

# Island Night Lizard Study Initiated

By Gary M. Fellers

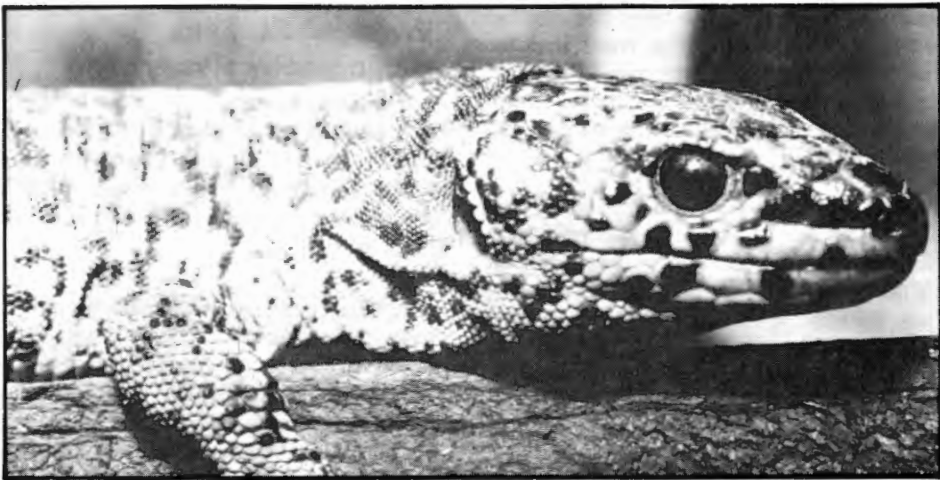
The island night lizard is listed federally as a threatened species. It is found only on three islands off the coast of southern California; one of these, Santa Barbara Island, is part of Channel Islands NP.

Currently, very little is known about the abundance, distribution or ecology of this rare lizard. Knowledge of its life history is a necessary part of the program to reduce or eliminate the rabbit population on Santa Barbara Island. The lizard study now underway there will also provide useful data as to where visitor use should be discouraged in the interests of protecting the lizard and where such visitations would have no significant impact.

Even more important, data on lizard habitat preference will be essential for planning any major effort to control or eliminate exotic plants, especially iceplant. (In following park practice of restoring sites to pre-manipulative conditions, we don't want inadvertently to destroy important habitat for an endangered species.)

Working with Charles Drost, a graduate student at the University of California, I have begun a study designed to fill the major voids in our knowledge. In January we worked with two VIP's (Volunteers in Parks) to install 150 pitfall traps (one gallon plastic jars) to capture lizards. About 50-75 traps are operated at a time and are checked on a daily basis. By repeatedly capturing marked individuals, we can evaluate patterns of movement and population density for each of several major habitats on the island. We also are gathering information on growth rates, food habits and reproductive effort.

*Fellers is assistant chief scientist for the NPS Western Region.*



*The ferocious character (above) is the endangered Island Night Lizard, found on Santa Barbara in the Channel Islands NP. Suspended in a weighing bag, the lizard's ability to strike terror doesn't impress researcher Charles Drost.*

