



An iguana checks out his own reflection at an Upper Keys window. A new program could reduce the number of the non-native reptiles in the Florida Keys. **Kevin Wadlow** - Keynoter

LOCAL

## State seeks Keys iguana wrangler

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Wanted: An iguana wrangler to go on patrol in the Florida Keys.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission staff posted a July 27 opening for a biologist to take the lead on dealing with Keys iguanas, primarily on public lands.

No one has calculated the Keys population of iguanas, an exotic reptile native to Central and South America, but state wildlife scientists say widespread reports and their own observations “driving up and down U.S. 1” strongly suggest the island iguana population is thriving.

“We have had a lot of calls about iguanas from constituents,” said Thomas Reinert, FWC South Florida regional director.

The job includes “acting as the primary point of contact for assisting the public with iguana management” and working on iguana “removal projects” on Keys lands owned by local, state or federal agencies. “[U]sing methods that may include ... hand capture, noosing, trapping, air rifles and other firearms,” says the job summary.

Applications are due Sunday. A college biological-science degree and wildlife expertise are required. “Knowledge of nonnative reptiles in Florida and experience handling potentially dangerous wildlife is preferred,” says the posting.

Iguanas are not considered aggressive but they do have teeth, claws and a whip-like tail that can inflict injury in a tangle with people or pets. They can grow to more than 5 feet long and live for more than a decade.

The reptiles are essentially vegetarian, but scientists fear voracious iguanas can devour endangered Keys plants and other plants needed by native species.

The new iguana wrangler, to be paid from \$18 to \$22 as a temporary state employee with limited benefits, can advise homeowners about removing iguanas but will not actively work on private property, Reinert said.

“If the owners catch an iguana in a trap and don’t want to euthanize the iguana, we’ll pick it up and euthanize it in a humane manner,” Reinert said. “We won’t freeze them.”

“Iguanas can cause damage by eating valuable landscape plants, shrubs and trees, as well as orchids and many other flowers,” a Broward County advisory notes. “They can also dig burrows next to seawalls and foundations, increasing the chance of erosion and eventual collapse.”

Iguanas also defecate and their droppings can be substantial.

Killing an iguana on private property is legal but all animal-cruelty and firearms laws apply. Experts advise against use of a pellet gun since the iguana may suffer wounds but rarely will be killed outright.

For the full job description, go to <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLFFWCC/bulletins/1ad02a6>.

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A midsize iguana warms itself on a rocky yard in the Upper Keys. A new program seeks to reduce the number of the reptiles in the Florida Keys. **Kevin Wadlow** - Keynoter

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