

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

USDA National Wildlife Research Center - Staff
Publications

U.S. Department of Agriculture: Animal and
Plant Health Inspection Service

July 2005

IGUANA IGUANA (Green Iguana). PREDATION.

Richard M. Engeman

USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services, richard.m.engeman@aphis.usda.gov

Elaine M. Sweet

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Henry T. Smith

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/icwdm_usdanwrc



Part of the [Environmental Sciences Commons](#)

Engeman, Richard M.; Sweet, Elaine M.; and Smith, Henry T., "IGUANA IGUANA (Green Iguana). PREDATION." (2005). *USDA National Wildlife Research Center - Staff Publications*. 25.
https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/icwdm_usdanwrc/25

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in USDA National Wildlife Research Center - Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Published in *Herpetological Review* 36(3) (2005),
p. 320.

IGUANA IGUANA (Green Iguana). **PREDATION.** *Iguana iguana* is exotic to Florida, but has been reported in the wild there since the 1960s, with breeding colonies reported since the 1980s (Meshaka et al. 2004. *The exotic amphibians and reptiles of Florida*, Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida, USA. 155 pp.). *Iguana iguana* is currently known to breed at diverse sites on the Florida mainland and in the Keys (Meshaka et al., *op. cit.*). As indigenous predators may represent one controlling influence on exotic Florida herpetofauna (Butterfield et al. 1997. *In* Simberloff et al. [eds.], *Strangers in Paradise*, pp. 123–138, Island Press, Washington, DC), we report here an observation of Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) preying on *I. iguana* from the Florida Keys.

At ca. 0800 h on 5 June 2004 (ca. 27°C air temperature), EMS observed a juvenile *N. violacea* that had just captured a hatchling (ca. 150 mm SVL) *I. iguana* by the old Bahia Honda Bridge in Bahia Honda State Park on Bahia Honda Key (24°39'17"N, 81°16'52"W; elev. ca 2 m). Based on size, the lizard had probably hatched the previous August (Meshaka et al., *op. cit.*).

The event was noteworthy not only because it involved another case of a juvenile wading bird foraging in a terrestrial situation and preying on an exotic species (Smith and Engeman 2004. *Herpetol. Rev.* 35:169–170), but because natural predators of *I. iguana* have not been recorded in Florida. Most foraging by *N. violacea* occurs in shallow water, with crustaceans the primary

prey (Bancroft and Strong 1996. *In* Rodgers, Jr. et al. [eds.], Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida, pp. 450–456, University Press of Florida, Gainesville). Herons and egrets have been known to capture and consume exotic lizards in terrestrial situations (Franz 2001. *Herpetol. Rev.* 32:253; Smith and Engeman, *op. cit.*), but prior to this observation only dogs had been reported as predators on *I. iguana* in Florida (Meshaka et al., *op. cit.*). This is also the first observation of a hatchling *I. iguana* on Bahia Honda Key, although ES has observed adult *I. iguana* here for at least 5 yrs.

Submitted by **RICHARD M. ENGEMAN**, National Wildlife Research Center, 4101 LaPorte Ave., Fort Collins, Colorado 80521-2154, USA (e-mail: richard.m.engeman@aphis.usda.gov); **ELAINE M. SWEET**, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Park Service, Bahia Honda State Park, 36850 Overseas Hwy, Big Pine Key, Florida 33043, USA; **HENRY T. SMITH**, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Park Service, 13798 S.E. Federal Highway, Hobe Sound, Florida 33455, USA.