Discover The Wonders

Iguana delicatissima - One of the most endangered iguanas on Earth

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DISCOVER THE WONDERS
Lesser Antillean Iguana

Lesser Antillean Iguanas (*Iguana delicatissima*) are threatened with extinction. Despite having multiple island populations, the conservation status of the species was recently changed from vulnerable to endangered — and most populations are critically endangered. On St. Eustatius, where as many as 20,000 iguanas lived before European colonization, only a few hundred remain.

Habitat change and loss are primarily responsible. Other threats include those posed by invasive species. Cows and goats compete with iguanas for food, pet cats and dogs kill juvenile and adult iguanas, and on Statia an imported garden vine from Mexico, *Corallita*, blankets about 20% of the island, covering native plant species on which iguanas feed. Humans are responsible for road mortalities and intentionally killing iguanas for food or out of fear.

While dogs and cats kill iguanas and rats eat eggs and young, Statia is so far mongoose-free. Another potential threat is the Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*). The two closely related species compete and interbreed, hybridizing and ultimately causing the extinction of the unique genetic identity of *Iguana delicatissima*.

If Statia’s Lesser Antillean Iguanas are to survive, residents must control introduced species, prevent the arrival of mongooses and Green Iguanas, work together to conserve habitat, reduce mortality, and even increase the wild population by establishing a local captive breeding program to give baby iguanas a headstart on life.