



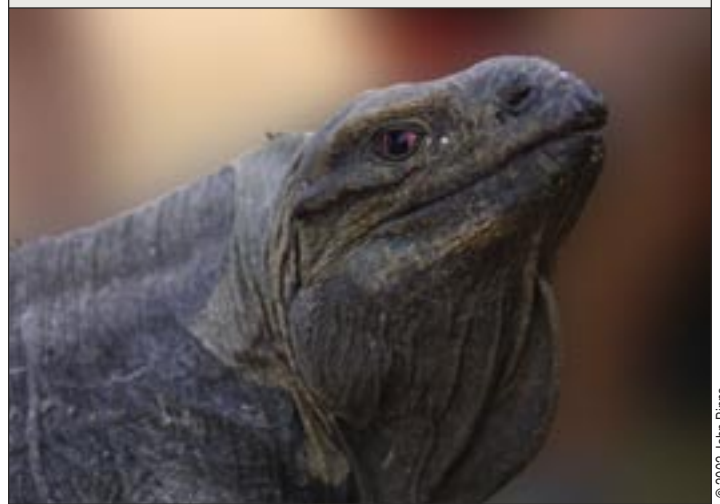
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Rachel Goodman, Master's degree student at the University of Tennessee shown here using an infra-red detector to measure ground temperature where she has located a radio-tagged Blue Iguana in QE II Botanic Park.



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Jamaica Iguana (*Cyclura collei*)



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Anegada Iguana (*Cyclura pinguis*)

The Role of the International Iguana Foundation

The International Iguana Foundation (IIF) was established as a Texas non-profit 501 c (3) corporation in August 2001 in Fort Worth Texas. Formed in response to the need for consistent funding for critical iguana conservation initiatives, the IIF is composed of twelve Board members representing the zoo, corporate, and private sectors. The IIF seeks to ensure the survival of the all iguana species, Caribbean and elsewhere, through the promotion of a broad conservation agenda involving habitat protection, education, scientific research, and captive management. Through annual financial pledges, the IIF Board is able to generate modest funding each year to help sponsor ongoing field conservation and research projects in areas of critical need. The IIF is wholly dependent on funding from grants and donations to carry out its iguana conservation mandate. In essence, the IIF is the fund-raising arm of the IUCN Iguana Specialist Group (ISG) and the priority projects listed in that group's Conservation Action Plan are assigned a high ranking for IIF funding. For instance, in April 2002 the IIF Board voted to direct support toward three programs working to save critically endangered iguana species in Jamaica (*Cyclura collie*), Anegada BVI (*C. pinguis*), and Grand Cayman (*C. nubila lewisi*).

The IIF Board is squarely behind the efforts to save the Grand Cayman iguana and is preparing to rally additional resources as needed. The recent population survey results give this project a whole new sense of urgency. The Species Recovery Plan drafted for this iguana in November 2001 provides a solid foundation on which to build and mobilize support, and the IIF is committed to seeing that Plan to completion. For this Plan to be successful a number of conservation partnerships will be necessary, involving many sectors, some non-traditional. The plight of the Grand Cayman iguana has gone largely unnoticed by the world conservation community, and this recent tragic news will likely create shock waves. How could a large and charismatic species with such public appeal as the magnificent Blue Iguana slip through our hands in such a short a time? If this is the fate of a high profile species, living in a civilized culture such as Grand Cayman, then what chance for survival do similar species of lesser stature have? The

message is clear: the extinction process is slow and insidious, and unless someone is monitoring these threatened populations closely, species can disappear without fanfare. Witness the Jamaican iguana that was rediscovered and given a second chance for survival.

The situation for the Grand Cayman iguana is dire and cannot be overstated. The Blue Iguana, perhaps the most highly evolved of all the West Indian rock iguanas, and certainly the most beautiful, is teetering dangerously on the brink of extinction. In all likelihood their ultimate survival will depend on captive management efforts, ongoing both in Grand Cayman (*in situ*) and in the U.S. (*ex situ*). The *in situ* program is well organized and successful, and with recent improvements and future expansion, will be capable of producing large numbers of offspring for headstarting and release. The *ex situ* program consists of the American Zoo Association's (AZA) Rock Iguana Species Survival Plan (SSP) which seeks to maintain genetically diverse and demographically stable captive populations for both Jamaican and Grand Cayman iguanas. Due to limited captive space in both countries, these captive gene pools will be managed collectively as a single unit in a collaborative manner, so as to maximize the reproductive potential of all genetically valuable animals. This recent news of the wild population crash places an increasingly heavy burden on captive managers. To guide this process, AZA Rock Iguana studbook keeper, Tandora Grant of the San Diego Zoo's Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species (CRES), in concert with the Small Population Management Advisory Group (SPMAG), has drafted a Population Management Plan (PMP), which contains a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the captive populations along with breeding recommendations for the most optimal pairings. This is the first such management plan compiled for an iguana species and it arrives just in time to provide the critical information necessary to maintain the captive gene pool over the long-term.



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Fred Burton, Director of the Blue Iguana Conservation Project, inspects flooded areas of the QE II Botanic Park in November 2001 caused by a hurricane. A disaster recovery plan for isolated iguanas is always a paramount issue when developing a species recovery plan.



Epilogue 2002 Survey Results - Shocking

A report issued June 22, 2002 by Fred Burton, Director of the iguana recovery program for the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, estimates that only 10 to 25 of these magnificent creatures remain in the wild.

The new report concludes that, without intervention and immediate preventative measures, the surviving wild population will be functionally extinct within the next 5 years.