

REPTILE LEGENDS - KEEPER PROTOCOL

Evidence-informed annual schedule - adjust to provenance, body condition, age and veterinary findings

Cyclura rileyi nuchalis

Acklins Rock Iguana / Acklins Ground Iguana

Species-specific husbandry and breeding protocol for the Acklins Bight subspecies, anchored to North Cay nesting research, the IUCN West Indian Iguana Husbandry Manual, and current Bahamian climate data.

Core profile Endangered Bahamian rock iguana restricted to cays in the Bight of Acklins. Terrestrial, heliothermic and primarily herbivorous, using exposed coastal scrub, limestone and sandy dune nesting habitat.	Breeding anchor Mating is probably May-June. Field work shows nesting begins in late June and extends into early July; oviposition follows several days after digging begins.	Nest / clutch evidence Females may excavate up to 7 test burrows. Final burrows 69-235 cm long; egg chambers 14-40 cm deep. Clutches 2-5 eggs; mean about 3.1.	Incubation evidence The IUCN manual gives 30 C as the captive incubation temperature. A precise taxon-specific duration is not established; field literature presumes roughly 85-90 days to emergence.
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Annual keeper schedule

Month	Day air	Night	Bask	UVI*	Light	RH day/night*	Rain / mist	Food d/wk	Seasonal management
January	25-27 C	21-23 C	41-45 C	4-6	10.9 h	58-70 / 72-82%	Dry-season maintenance; light AM mist 2-3x/wk	5-6	Cooler, drier phase; keep adults lean
February	25-27 C	21-23 C	41-45 C	4-6	11.4 h	57-69 / 72-82%	Dry; localized moist refuge only	5	Dry-season conditioning; broad browse variety
March	25-28 C	21-23 C	42-46 C	4-6	12.0 h	56-69 / 72-82%	Driest period; avoid chronic enclosure wetness	5-6	Seasonal warm-up; no brumation
April	26-29 C	22-24 C	42-46 C	4-6	12.7 h	58-72 / 74-84%	Dry-to-wet transition	5-6	Increase feeding quality; prepare deep nest zone
May	27-30 C	23-25 C	43-47 C	4-6	13.2 h	62-76 / 76-86%	Rain pulses increase	6	Probable courtship/mating period
June	28-31 C	24-26 C	43-47 C	4-6	13.5 h	64-78 / 78-88%	Warm; regular rain pulses	6-7	Mating / gravid females; late-June nesting begins
July	29-31 C	24-26 C	43-47 C	4-6	13.3 h	65-80 / 78-89%	Warm wet season; moderate rain	6-7	Primary oviposition; females may dig multiple test burrows
August	29-31 C	24-26 C	43-47 C	4-6	12.9 h	66-80 / 79-90%	Wet/storm season	6	Incubation; female recovery
September	29-31 C	24-26 C	42-46 C	4-6	12.2 h	66-81 / 79-90%	Wet/storm season	6	Late incubation; stabilize nest moisture
October	28-30 C	23-25 C	42-46 C	4-6	11.7 h	65-80 / 78-89%	Peak rainfall / storms	6	Expected emergence from late-June/July clutches
November	27-29 C	22-24 C	41-45 C	4-6	11.1 h	62-76 / 75-86%	Rainfall easing	5-6	Juvenile growth; transition toward dry phase
December	26-28 C	21-23 C	41-45 C	4-6	10.8 h	59-72 / 73-84%	Drier transition	5	Seasonal reset; reduce rain, not drinking water

* UVI and enclosure RH are practical operational targets, not experimentally determined thresholds for C. r. nuchalis. Acklins is warm, maritime and seasonally dry; do not use cold brumation.

Housing, climate and nutrition

Taxonomy and status

Cyclura rileyi nuchalis is the Acklins Rock Iguana. The current Reptile Database retains *C. rileyi* with three subspecies: *rileyi*, *cristata* and *nuchalis*. The IUCN SSC Iguana Specialist Group lists the Acklins form as Endangered; *Cyclura rileyi* is CITES Appendix I.

Range and habitat

The subspecies survives on cays in the Bight of Acklins, The Bahamas, particularly North Cay and Fish Cay. Habitat is low, exposed and maritime, with limestone, scrub, cactus and sandy beachfront dunes that provide the principal nesting substrate.

Seasonality

Acklins has a tropical wet-dry climate with warm temperatures year-round. March is among the driest months, rainfall rises from May, and the wetter/storm season builds through late summer and autumn. Annual humidity remains relatively high because of the maritime setting.

Enclosure

Use a large terrestrial enclosure with extensive floor area, broad basking slabs, heavy rockwork, deep retreats and visual barriers. Provide compactable sand/soil year-round, with a particularly large dune-like nest zone prepared well before June.

Heat and UVB

Provide a broad, sun-like basking surface around 41-47 C seasonally while preserving cooler shaded retreats. UVI 4-6 at the principal basking zone is a conservative open-habitat *Cyclura* target; animals must be able to leave UV instantly.

Humidity and ventilation

Do not confuse a xeric appearance with very dry indoor air. Use strong ventilation and allow exposed surfaces to dry between rain events, but keep deeper substrate and hides buffered from desiccation. Avoid persistently wet substrate.

Diet

The IUCN manual describes the taxon as primarily herbivorous. Feed calcium-rich leafy weeds, browse, flowers, fibrous vegetables, cactus pads and seasonal fruit in modest amounts. Occasional animal matter may occur naturally, but it should not become routine adult protein.

