The Terrestrial Resources Unit (TRU) has been actively conserving the Sister Island Rock Iguanas (*Cyclura nubila caymanensis*) (SIRIs) for well over a decade. With assistance from several residents and visiting scientists over the years, the monitoring and research on SIRI’s has truly been an international and collaborative effort.

In 2017, TRU established a much-needed internship based on Little Cayman to allow the Department of Environment (DoE) to collect continuous data on this critically endangered species both during and outside the main breeding season. Our intern, Tanja Laaser, has worked tirelessly on the project over the last year and continues to gather crucial support from Little Cayman volunteers.

Residents who are interested in protecting the Cayman Islands environment invest their free time to help catch, tag and release SIRIs during the day while they also help search for the invasive Green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) at night. Even tourists from abroad are keen on helping out. Tanja shares her enthusiasm through multiple weekly talks at the main resorts and at the museum where she works. Occasionally the project also receives more than a helping hand and an extra pair of eyes: donations!
Jonathan Weisbach, who came to Little Cayman with the Earthwatch Institute to assist the “Central Caribbean Marine Institute” (CCMI), was one of those engaged visitors. He was so inspired by the conservation work done on Little Cayman that he wanted to do more. Not only did he join the team of resident volunteers tagging and monitoring the SIRI’s, he also left his brand-new binoculars with the iguana team and donated US$500 for the conservation efforts.

When he returned to the U.S., he ordered more field equipment essential for the SIRI work. He sent a total of six extendable poles and a capturing net to Little Cayman. As iguanas are surprisingly strong animals, the equipment easily gets damaged over time with heavy usage. Attaching a noose to the extendable poles helps to safely catch iguanas. Different sizes and strengths are needed for the varying sizes of the iguanas.

Other generous donors include Dr. John Sallaway and his wife, Anita, who have visited Little Cayman several times. John is a reptile veterinarian and supports our efforts with his expertise as well as with fieldwork supplies such as stickers to label the blood vials and surgical instruments. Dr. Sallaway also brought a generous donation to Little Cayman provided by Mark Hagen from Exo Terra.

Exo Terra not only distributes reptile products for terrariums but is also a member of the “The International Reptile Conservation Foundation” (IRCF) and has been actively involved with the “Blue Iguana Recovery Program” (BIRP) in Grand Cayman.

Our intern, Tanja Laaser, presents three weekly talks on the native Rock Iguanas in the Cayman Islands and the audience often leaves donations for the continued monitoring and research. John and Joan Hillenbrand, the parents of Peter Hillenbrand who owns the Southern Cross Club in Little Cayman, also recently contributed with a generous donation of US$500 to the cause.

The support we get for the conservation of our Sister Island Rock Iguanas in Little Cayman and Cayman Brac is heart-warming, extremely valuable and most appreciated. This is a shout out to everyone involved; donors, volunteers, researchers and interns for allowing us to maintain the conservation efforts of this endangered species to safe-guard it for generations to come. These animals truly represent the natural heritance of both Little Cayman and Cayman Brac.
Drawing on the foundations of two years of experimental cull trials in 2016 and 2017, the Department of Environment (DoE) is about to launch a major, long-term effort on Grand Cayman to bring the exploding Green iguana (*Iguana iguana*) population under control.

Supplementary government funds have been allocated in 2018 to enable the cull to start at full force and a contractor is being retained to manage this complex operation.

TRU’s annual survey this past August shows the green iguana population on Grand Cayman has now reached approximately 1.3 million, with additional hatchlings still emerging after the survey was completed. The cull seeks to reverse years of near exponential increase and cause a major decline in the Green iguanas over its first year of operation.

DoE hopes to start registering cullers in the second week of October, and the cull may start a week or two later. It is planned to continue through 2019 and beyond.

Caymanian adults and local companies will be able to register as cullers, so long as they can commit to culling at least 400 iguanas in the first month, and can continue that level of effort at least to the end of 2019. Any registered culler will be free within normal legal requirements to make private

One container full of culled iguanas from the pilot projects back in 2016 goes to show the level of logistical issues surrounding just counting and moving a miniscule proportion of the existing population.
arrangements to partner with others and increase their culling power.

A site for counting culled iguanas is being set up at the George Town landfill where the management contractor will place a team to receive the incoming batches and record them.

The contractor will pay registered cullers for the iguanas culled, with an adjustment for an incentive scheme which will reward cullers for reaching their individual monthly and annual quotas. Cull counts will be monitored constantly by DoE and reviewed at regular Project Steering Committee meetings, where the progress of the cull will be carefully assessed and any problems that arise can be addressed.

