

*Iguana iguana* 

**System:** Terrestrial

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Reptilia	Squamata	Iguanidae

**Common name** gallina de palo (Spanish), iguane vert (French), iguane commun (French), common iguana (English), green iguana (English), iguana verde (Spanish), grön leguan (Swedish)

**Synonym** *Lacerta Igvana* , Linnaeus 1758: 206  
*Iguana minima* , Laurenti 1768  
*Iguana tuberculata* , Laurenti 1768  
*Iguana coerulea* , Daudin 1802  
*Iguana vulgaris* , Link 1806  
*Iguana sapidissima* , Merrem 1820  
*Iguana sapidissima* , Wied 1824  
*Iguana squamosa* , Spix 1825  
*Iguana viridis* , Spix 1825  
*Iguana coerulea* , Spix (*non* Daudin) 1825  
*Iguana emarginata* , Spix 1825  
*Iguana lophryoides* , Spix 1825  
*Prionodus iguana* , Wagler 1828  
*Hypsilophus tuberculatus* , Wagler 1830  
*Iguana tuberculata* , Dumeril & Bibron 1837: 203  
*Hypsilophus tuberculatus* , Fitzinger 1843  
*Iguana Hernandessi* , JAN 1857 (*nomen nudum fide* Smith & Taylor 1950)  
*Iguana tuberculata* , Boulenger 1885: 189  
*Iguana tuberculata* , Gunther 1885: 56  
*Iguana tuberculata* , Cope 1886: 270  
*Iguana iguana* , Conant & Collins 1991: 95  
*Iguana iguana* , Schwartz & Henderson 1991: 419  
*Iguana iguana* , Liner 1994

## Similar species

**Summary** The green iguana (*Iguana iguana*) is native to tropical parts of Latin America and grows to around 1.5m in length and 4 to 5kgs in weight. It is associated with warm coastal regions, low elevations and waterways, especially where trees extend over water. It inhabits mangrove forests and saltwater habitats, but requires access to freshwater. Popular as pets throughout America and Europe, green iguana owners often do not realise the lizard's space requirements and release them into urban areas when they grow too big. *I. iguana* is reported as an exotic pest in Puerto Rico. It also occurs in high concentrations in urban areas of southern Florida. It consumes and defecates the fruits of invasive plants, thereby acting as a potential dispersal agent. It has been cited as the source of a number of laboratory-confirmed cases of human salmonellosis.



[view this species on IUCN Red List](#)

## Species Description

Green iguana grow to around 1.5m in length and 4 to 5kgs in weight (Engeman *et al.* 2005).

## Notes

In Florida the green iguana is known to be eaten by the domestic dog *Canis familiaris* (Meshaka *et al.* 2004); the yellow-crowned night-heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) (Engeman *et al.* 2005); the Florida burrowing owl ([Athene cunicularia floridana](#) a species of 'Special Concern') (McKie *et al.* 2005) and the introduced raccoon ([Procyon lotor](#)) which eats juveniles, attacks adults and preys on nests (Smith *et al.* 2006).

## Lifecycle Stages

On Key Biscayne, (Florida, USA) green iguana nest in sandy areas, often with multiple females utilising a single small area. Most hatchlings appear during July and August (Townsend *et al.* 2003).

## Uses

Green iguanas make popular pets throughout America and Europe. They are known for their docile, attractive and interesting traits (Meshaka *et al.* 2004).

Throughout Central America, iguanid lizards (*I. iguana* and *Ctenosaura similis*) are captured by professional lizard hunters and sold at local markets (Fitch *et al.* 1982, in Klemens and Thorbjarnarson 1995). There is even a significant trade of lizards across borders from the Honduras and Guatemala to El Salvador. Iguanas and their eggs are used both as food and for medicinal purposes, depending on the region. In some cultures iguana eggs are believed to be aphrodisiacs (Werner 1991, in Klemens and Thorbjarnarson 1995). The green iguana has been managed on a sustained-yield basis in Panama (one of the few instances of a successful sustainable project for reptiles). The iguana's forested habitat is being protected and it provides a dependable, sustainable source of protein for rural inhabitants (Werner 1991, in Klemens and Thorbjarnarson 1995).

