

## Brief Notes on the Status of Hispaniolan Rhinoceros Iguanas, *Cyclura cornuta*

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Rhinoceros Iguanas have a broad but disjunct distribution across Hispaniola. Populations in Parque Nacional Jaragua on the lower Barahona Peninsula and in Parque Nacional Isla Cabritos (and nearby shorelines of Lago Enriquillo) are stable and show signs of increasing in numbers. Protected status, the inaccessibility of much of the lower Barahona Peninsula, and education efforts directed primarily at the inhabitants of villages around Lago Enriquillo have apparently combined to produce this currently rosy picture.

Elsewhere the outlook is less bright. The status of Haitian populations has not been assessed recently. Most are probably in decline and many may have been extirpated as a consequence of continued human exploitation and habitat degradation attributable to a growing population engaged in subsistence agriculture and charcoal production. Combined with a lack of ability or interest on the part of the government to enforce existing laws, the future of those populations still remaining appears grim.

Isolated Dominican populations may be holding their own in portions of the Valle de Neiba and possibly in the drier regions of the Samaná Peninsula. However, the status of those found in the north near Monte Cristi and Puerto Plata and those in the eastern Dominican Republic range from being definitely in decline to having an undetermined status. Suitable

habitat in inaccessible regions of Parque Nacional del Este may support viable populations, but sightings there and elsewhere are rare and consist almost exclusively of large adults. If population densities are too low to facilitate sufficiently frequent contact (i.e., breeding) to sustain numbers, those populations are in danger of extirpation when the few remaining adults die.

Recent evidence showing two distinct genetic haplotypes among Dominican Rhinoceros Iguanas and indications that one of these may reflect the eastern populations emphasize emphatically the need to study and preserve these isolated populations, populations that might represent a unique genetic heritage.

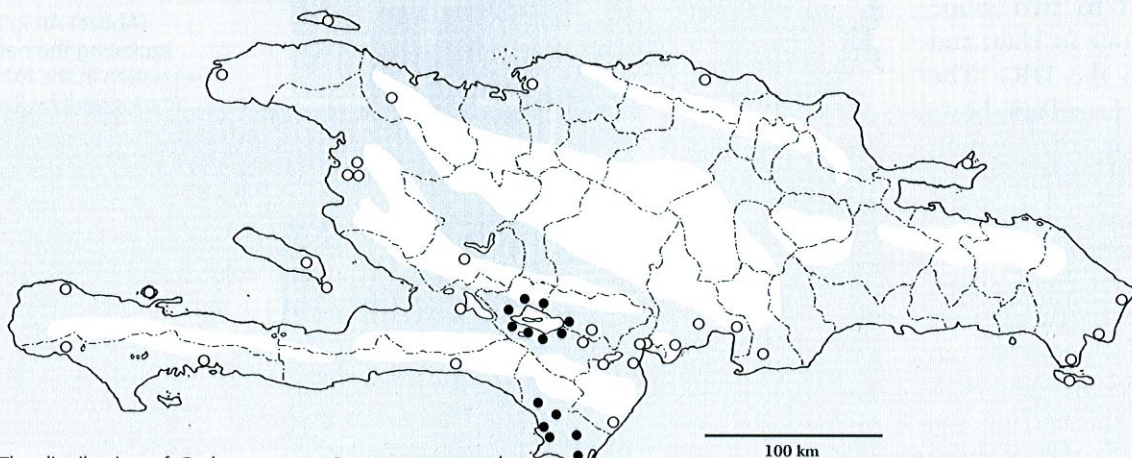
### Pertinent Literature

**Glor, R.E., R. Powell, and J.S. Parmerlee, Jr.** 2000. *Cyclura cornuta*. *Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles* (709):1–6.

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The distribution of *Cyclura cornuta*. Dots represent populations that are apparently doing well, whereas circles represent populations in decline or the status of which is undetermined. Light areas mark mountain ranges.