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# Saving the Swamper: research and efforts for conservation of the endemic and critically endangered Utila Spiny-tailed iguana (Utila, Islas de la bahia, Honduras)

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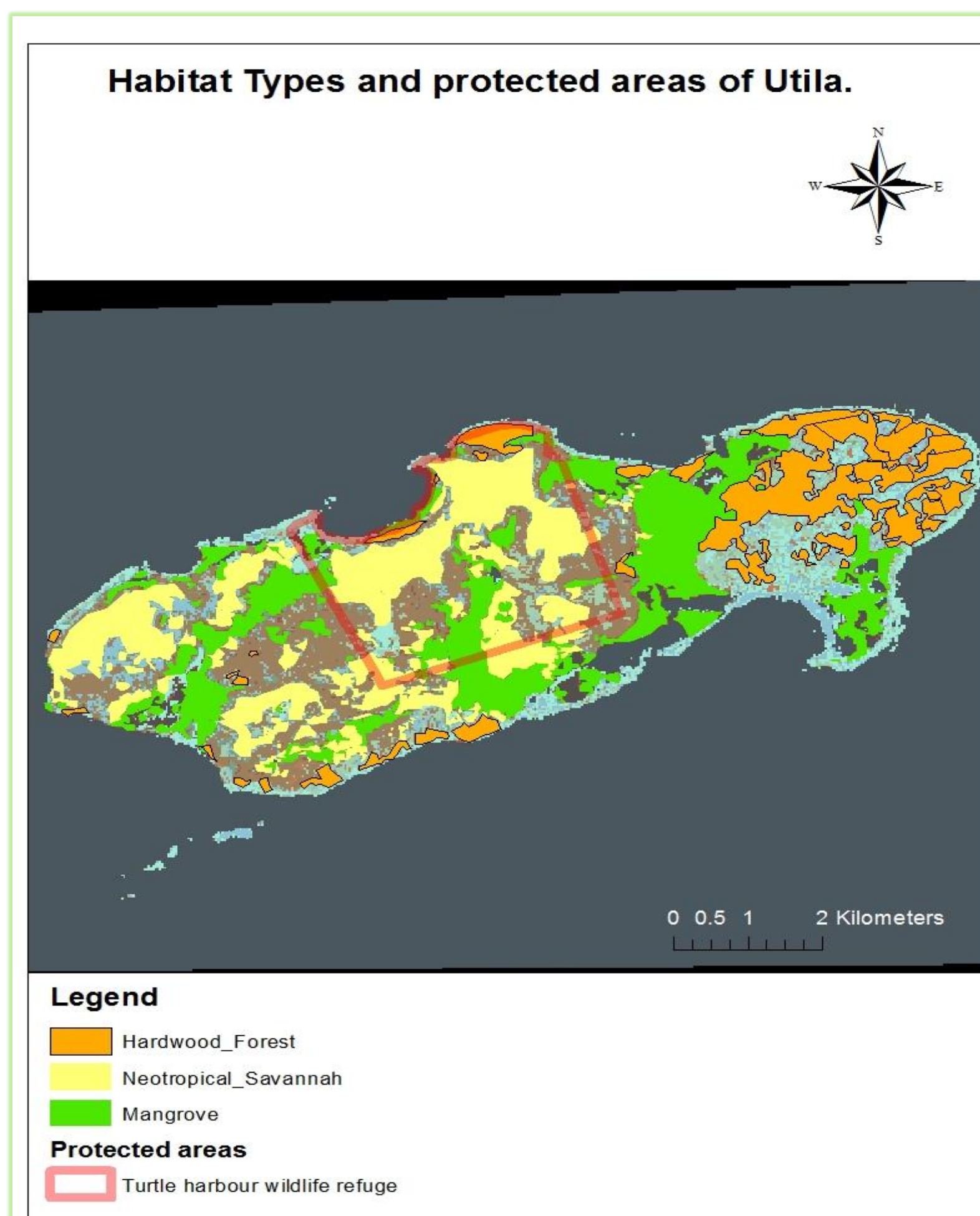
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## Introduction

The Swamper iguana (*Ctenosaura bakeri*) owes its common name to the habitat they live in - **Mangrove Swamps** - of which Utila has the most extensive of the Bay Island group. Unfortunately populations of this iconic iguana (which may be the worlds only strictly mangrove dwelling reptile) are **Critically Endangered** due to habitat **destruction** and **illegal hunting** pressure.

Together with the team at KanaHau Utila Research and Conservation Facility we are working to change the local perception of the Swamper from **food to friend**, and to protect its unique mangrove habitat! Currently, KanaHau and the University of South Wales, are conducting population, behavioural, and genetic studies on *C. bakeri* across the island. This research aims to locate important migration routes of gravid females across the island, identify nesting areas, and assess the size, structure, and current rate of hybridization with sympatrically occurring *Ctenosaura similis* in the population.