## Habitat Description

*Iguana iguana* are known to show a preference for disturbed sites near standing water. In Florida they are associated with warm coastal regions free of frost. They are often found associated with waterways, such as bays, canals, ponds and ditches, and especially areas where trees extend over water. They also inhabit mangrove forests and saltwater habitats (Meshaka *et al.* 2004).

## Reproduction

Attaining maturity may take three to four years but female green iguana can produce large clutches for many years (Meshaka *et al.* 2004).

## Nutrition

In their native range green iguana are known to be herbivorous through their lifespan, however, juveniles have been reported to maybe, be omnivorous (Savage 2002). Analysis of stomach contents of 18 green iguana by Townsend *et al.* (2005) as part of an ongoing study on the exotic herpetofauna and its management in Florida, discovered the remains of an arboreal snail *Drymaeus multilineatus* in two specimens, one with accompanying plant material (suggesting that they could have been ingested accidentally with plant material on which the snails were aestivating) and the other without (suggesting that they could have ingested the snails intentionally).

## General Impacts

Competition and hybridization between *Iguana iguana* and the Lesser Antilles iguana, the 'Vulnerable 'VU' (*Iguana delicatissima*), are mentioned as the main causes of the virtual disappearance of the Lesser Antilles iguana from Iles des Saintes, Guadeloupe, in the second half of the 20th century (Breuil and Sastre, 1993). On Martinique, the green iguana which is larger and more opportunistic in its food choices than the endemic *I. delicatissima* may be a strong competitor for the latter (Breuil, 2002). Green iguana may compete for resources with the 'Critically Endangered (CR)' endemic Cayman island ground iguana (see *Cyclura lewisi* in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) on Grand Cayman, if their ranges overlap in the future (Burton, 2003).

While there are reports of juvenile green iguana being predated on by the Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia floridana* a species of 'Special Concern'); there are concerns that adult green iguana may venture into burrows of the owl and forage on eggs and hatchlings (McKie *et al.* 2005). In their native range green iguana are known to be herbivorous through their lifespan, however, juveniles have been reported to maybe, be omnivorous (Savage 2002). Analysis of stomach contents of 18 green iguanas by Townsend *et al.* (2005) as part of an ongoing study on the exotic herpetofauna and its management in Florida, discovered the remains of an arboreal snail *Drymaeus multilineatus* in two specimens, one with accompanying plant material (suggesting that they could have been ingested accidentally with plant material on which the snails were aestivating) and the other without (suggesting that they could have ingested the snails intentionally). The authors of this study point out that while *D. multilineatus* is widespread and in no immediate danger, increased numbers of green iguana could potentially impact on tree snails with restricted distributions, whose native range overlap with that of the green iguana.

Green iguana are reported to be posing a collision hazard on airport runways in Puerto Rico (Engeman *et al.* 2005).

The keeping of reptiles as pets has been cited as the source of a number of laboratory-confirmed cases of human *salmonellosis* associated with exposure to exotic pets including iguanas (Woodward *et al.* 1997).

## Pathway

Tens of thousands of baby green iguanas are introduced into the state of Florida from Latin America for the pet trade every year (Meshaka *et al.* 2004). In 1995 over 1.14 million *Iguana iguana* were imported into the United States, representi

## Principal source:

**Compiler:** IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group

Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

## Review:

**Publication date:** 2010-06-15

## ALIEN RANGE

[1] ANGUILLA  
[1] FIJI  
[1] ISRAEL  
[1] PUERTO RICO  
[2] SAINT MARTIN (FRENCH PART)  
[1] UNITED STATES

[1] CAYMAN ISLANDS  
[5] GUADELOUPE  
[1] MARTINIQUE  
[1] SAINT LUCIA  
[1] TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

