



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Temple Grandin Visits Blue Iguana Conservation Facility at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park**

**22 April 2026** – The National Trust for the Cayman Islands (NTCI) had the distinct honor of hosting the esteemed Dr. Temple Grandin at the Blue Iguana Conservation (BIC) Facility, which is nestled within the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park. Temple Grandin is a celebrated American scientist, animal behaviorist, and a leading advocate for autism awareness. Dr. Grandin has revolutionized the livestock industry and enriched the global understanding of neurodiversity.

During her visit, Dr. Grandin was taken on an exclusive tour of the facility led by Fred Burton, who played an instrumental role in the conservation of the endemic Blue Iguana (found only in Grand Cayman), bringing this remarkable species back from the brink of extinction. To date, over 1,200 Blue Iguanas have been released into the wild in the Salina Reserve and Colliers Wilderness Reserve, National Trust protected areas. These special places in nature are home to the Blue Iguana along with other plants and animals that occur nowhere else in the world including the Wild Banana Orchid, Silver Thatch Palm, and the Grand Cayman Parrot.

The private tour provided Dr. Grandin with a unique opportunity to observe the iconic Blue Iguanas in their natural habitat and to gain an in-depth understanding of the ongoing conservation efforts to protect these remarkable reptiles. Dr. Grandin met beloved Blue Iguanas “Forrest” and “Spike” who reside at BIC. These particularly charismatic Blue Iguanas were delighted to pose for the camera and enjoy some treats of papaya and banana. Dr. Grandin also had a chance to see hatchlings at the BIC nursery.

Dr. Grandin engaged with the conservation team to discuss animal behavior and shared her expert insights, drawing parallels between her extensive work in animal welfare and the specific needs of the Blue Iguana species. Her visit underscored the importance of conservation efforts and the role of scientific research in promoting biodiversity.

The event was attended by notable individuals, including Ally Olarou, Secretary and Director of Autism Cayman; Fred Burton, previous director of the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme and his wife Sarah; Candy Whicker, NTCI Council Member; Bill Petrie, Blue Iguana Conservation Manager; Jordan Whorms, BIC Warden; Catherine Childs, NTCI Environmental Programmes Manager; and Laura Butz, NTCI Marketing Manager.



Fred Burton shared a signed copy of his work, “The Little Blue Book,” with Dr. Grandin - a story about saving what was once one of the most endangered reptiles on earth. In return, Dr. Temple signed a copy of the book “Who is Temple Grandin?” for Blue Iguana Warden, Jordan Whorms, a young Caymanian passionate about her important role in Blue Iguana conservation. She was excited to meet Dr Grandin and proud to receive the signed book.

The Blue Iguana Conservation Facility is dedicated to preserving the endangered Blue Iguana species and fostering environmental education. This visit by Dr. Temple Grandin highlights the global importance of maintaining biodiversity and the ongoing need for support in protecting local wildlife and their natural habitat.



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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.