

Biology, Husbandry, and Medicine of the Green

Iguana, Elliott R. Jacobson, editor. 2003. Krieger Publishing Co., Malabar, Florida. xiii + 188 pp. pls., hardcover. US \$ 50.00. ISBN 1-57524-065-3

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Few lizard species are as easily recognized by the general public as the green iguana (*Iguana iguana*). Iguanas have been exploited as a food source in Latin America for centuries and by the international pet trade for many decades. Due to their popularity as pets, iguanas have been the subject of a variety of care manuals, hobbyist magazine articles and web sites during recent years. The information presented in these sources, especially related to diet, housing and disease prevention, is often contradictory and without verification. This book represents an outstanding effort to address these topics in an intelligent, well documented manner.

Elliott Jacobson, the book's editor, is a well known and highly respected herpetological veterinary pathologist and clinician. He has assembled a group of outstanding contributors including animal nutritionists, herpetologists, physiologists, veterinarians and zoo personnel, to present detailed and well referenced discussions of wild iguana biology, behavior, diet, reproduction, and ecology, and captive nutrition, husbandry, medicine and surgery.

Chapter 1, *Biology and Reproduction in the Wild*, by Gordon H. Rodda, provides a comprehensive description of the natural history of the species, including discussions of behavior, population biology, physiological ecology and conservation issues. This chapter is very well written, well referenced and sets the standard for the chapters that follow.

Two chapters on nutrition, *Nutrition in the Wild* by David J. Baer and *Nutrition in Captivity* by Mary E. Allen and Olav T. Oftedal, combine to provide an excellent discussion of iguana diet and nutritional requirements and I suspect those who are concerned with other herbivorous reptiles will find this information useful as well. Chapters on housing, diagnostic techniques, medicine and surgery are thorough and technologically current, as one would expect considering the experience of their authors.

This book effectively combines captive management recommendations with scientific justification based on field observation as well as standard analytical methods. The information presented should serve to improve conditions for

captive iguanas maintained as pets, commercial breeders, laboratory animals or zoo exhibits. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in iguana biology as well as to those keeping or caring for iguanas in captivity.



Desert Lizards: Captive Husbandry and Propagation

by Randall L. Gray with contributions from Dan McCarron and Tim Tytle. 2003. Krieger Publishing Company, P.O. Box 9542, Malabar, Florida. 130 pp. + 60 color photos and 14 tables. Cloth. \$27.50. ISBN # 1-57524-160-9.

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Who says that someone needs a thousand pages to adequately cover a topic? This relatively short book serves quite nicely as an introduction to desert lizards. The content is good, the text and layout are user friendly and it is written in a manner that serves both the layperson and professional herpetologist equally well.

In addition to the high-quality color photos of the species discussed, there are photos with concise but descriptive captions that do a good job of clearly illustrating several important aspects of herpetological husbandry.

The introductory chapter gives the reader a sense of context by explaining what a desert is and how lizards fit into these harsh landscapes. The second and third chapters provide the reader with a thorough overview of general husbandry of desert lizards and an understanding of how one can simulate desert environments in captivity. The author describes caging requirements, substrates, cage furnishings, temperature and lighting options, how to select good animals, social behavior and proper diets. (One caution though – the author advocates the use of several supplements, some of which are easy to overdo – which may yield tragic results. In general, many supplements can be avoided by offering complete diets that mimic what a lizard would normally eat in the wild.) In chapter four, the author fittingly explores several aspects of propagation, including sexing animals, hibernation, nest sites and egg incubation.

The remainder of the book consists of six chapters that explore the taxonomy, natural history and captive husbandry of several groups of lizards, including *Uromastyx*, *Sauromalus*, *Phrynosoma* and *Crotaphytus* spp., along with a short chapter on the Desert Iguana (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis*), and another devoted to several genera of exotic geckos.