

What is the status of the Anegada iguana?

The Anegada rock iguana is endemic to the island of Anegada, in the British Virgin Islands. Today the species is critically endangered and faces extinction. Non-native mammals have been introduced to the island, and brought new predation pressures that the iguanas are not equipped to handle.

Why are baby Anegada iguanas so big?

Baby Anegada iguanas are big because they come from a predator-poor environment. Prior to human colonization in the Caribbean, the iguanas were the largest vertebrates on the island. Adult iguanas have no natural predators. The only natural predators of juveniles are the kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), and a snake, the Puerto Rican racer (*Alsophis portoricensis*). Only a few of the snakes in the whole population will actually be big enough to swallow a baby iguana, and even then only one or two hatchlings per season. The iguanas adapted to these predation pressures by having big babies. There is a limited size window when the hatchling iguanas are vulnerable to predation, so by having large babies shortens the time when they can be eaten by predators. The faster a hatchling iguana can grow to be too big for the snake or kestrel to eat, the more likely it is to survive.

How can you tell an old iguana from a younger iguana?

There is no way to determine the exact age for an adult iguana, but one way to get an idea is to look at the crest scales (spikes) along the iguanas' back. Iguanas grow their whole life, but the growth rate really slows down as the animals get older. But the crest scales continue to grow at a fairly constant rate their whole life. So a large iguana with short crest scales is most likely younger than a large iguana with long crest scales