

- **Targeting American Iguana lifecycle** - BAF has appointed 14 temporary biosecurity officers who are working through the nesting period of the American iguanas to gather and submit data on sighted, captured and non-captured iguanas. They are also conducting surveys during nesting periods, mobilising response units to a confirmed nesting site, assisting with euthanasia on captured iguanas and record the necessary data.
- **New Office-** BAF has set up a new office at Mua Research Station in Taveuni as a central database unit for all sightings and reports on American iguanas by the Biosecurity officers; and
- **Billboards-** BAF has installed billboards advising people on the damages caused by American iguanas in Savusavu, Qamea, Matagi, Natuvu, Nabouwalu, Koro, Taveuni, Vanuavalavu, Natovi, Lautoka and Suva.

### Declaration of Biosecurity Emergency Areas for American Iguana

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) has declared the islands of Qamea, Matagi, Taveuni and Laucala as Biosecurity Emergency Area.

Movement of all stages of American Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) including its egg into, out of, or within the declared Biosecurity Emergency Areas is strictly prohibited.

Failing to comply with this declaration is an offence under section 79(3)(a),(b), and (c) of the Biosecurity Promulgation 2008, and the court can issue a maximum fine of \$50,000 and/or 15 months imprisonment or a fixed penalty of \$1,000.

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## American Iguana (*Iguana iguana*)



# Pests not Pets!

The American Iguana is a declared pest in Fiji. It is thought to have been brought illegally into the country and released on Qamea Island. Now almost 10 years later, it has spread to Laucala, Taveuni, and Matagi Island as well.

## About American Iguanas

American Iguanas are native to Central and South America. It has not only been declared a pest in Fiji but in other countries as well because of the damage it has caused to the environment and biodiversity of these countries.

The adult American iguana can grow to almost two meters in length and nine kilograms in weight. They are green but may also appear bluish with black markings. Adult American iguanas have long dangerous spines along their head, neck, back and tail, and long sharp claws, which are used in defense.

They also have long flaps of saggy skin hanging from their chins to the base of their necks, which is called a dewlap.

On both sides of their cheeks they have a large scale underneath their tympanums (a slightly sunken leathery covering of their eardrums). This large scale is a key identification feature for the American iguanas. The large scale and dewlap are ways to differentiate between American and the Fiji iguanas. American iguanas breed rapidly and a female can lay 50 to 80 eggs. As herbivores, American iguanas mainly eat plants. They have very sharp teeth and can shred leaves and branches with great ease. They are also very good swimmers and when threatened will dive into the water from their tree perch and swim rapidly away.

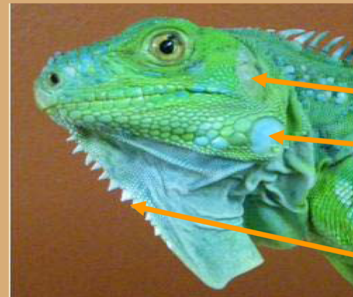
# IDENTIFYING AN AMERICAN IGUANA

A Threat to Fiji's Native, Endemic Iguanas and Human Well-Being

## American Iguana

### Main Features

One large scale below eardrum  
Pointy scales on dewlap (under chin)  
Body size ranges from 16 cm—200 cm



Juvenile American iguana



Adult American iguana - Matagi Island, 2007

## Banded Iguana

### Main Features

NO large scale below eardrum  
NO Pointy scales on dewlap (under chin)  
Body size ranges from 16 cm— 70 cm



Female (left) and male (right) banded iguanas

## Key Differences

Eardrum  
Scale Under Eardrum / No Scale  
  
Dewlap (under chin)  
With Pointy Scales / No Pointy Scales

## Why American iguanas are a threat

American iguanas pose an immediate threat to food security in villages and islands where they are present as they eat plants such as dalo and cassava leaves, bele, tomatoes and cabbage, beans and yam vines.

If American iguanas are left unchecked, food sustainability in Fijian villages will be at great risk in the near future. Large numbers of American iguanas would devastate the environment around the villages and cause economic hardship. They could also affect Fiji's biodiversity having a serious impact on endemic plants and bird eggs and nestlings. American iguanas pose a risk to our endangered native iguanas through the possible transmission of iguana-specific diseases, parasites and pathogens from American iguanas to the endemic Fijian iguanas.

## What has been done to eradicate American Iguanas in Fiji

In 2010, an American Iguana Eradication Campaign Taskforce was set-up to eradicate these iguanas. The taskforce has carried out a number of community outreach programmes highlighting the potential harm these iguanas could do to Fiji's endemic iguanas, tourism industry, food security in villages and islands and the thriving agricultural industry on Taveuni.

Last year BAF together with NatureFiji-MereqetiViti took a more strategic approach to eradication of American Iguanas which involved:

- **Awareness and training-** Training village heads and *tikina* representatives on American Iguana
- **Capture and kill-** Villagers have been trained by experts on how to capture and kill American Iguanas in a humane manner