



Iguana Care Demonstration

How to Use This Document

The following text is similar to what a presenter will say during a public demonstration. You may follow along, but please note that the exact wording and sequence will vary depending on staff and animal activity. Feel free to ask the presenter questions after the program. Thank you for joining us today!

Pre-Demonstration Announcement

Hello! In a few minutes, Animal Care staff will be working with the Jamaican iguanas. If you are interested in learning more, please find a place a few feet away from the window. You may take a seat at the front or stand behind the people who are already seated. The demonstration will start shortly and will last five to ten minutes. If you have any questions before we begin, please let me know.

Introduction

Welcome to Regenstein Small Mammal -Reptile House at Lincoln Park Zoo!

Learning Team. During the training session today, a member of our Animal Care staff will enter the Jamaican iguana habitat. While they work, our expert care helps reptiles thrive.

Training

One of the ways we provide expert care is through training. Whether the animal is an iguana, a lion, or a

gorilla, training at Lincoln Park Zoo is always done with animal well-being in mind. Training is voluntary for animals, so they are never forced to participate.

Enrichment

Expert care also involves lots of enrichment. Enrichment is by caretakers to provide choice and encourage natural behavior. For Jamaican iguanas, our Animal Care staff often use food as enrichment. At the zoo, Jamaican iguanas eat salad greens, like kale, endive, and collard greens, along with carrots, beans, and fresh fruit. We round out their diet with specially made pellets that have a precise mix of nutrients. The placement of that food can be a source of enrichment.

Iguanas naturally spend a lot of time walking along tree branches to find leaves or fruit. Animal Care staff often place salad greens on branches to encourage natural foraging behavior. Animal Care staff can also place food inside puzzle feeders and other objects. These not only add variety to feeding, but also provide them ways to manipulate and investigate novel objects. This is known as mechanical enrichment.

Another way to provide food enrichment is with special, once-in-a-while food items. For iguanas, that can mean small invertebrates, like crickets or nightcrawlers.

Enrichment also comes from

structured space. Jamaican iguanas are natural climbers, so there are several live plants and logs placed throughout the habitat at varying heights. They also dig holes to build nests, so the bottom of the habitat is covered with a layer of sand to encourage natural nesting behavior.

Saving a Species with Expert Care

Our knowledge of how to care for Jamaican iguanas can help us care for their populations in the wild. Jamaican iguanas are one of the most endangered lizards in the world. They are native to Jamaica, an island nation in the Caribbean. They were once common across the island, but today they only live within a four-square-mile section of a

protected

capital and large city.

At one point, researchers thought Jamaican iguanas had already vanished. They were considered extinct by the 1940s due to non-native predators and reduction of their forest habitat. In 1970, a single Jamaican iguana was found, proving the species still survived.

Another individual was found two decades later in 1990 and shown to staff at Hope Zoo in Kingston. After an extensive survey, researchers estimated the remaining population to be potentially as small as 50 individuals.

Lincoln Park Zoo is one of many partners working to save this critically endangered species from extinction. As a participant in the Jamaican Iguana Species Survival Plan, we work to better understand their needs and develop the techniques involved in caring for them.

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