



IGUANA TIMES



STATUS REPORT
THE SAN SALVADOR IGUANA
D. BLAIR

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL IGUANA SOCIETY INC.

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UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE SAN SALVADOR
ROCK IGUANA, *CYCLURA RILEYI RILEYI*

DAVID BLAIR

The San Salvador Rock Iguana, *C. rileyi rileyi*, is a small, brightly colored form of rock iguana restricted to a few small cays off the coast and within the land-locked saline lakes of the Bahamian island of San Salvador. This subspecies of *Cyclura rileyi* is listed as endangered by the U.S. and its numbers are thought to be precariously low. The most recent information available on the status of this species has been from a survey conducted by Auffenberg (1982).

To update the status of *C. rileyi rileyi*, Cindy and David Blair spent eight days on the island in June of 1990. Visits were made to several offshore cays and to some of the islands in San Salvador's large, highly saline, inland lakes. Juveniles and adults were seen on most of the same cays where they were present in 1982. In fact, the populations seemed little changed from the previous study. One, however, Pidgeon Cay in Great Lake, where the iguanas were reported as abundant in the earlier study, now supports only a very small population. Only five animals were seen during several hours on the cay, and all these individuals appeared to be relatively thin in comparison with iguanas on other cays. In fact, the cay itself appears to provide very little suitable habitat for rock iguanas as most of it is a dense tangle of mangrove marsh.

Low Cay, off the southern coast of San Salvador, still supports one of the largest populations of *C. rileyi rileyi*, and at twelve hectares, is the largest cay still populated by iguanas. The Low Cay population was reported by Auffenberg in 1980 to be affected by a disfiguring skin disease, but it appeared to be in remission when rechecked in 1982. We are pleased to report that apparently there has not been a reoccurrence of this unknown pathogen. A few animals observed had suffered some digit loss, but it is possible that this is the result of intraspecific conflicts.

Because of the extreme difficulty in procuring a suitable boat and motor on San Salvador and a lack of sufficient time, we were unable to confirm the report by G.K. Ostrander (1982), of a newly discovered population of iguanas. "Guana," a small cay within Hermitage Lake, was reported at that time to support more than eighty iguanas, and should be investigated further.

Contrary to some earlier reports that iguanas no longer exist on mainland San Salvador, we were able to confirm that they are still present on the south end of the island in the vicinity of Snow Bay. Sightings are reported at the rate of "once or twice a year" by local residents and are usually made as iguanas dash across the road in front of oncoming vehicles. Within recent years iguanas have also been encountered on the east side near the settlement of Holiday Tract and along old survey trails in the remote interior of the island. We were also informed that iguanas are occasionally killed by dogs. Apparently, all lizards seen on mainland San Salvador in recent years have been adults.

Previous reports place the entire population of *Cyclura rileyi rileyi* at little more than 100 individuals. While numbers are certainly quite low, and declining, we feel a more accurate estimate would be closer to 500 individuals. If this figure is correct, it is still precariously low, and this subspecies certainly deserves endangered status. On many of the small cays that supported viable populations of iguanas within the last two decades, they have been extirpated. We recommend that all cays still supporting iguanas should be set aside as preserves with a resident warden to enforce protection. Low Cay, Green Cay and "Guana" Cay are perhaps the most important of these cays. Investigations should be made to determine the role of introduced

