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Black Iguanas (*Ctenosaura similis*) range from southern Mexico through Central America to Panama. The species was not known to occur in South America until now. Other introduced populations are known from Florida and the Colombian islands of Malpelo and San Andres.

Spiny-tailed Iguanas (*Ctenosaura similis*) in Venezuela: A Preliminary Report

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Ctenosaura similis is a large iguanid (see the excellent description in Savage 2002) that ranges from southern Mexico through Central America to Panama. The species is unknown in South America, but has been introduced in Florida (Krysko et al. 2003) and the Colombian islands of Malpelo and San Andres (Forero-Medina et al. 2006).

Around 1998, Eduard Asens (pers. comm.) noticed large iguanids in the Barcelona area. Only two large lizards with distinctly different shapes, *Tupinambis teguixin* and *Iguana iguana*, are known from coastal Venezuela. These lizards were identified from photographs as *Ctenosaura similis*. Because the area is a port, the assumption is that the species arrived with cargo shipped from Central America.

The area where the iguanas occur is heavily developed, and is centered around a storage and market center named Lecherías along the road from Barcelona to Puerto La Cruz in the state of Anzoátegui, where they occur in gardens, parking lots, and parks, but the population has expanded into adjacent natural dry habitats. Because only a few adult males have been seen, the sex ratio of this population appears to be female-biased, or perhaps composed largely of subadults. In the developed areas, they are quite tolerant of people. No specimens have been collected; consequently, the photographs presented herein are the only vouchers for the presence of *C. similis* in Venezuela.

Ctenosaura similis is known to produce clutches of 12–88 (mean 43) eggs (Fitch and Henderson 1978). This species is mainly herbivorous but may feed opportunistically on invertebrates and small vertebrates such as lizards, birds, eggs, and mammals. On Central American Caribbean islands, *C. similis* is known to prey on beach-nesting birds and marine turtle hatch-

lings (Krysko et al. 2003). If the Venezuelan population expands to the east toward Mochima National Park or reaches the Paria Peninsula, it might pose a threat to nesting sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas* and *Dermochelys coriacea*). Although presumably subject to the same predators as Green Iguanas in the region, the population appears to be reproducing effectively.

A study investigating the extent and impact of *C. similis* in Venezuela is necessary to identify the possible threat this species poses to native plants and animals. The Venezuelan Ministerio del Ambiente, with the assistance of Venezuelan and international herpetologists with expertise in invasive populations of iguanas, should address the situation before control measures are no longer possible.

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References

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EDUARDO ASENS PAGÉS

Ctenosaurs in the Barcelona area occur in heavily modified habitats such as gardens, parking lots, and parks, but the population has expanded into adjacent natural dry habitats. This is one of the few adult males observed.



EDUARDO ASENS PAGÉS

Females are difficult to distinguish from subadult males. Most individuals fall into one of these classes, suggesting that the Barcelona population either is composed largely of adult females or is reproducing rapidly, and the rising cohort of young males has yet to fully mature.