Project Update: October 2017

On Little Cayman, a largely undeveloped island with a human population of fewer than 200, presence, community awareness, and rapid response are the keys to controlling the spread of invasive green iguanas and hybrids. As evidence of this, our SIRI research team, a collaboration of researchers from Mississippi State University, Cayman Islands Department of Environment (DOE) Staff, and many volunteers, successfully removed one hybrid and six green iguana hatchlings in this past month alone by partnering with the mission of "Green Iguana B'Gonna" (GIBG) and seamlessly incorporating green iguana control into our major objectives. The hybrid, the sixth encountered on the island since a single breeding event was first detected in August 2016, was captured on an active search following a community hotline report.

Meanwhile, the green hatchlings were all encountered within a short radius of a major nesting site during routine survey and tracking activities. This follows successes of earlier in the summer, when our team directly partnered with GIBG to capture two green iguanas and an additional hybrid. Since leaving the island, GIBG has been organising intensive night surveys of the areas where we encountered green hatchlings and has so far removed an additional six animals. This is only the second record of a green iguana clutch hatching out on Little Cayman, and is an early warning sign of an invasive breeding population becoming established. In a recent Action Plan meeting with major stakeholders, green iguanas were recognised among the most urgent threats facing wild SIRI populations. However, with the dedication of the local community and the commitment of the DOE and Little Cayman National Trust to supporting terrestrial research and pursuing increased biosecurity for the Sister Islands, Little Cayman may continue to serve as a beacon for effective invasive species control on small islands.