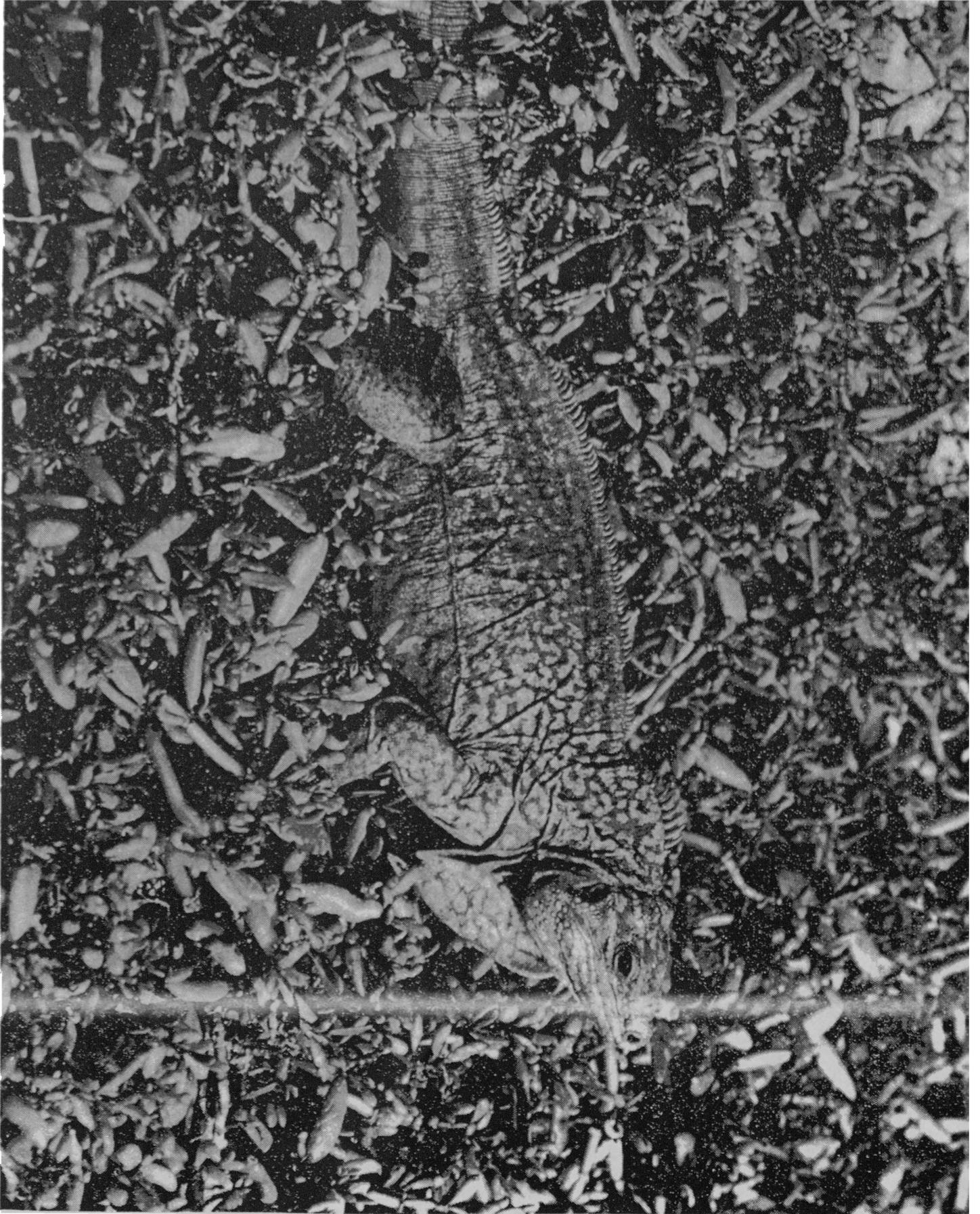
non-native animals, such as rodents and cats, in the decline of these iguanas. Introduced plants may also be a contributing factor. A low-growing succulent appears to be spreading across several cays, and may be choking out native vegetation. Once decimating factors have been removed or brought under control, it may be possible to re-introduce iguanas to cays that are known to have supported them in the past. With the increasing success that captive breeding programs for other *Cyclura* have shown in recent years, it may be advisable to establish several breeding groups at qualified locations. Currently there is no effort being made to breed *C. rileyi rileyi* in captivity. The AAZPA Lizard Advisory Group (LAG), at their meeting in April, 1990, at Gainesville, Florida, concluded that "Captive management of *Cyclura* species can be an important hedge against their extinction." This must, of course, be in addition to protecting wild populations and providing financial support for their conservation.

Table 1. The status of *C. rileyi rileyi* on the cays of San Salvador, current June 1990.

Locality	Status	Reference
Low Cay, Snow Bay	abundant	Blair, this study
"Guana" Cay, Hermitage Lake	abundant	Ostrander, 1982
Green Cay, Grahams Harbor	small population	Blair, this study
Man Head Cay, Rice Bay	small population	Blair, this study
Goulding Cay, Greens Bay	small population	Auffenberg, 1980
Mainland San Salvador	small population	Blair, this study
Pidgeon Cay, Great Lake	v. small population	Blair, this study
Catto Cay, Grahams Harbor	extirpated	Blair, this study
Gaulin (Little Green) Cay, Grahams Harbor	extirpated	Blair, this study
White Cay, Grahams Harbor	extirpated	Auffenberg, 1980
High Cay, Snow Bay	extirpated	Auffenberg, 1982
Pokus Cay, Snow Bay	extirpated	Auffenberg, 1980
Cut Cay, Rice Bay	extirpated	Auffenberg, 1982
Barn Cay, Long Lake	extirpated	Auffenberg, 1982

