

ZOO VIEW

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Dedication to a Highly Productive Zoo Conservation Biologist and Herpetologist Who Serves as a Wonderful Model for all Persons in Our Profession—Allison C. Alberts, Ph.D.

I offer this tribute to Allison Alberts to reflect my admiration for her long service to our community as herpetologist, conservationist, manager, leader, and mentor (Fig. 1). Until her retirement in the fall of 2020, she served at San Diego Zoo Global as Chief Conservation and Research Officer and holds the Benirschke Chair of Research. The chair honors the name of Dr. Kurt Benirschke, long-time veterinarian at the Zoo. Allison is responsible for ongoing conservation science activities at the San Diego Zoo, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research, and at field sites worldwide.

As a reptile and amphibian enthusiast, Allison has participated in conservation programs for endangered iguanas in Costa Rica, Cuba, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and Fiji, as well as working with Komodo Dragons, sea turtles, desert tortoises, and native California frogs, lizards, and snakes (Figs. 2–7). Much of her research has focused on the development of innovative techniques for restoring critically endangered species to the wild. The San Diego Zoo has been an integral player in iguana research and conservation over many years through publication of books and papers by Alberts and colleagues.

As one reviews a list of her publications, it is striking that so many are in peer-reviewed scientific journals. These topics include medical and captive management, head-starting, and *in situ* studies focusing on physiology and behavior. Another characteristic is the large number of joint studies with academic, zoo, and other biological colleagues. In summary, this is quite an impressive lifetime of accomplishments and I enthusiastically await her next thought-provoking ideas.

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PHOTOS BY JEFFREY LEMM



FIG. 1. Allison Alberts up front and personal doing three of her favorite things—interacting with wild reptiles.

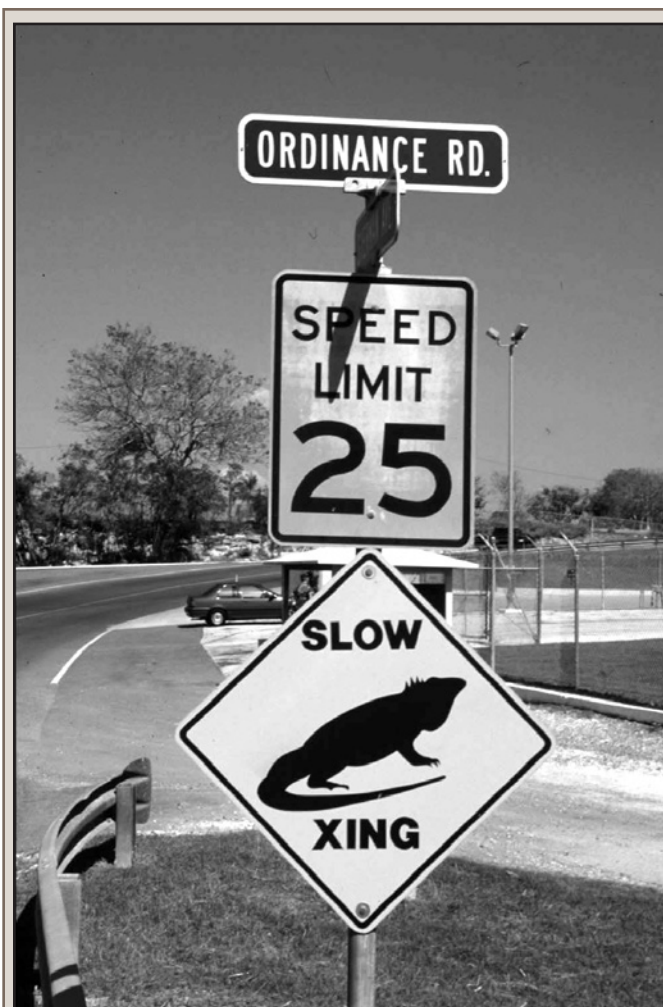


FIG. 2. Iguana Crossing sign warning motorists to slow down for lizards in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

