

Fiji Island Banded Iguana

Brachylophus bulabula

Reptile

Scientific Name

Brachylophus bulabula

Other Names

South Pacific Banded Iguana

Range

Southeastern Fiji Islands and introduced populations in Tonga and Vanuatu

Habitat

Rain forest, cloud forest and swamps

Description

A large, emerald green lizard with broad, vertical blue to green stripes along the body and tail and a yellow underside. There is a short band of spines that run along the back. Females are uniformly green with slight white to pale blue spots.

Average Size

Length: 22 – 24 in.
Weight: 150 – 200g.

Lifespan

In the wild: Unknown
In captivity: 15 years

Diet

In the wild: Leaves, fruit and flowers
In captivity: Fruit, vegetables and insects

Incubation

7 – 9 months

Sexual Maturity

Estimated at 2 – 3 years of age

Clutch Size

3 – 6 eggs

Predators

Birds of prey and humans

Population Status

Endangered



Behavior

Fiji Island Banded Iguanas are diurnal (active during the day), spending the daylight hours foraging in the lower levels of the forest, basking in the sun and defending their territory from intruders. At night, they retreat high into the treetops for safety. Although they are strictly arboreal (tree-dwelling), they are good swimmers when using waterways to travel.

Males are highly territorial and use predominantly visual displays of flaring and expanding their dewlaps and open mouthed lunging to intimidate intruders. These displays often end in violent, aggressive confrontations with biting and scratching.

Reproduction and Breeding

In the wild, breeding season occurs during the month of November, with complex visual courtship rituals. In captivity, however, hatchings occur in almost every month of the year. Like other iguanids, males approach the females during courtship with tongue flicking and rapid head bobs. After mating, the female digs a burrow where she lays and buries a clutch of three to six eggs. Females guard the nest aggressively and remain nearby until hatching (which is unusual in iguanids).

The hatchlings emerge from their eggs in the rainy season and obtain moisture by licking wet leaves. Neither parent gives care to the offspring but they provide some protection with their continued presence in the area.

Conservation

The Fiji Island Banded Iguana is considered endangered due to habitat destruction and predation by introduced mongooses and feral house cats that feed on the iguanas and their eggs. It now has full protection under both Fijian and international laws. This species has also benefitted from some very noteworthy captive breeding programs: the Fear-No-More Zoo in Fiji has successfully bred the species for the last fifteen years and the San Diego Zoo had produces over 100 offspring since 1965.

Fiji Island Banded Iguanas are considered a national treasure by the government of Fiji and their likeness has been featured on postage stamps, currencies, and phone book covers.



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Amazing Facts

The tail of this iguana makes up two thirds of its body length.

Until recently, scientists believed there was just one species of iguana on Fiji, but they now recognize at least three species that inhabit these islands. In the future, genetic testing may indicate there are even more.

Many people native to Fiji are afraid of this lizard as it behaves very aggressively when threatened.

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