**Red List assessed species 3: CR = 1; EN = 2;**

[Brachylophus fasciatus](#) EN  
[Iguana delicatissima](#) EN

[Cyclura lewisi](#) CR

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 28 references found for *Iguana iguana*

#### Management information

[IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group \(ISSG\), 2010. A Compilation of Information Sources for Conservation Managers.](#)

**Summary:** This compilation of information sources can be sorted on keywords for example: Baits & Lures, Non Target Species, Eradication, Monitoring, Risk Assessment, Weeds, Herbicides etc. This compilation is at present in Excel format, this will be web-enabled as a searchable database shortly. This version of the database has been developed by the IUCN SSC ISSG as part of an Overseas Territories Environmental Programme funded project XOT603 in partnership with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment. The compilation is a work under progress, the ISSG will manage, maintain and enhance the database with current and newly published information, reports, journal articles etc.

[Kern, W. H. Jr, 2009. Dealing with Iguanas in the South Florida Landscape. University of Florida IFAS Extension ENY-714](#)

**Summary:** Available from: <http://if-srvv-edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/IN/IN52800.pdf> [Accessed 22 June 2010]

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[Meshaka, Walter E. Jr; Henry T. Smith; Elizabeth Golden; Jon A. Moore; Stephanie Fitchett; Ernest M. Cown; Richard M. Engeman; Stacey R. Sekscienski and Heather L. Cress, 2007. Green Iguanas \(\*Iguana iguana\*\): The unintended consequence of sound wildlife management practices in a South Florida Park. Herpetological Conservation and Biology 2\(2\): 149-156](#)

**Summary:** Available from: [http://www.herpconbio.org/Volume\\_2/Issue\\_2/Meshaka\\_etal\\_2007b.pdf](http://www.herpconbio.org/Volume_2/Issue_2/Meshaka_etal_2007b.pdf) [Accessed 22 June 2010]

Morton, M. N. 2009. Management of Critical Species on Saint Lucia: Species Profiles and Management Recommendations. Technical Report No. 13 to the National Forest Demarcation and Bio-Physical Resource Inventory Project, FCG International Ltd, Helsinki, Finland

[NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, 2010. American iguanas in Fiji](#)

**Summary:** Available from: <http://www.naturefiji.org/newsstory.php?id=93> [Accessed 14 June 2010]

Smith, H.T., W.E. Meshaka, R.M. Engeman, S.M. Crossett, M.E. Foley, and G. Busch. 2006. Raccoon predation as a limiting factor in the success of the Green Iguana in Southern Florida. *Journal of Kansas Herpetology* 20:7-8.

[Varnham, K. 2006. Non-native species in UK Overseas Territories: a review. JNCC Report 372. Peterborough: United Kingdom.](#)

**Summary:** This database compiles information on alien species from British Overseas Territories.

Available from: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3660> [Accessed 10 November 2009]

#### General information

Breuil, M. 2002. Histoire naturelle des Amphibiens et des Reptiles terrestres de l'archipel Guadeloupéen. In Patrimoines Naturels, MNHN, Paris.

**Summary:** Ce livre propose une synthèse sur les amphibiens et reptiles terrestres de l'archipel Guadeloupéen. Six espèces d'Anoures, 5 de Tortues, 21 de Lézards dont 4 éteintes et 7 de Serpents sont détaillés.

Breuil, M. 2003. In the footsteps of French naturalists, a battle of iguanas and improvements in biodiversity. *Island and the sea. Essays on herpetological exploitation in the West Indies.* R. W. Henderson and R. Powell: 255-269.

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Daltry, J.C. 2009. The Status and Management of Saint Lucia's Forest Reptiles and Amphibians. Technical Report No. 2 to the National Forest Demarcation and Bio-Physical Resource Inventory Project, FCG International Ltd, Helsinki, Finland.

