



*Championing UK's most special species:
the wildlife of UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and
Crown Dependencies (CDs)*

FACT-SHEET ON:

Anguilla Lizards
UK Overseas Territory: Anguilla

Sombrero Black Lizard *Pholidoscelis corvinus*

This species (also known as *Ameiva corvine*) is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to its limited distribution, only Sombrero Island: an area less than 0.37 km² (91 acres) in size. A 1999 study estimated between 396 and 461 individuals, including adults and juveniles, based on mark-recapture data. Although there are no permanent human settlements on Sombrero, increased rodent populations such as introduced mice may put pressure on the lizards. The population appears to be thriving, possibly due to its isolation from human activity.

A major threat appeared in the late 1990s when a US company proposed to construct a launching site for rockets larger than any then in use (and despite having no experience of this industry). Objections and study from conservationists, combined with concerns about security, safety and contingent liability eventually prevented this. In 2005, in a review for UK and UKOT governments, UKOTCF proposed Sombrero as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, and this was designated in 2018. With this clearer indication of Sombrero's future, the situation should be safer, provided that threats such as invasives are avoided.

Little Scrub Island Ground Lizard

Pholidoscelis corax

Also known as Censky's ameiva and *Ameiva corax*, this species is endemic to Little Scrub Island. It is classified as Endangered due to its small population (estimated at approximately 250 mature adults) and extremely limited distribution/habitat, an area less than 0.049 km² (12 acres) in size. It is vulnerable to built development, invasive mammal introduction, seasonal loss of vegetation during hurricanes, and declining seabird numbers (a food source).

Lesser Antillean Iguana *Iguana delicatissima*

The Lesser Antillean iguana is a large arboreal lizard endemic to the Lesser Antilles. It is one of two species of lizard of the genus *Iguana* and is in severe decline due to habitat destruction, introduced feral predators, hunting, and hybridization with its introduced sister species, the Green Iguana *Iguana iguana*. Thus, it is Critically Endangered. The total population has experienced declines of $\geq 75\%$. Although extirpation from some islands occurred in the early to mid-20th century, the remaining population has continued to decline within the last three generations (33–42 years). In recent years, on-going decline and extirpation of the Lesser Antillean Iguana has been primarily caused by inter- and intra-island dispersal (human-assisted) of the invasive alien Green Iguana and subsequent hybridization.

On Anguilla, the iguana population was estimated around 300 in 1998. During a recent assessment, however, only 15 individuals were found in a single location on the northeast



Above: Sombrero Black Lizard, © Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF
Below: Little Scrub Ground Lizard
Bottom: Lesser Antillean Iguana



side of the island. Continued survey efforts 2016–2017 have led to additional sightings. In 2016, after genetic analysis, 14 animals were translocated by the Anguilla National Trust to an offshore cay (Prickly Pear East) for long-term monitoring and to ensure the conservation and survival of these animals. This is part of joint working with Flora & Fauna International and other partners. Following an abortive attempt to remove the invasive green iguanas from mainland Anguilla, the few surviving Lesser Antillean iguanas are now being relocated and reintroduced to offshore islands that can be more effectively guarded against invaders. The project team is now collaborating with neighbouring French and Dutch territories to help ensure the survival of their iguana populations, as well as expanding to conserve other threatened reptiles.