is 30-50 wild *Cyclura nubila lewisi* individuals), a 4 to 5 year old male was recently road killed on the Queens Highway. This road was constructed in the early 1980's to open the last coastal areas on Grand Cayman's north coast to development.

The National Trust is faced with many challenges with its iguana program. They have a large budget for a public relations campaign on behalf of the iguana. The iguana is still considered an agricultural pest by some islanders. The Trust is constructing captive breeding enclosures at two locations. I.I.S. has offered assistance and hopes the program will be successful.

A Further Clarification

In the last issue of the *Iguana Times*, a newsbrief item entitled "Point of Clarification" mentioned that captive-hatched iguanas at David Blair's *Cyclura* Research Center might be of hybrid origin between *Cyclura nubila lewisi* and *C. n. caymanensis*. This report in no way was intended to implicate him in any misrepresentation or slipshod management of his breeding program. The suspected genetic contamination between these subspecies did not occur at *Cyclura* Research Center, and may have taken place some ten years or more ago when only a handful of animals were in captivity anywhere in the world. There has been some suggestion that the hybridization between *C. n. lewisi* and *C. n. caymanensis* may have occurred on Grand Cayman Island approximately 18 years ago in a private collection where both subspecies were being kept. Only with the cooperation of many parties will the current problem be resolved since virtually all *C. n. lewisi* in the United States are genetically suspect. In any case, the Editor sincerely regrets any implication of fault on the part of *Cyclura* Research Center in the newsbrief.