



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Blue Iguana Day Celebrated with School Visits from Renowned Conservationist Ian Redmond

George Town, Grand Cayman – May 17, 2024 – In celebration of International Blue Iguana Day, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands was excited to host renowned conservationist Ian Redmond for a series of educational visits to local schools. His talks focused on the importance of biodiversity, the challenges facing wildlife, and the crucial role young people can play in conservation efforts.

Mr. Redmond, a world-renowned wildlife biologist and conservationist, is best known for his work with mountain gorillas and elephants. His dedication to wildlife preservation has earned him numerous accolades, including the OBE (Order of the British Empire) for his services to conservation. During his visit to the Cayman Islands, he brought his wealth of knowledge and passion for wildlife conservation to engage and educate young minds about the importance of protecting the unique biodiversity of their islands.

Throughout the week, Mr. Redmond visited several schools across the Cayman Islands, including East End Primary School, Edna Moyle Primary School in North Side, and Sir John A Cumber Primary School in West Bay. He shared stories from his fieldwork, discussed the importance of biodiversity, and highlighted conservation challenges and successes. Students were captivated by Mr. Redmond's vivid storytelling and firsthand accounts of his experiences working with gorillas and elephants, as well as his insights into the interconnectedness of all living species. He linked his adventures to our iconic Blue Iguana, pointing out that gorillas and iguanas are both seed dispersers responsible for overall ecosystem health.

Mr Redmond said that he was impressed by the children's incredibly insightful questions. After learning that seeds often germinate more effectively after passing through the gut of a gorilla or iguana, one student wisely asked how the seeds survive the animal's stomach acid. Plants and animals often coevolve leading the seeds to develop the ability to survive ingestion and if the herbivore is lost, sometimes that plant is no longer able to complete its cycle of reproduction. Conservation isn't about preserving one species for its own sake, but rather for the health of the entire ecosystem as a whole.

"Although it might seem odd to book a gorilla specialist to celebrate Blue Iguana conservation, there are key parallels between these two very different species. Both are conservation success stories where an individual rallied support for intensive conservation action that has worked and brought a tiny population up to more than a thousand," said Ian Redmond. "It was a real pleasure to share these insights with so many young minds in the schools of Grand Cayman."



The National Trust for the Cayman Islands expressed their gratitude to Mr. Redmond for his visit and to the schools for their enthusiastic participation. "Having Ian Redmond here to celebrate International Blue Iguana Day with our students was an extraordinary opportunity," said Catherine Childs, Environmental Programmes Manager for the National Trust. "We are grateful to key National Trust benefactors who made Mr Redmond's visit possible."

International Blue Iguana Day is a global event dedicated to raising awareness about the plight of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana and celebrating the successes in its conservation. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands continues to work diligently to protect this species and its habitat, ensuring that future generations can enjoy and appreciate the unique wildlife of the Cayman Islands.

For more information about the National Trust for the Cayman Islands and their conservation initiatives, please visit www.nationaltrust.org.ky.

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About the National Trust for the Cayman Islands



The National Trust for the Cayman Islands is a non-governmental organization whose mandate under the National Trust Law (2010 Revision) includes the preservation of the historic, natural and maritime heritage of the Cayman Islands for present and future generations.

About the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme

The Blue Iguana Recovery Programme began in 1990 with only 30 dedicated Blue Iguanas and the primary goal to restore the wild population to 1,000 Blue Iguanas, encouraging viable population in the long-term. Having met its primary goal in 2018, the initiative formally transitioned to the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme in 2019 with a new focus of sustainably conserving the native species of Grand Cayman.

About the National Trust's Environmental Programme

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands' environmental programme was founded on the concept that the protection of native plants and animals is best achieved by protecting the natural areas in which they depend.

About the National Trust Conservation Programme

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands' conservation programme strives to protect Cayman's native species and the habitats in which they live, and includes the endemic Blue Iguana of Grand Cayman, the Sister Islands Rock Iguana and Cayman's native bat species.

About the National Trust Historic Preservation Programme

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands introduced the launching of its *Historic Preservation Fund* at its Annual General Meeting in September 2021 for the purpose of inviting increased support of its continuing efforts to encourage the preservation and protection of historic homes and buildings for present and future generations of the Cayman Islands.