Currently on Utila, there is only one area of protected land i.e. Turtle harbour wildlife refuge. The refuge area comprises of 10km<sup>2</sup>, but contains only 1.7km<sup>2</sup> of mangrove habitat suitable for the Utila iguana.

## Threats to the species



Hunting of gravid females



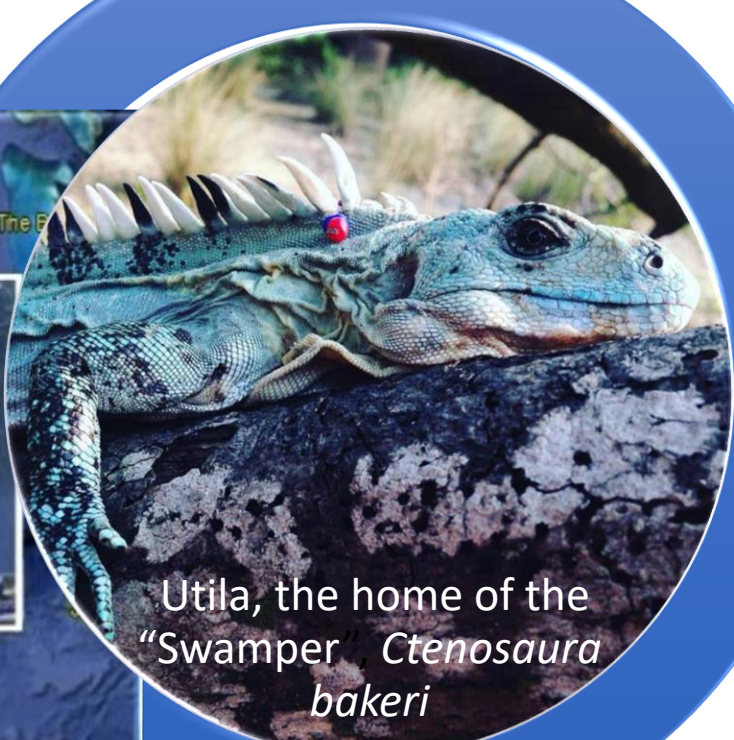
Oceanic Plastic covering nesting beaches



Invasive predators



Destruction of Mangrove Habitat



Utila, the home of the "Swamper" *Ctenosaura bakeri*

## Population monitoring



Distance sampling



Radio telemetry



Capture mark recapture

## Community Engagement

In questionnaires' given to school children over 57% associated iguanas with food, however, 90% also stated iguanas were important for tourism. Community engagement is key to conserving this Endangered species. Alongside community events and environmental education in schools, "KanaHau school of nature" was set up in spring 2019.

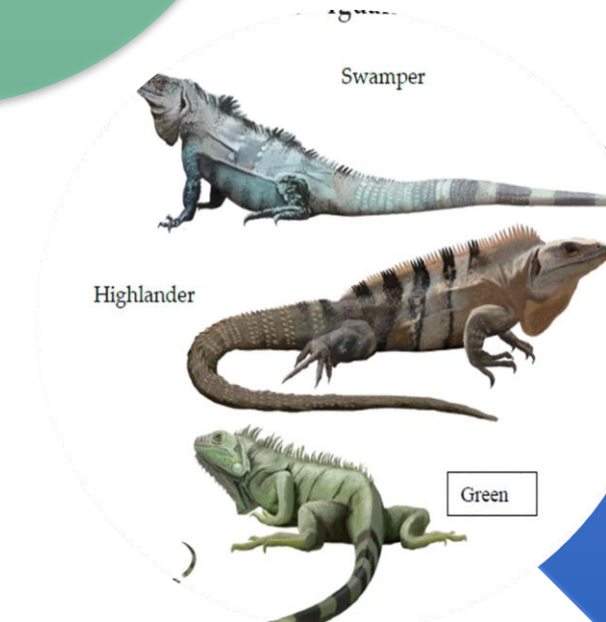
Serving as a nature club for children ages 8-15. The school of nature is a "classroom without walls" designed to inspire a love of nature in the child of the island.

The children join field trips with the scientists of KanaHau to learn field skills, get up and close with iguanas and other wildlife. Through this initiative we hope to turn the Swamper from "food" to "friend".

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SAVE THE SWAMPER



Public Information Resources – "Iguana ID guide"



Community Engagement - Recycled carnival float



Nature Photography competition "Eyes of Utila"



INTERNATIONAL IGUANA FOUNDATION



Field guide project - Alternative incomes