[Engeman, R. M., E. M. Sweet and H. T. Smith, 2005. Iguana iguana \(Green Iguana\). Predation. Herpetological Review. 36\(3\) \(2005\).](#)

**Summary:** Available from: [http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=icwdm\\_usdanwrc](http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=icwdm_usdanwrc) [Accessed 22 June 2010]

Engeman, R.M., Smith, H.T., and Constantin, B. 2005. Invasive Iguanas as Airstrike Hazards at Luis Munoz Marin International Airport, San Juan, Puerto Rico, *JAAER*

**Summary:** A report on the hazard posed by green iguanas at an airport in Puerto Rico.

Graveson, R. 2009. The Classification of the Vegetation of Saint Lucia. Technical Report No. 3 to the National Forest Demarcation and Bio-Physical Resource Inventory Project, FCG International Ltd, Helsinki, Finland.

[ITIS \(Integrated Taxonomic Information System\), 2008. Online Database Iguana iguana \(Linnaeus, 1758\)](#)

**Summary:** An online database that provides taxonomic information, common names, synonyms and geographical jurisdiction of a species. In addition links are provided to retrieve biological records and collection information from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Data Portal and bioscience articles from BioOne journals.

Available from: [http://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search\\_topic=TSN&search\\_value=173930](http://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search_topic=TSN&search_value=173930) [Accessed 14 January 2008]

Klemens, M.W and Thorbjarnarson, J.B. 1995. Reptiles as a food resource, *Biodiversity and Conservation* 4: 281-298.

**Summary:** A review of the use of various reptile species in world food markets.

Lorvelec, O., Pascal, M., Pavis, C., Feldmann, P. 2007. Amphibians and reptiles of the French West Indies : Inventory, threats and conservation. *Applied Herpetology* 4, 131-161

**Summary:** Cet article fait le point des connaissances sur les amphibiens et les reptiles indigènes et introduits des Antilles françaises. Les impacts des espèces introduites sur la faune indigène sont discutés. Le cas de la conservation des populations d'*Iguana delicatissima* sur l'île de Petite-Terre est présenté.

[McKie, A.C., Hammond J.E., Smith, H.T. and Meshaka, W.E. 2005. Invasive Green Iguana Interactions in a Burrowing Owl Colony in Florida, Florida Field Naturalist 33\(4\): 125-127.](#)

**Summary:** Report on the preying of burrowing owls on green iguanas.

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**Summary:** An overview of the colonisation of Florida by green iguanas.

[Reptiles Database, 2010. \*Iguana iguana\* Linnaeus, 1758](#)

**Summary:** Available from: <http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species.php?genus=Iguana&species=iguana> [Accessed September 8 2010]  
Reptile trade in the EU. 2003. *Traffic bulletin* 19 (3)

**Summary:** Overview of reptile pet trade in the European Union.

[Townsend, J.H., Krysko, K.L. and Enge, K.M. 2003. Introduced Iguanas in Southern Florida: A History of More Than 35 Years, \*Iguana\* 10\(4\): 111-120.](#)

**Summary:** An overview of the colonisation of Florida by various iguana species.

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[UNEP-WCMC. 14 November, 2006. UNEP-WCMC Species Database: CITES-Listed Species \*Iguana iguana\*](#)

**Summary:** Roughly 5,000 species of animals and 28,000 species of plants are protected by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade. They are listed in the three CITES Appendices. The species are grouped in the Appendices according to how threatened they are by international trade. They include some whole groups, such as primates, cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), sea turtles, parrots, corals, cacti and orchids. But in some cases only a subspecies or geographically separate population of a species (for example the population of just one country) is listed. To find more details of the CITES species, you can search the CITES-listed species database hosted by UNEP-WCMC.

CITES species database is available from: <http://www.cites.org/>

This page is available from:

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Woodward, D.L., Khakhria, R. and Johnson, W.M.1997. Human salmonellosis associated with exotic pets, *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* 11(35): 2786-2790.

**Summary:** Study on the link between human salmonellosis and some reptilian pets.