



Grand Cayman Blue Iguana Fact Sheet

WHO THEY ARE

Unique to Grand Cayman, the Blue Iguana is a giant lizard that can grow up to 5 feet long. It is the most endangered of the roughly 20 types of iguanas around the world. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature considers them critically endangered. Blue Iguanas are found on Grand Cayman Island, which is located south of Cuba in the West Indies.

They get their name from their heads, which turn electric blue during mating season.

THEIR DWINDELING NUMBERS

Before Hurricane Ivan, only 10 to 25 Grand Cayman Blue Iguanas (*Cyclura nubila lewisi*) are estimated to remain in the wild. The total number of these animals known to exist anywhere in the world is fewer than 120.

Shedd Aquarium is one of the few organizations entrusted with them. Shedd has one male and one female iguana.

A report estimates that, without intervention, the Blue Iguana will be functionally extinct in five years.

In a document released by Fred Burton, Director of the Blue Iguana Conservation Project for the National Trust for the Cayman Islands on June 22, 2002.

Cars are among the biggest killer of Blue Iguanas. They also face habitat destruction and are severely preyed upon by wild cats and dogs.

After several years behind the scenes, in 2005 the Blue Iguanas returned to public view in a new state of the art exhibit.

STEPS TO SAVE THEM

Prompted by these alarming new statistics, scientists sponsored by the Ft. Worth, Tex.-based International Iguana Foundation (IIF) and IUCN's Iguana Specialist group are mobilizing a response to this crisis that could involve the removal of the last remaining wild specimens to the safety of captivity. Such a move would be similar to the efforts to rescue the California condor nearly 20 years ago, which has become a highly successful conservation program.

Shedd Aquarium is part of a group of 10 zoos and aquariums that are working to breed these special iguanas. Shedd also contributes to the overall research and conservation of these animals through its research and study on declining populations of the closely related Bahamian iguanas.