



HONDURAN SPINY-TAILED IGUANA

Squamata
Family: Agamidae
Genus: *Ctenosaura*
Species: *palearis*



Range: Upper Rio Motagua Valley in eastern Guatemala ranging from 656' to 2953' elevation

Habitat: Rocky terrain of dry forest and thorn scrub

Niche: Diurnal, omnivorous, semi-arboreal

Wild diet: young: vegetation and invertebrates

adults: vegetation mostly: leaves and fruits of cacti

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild)

(Captive)

Sexual dimorphism: Males slightly larger than females

Located in SF Zoo: South American Tropical Rainforest & Aviary

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The Honduran spiny-tailed iguana, is a species of spiny-tailed iguana endemic to the Motagua Valley, Guatemala. *Ctenosaura*'s have a spiky tail that can be used to defend itself. This iguana has a relatively slender body that is greyish-brown with some blackish banding. They have a large dewlap, that is more conspicuous in adult males than females, and a row of flattened spines their back.

Iguanas have great vision and can see shapes, shadows, colors, and movement at long distances. Like other iguanas, they have a parietal eye, a light-sensing organ, which cannot make out details, just brightness; this regulates circadian rhythms and hormone production for thermoregulation.

Weight:

Length (incl. tail): 2 feet

STATUS & CONSERVATION

This species is considered endangered on the IUCN Red List. There is a continuing decline due to hunting and the pet trade, and habitat loss. Habitats have become extremely fragmented and there has been an increased mortality of cacti (their main food and shelter source). Natives use these iguanas as a source of food. It is included in CITES appendix II so that their trade is being regulated.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

The spiny-tailed iguana will rapidly flee to a branch or rock crevice when threatened.

The Guatemala spiny-tailed iguana is primarily an herbivore that feeds on plant material, but it may also occasionally small invertebrates; the diet of juveniles consists of more invertebrates than adults.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

During the breeding season, the male rapidly bobs his head at the female. He will then approach her and usually begin flicking his tongue over her body. If the female is receptive the male pins the female down with its legs and holds her neck in its mouth and proceeds to copulate. They may remain in this position for up to 20 minutes.

The female lays eggs into a nest she has dug into the ground. Like other iguanas, spiny-tailed iguanas exhibit no parental care, and the female will leave the nest once she has laid her eggs. When the eggs hatch, the newly hatched iguanas must dig their way out of the underground nest.

Incubation: 55 – 75 days # of Young: 20 eggs	Sexual Maturity: 8 – 18 mos Weight at birth: < 1 oz Length at birth: 4 inches
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MISCELLANEOUS

Until 1997, the Honduran spiny-tailed iguana was considered the same species as *Ctenosaura melanosterna*, the Rio Aguan Valley iguana, but they were separated based on a number of differences in appearance.

The Honduran spiny-tailed iguana is an important role in seed dispersal of *S. pruinosus* (a type of cactus) and is considered a keystone species. Its eggs are a food source for the equally threatened Motagua Valley beaded lizard (*Heloderma horridum charlesbogerti*), thereby possibly linking the status of the two species and its conservation.

Sources:

<http://www.reptilesmagazine.com/Breeding-Lizards/Spiny-Tailed-Iguanas/>
<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/44192/0>
<http://www.arkive.org/guatemalan-spiny-tailed-iguana/ctenosaura-palearis/>

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