

Off-campus May Term 2009  
John Iverson  
Biological Research; Bahamas Iguanas

Course description. This tropical biology experience will allow eight students to be an integral part of a team doing field research on a population of endangered iguanas (from planning to data collection to data analysis, to report preparation). This study represents the second longest continuous field study of any lizard in the world (our 30th year). We will also spend time identifying invertebrates in tide-pools and snorkeling on coral reefs for fishes and invertebrates. Prerequisites include Biological Diversity and EcoBio. Students will be evaluated on attendance and participation at orientation meetings during spring semester, field participation in May, on the content of their lab/field journals, and on their work preparing our final report. Final reports from recent trips are available by following the links at [www.earlham.edu/~johni](http://www.earlham.edu/~johni).

Itinerary

- 15 October: application due to me (I have my own form that will be required in addition to that of IPO)
- late October: participant selection
- early November: first orientation meeting
- early December: second meeting (especially to provide info for them to take to parents over break, but also to provide general background material to read over break)
- Second semester: ca. three meetings as well as attendance required at Bio Colloquium  
I will give on the long-term results of our studies.
- mid April: Students will be provided with additional background reading material on iguanas to be read before 9 May
- 9 May: Earlham graduation
- 12-14 May: Classroom days (all day), reviewing the biology of iguanas and field techniques in field biology, and preparing for field work.
- 15 May: Early A.M.: Fly to Nassau, board boat; sightseeing in Nassau
- 16 May: Sail to Allen Cays; begin field work
- 17-25 May: Field work in the Exumas
- 25 May: Return to Nassau; visit straw markets and other tourist shops
- 26 May: Midday flight to Dayton and return to Richmond
- 27-29 May: Data analysis and report preparation

Background: This site is important because it is the only place in the world where these iguanas occur, and it has been my long-term study site since 1980 (involving 112 different students and 6 faculty over that time). Since the semester system does not allow us to do field biology on campus during the time of year during which most local field biological activity occurs (May to early June), we in Biology must do field work with students during May Term. We typically offer at least three field opportunities each May Term (seeking a mix of plant and animal, and temperate and tropical experiences). This is our tropical-terrestrial-animal program this year.

Accommodations: While on campus (three days at beginning of program; three days at the end), students will stay in college housing (or their own housing). Presumably housing arrangements will be made through the campus housing coordinator. While in the Bahamas, we will live on the sailing vessel Bahamas Star. We will eat and sleep on board, but spend about 11 hours a day on the islands themselves. Boat charter reservations have already been made.

Other staff: In addition to the owners of the boat (husband and wife, Bruce Dunham and Sheila Young; see attached), Captain Ron White of Good Fortune Charters out of Beaufort, North Carolina (trained marine biologist who leads biology-focused charters on his own boat each summer) will also join us. Bruce Dunham is a former Navy SEAL and is a trained EMT. We will be in VHF radio and cell phone contact with the outside world at all times, and BASRA (Bahamas Air and Sea Rescue) has its headquarters in Nassau (40 miles NW of our field site). We will also be working with the Bahamas National Trust and the Bahamas Department of Agriculture both before (e.g., for permits) and during the trip. Dr. Geoff Smith (EC '90, now at Denison University) and Lynne Yamaguchi Pieper (EC '85, now at Lincoln Park Zoo), both participants on several previous trips and collaborators on several published papers on these iguanas, will also join us.

For any additional questions, please contact John Iverson ([johni@earlham.edu](mailto:johni@earlham.edu) or 765-983-1405).