

Fun Facts: Dive into the life of the Sister Islands Rock Iguana (SIRI)



40 minutes



Age 7-11

1. Sister Islands Rock Iguanas are native/endemic to only two places worldwide, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, the Sister Islands of the Cayman Islands (DoE.ky - Terrestrial).
2. Iguanas are cold blooded and need an exterior heat source to awaken their internal organs and bodily functions (LiveScience.com).
3. In 2016, over 460 SIRI hatchlings were tagged and released on Little Cayman (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
4. All iguanas have a shadow and light sensing scale on the top of their head that act as their “third eye” also called a parietal eye (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
5. If an iguana becomes trapped or a predator has a hold of its tail, it can “drop” and detach it from their body. The tail will keep moving to distract the predator while the animal can run away and survive. The tail will then regrow from this breaking point, it most often looks almost identical to its original tail but never shows the spines like on the original tail as they never regrow. (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
6. Sister Islands Rock Iguanas have crest spines all down their tails. However, if it is a regrown tail, then they won’t have these crest spines as they never grow back (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
7. Unlike green iguanas, Sister Islands Rock Iguanas don’t live in trees, but in underground burrows and tunnels they build (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
8. Sister Islands Rock Iguanas are herbivorous but are also opportunistic feeders, meaning that they will eat almost anything if they got the opportunity (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
9. Sister Islands Rock Iguanas have their own language which involves the bobbing and shaking of their heads. Different frequencies and patterns symbolize different communications (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
10. Male Sisters Island Rock Iguanas are very territorial of their land, it is because of this that you will never find more than one male iguana living in the same territory (DoE.ky - Terrestrial).



11. When Sister Island Rock Iguanas are young, their gender cannot be identified by their outward physical appearance. When they are approximately 5 years old, you can determine a SIRI's sex by appearance, as males have a larger head than females in proportion to their body size, are larger in general body size and have big jowls that are muscles the males use for fighting to defend their territory (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
12. Sister Islands Rock Iguanas have red eyes, this is a shared characteristic of most rock iguanas (*Cyclura sp.*) (Tanja L. SIRI Presentation 2017, DoE).
13. The population of SIRI on Little Cayman was estimated at 1,786 individuals in November 2019. This is a significant reduction from the population in 2015, which was estimated at 2,915. This population survey also suggested a lack of young iguanas in the population in Little Cayman (Cayman Islands Department of Environment, 2020).