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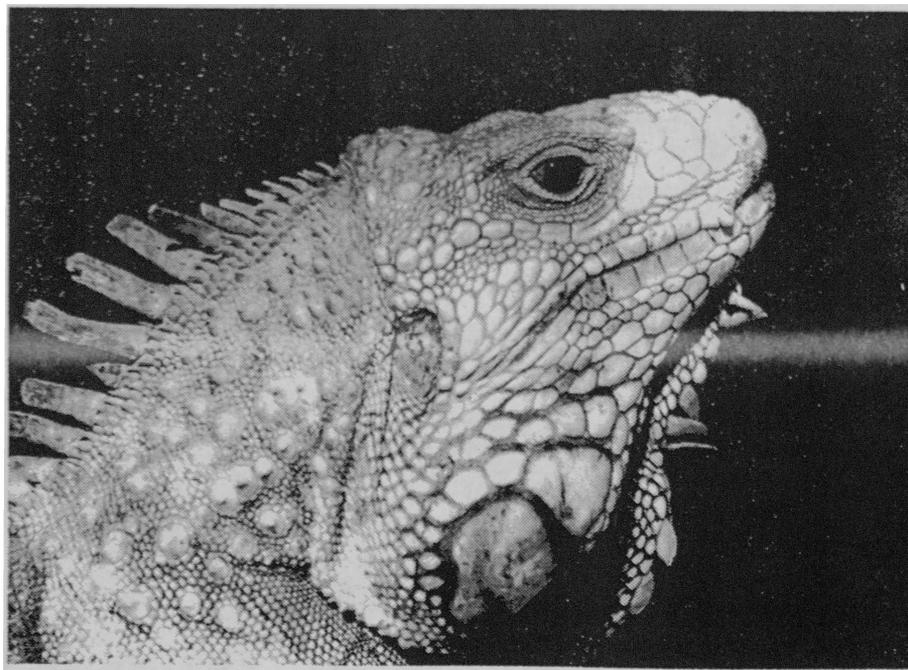


San Salvador Rock Iguana, *Cyclura rileyi*. David W. Blair photo.

What Are We?

No, it's not the *Cyclura* society, although right now it may seem that way to some of you. It just happens that several members of the Board are working on projects dealing with this West Indian genus. Also, a number of *Cyclura* species happen to be on the edge of extinction and this has many people both within and outside the society very alarmed. We are the International Iguana Society and our attention is focused exclusively on members of the family Iguanidae as recently redefined by two systematists, Darrel Frost and Richard Etheridge (Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist. Misc. Publ. No. 81; 1989). Formerly, the family was large, consisting of about 54 genera and 546 species. However, no shared-derived characteristics could be found to support the monophyly of this family exclusive of Old World Agamidae and Chamaeleonidae. Therefore, Frost and Etheridge, in a comprehensive morphological analysis subdivided this cumbersome group into eight monophyletic families. The family Iguanidae, as now redefined, consists of the following genera: *Amblyrhynchus*, *Brachylophus*, *Conolophus*, *Ctenosaura*, *Cyclura*, *Dipsosaurus*, *Iguana*, and *Sauromalus* (the genus *Enyaliosaurus* has been synonymized with *Ctenosaura*, although this action may be disputed).

The International Iguana Society has an important mission. First, we intend to disseminate and exchange information on all aspects of the ecology, population biology, behavior, captive husbandry, conservation, and systematics of iguanas. Also, the society will encourage and support active conservation projects, either alone or in cooperation with other organizations. We will assist the governments of countries where iguanas occur to conserve and protect these animals and their habitats by promoting sustainable economies compatible with the maintenance of biodiversity. We are a unique society and we face enormous challenges because iguanas and their habitats are threatened just about everywhere they occur. In order to accomplish our goals, we must expand our base of support. The I.I.S. greatly appreciates the support and commitment received thus far from its members and looks toward the future with optimism and determination. If we can save iguanas and their habitats, this world will be a better place for humans and lizards alike. Let's do more than flick our tongues, let's lash our tails! The Editor.