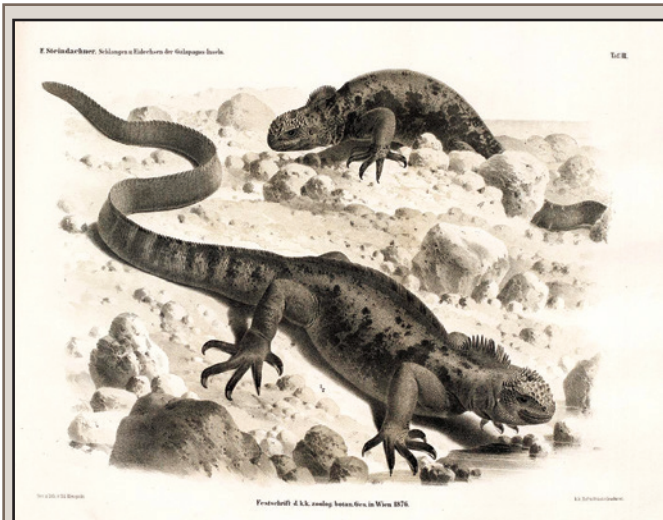


FIG. 3. Marine Iguanas (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) from Die schlangen und eidechsen der Galapagos-inseln / by Franz Steindachner in 1876.

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FIG. 4. The Fiji Island Iguana (*Brachylophus fasciatus*), here pictured in *Proceedings of Scientific Meetings of the London Zoological Society*, is certainly impressive but it is at risk due to human factors. The San Diego Zoo is playing a significant role in developing captive assurance colonies of this taxon and congeners Fiji Crested Iguana (*B. vittensis*) and Central Fijian Banded Iguana (*B. bulabula*).

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FIG. 5. Curator C. B. Perkins from San Diego Zoo moved 60 Galápagos Land Iguanas (*Conolophus subcristatus*) from Baltra Island (known also as South Seymour Island) to North Seymour Island, which contained no iguanas, in the 1940s. Had this not been done, this species would now be extinct due to human activities. Frontispiece image from William Beebe's *Galapagos World's End* (1924).

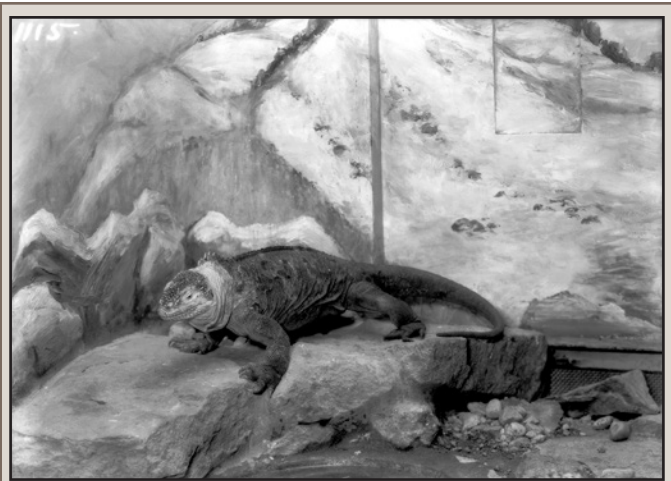


FIG. 6. Galápagos Land Iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*) on exhibit at Smithsonian National Zoological Park (SNZP) in Spring 1934. The dinosaur mosaic in the transom was by artist Charles R. Knight. All of the larger exhibits within the building had background murals painted by Knight. These were detailed paintings of ancient ruins, such as Egyptian temples, as well as natural habitat scenes. Unfortunately, all of these murals were either painted over or the exhibits were totally destroyed and rebuilt during the middle 1950s and early 1960s.



FIG. 7. Edward Drinker Cope erected the monotypic genus *Cachryx* in 1866 to accommodate his newly described species, *C. defensor* (Yucatan Spiny-tailed Iguana). However, *Cachryx* would eventually be synonymized with *Ctenosaura* or *Enyaliosaurus*. A recent molecular study (Malone et al. 2017. *Mol. Phylog. Evol.* 115:27–39) using both mitochondrial and nuclear data recovered the two Yucatan endemics—*defensor* and *alfredschmidtii*—as outside the clade containing other species of *Ctenosaura*; both were placed in the resurrected genus *Cachryx*. Image from *Proceedings of the Scientific Meetings London*, 8 volumes (1861–1891).

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FIG. 8. Books authored by Allison Alberts.

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