

Long-Tailed Iguanas & Tegus

Program: Iguana Invasion!

Description: After reading excerpts from *Iguana Invasion!* by Virginia Aronson and Allyn Szejko, participants will make an interactive craft that features the iguana's famous long tail and its preference for flowers as a snack. Participants can choose to make the lizard colorful like the iguana or more monochromatic like the black and white tegu (also a nonnative species).¹

Objectives:

- Participants will learn about the behavior of iguanas and other large lizards in the wild and how they have adapted to the Florida peninsula.
- Readers will learn about how these animals are released into the wild and how they thrive while native species may decline.
- Learners will become more aware of responsible pet ownership to avoid increasing the population of invasive creatures such as the iguana, Burmese pythons, tegus, etc.

Activity Materials:

- Paper plate with iguana outline
- Coloring instrument (markers, crayons or colored pencils) in any colors, but especially greens, brown, black, orange and pink.
- Pipe cleaner
- Scissors
- Tissue paper or colorful craft paper
- Single hole punch

Activity Instructions:

First, have participants color the paper plates using a variety of colors (or in fantastical black and white if recreating a tegu). Iguanas can have striping on their tails or different colors depending on their healthiness, the temperature, and their age (known as cryptic coloring).²

Next, carefully cut along the bolded line of the iguana, starting at the tip of the tale and rotating inward. Remove the section that says, "cut along thick line." The thin lines indicating the iguana's feet and subtympenic scale do not need to be cut.

Then, stack five or six small strips or squares of tissue paper. Use the pipe cleaner to create a stem by twisting it at the middle of the tissue paper and securing the "petals." Fluff the tissue paper into a flower shape.

Lastly, use the hole punch to create a hole near the iguana's mouth. Pull the stem of the flower through this hole to make it look as if the iguana is munching on a fresh flower. You can wrap part of the stem back up to create a stick for holding the iguana and letting its long tail curl around.

¹ <https://www.wrdw.com/2020/08/22/check-out-the-first-sighting-of-black-and-white-tegu-lizard-in-south-carolina/>

² https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/iguana_iguana/

Historical Notes/References

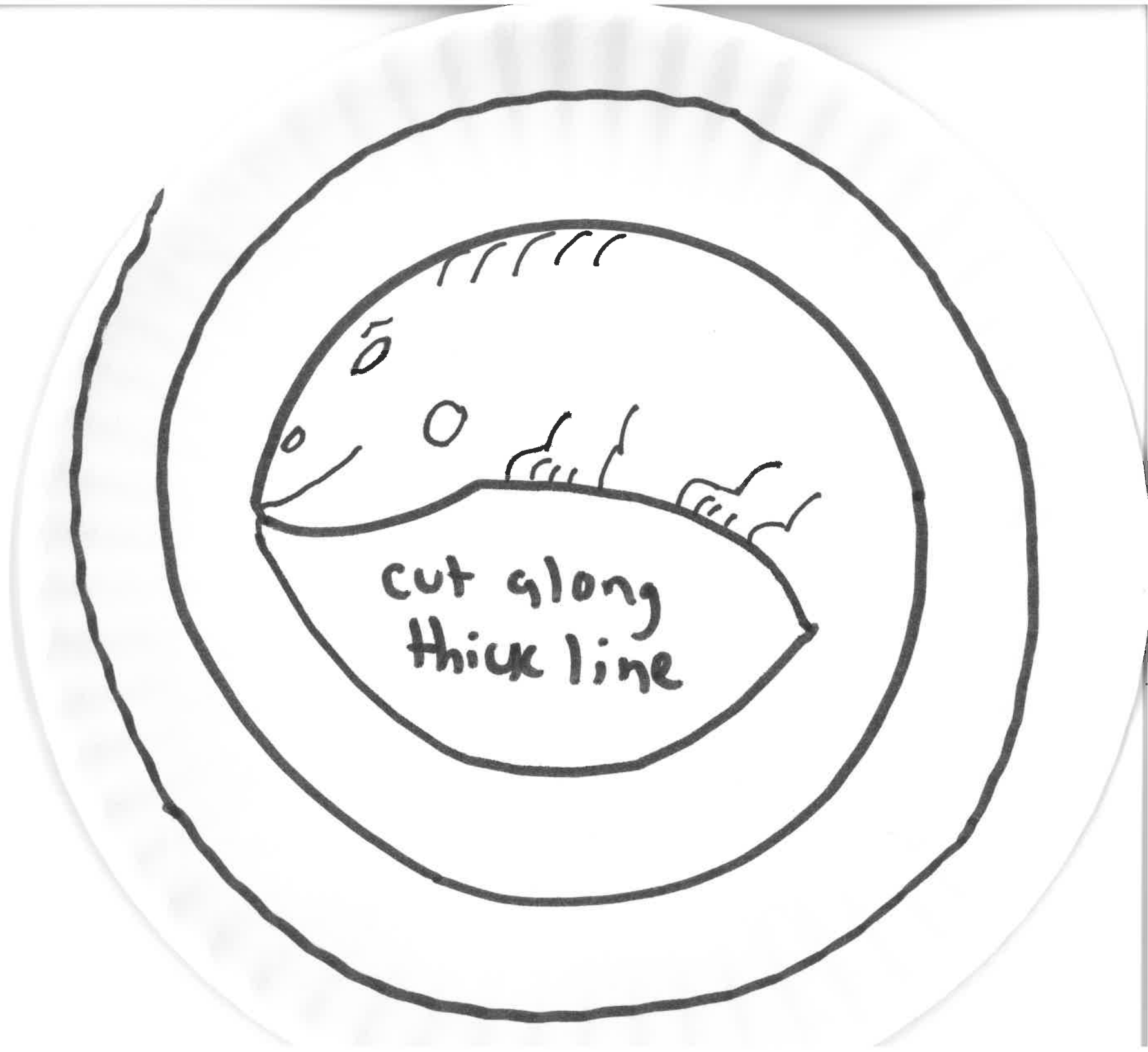
1. Young green iguanas, including hatchlings, usually have bright green as their coloration.³
2. Iguanas are mostly vegetarians who will eat a large variety of foods from leaves and berries to flowers and nuts. Because they will eat ornamental plants, homeowners find them to be a nuisance on the landscape. Adult iguanas may sometimes eat bird eggs or scavenge other food sources.⁴
3. Although iguanas typically live in tree canopies (*arboreal*), they can live in burrows (manmade or animal made). They can overtake the burrows of native Florida animals like the gopher tortoise or the burrowing owl.⁵
4. Iguanas are strong swimmers and may hide from predators in the water for several hours.⁶

³ <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/reptiles/green-iguana/>

⁴ <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/reptiles/green-iguana/>

⁵ https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Iguana_iguana/

⁶ https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Iguana_iguana/



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