

Iguana Mama Calls Belize Zoo Home

No, The Belize Zoo does not have an "official enclosure" home for the beloved Green Iguana. However, walking down the shaded pathways usually provides the opportunity to see one of these gentle lizards staking about. Spot a big orangey-brown iguana? That, for sure, is a male. The females are always green and much smaller than their male counterparts.



Our zoo resident Green Iguanas share food daily with the Tapirs and the Deer, and none of the involved parties show signs of conflict with this eating strategy! This spring, somewhere on zoo grounds, a gravid female laid her eggs. The months of March and April are key times for females to lay their eggs in Belize. They prefer sandy areas because it allows them to dig out their "nursery-nesting-niche". The eggs hatch in late May or June, and out crawl miniature Green Iguanas, ready for life in Belize.

A clutch of iguana eggs can easily number over 50 eggs! This high number, however, does not ensure that all will survive once they do hatch. Iguana eggs themselves have a mountain of hungry predators. A troop of Coatimundis can easily bring a nest-full of Green Iguana eggs to ground zero! Once a nest of Green Iguana eggs hatches, predation is still a large threat. Birds-of-prey, wild cats, Tayras, Coatimundis, Grey Fox... The Green Iguana Food-Fan Club list is a long one!

Green Iguanas eat only plants. They prefer living near rivers. This habitat type provides food, shelter, and sandy banks where they can nest. Green Iguanas are good swimmers, too. If one of these placid lizards feels threatened, it will quickly dive into the water, and, using its long tail as an efficient "engine-rudder", swims swiftly away from danger.

Sadly, numbers of Green Iguanas in Belize are declining. This isn't the fault of the hungry Coatimundi, it is our fault. People still over-harvest Green Iguanas, especially the gravid females. It is a popular belief that eating iguana eggs provides more sexual vigor for men folk. This myth has led to a consistent decrease in our Belizean Green Iguanas. Then, add intense

collecting for the stewpot . These combined practices simply result in our having less and less Green Iguanas. Hey! It doesn't take a Wizard to see that it's tough to be a Lizard...We are happy to offer a safe and secure home for the Green Iguanas freely roaming the grounds of The Belize Zoo!