The Giant Invasive Iguana (GII) or *Iguana iguana* as it is scientifically known is a declared pest in Fiji. It is Omnivorous invasive pest brought illegally on Qamea Island in early 2000. GII is also found on the Matagi, Lasuca and Taveuni islands.

**About Giant Invasive Iguanas**

GII is a large arboreal (tree-dwelling) species of lizard and is native to Central, South America and the Caribbean. It can reach total length of 2 meters and weigh an average of 9 kilograms. Most GII is predominantly green in colour. However, the coloration is variable including black, grey, white, bluish, green or brown GII. GII has very long tail which is 2 or 3 times the length of the body. The toes are long with thin curved claws for climbing. GII has spin along the head, neck and back, reaching up to its tail. It has a fold of loose skin hanging below the throat which is called the dewlap. GII also has large scale (leathery covering of their eardrums) on both sides of the neck. The large scale and the dewlap are key ways to differentiate between the GII and the native Fijian iguanas.

GII spends most of its time on trees amongst the canopy, descending early to mate, lay eggs or change trees. It also inhabits mangrove forests and saltwater habitats too. GII also digs burrows into the ground usually close to the seashores or close to water. Although they prefer sun and seashores, they can invade inland and forests. GII can also sleep in available vegetation and occasionally they are seen sleeping in tunnels constructed in the ground. This may also cause damages to the infrastructure including seawall, concrete road damages and landslides causing damages to buildings. GII prefer a tropical to subtropical climate. They are excellent swimmers and can remain underwater for a long time. GII has excellent ability to migrate and multiply. GII breeds rapidly and a female can lay 17 to 76 eggs in any nesting period. As her bodies, GII mainly eats a wide variety of plant foods. It has very sharp teeth and is able to shred leaves and branches with great ease. GII has the ability to escape predators or captivity. They are hard to spot since they camouflage well, capable of running fast and can dive into water to escape predators. These features make it difficult to capture and eradicate. GII has become popular in the pet trade.

**Fijian Native Iguanas**

There are 3 different types of Fijian native iguana which includes Fiji Crested iguana (*Brachylophus vitiensis*), Lau Banded iguana (*Brachylophus fasciatus*) and Fiji Banded iguana (*Brachylophus bulabula*). Iguanas are herbivorous which prefer to eat leaves, fruits, flowers and buds. All the *Brachylophus iguanas* are very difficult to observe during the day and occupy the highest levels of the tree canopy on the islands. Fiji crested iguana are reported to be found on Yadua Tabo, Macuata, Yasawa group, Manaunca group. They are the largest South Pacific iguanas, maximum snout vent length of 25cm, has the large spines on back as opposed to two species of banded iguana. Both male and female has the dorsal spines. Females lay 2-4 eggs in single clutch and their eggs are known to have the longest incubation times than any other lizards, taking approximately nine months to hatch.

**About Fiji Crested Iguana**

The Fiji Crested Iguana (*Brachylophus vitiensis*) is usually found on Lau, Viti Levu and Cikobia, verbal reports of presence on smaller islands. As with most iguanas, this species is herbivorous, although a comprehensive study of its diet in the wild has never been studied as it is so rare. They are the smallest South Pacific iguana with snout to vent length of 18cm thus different from other two *Brachylophus iguanas* genotypically, and body size, higher number of dorsal crest spines and lower number of femoral spines, nostril colour, shape and overall colour pattern. Females lay an average of 3 eggs per clutch. Lau Banded iguana (*Brachylophus fasciatus*) are found on Lau group of eastern Fiji and as with most iguanas, this species is herbivorous, allowing a comprehensive study of its diet in the wild has never been studied as it is so rare. They are the smallest South Pacific iguana with snout to vent length of 18cm thus different from other two *Brachylophus iguanas* genotypically, and body size, higher number of dorsal crest spines and lower number of femoral spines, nostril colour, shape and overall colour pattern. Females lay an average of 3 eggs per clutch.

**Impact of GII Internationally**

The Giant Invasive or the Green Iguana as it is commonly known in most places has been introduced to many countries around the world, mainly through pet trade. The introduced GII populations in countries like Florida, Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands have brought significant economic and ecological impacts. Some of these negative impacts are on agriculture, tourism, infrastructure and biodiversity. In Florida, GII is regarded as a public nuisance and health risk, particularly to the food and hotel industries, where they are known to scare and steal food from guests and defecate on tables, chairs, swimming pools and their surroundings. In Puerto Rico, the GII is said to be increasingly disrupting airfield operation at the international airport and become a serious hazard to road users, particularly in the breeding season. While road embankments may suit the GII for nesting burrows, however, road collapses require expensive repair. With increasing population numbers in the introduced habitats, GII has shown to become a significant pest in a wide variety of agricultural, ornamental, park and horticultural settings. GII is also said to pose a threat to a variety of native animals through direct competition, predation and the introduction and spread of disease and parasites which may affect vulnerable native reptile species. GII can spread salmonella disease. Both in Florida and Puerto Rico, the authorities realised very late the negative impacts of the GII. This had long past any opportunity to control or eradicate the pest.

**What Can You Do to Help BAF**

You can help BAF in stopping the spread of GII and eradicating the pest by:

- Reporting any sighting of GII to BAF
- Seafarers and boat operators who service the Northern Division to monitor their vessels and ensure that there are no GII on board either accidentally or deliberately. Boat operators and seafarers play a very important role in containment of GII and prevention of its spread to other parts of Fiji
- Do not release any captured GII into forests or any places

**For Further Information Please Contact:**

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji on 5312512 or Short Codes: General Enquiries - 5994  Giant Invasive Iguana (GII) - 5995 or Termite - 5996 or Animal Disease Surveillance - 5997 or Email - info@baf.com.fj or visit BAF website www.baf.com.fj