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News of the Society

On March 19, 1991, the Florida Keys Chapter of the I.I.S. held its first general membership meeting. The meeting was well attended considering its somewhat remote location at Lord of the Seas Church on Big Pine Key. Thirty-one members and guests were present, including representatives from the Dolphin Research Center, Save A Turtle, Inc., and The Key Deer Protection Alliance. I.I.S. Treasurer, David Ehrlich, explained the workings of a Florida non-profit corporation. Board member and Editor, Richard Montanucci, briefly discussed the endangered status of many iguana species and the challenge that I.I.S. faces as an active conservation and educational organization. He expressed pleasure at being in an area where so many people are actively involved in conservation. Society President, Robert Ehrig, described the different characteristics of several genera of iguanas using live animals. A male *Cyclura nubila* (8 years old), a female gold *Ctenosaura similis*, a female *Cyclura cornuta* (3 1/2 years old), and a male *Iguana iguana* were displayed. Refreshments were served after the meeting and three new members joined the society.



I.I.S. President, Robert Ehrig with male Cuban iguana, *Cyclura nubila*, and participants at Keys Chapter meeting on 19 March 1991. Laurel Canty photo.

The International Iguana Society wishes to thank the following organizations and individuals for their support:

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands
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Denise Garcia, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX
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West Coast Reptile, Bellflower, CA
Life Fellowship Bird Sanctuary, Seffner, FL



Robert Ehrig (left) and Richard Montanucci remove an angry subadult female Rhinoceros Iguana, *Cyclura cornuta*, from bag. Laurel Canty photo.



Sea Turtle Hospital owner, Richie Moretti, displays male *Iguana iguana*, to young enthusiasts. Laurel Canty photo.

I.I.S. Publicity

The I.I.S. was well represented recently at several herpetological events in California. At the Conference on Captive Propagation of Reptiles and Amphibians held at U.C. Davis in February, society member, Skip Kruse, set up a display which drew much attention. Society vice-president, David Blair, generated additional interest in iguanas at this same conference by presenting the paper "West Indian Rock Iguanas (Genus *Cyclura*): Their Captive Propagation and Current Status in the Wild." David's talk and slides were also presented at two additional regional meetings: The Southern California Herpetology Association in Long Beach on March 11th, and The Southwestern Herpetologists Society in Reseda on April 2nd. The talks were well received and the I.I.S. was again represented with pictorial displays. More than 200 I.I.S. membership applications were distributed to interested parties at the three meetings. It is hoped these efforts will generate additional active members for our society.

I.I.S. Bookstore

As a service to our membership, a limited number of publications will be distributed through the I.I.S. Bookstore. We believe this will become a valuable source of information. The following publications are now available:

- No. 01 **The General Care and Maintenance of the Green Iguana**, by Philippe de Vosjoli. 1990. \$4.40 (including postage); \$5.50 (non-members).
- No. 02 **Guide to the Identification of the Amphibians and Reptiles of the West Indies (Exclusive of Hispaniola)**, by Albert Schwartz and Robert Henderson. 1985. \$19.00 (including postage); \$27.00 (non-members).

THE IMPACT OF FERAL CATS AND DOGS ON POPULATIONS
OF THE WEST INDIAN ROCK IGUANA, *CYCLURA CARINATA*

JOHN B. IVERSON

Abstract

A population of rock iguanas, *Cyclura carinata*, inhabiting Pine Cay in the Caicos Islands was nearly extirpated during the three years following construction of a hotel and tourist facility. The decline, from an estimated adult lizard population of nearly 5500, was due primarily to predation by domestic dogs and cats introduced to the island simultaneously with hotel construction. Population declines on other nearby islands were also attributed to predation by these feral mammals.

As emergence time approaches, cats employ their usual sit-and-wait strategy (Christian, 1975) near lizard burrows. Emerging lizards are torpid and easily obtained; *Leiocephalus* and juvenile *Cyclura* suffer heavy mortality by this method. This technique is also commonly used by natives in securing adult *Cyclura* for food. This sit-and-wait strategy is to some extent used during the lizard's normal activity period, but active stalking is much more common. Cats were observed to take *Cyclura* up to 235 mm snout-vent length and 510 g, subduing them immediately with neck bites. Unlike dogs (see later), the cats always ate the lizards they killed. Only three scats from feral cats on Pine Cay were found during the course of the field work, but two of these contained skin and skeletal elements of adult iguanas. During two months of field work in early summer of 1974, pet cats were observed daily bringing lizards (*Leiocephalus* and *Cyclura*) to their kittens. Most of the offspring of the cats became feral as they matured, and thus subsisted entirely on native wildlife.

