



# Andros Iguana Education Kit Checklist

## Activity A: Where Have All the Iguanas Gone?

- Activity Sheets Envelope
  - Activity Instructions Sheet
  - Iguana Habitat Master Copy
  - Threat Coverage 30%/70% Master Copy
  - Threat Coverage 40%/60% Master Copy
  - Threat Coverage 50%/50% Master Copy

## Activity B: Iguana Bead-Tagging

- Activity Sheets Envelope
  - Activity Instructions Sheet
  - Colored Bead Identifying Cards (5)
- Toy Iguanas (5)
- Beading Kit (8 different colors and 5 safety pins included)
- Plastic Binoculars (5)

## Activity C: Make a Sign, Save an Iguana

- Activity Sheets Envelope
  - Activity Instructions Sheet
  - Clip-Art Master Sheets (threats and iguanas)
  - Sign Example
- Marker/Crayon Sets (5)



# Andros Iguana Kit

Grade Levels: 5 – 7 (suggested)

## Background Information

The Andros Iguana (*Cyclura cyclura cyclura*) has the distinction of being the largest land animal on Andros Island. Like the elephants of Africa, these rock iguanas are vegetarians and play an important role in our native environment as seed dispersers. Due to its small and declining population size, the Andros Iguana is listed internationally as “endangered.”

Before humans arrived on the island around 500 years ago, Andros Iguanas inhabited North, Central, and South Andros and the larger cays. Currently though the iguanas only occupy at most 40% of their former range. This is primarily due to three factors 1) feral cats, dogs, and humans predate (kill and/or eat) the iguanas; 2) feral pigs destroy the termite mounds where female Andros Iguanas lay their eggs; and 3) the iguanas’ native habitat is altered and used by humans.

Today the Bahamas National Trust and the San Diego Zoo are collaborating to help protect the Andros Iguana. This education kit helps students follow the important steps in protecting iguanas from learning about the problem, to using research to study solutions, and finally taking action.

## Purpose of Activities

This education kit is designed to help students understand more about our endangered rock iguana’s situation and what we can do about it.

### Activity A: Where have all the iguanas gone?

This activity helps students understand that our native iguanas survive at most 40% of their original habitat.

### Activity B: Bead Tagging Iguanas

Students mimic scientists by using bead tags to help them identify individual iguanas for research over time.

### Activity C: Make a Sign

Protecting iguanas from cats, dogs, pigs, and humans is a big job. This activity has students use their creativity to make signs that will work to educate people about the importance of protecting iguanas from humans and non-native animals.

## Natural History of Andros Iguanas

### Ecology Overview

\*Size varies between islands. Adult males average 7-9 pounds with 4.5 feet total length; females average 4-5 pounds with 3.5 feet total length.

\*Males- Have larger heads and larger pronounced crest scales down the neck and back.

\*Name *Cyclura* and *cyclura*- refer to enlarged ring scales on the tail.

\*Coloration ranges from dark grey to black with yellow, orange, and/or red tinged scales on the head, dorsal crest and legs.

\*Animals are territorial. Males hold territories of up to 77 acres and defend against other males. Females have been documented defending their nests in termite mounds (ant nests).

### Diet

Primarily vegetarians, rock iguanas eat fruits, flowers, and leaves of native plants. They eat a small percentage of animal matter including crabs, slow moving insects and carrion. Rock iguanas are the largest native vertebrate and dominant herbivore. Rock iguanas play an important role in the dispersal and germination of seeds and the perpetuation of Caribbean scrub and dry forest habitat.

### Reproduction

**April and May-** Adults court and mate. Polygynous- males mate with as many females as possible but sometimes a male will guard one female and stay with her until she deposits her eggs. This occurs when female density is very low making them hard to find. It's better for the male to stay with one female and make sure she deposits eggs fertilized by him than to try and find other females, if there are no other females. Mating occurs approximately 1 month before egg laying.

**May and June-** Females dig a nest chamber in an active termite mounds where they lay between 3 and 19 eggs. Eggs are 2 inches long and 1 inch wide, leathery (like sea turtles). The termite mound keeps the eggs at a stable temperature, prevents them from drying out, and provides protection from predators. Females defend a nest anywhere from a few weeks to two and a half months.

**August and September-** Juvenile incubation takes about 80 days. At seven inches and 0.5 ounces hatchlings dig their way to the surface. Once young hatch from the nest, they are on their own. Usually, it will take these youngsters about 8 years to reach maturity, an incredibly long time considering most lizards' entire life cycles are shorter than this.

**Longevity-** It's not known exactly how long these iguanas can live but it is well over 20 years.