The culler registration dates and details will be announced via all public media and all interested cullers should respond to that announcement when it comes.

Department of Environment
Registered Green Iguana Culler:
Name Here #123
Valid 20 - 27th June, 2016, for locations west of Grand Harbour, Grand Cayman only

Green Iguana Culling Guidelines (left) will be distributed to each registered hunter as will an Identification Card (example above) to allow registered hunters to deliver iguanas to the station at the landfill. A map of high density areas, such as the below, will be made available also.
The brand new Blue Iguana signs were finally installed last month in East End with the assistance of the National Roads Authority (NRA).

While most visitors and residents alike will probably wonder about their chances of coming across a Blue Iguana on their way to Morritts and the Wyndham Reef Resort, the Department of Environment (DoE) and Blue Iguana Recovery Programme (BIRP) have sadly received many reports of Blue Iguana roadkill recently. Most cases occur along Queens Highway and along Sunny Field Road. Calls often come in during the breeding season when males roam large territories to fend off competing males while trying to keep track of their females. Even females expand their (much smaller) territory during this time in search for good nesting grounds and not all iguanas stay within the reserve boundaries. With an ever increasing population of unwanted Green iguanas, it is possible that drivers may be attempting to run over iguanas on purpose -not knowing the difference. While we do want to reduce the Green iguana population, we endorse only humane controlled culling and advice to keep our roads safe.

The beautiful new signs were designed by John F. Binns and have five different locations in EE on both sides of the road. Go see if you can find them all!
Cayman has five native snakes: the Cayman Racer (Alsophis cantherigerus), the Cayman Ground Boa (Tropidophis caymanensis), the Caribbean Water Snake (Tretanorhinus variabilis), and the Cayman Blind Snake (Typhlops caymanensis) and (Typhlops epactia). Two introduced species are also relatively common: the Corn Snake (Elaphe guttata), a popular pet species from North America, and the tiny Brahminy Blind Snake (Ramphotyphlops braminus), probably introduced from Florida in plant pots. None are dangerous to humans, cats or dogs. This guide focuses on the three species causing most concern.

**Cayman Ground Boa**
A miniature boa, rarely exceeding 18 inches, found only in the Cayman Islands.

**ID:** Look for triangular head, “chubby cheeks”. Colours vary from chocolate brown to very pale.

**FEAR FACTOR:** Often mistaken for “baby rattlesnakes” on account of their “diamond back” pattern, and a light, creamy yellow tip to their tail.

**FACT:** When snakes flick their tongues, they are tasting the air - no cause for concern!

**Cayman Racer**
Fast-moving, growing to 5-6 feet.

**ID:** Generally dark brown or reddish with pale belly, flecking with dark and pink scales.

**FEAR FACTOR:** When threatened, it can raise its head and flatten its neck, causing confusion with a cobra. Fully grown adults can appear “huge”.

**FACT:** To scare a snake from your path, stamp your feet on the ground. It will detect the vibrations and move away.

**Corn Snake**
Growing to around five feet in length. Highly variable in colour. **ID:** Most specimens captured around George Town exhibit light brown bodies with bold red patterning.

**FEAR FACTOR:** Bright colouration can often indicate poisonous or venomous species, however the Corn Snake, like Cayman’s native snakes, is harmless to people and pets. If spotted call DoE as they are invasive.
The Tea Banker occurs in two varieties, namely *P. c. var. caymanensis* and *P. c. var. robusta*. The first mentioned variety can be found on Cuba and on all three Cayman Islands while the second variety is a Grand Cayman endemic.

Both plants are critically endangered and in decline due to development of its beach ridge habitat. Coastlines are rapidly developing and the cemeteries in which it is found are constantly maintained and raked. The *caymanensis* grows in small soil pockets of exposed limestone or coarse sand while the *robusta* grows mainly on top of fine sand.

Recognised by its flat and mat-like growth, the Tea Banker has beautiful tiny yellow flowers which gives off a sweet lemony scent.

Tea banker is of significant cultural and historic value to the Cayman Islands as it was used in bush medicine for making an aromatic tea. Boiled with sugar the tea was said to cure stomach ailments and to increase your appetite.

Whether or not this plant is in fact an annual is a challenge to monitor, because it grows amongst Zoysia grass, Donkey Weed (*Stylosanthes hamata*) and other small and large ground covers. When in flower it is easy to spot, however, so see if you can find it on your next beach excursion!

Tea Banker can be spotted by its pretty little yellow flowers in certain cemeteries and along beach ridges. Photos by Kristan Godbeer & Mat Cottam.