



About Our Cover

The Black Spiny-tailed Iguana (or Black Iguana; *Ctenosaura similis*) has the largest range and is the largest species in the genus (males are ≤ 1.4 m and females ≤ 1 m in length). From its presumed origin in Central America, it has spread throughout the region into Mexico and even into the northern regions of South America. There are introduced populations in Florida and on several Caribbean islands.

The genus name (*cteno* = comb, *saura* = lizard) refers to the crest of spikes that runs down the back and tail. Males may develop colored regions on the head and neck during the breeding season as part of their display regime, which includes characteristic head bobbing. After mating in the spring, females produce up to 30 eggs at a time, which hatch in 90 days.

These iguanas are opportunistic feeders and may eat small vertebrates and insects but are primarily herbivores. They are diurnal and hide from predators in rocks and crevices and in trees. They readily use their tails and teeth for defense. Capable of running up to 30 km/hour for short distances, they lay claim to being the world's fastest lizard.

The photograph was taken at the Mayan ruins of Tulum on the Atlantic Coast of the Yucatan peninsula with a Nikon D300 and 150-mm Nikor lens by Associate Editor William McComas.

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