Social management

Adults can become territorial around courtship and nesting. Use multiple basking and feeding sites, large sight breaks and enough floor area for avoidance. Separate for persistent biting, chasing, food/heat exclusion or declining body mass.

Monitoring

Weigh adults monthly and more often through breeding. Record appetite, feces, shedding, basking use, reproductive behavior and nest digging. Maintain excellent hydration access even during the dry phase.

Breeding, nesting and incubation

Sexual maturity

Field work indicates females can reproduce at about 19.5-20 cm SVL and roughly 260-300 g. Size alone should not trigger breeding; use skeletal maturity, body condition, age and prior history.

Courtship and mating

The IUCN manual lists mating as unknown but probably May-June. Increase rainfall and feeding quality gradually from spring while maintaining intense basking and UV. Monitor females closely for excessive male pressure.

Nesting timing

North Cay field studies show nesting starts in late June and continues into early July. Oviposition occurs several days after excavation begins and can continue for at least two weeks across the population.

Nest-search behavior

Gravid females may travel toward sandy beachfront dunes and can excavate as many as seven test burrows before selecting a final nest. Repeated digging is therefore normal if the female remains bright, strong and hydrated.

Nest design

Natural burrows measure about 69-235 cm long and egg chambers sit 14-40 cm below the surface. Provide at least 40-60 cm of compactable sand/soil where possible plus generous horizontal tunneling space, warmth and privacy.

Clutch and egg data

Observed clutches contain 2-5 eggs; the IUCN husbandry manual gives a mean of about 3.1. Mean egg size is approximately 55.5 x 30.2 mm and 27.1 g. Larger females tend to lay more eggs.

Incubation

The IUCN manual lists 30 C for incubation but does not provide a taxon-specific duration. Conservation literature presumes approximately 85-90 days after laying, giving expected emergence from late September into mid-October for late-June/early-July nests. Treat duration as provisional and log every clutch.

Incubator management

At 30 C, prioritize stability over chasing a precise number. Maintain a humid but not waterlogged incubation microclimate, prevent free water from touching eggs, and monitor box mass rather than repeatedly adding large amounts of water. Avoid prolonged temperatures above about 31 C unless your own lineage data support them.

Female recovery / hatchlings

Post-lay females need privacy, water, high-calcium browse and normal basking. Suspect retained eggs if digging continues with lethargy, anorexia or persistent abdominal fullness. Hatchlings should receive secure hides, scaled basking sites, UVB and plant foods immediately.

Conservation and records

Preserve exact pedigree and locality records. Do not hybridize *C. r. nuchalis* with *C. r. rileyi* or *C. r. cristata*. Primary evidence anchors are Thornton 2000, Hayes et al. 2004, the IUCN West Indian Iguana Husbandry Manual, current Reptile Database taxonomy and IUCN SSC conservation listings.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Cyclura rileyi nuchalis

Your measuring point

Measure UVI at normal back height directly beneath the brightest accessible part of the optional T5 strip. Place the strip toward the middle/back with free access to and away from it; preserve a gradient into fully covered refuges near UVI 0. These numbers describe the exposure area, not the whole enclosure or a daily average.

Measure and adjust

- 1. Use a UV Index meter.** A Solarmeter 6.5/6.5R or equivalent UVI meter is suitable. Broadband UVB readings in microwatts/cm2 cannot be substituted for UVI.
- 2. Measure the installed arrangement.** Warm the tube for about 30 minutes. Keep the reflector, guards and mesh in their normal positions. With the animal elsewhere, hold the sensor at its normal back height, aimed toward the tube.
- 3. Adjust the fixture.** Begin near the lower part of a newly selected working range and adjust gradually. Respect the lamp manufacturer's minimum distance. Recheck after each change and check every higher accessible branch, rock or platform.
- 4. Keep a full gradient.** Provide usable exposure across the animal's body, lower-UVI areas and fully covered refuges near UVI 0. For daytime baskers, overlap the UV area with visible light and appropriate basking warmth while retaining cooler shade.
- 5. Record and recheck.** Log UVI, measuring point, tube-to-back distance, tube age and lamp-on time. Recheck through the year and after changes to the tube, reflector, mesh or furnishings. Exposure duration and behaviour also determine dose.

A T5 range is a working exposure target, not a whole-cage setting, measured wild monthly average, guaranteed optimum or proven safety ceiling. The animal must be able to enter and leave freely.

Monthly target at normal back height

Month	UVI under T5 when on
January	4-6
February	4-6
March	4-6
April	4-6
May	4-6
June	4-6
July	4-6
August	4-6
September	4-6
October	4-6
November	4-6
December	4-6

Refine numerical target

Replace the blanket UVI 5-7 default with an optional adult T5 patch at UVI 4-6, aiming initially around 5. This is a moderate working choice within published exposure guidance, not proof that 5-7 is harmful or a measured optimum for every Cyclura. Published UV-Tool assignments vary even within the genus; no trial was found that makes UVI 7 a necessary default.

Evidence level: Inferred genus-level working range. The seasonal schedule is a captive operating plan; it is not measured wild monthly UV. Off means the existing planned UVB-off/rest phase is preserved. Any staged Off/1 entry still means gradual reintroduction.

UV references: Baines et al. (2016), UV-Tool; Muryn, Baines and Dishman (2026), Reptile Lighting Guide V10. Full rationale and monthly comparison: [UVI_Audit_Report.html](#).