The feral cat population on Pine and Water Cays increased continually during the study. In 1974, feral cats were encountered at a rate of about 1/two weeks of field work. By June 1976, daily sightings were the rule. Cat tracks on sandy roads were rare in 1973 at a time when iguana tracks were so plentiful that estimating lizard numbers on this basis was impossible. By late spring 1976, lizard spoor was almost non-existent and that of cats could be found virtually everywhere on both Pine and Water Cays.

Rand (1967) also believed that domestic cats were the most important predators on *Anolis lineatopus* in Jamaica, and their detrimental effects on other natural ecosystems are well documented (review in McKnight, 1964; Coman & Brunner, 1972; George, 1974).

Dogs -- Grant (1937) and Hirth (1963) both considered dogs the most serious predator on the iguanas, *Cyclura pinguis* and *Iguana*, respectively. Free-ranging dogs on Pine Cay were also responsible for killing many iguanas. Though the total dog population only averaged between two and three during the study, these few spent most of each day chasing and killing iguanas. Dogs frequently ranged over the entire island in a single day. They often crossed the



Turks and Caicos Rock Iguana, *Cyclura carinata*. A thriving population resides on Little Water Cay. June 1988. David W. Blair photo.

sandy isthmus to Water Cay and were observed making forays on its most southerly shores, nearly 5 km from human habitation. They were frequently observed chasing and killing adult *Cyclura*, and attempting to exhume lizards they had chased into retreats. This latter behavior was probably responsible for the deaths of more iguanas than direct predation, since the dogs frequently succeeded only in plugging the lizard's burrow, entombing it within. Dogs on Pine Cay apparently chased and killed *Cyclura* mainly for "sport"; they were regularly fed by humans and left as many carcasses as they consumed. Freshly killed iguanas were often taken from the mouths of dogs (and cats); sometimes only portions of the bodies could be salvaged. Fresh carcasses of 18 obviously dog-killed adult *Cyclura* were collected on Pine Cay and Water Cay during field work, although many more were seen.

Whereas lizard numbers near the SW Blind decreased slowly during most of the study period (due to its distance from the center of the dogs' activity ranges at that time), between November 1975, and May 1976, the population was finally totally extirpated. The majority of the burrows showed evidence of digging by dogs; many had caved in and all were inactive.

During this same time-interval, the dogs began swimming the channel separating Pine Cay from Grouper and Fort George Cays, both with dense iguana populations. Prior to that time, only one iguana carcass had ever been found during four visits to Fort George, but during a half day in June 1976, four were discovered (they were not the object of search) in a small area at the western end of the island. While adults seemed to be less abundant than in the past, inactive lizard burrows were unquestionably more common. In June the dogs were visiting Grouper and/or Fort George Cays daily. The iguanas on these islands will probably suffer the same fate as those on Pine Cay.

Acknowledgements -- My studies of *Cyclura carinata* would not have been possible were it not for the generous efforts of the New York Zoological Society, the Florida State Museum, Walter Auffenberg, C. W. Maguire, Bill and Ginny Cowles, Francoise de Rouvray, Gaston Decker, and my wife, Sheila. Walter Auffenberg, John Behler, Wayne King and Tom Weiwandt commented on early drafts of the manuscript. Chuck and Kathy Hesse, Tommy Coleman, and numerous other Caicos Islanders shared their knowledge of iguana populations with me.

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Editor's Note -- This article represents portions of a paper originally published in Biological Conservation (1978) and used here with permission of the author. I.I.S. intends to assess the current status of *Cyclura carinata* on the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The International Iguana Society, Inc. is an international membership, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the biological diversity of the iguanas through habitat preservation, active conservation, research, and the dissemination of information. Iguana Times, the newsletter of the Society is distributed quarterly to members and member organizations. Additional copies are available at a cost of \$4.00 including postage.

