

LIZARD LETTERS

Dear Mr. Ehrig and IIS Members,

In regard to the "Red Green Iguana" in the news-briefs of your *Vol. 1, No. 6 Iguana Times* I felt I should let you know of other "red greens." I first observed this variation as a kid back in the late 1960's at the pet department of a large shopping center in Wichita, KS. I had purchased several iguanas from this very exotic pet oriented store and had become a "regular" there. The red iguana was in all other respects a normal *Iguana iguana* except that it's head was deep red, especially around the jowls, fading to a more burnt copper farther along the body. I'd never seen anything like it and neither had any of the shop's employees.

Then in early August of 1988 I happened upon another red iguana, this time at a small surf-side bar on the west coast of Costa Rica near Manuel Antonio National Park. The bar, Julio's, had become a popular hangout for us, as the very building itself teemed with lizards including large *Ctenosaura*, Basilisks, yellow-headed geckos and of course green iguanas. He also makes the finest pifia coladas in Central America and together his place makes for a herpers paradise. Julio is extremely fond of his resident lizards, knows their habits, their favorite foods and even names them. He proved to be a wealth of information on local lizard ecology.

Near 10:00 a.m. each day several large iguanas would reach optimum temperatures basking in treetops around the bar and descend to eat hibiscus flowers and leaves growing along the seaward veranda of the establishment. One of them was an enormous male whose head and neck were very red. Julio told me that the dominant males turned red for a brief two week period each summer during which time they bred and constantly displayed to one another. I've never heard of this observation but Julio's intimate knowledge of his "pets" seems unfaltering in every other detail. The male at Julio's bar were far redder than the one shown in the Sept.-Oct. Audubon magazine.

Fond memories and wild stories abound concerning the time spent at Julio's. The last time I was there, Julio was replacing a corrugated fiberglass roof panel with a sheet of tin. Shards of broken fiberglass were everywhere. When I asked what had happened assuming a coconut had pierced the roof, he told me one of

the big iguanas had jumped from an over-hanging limb and crashed through the sky-light landing precisely on the bar before a crowd of dazed and horrified yuppie eco-tourists! Luckily, Julio smiled, the iguana was not hurt and ran down the bar and off into the hibiscus.

Julio also showed me how he had electrified the roof by hooking a fence charger up to the tin roof in order to keep the noisy and somewhat heavy iguanas off of the skylights. It shocked me when I grabbed hold of the roof but only because I was grounded, having both feet on the floor. The iguanas, jumping or scurrying quickly, from the tree-trunks still sat on the roof, as usual, with no apparent discomfort!

Our last visit to Julio's delighted us with the capture of a very large male *Ctenosaura* in "breeding colors." *Ctenosaura* are very abundant along the west coast of Costa Rica where locals call them garrobos. This male was boldly banded in black and brilliant turquoise blue and was one of only three or four colored in this manner amongst over two hundred individuals that we observed during our week there. I photographed my wife holding this iguana.

Best regards and keep up the fine work!

Yours,
Marty Capron
Oxford, KS

Editors Note: Several of us have observed *Iguana iguana* in Costa Rica in the area around the Manuel Antonio National Park, but have only observed very orange specimens.



Dear Mr. Ehrig,

The sixth issue was dynamite. The articles were short, sweet and right on target without wading through a lot of material. I often try to enlist iguana enthusiasts to join the society, but there are two criticisms. One is the lack of material concerning our beloved green iguana, two is that IIS seems to be preoccupied with *Cyclura*. Some are so pessimistic as to believe that it is already too late to save them and that IIS should be in the forefront of iguana information and should con-

centrate it's efforts on greens, spinytails, the American varieties including the Galapagos island species. This pessimism stems from projected population growth figures and poverty and the problems associated with such growth.

Personally, I don't think that it is too late to save some, if not most species. Keep up the good work because I am sure God is smiling at you.

Yours truly,
Dr. Timothy Durkins
593 East 164th Street
Bronx, New York 10456-6807

Dear Dr. Durkins,

Thank you for your comments concerning Iguana Times. It is true that IIS has designated *Cyclura* as a priority genus. This is because of the critical level of endangerment of some species and the threatened and endangered status of the rest. This should not be interpreted as lack of interest in any of the other seven genera of iguanas. We are equally as concerned with the status of all iguanas including *Iguana iguana*. We are pleased that we have been able to disseminate

much new information to our members, as this is one of the goals of the society. All of the husbandry and medical articles are directly applicable to green iguanas. The articles concerning the natural history and conservation of rock iguanas also help members to understand how these magnificent creatures function within their environments. All iguanas are basically variations of a theme. They all have many similar traits and their differences are a result of adaptations to the variety of habitats where they are found. The more you understand about any iguana the better you know our beloved green friend. The comment that I most hear is, "I didn't realize that there are so many species of iguanas." There are 31 taxa of iguana currently recognized, our hope is to supply our members with information on all of them. We do not believe it is too late to save all species. We are a very young organization and we face many challenges. The job ahead will not be easy but I am confident that we can make a substantial difference.

Sincerely,
Robert W. Ehrig



NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

IIS Enters the Electronic Age

Assisted by IIS members, the Society recently purchased its first computer system: an **Apple Macintosh Classic II** with 4mb of RAM and an 80mb hard disk, an **Apple StyleWriter** ink-jet printer and **ClarisWorks**, an integrated software package combining word processing, database, spread-sheet, drawing and telecommunications functions.

One of the many benefits derived from computerization is maintaining a database of members. The ability

to store and sort member information, for mailing labels for example, will dramatically reduce the time and effort involved in getting *Iguana Times* to its readers. Other uses will include creating more professional looking correspondence and forms.

Members interested in submitting manuscripts on disk for *Iguana Times* should provide the following information along with their disk: **file name(s), application program and version number, and two (2) hard copy print-outs of the file on disk.** We have the ability to translate text files from many popular software packages (i.e. Microsoft Word and Excel, Word Perfect, etc.) in Macintosh or PC formats.

Any questions may be directed to Michael Ripca at (215) 626-1988.

