



SouthWestern Association of Naturalists

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For Immediate Release:

University of California Riverside Scientists Honored for Research Work

The Southwestern Association of Naturalists is pleased to announce that the 2011 George Miksch Sutton Award in Conservation Research has been awarded to Cameron W. Barrows and Michael F. Allen for their paper “Conserving Species in Fragmented Habitats: Population Dynamics of the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard, *Phrynosoma mcallii*.” The award recognizes an outstanding paper related to conservation published in *The Southwestern Naturalist*, the journal of the Southwestern Association of Naturalists. Barrows is an Assistant Research Ecologist in the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of California Riverside; he also won the award in 2008. Allen is a Professor in the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University, and is the Chair of the Center for Conservation Biology.

The winning paper investigates population fluctuations of flat-tailed horned lizards in the Coachella Valley of California. Lizard numbers were estimated through identification of tracks in the fine-grained sands of the Thousand Palms Preserve. Researchers counted lizards and measured habitat components over a six-year span. Although the population dynamics of other desert lizards are closely linked to rainfall amounts, Barrows and Allen found that the causes of fluctuations in flat-tailed horned lizard numbers are much more complex, and are linked to plant cover, rainfall, and abundance of harvester ants, a favorite food of the horned lizards. Understanding population dynamics is an important step in conservation of the flat-tailed horned lizard, which is a species of conservation concern.

The Southwestern Association of Naturalists is an international association of scientists, educators, and students, founded in 1953 to promote the field study of plants and animals (living and fossil) in the southwestern United States, Mexico, and Central America. The award was announced at the annual meeting held in April at the University of Texas at Tyler.

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