Jamaican Initiative

The International Iguana Society began its Jamaican Initiative on March 31, 1991, by hiring Edwin Duffas, a hog hunter who rediscovered *Cyclura collei*, to survey iguana localities in the Hellshire Hills. Mr. Duffas will record sightings of the Jamaican Rock Iguana as well as monitor the feral hog population. This information will help I.I.S. determine the course of action necessary to protect and rehabilitate the iguana population. *Cyclura collei*, Jamaica's largest terrestrial vertebrate, is on the verge of extinction and the dry forest habitat of the Hellshire area is threatened by charcoal burners. I.I.S. is working to build support for conservation programs vital to the survival of *Cyclura collei* and the multitude of plant and animal species that share its starkly beautiful, primeval world. I.I.S. is presently seeking long-term funding sources, through other conservation organizations, to employ local Jamaicans for active conservation programs to protect their ecologically unique Caribbean wilderness. Any member is welcome to contribute any amount directly to the I.I.S. program fund. Contributions are tax deductible. Write to: I.I.S., Finca Cyclura, Rt. 3, Box 328, Big Pine Key, FL 33043.



Jamaican Rock Iguana, *Cyclura collei*. Peter Vogel photo.

Cover Photo of Last Issue: Curtis Kruer on the morning of October 14, 1990, at 600 ft. elevation looking to the west in the Hellshire Hills, Jamaica. This West Indian Dry Forest wilderness which has remained virtually unchanged for hundreds of thousands of years now faces destruction. See update in this issue. Robert Ehrig photo.

IGUANA NEWSBRIEFS

Grand Cayman Island Visited

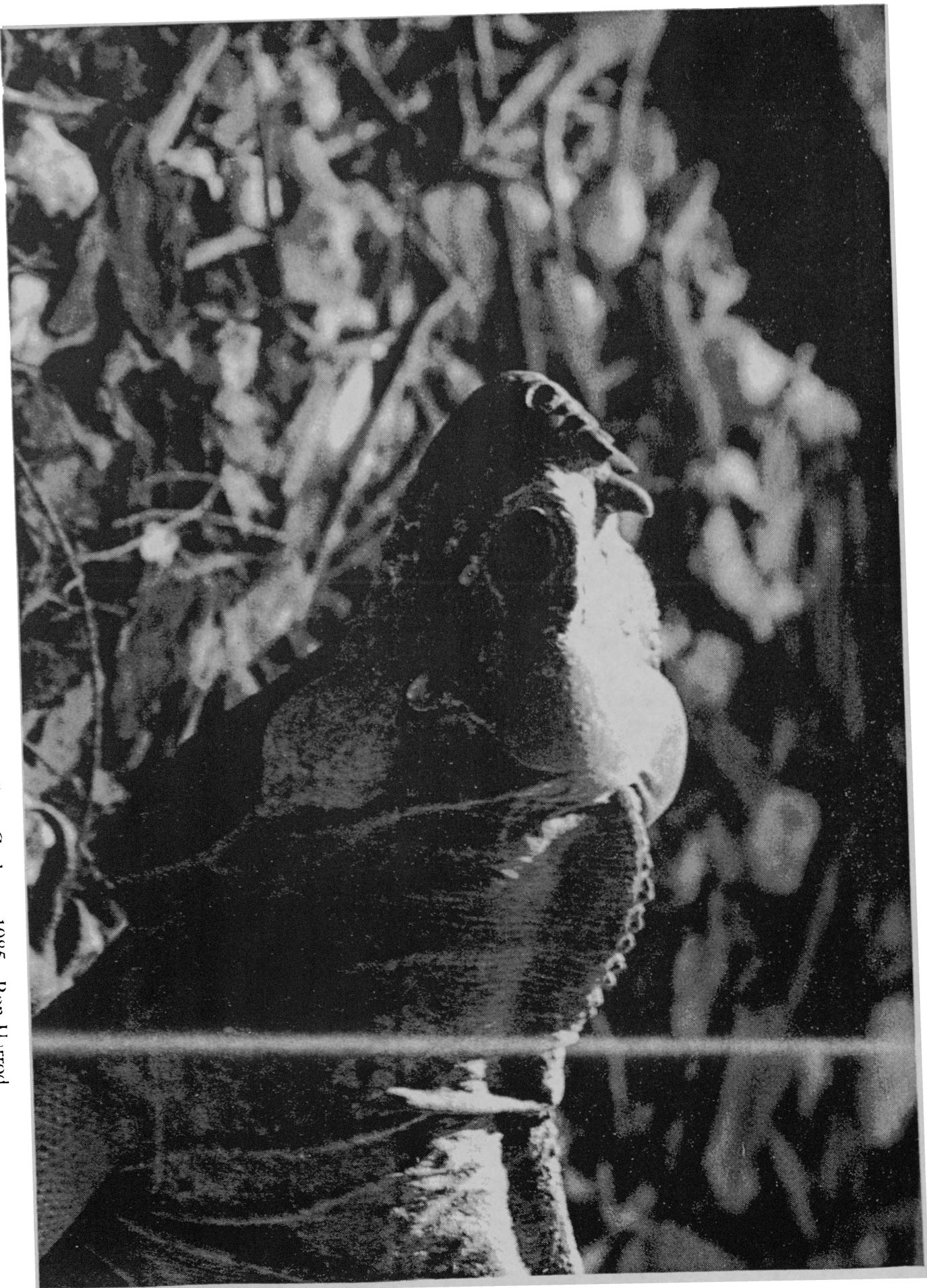
I.I.S. President, Robert Ehrig, visited the West Indian island of Grand Cayman from April 8 through 11, 1991. The east end of the island is the last remaining habitat of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana, *Cyclura nubila lewisi*. The National Trust of the Cayman Islands, which is dedicated to the protection of the natural heritage of the islands, has a successful captive breeding program for *Cyclura nubila lewisi*. The National Trust has plans to expand this program in 1992, and eventually intends to release captive-bred iguanas into the 635 acre Salina Reserve. Bob was able to survey the northern sector of the Trust's reserve and found a large number of known iguana food plants. While on the island, Bob examined six of the seven wild-caught *C. n. lewisi* at the Trust's breeding facility, recording scale counts and color characteristics of the animals. I.I.S. is looking forward to a long-term collaboration with the National Trust in solving various problems associated with the re-establishment of this strikingly beautiful iguana within its former range. More details about this will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

