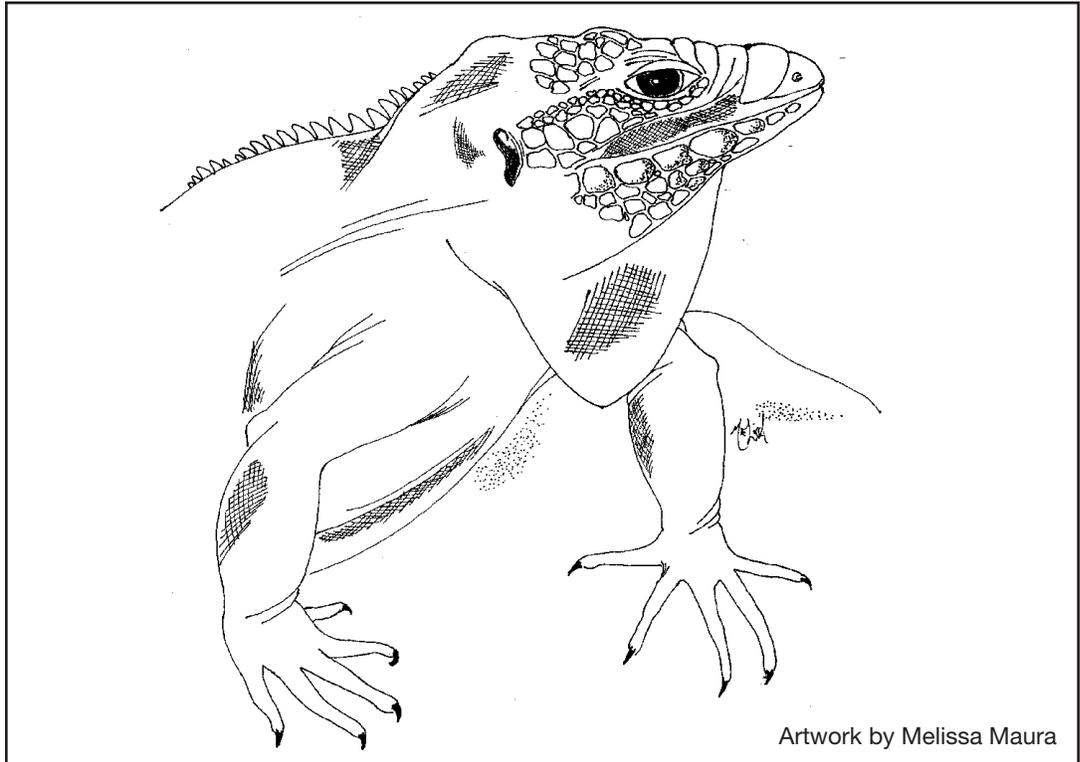




Endangered Species of The Bahamas



Artwork by Melissa Maura

BAHAMIAN ROCK IGUANA

SCIENTIFIC NAME

There are three species, *Cyclura cychlura*, *Cyclura carinata*, and *Cyclura rileyi*, and seven subspecies of Rock Iguanas in The Bahamas.

DESCRIPTION

Rock iguanas are large lizards, Bahamian iguanas are usually some shade of brown. Most are two and a half to three feet long,

DIET

Young iguanas eat mostly plants and insects, Later in life, they become almost complete herbivores (plant eaters), feeding on leaves, fruits and flowers of a large variety of plants including some like manchineel that are toxic or noxious to humans. It is probably not necessary for them to drink, particularly if the plants on which they feed are succulent. Wild dilly (*Manilkara bahamensis*), black torch (*E. fruticosa*), darling plum (*Reynosa septentrionalis*), and blolly (*G. obtusa*) are eaten by Rock iguanas.

REPRODUCTION

Sexual maturity occurs when Rock iguanas are about six to nine years old, Breeding takes place in early spring. At this time mature males are more brightly colored than at any other time. Around the middle of June, females lay three to twelve white leathery eggs, usually in shallow burrows in the sand. In approximately three months the young hatch and dig their way to the surface,

HABITAT

Rock iguanas thrive in dry areas where there are sandy patches for breeding and

limestone that provides the Rock iguana with holes to retreat in and shade to regulate body temperature.

STATUS

All Rock iguanas in The Bahamas are protected by the Wild Animals (protection) Act. At present, The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists all Bahamian populations of Rock iguanas as "rare". The Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) list the Rock iguana in Appendix 1 meaning the species is near extinction or very endangered. All international trade is prohibited among CITES signatory nations. Subspecies of Rock iguanas are found on Andros, San Salvador, Acklins, Mayaguana and in the Exuma Cays.

THREATS

On Andros wild hogs, feral cats and dogs are severe threats to iguanas there. All other Bahamian Rock iguanas are restricted to small, isolated islands where these animals do not pose a threat. Even so, there remains the continuous threat to all populations of iguanas of being harvested by man for food and for the pet trade, and a potential threat of falling prey to introduced predators, like dogs and feral cats. In addition natural disasters, such as hurricanes are a constant threat.

INTERESTING FACTS

- Rock iguanas used to be eaten by early inhabitants of The Bahamas. Today it is illegal to harm or capture a Rock iguana.
- The Andros Rock iguana is the largest iguana in The Bahamas and can attain a length of nearly five to six feet.
- The most threatened Bahamian iguanas are the San Salvador iguanas.
- The serrated ridge along the spine of the Rock iguana radiates excess heat from the iguana's body. In territorial displays this ridge makes the iguana appear larger to its adversaries.
- Iguanas are equipped with breakable tails which cleave off neatly when seized by a hand or a predator. A new tail begins to regenerate immediately.
- Rock iguanas can live for up to forty years!



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