

IUCN IGUANA SPECIALIST GROUP MEETING

South Andros, The Bahamas

6–7 November 2005

The IUCN Iguana Specialist Group conducted their annual working meeting, 6–7 November 2005 in South Andros, Bahamas. Generously hosted and substantially underwritten by Mike and Petagay Hartley of Tiamo Resorts, ISG participants enjoyed what is aptly described as “barefoot sophistication” at the eco-friendly Tiamo Lodge. Planning and travel arrangements fell on the shoulders of Chuck Knapp, who did an admirable job of facilitating the arrival of so many people to this remote destination.

For 1½ days, the ISG heard various species update reports and then discussed a number of pressing issues relevant to the group’s activities. One of the more productive discussions focused on drafting a prioritized list of ISG projects for 2006, an exercise that has implications for short-term funding opportunities. Finally, a Jamaican Iguana sub-group convened and began planning a Species Recovery Plan workshop, tentatively scheduled for July 2006. This will be the first time since the Jamaican Iguana PHVA workshop in 1993 that this conservation strategy has been officially revisited. This information will be detailed in the meeting minutes in the upcoming ISG newsletter.

The 2005 ISG meeting represented a significant milestone: It has now been ten years since this group began meeting together to discuss, plan, and strategize iguana conservation activities in the Caribbean region. Hosted by the Miami Metrozoo, we first met in 1996, although we were not formally recognized as an official Specialist Group — initially the West Indian Iguana Specialist Group — by the IUCN Species Survival Commission until the following year in Seattle. We will recognize our official 10-year anniversary next year and plans are already being discussed for a cumulative photo expose on the ISG’s work.

Following the ISG meeting, a Species Recovery Plan (SRP) workshop for the Andros Iguana, *Cyclura c. cyclura*, was convened. An important component of all SRPs is having local participants that help draft and then endorse the final product.

Thanks to support from the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, key local players and stakeholders were involved in the production of this Plan. Four primary working groups split off to work on the following topics: Protected Areas, Education and Public Awareness, Fund-raising, and Research Priorities. These documents will be incorporated into an overall conservation strategy (SRP). One of the most exciting outcomes was the emergence of a bright, articulate, and highly motivated local high school teacher and coach, Ricardo Johnson, who plans to use the iguana as the mascot for the school’s soccer team. Mascots are not commonly used in the Bahamas and we have high hopes that this



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The lodge at the eco-friendly Tiamo Resort in South Andros was the venue for a Species Recovery Plan workshop for the endangered Andros Iguana (*Cyclura cyclura cyclura*). This one-day meeting enjoyed strong participation by the local community, and separate working groups “broke out” to discuss education/local awareness, protected areas, research priorities, and fund-raising. This workshop represented a major first step toward producing a conservation strategy for the iguana, with the species emerging as a potential icon for biodiversity conservation on South Andros.



Participants in the IUCN ISG Meeting, South Andros, The Bahamas, 6–7 November 2005 (from left): Rick Hudson, Peter Tolson, Kristin Hines, Steve Conners, Tom Wiewandt, Stesha Pasachnik, Joe Burgess, Quentin Bloxam, Ricardo Johnson, Jeff Lemm, Byron Wilson, Karen Graham, John Iverson, Allison Alberts, Catherine Stephen, Miguel Garcia, Bruce Weissgold, Jan Ramer, Fred Burton, Tandora Grant, Samantha Addinall, Tarren Wagner, Joe Wasilewski, Sandra Buckner, and Chuck Knapp; not pictured, Janet Conners, who took the photograph.



JANET CONNORS

The IIF Board met in conjunction with the ISG in South Andros; front row (from left): Mike Hartman (Tiamo Resort Manager), Quentin Bloxam (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust), Mike Fouraker (Ft. Worth Zoo), Karen Graham (Sedwick County Zoo); middle: Rick Hudson (Ft. Worth Zoo); back row (from left): Allison Alberts (Zoological Society of San Diego), Jackie Ogden (Disney's Animal Kingdom), Colette Adams (Gladys Porter Zoo), Peter Tolson (Toledo Zoo), Jan Ramer (Indianapolis Zoo), and Chuck Knapp (Shedd Aquarium).

action will serve to elevate the iguana from relative obscurity to iconic status in the eyes of the local community. Popularizing the Andros Iguana and improving local awareness should have a positive impact on efforts to protect them and their habitat. South Andros is a large island, with vast expanses of undisturbed wilderness that support considerable biodiversity. With the potential to become a showcase for biodiversity preservation in the region, one of the goals of the workshop was to include an iguana management zone within a much broader protected area on South Andros. Hopes remain high that this will become a reality and that this workshop will serve to catalyze this much-needed action.



TOM WIEWANDT

Some of the participants took advantage of a break in the action to go snorkeling.

Following the ISG workshops, the Board of Directors of the International Iguana Foundation met on 9–10 November. This is the first time the two groups have met together, a trend that will likely continue. The primary order of business was reviewing 2005 funding proposals and awarding grants. The Board reviewed five proposals requesting a total of \$53,473. Due to funding constraints, the Board was able to award \$31,864 to the following five projects or programs: (1) *Restoration of a Second Subpopulation of Wild Grand Cayman Blue Iguanas, Phase 2*, \$5,864. Fred Burton, Principal Investigator (PI); (2) *Jamaican Iguana Recovery Program*, \$9,000. Byron Wilson, PI; (3) *Conservation of the Anegada Iguana: Public Education, Headstart Optimization, and Nest Protection*, \$8,000. K. Bradley and G. Gerber, PIs; (4) *Conservation of the Critically Endangered Fijian Crested Iguana*, \$3,000. J.S. Keogh, P. Harlow, and S. Morrison, PIs; and (5) *Development of a Cost-efficient and Effective Monitoring Program for the Mona Iguana Population*, \$6,000. N. Perez-Buitrago, S.M. Funk, W.O. McMillan, and M. Garcia, PIs. Subsequent to the IIF Board meeting, a \$3,000 emergency request was awarded to Ernst Rupp (Grupo Jaragua) for a Ricord's Iguana survey on the southern shore of Lago Enriqueillo, Dominican Republic.

Rick Hudson
ISG Co-chair
IIF Executive Director