

Iguana

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Iguana Latest News

Voyage of the Iguanas: How They Traveled from the Americas to Fiji

What Are Iguanas?

- **Iguanas** are **large, stout lizards** primarily found in **tropical regions of the Americas**.
- They have **scaly skin covered in warts, spines along their back**, and a **flap of flesh (dewlap) under their necks**.
- Iguanas exhibit **various colour morphs**, including **green, blue, and grey**.
- They are **herbivores** and have **adapted to different environments**, from **deserts to rainforests**.

Geographic Range

- **Native Habitat:** Found throughout **Central and South America**, from **Mexico to Paraguay and Brazil**.
- **Introduced regions:** Established populations in **Florida, Hawaii, and Caribbean islands**.

- **Largest Lizard in the USA:** It is the **largest lizard species** found within **U.S. borders**.
- **Arboreal Species:** Primarily **tree-dwelling (canopy layers)**, rarely descending except for nesting.
- **Preferred Environments:**
 - **Forests & Rainforests** (terrestrial biomes).
 - **Rivers, Lakes & Coastal Waters** (aquatic biomes).
 - **Wetlands (swamps)**.
 - **Urban & Agricultural Areas** (suburban adaptability).

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** **Not Threatened**.
- **CITES Listing:** **Appendix II** (regulated trade).
- **Threats to Population:**
 - Overexploitation for **pet trade & leather industry**.
 - **Habitat destruction** due to deforestation and urbanization.

How Did Iguanas Reach Fiji?

- A recent study published in the **Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences** suggests that the **ancestors of Fijian iguanas** travelled nearly **8,000 km across the Pacific Ocean** on **rafts of floating vegetation** from the **Americas**.
- **Theory of Rafting:** **Rafting is a process where animals hitch a ride on floating vegetation across oceans.**
 - Common among **small invertebrates**, but rare for **large vertebrates** due to survival challenges.
- **Previous Evidence of Iguana Rafting:**
 - **1995 Caribbean Observation:** Scientists saw **15 green iguanas** raft **over 300 km** on hurricane debris.
 - **Galápagos Iguanas:** Likely rafted **1,000 km from South America**.
- The **Fijian crossing was nearly 8 times longer**, making it an **extraordinary event**.

Iguana FAQs

Q1. What is an Iguana?

Ans. Iguanas are large, herbivorous lizards native to Central and South America. They belong to the Iguanidae family and are known for their spiny crests, strong tails, and sharp claws.

Q2. What is the ecological significance of Iguanas?

Ans. Iguanas play a crucial role in seed dispersal and maintaining vegetation balance in their ecosystems. They help control plant growth and serve as prey for predators.

Q3. Why is the Marine Iguana unique?

Ans. The Marine Iguana is the only lizard adapted to a marine environment. It feeds on algae, can dive underwater, and has specialized salt glands to excrete excess salt.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/iguana/>

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