Not for the Pot

We salute Darwin Porter, author of Frommers Bermuda and the Bahamas for correcting misinformation contained in previous issues of this quality travel guide. Instead of discussing the Bahamian Iguanas (Genus *Cyclura*) in "The Flora and Fauna" section, their only mention was in "The Food and Drink" section. Here it was stated that "Many Bahamians...consider iguana a delicacy -- that is, if they can catch one." Society vice-president, David Blair, sent a cordial letter to Mr. Porter and his publisher informing them of the protected status of Bahamian Iguanas, all of which are considered threatened or endangered. The penalty for capturing or killing an iguana in the Bahamas is up to a \$300 fine and 6 months imprisonment. In response to this letter, Mr. Porter has rewritten several sections in the current 1991 guide, removing mention of the iguanas from the "Food and Drink" section and placing them into the "Flora and Fauna" section where they rightfully belong. He has included several additional, informative paragraphs about the iguanas which will serve to educate his readers as to the current status of this unique part of the Bahamian natural history. Thousands of people use this guide every year and this is a good example of what I.I.S. members can accomplish with very little effort. Well done, Mr. Porter!

Point of Clarification

The captive-hatched *Cyclura nubila lewisi* reported by David Blair in the first issue of the newsletter may be of hybrid origin between *C. n. caymanensis* and *C. n. lewisi*. More information will be reported about these lizards when the question of their genetic background is resolved.



"Joannie", a female Rhinoceros Iguana, *Cyclura cornuta*, at Finca Cyclura. 1985. Ron H irrod photo.

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.

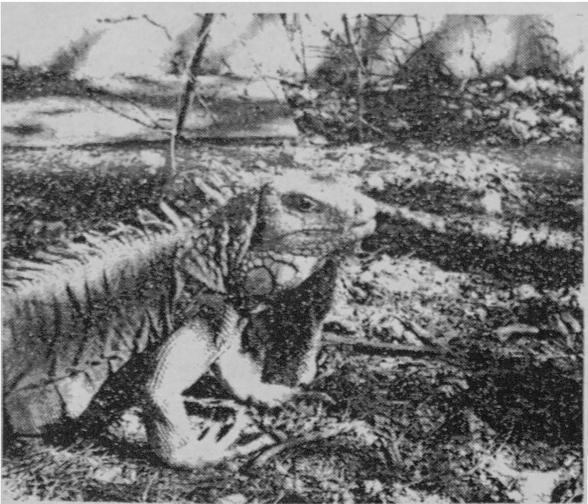
My primary reason for writing is to make a few suggestions concerning future issues. I'd like to see coverage of subjects such as probing of iguanas and breeding/incubation information in addition to conservation articles. As a private individual I have little exposure to the professional side of iguana 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 AUTEK 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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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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