



Likuliku Lagoon Resort's Fijian Crested Iguana Sanctuary Welcomes More Newborns



Based at Likuliku Lagoon Resort, the Ahura Resorts Iguana Sanctuary is delighted to welcome more new arrivals of the critically endangered* Fijian Crested Iguana.

These new captive-bred hatchlings bring the total to 5 born in the last year in what is the only facility of its kind in the world to successfully breed this species under “natural” conditions. This essentially means, no laboratories or incubators and that the adult female laid her eggs in the dirt at the bottom of the cage as she would do in the wild. Other captive programs and zoos practice incubation where they actually dig the eggs out of the dirt and incubate them.

Sia Rasalato, Group Environment Manager for Ahura Resorts (Likuliku’s owning/management company), explains: “Two of Likuliku’s captive females laid approximately 4 to 6 eggs each back in January (you cannot identify the exact number of eggs each female laid due to the fact they hatch naturally in captivity). Three eggs from one of the females hatched on 30th August, but unfortunately one didn’t make it as it was very weak. Following this, another egg hatched from the second female a few days later and we are expecting more eggs to hatch within the next couple of weeks. Then all these new hatchlings will be closely monitored before they are tagged and released into the wild.

“Like the hatchlings born last year, they are too tiny for some of their physical features to develop, so we haven’t named, tagged or identified the sex yet. It will be a few more months before we are able to do all that” said Sia. “There is also even more good news out in the wild too which indicates that our invasive species management program is working. Last year we captured a total of 16 iguanas within the Resort leases. Out of the 16 captured, 12 were first-time captures, which were later tagged, morphometry measurements done, names given and then released back into the wild. The remaining 4 were recaptures – their pit-tags were monitored and weight and length measurements were also observed.

Resort guests are able to see these new and existing family members when they visit the Iguana Sanctuary based at Likuliku Lagoon Resort.

Steve Anstey, Ahura Resorts, Group General Manager says, "As a resort company operating in a pristine and sensitive wilderness environment such as ours - with ocean and coral reefs on one side and land flora and fauna on the other, we fully recognize the importance of sustainable tourism and believe that development in such areas carries both a legal and moral responsibility to ensure our environment is not degraded through irresponsible activities and practices.

"Our aim is to not only minimize our footprint and impact on the extraordinary nature that surrounds us but also, through a range of activities, programs and initiatives, improve and enhance the environment for imperilled species for future generations. The significant work we have done to date with the iguanas can now be celebrated via these recent breeding successes" continues Steve, "including this program being instrumental in our acceptance earlier this year into the National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World collection. This was further recognition of the great work being done to conserve this fragile species and its subsequent habitat".

The discovery of a Fiji Crested Iguana in 2010 at Likuliku Lagoon Resort kicked off an incredible research journey, sparked by the species' classification as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List. Fiji Crested Iguanas are naturally found only in Fiji, and their presence is therefore beneficial to the eco-tourism economy. Each island that is lucky enough to still have an iguana population will have their own unique genetic "finger print," and each island often supports an iguana species different from all others in Fiji. They may look similar and be close relatives, but they are different and only DNA sampling of iguanas will indicate which island they are from. The iguanas on Malolo were thought to be extinct for over 25 years before the exciting rediscovery in 2010.

Like most animals on the brink of extinction, the demise of the Fiji Iguana has been largely due to the destruction of their natural forest habitat through human activities and the introduction of non-native animals including rats, cats, mongoose and goats which either eat the iguanas or eat their food.

Dry Forest is one of the most endangered eco-systems on the planet and is crucial to the survival of the Fiji Iguana and other wildlife. Unfortunately, only small pockets of dry forest remain on Malolo Island and the islands of the Mamanuca group. Ahura Resorts is helping to combat this with a major regeneration program including the first Dry Forest Nursery established on the island to grow the various required species to create this unique eco-system, plus the development of a seed-bank. This will ensure the various species can continue to be planted on the island to re-establish this crucial Iguana habitat.

Sia adds, "We continue to plant crested iguana edible trees and other native trees within the resort leases. So far, we have restored about 2.5 acres of dry forest (approximately 2000 trees) within the past year. We have doubled our saplings inventory from 12 to 24 species and at the moment we have about 2000 native tree saplings in the nursery – of which 500 will be transferred out to be planted by guests and resort staff as part of the various environmental projects and activities we conduct at the Resort."

The US Geological Survey, San Diego Zoo and Taronga Zoo have been valuable partners with Ahura Resorts over the last seven years. The team has carried out major control of feral cat and rat populations, and has also assisted with the reforestation project which has now become a focal point. Recently, the first "benefactors" group from San Diego zoo visited Likuliku to help out with the dry forest restoration and Crested Iguana conservation.

The arrival of the latest newborns is also perfect timing for World Iguana Day on 8th September.

***As listed on the [The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#) and in Appendix 1 of [CITES \(Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species\)](#)**

ENDS

Ahura was an ancient god of creations who symbolised life, kindness, equality, care of the environment, charity, loyalty and faithfulness to settlement, tribe and county. The omnipresent sun was an enduring symbol of radiance, purity and life sustenance. Today, Ahura Resorts embodies these same values. As a 100% Fijian-owned company, with over 40 years experience in tourism and hospitality throughout the Pacific, Ahura is dedicated to providing quality holiday and lifestyle experiences while preserving cultural values and the surrounding environment. Ahura is the management company operating one of Fiji's most popular and well-known resorts - Malolo Island Fiji, and the luxury escape for couples which features Fiji's first and only authentic over-water bures - Likuliku Lagoon Resort. Experience the Warm Heart of Fiji with Ahura Resorts. www.ahuraresorts.com

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