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By Mark Post

Looking for lizards across Los Angeles

The Natural History Museum is launching a first-of-its-kind-backyard-survey of lizard species.



Brian Brown and Leslie Gordon of the L.A. County Natural History Museum hold preserved lizard specimens native to Southern California. "Some people think they... look like space aliens," Brown said.
(Katie Falkenberg / Los Angeles Times / March 13, 2008)

They plan to leave no stone unturned in the hunt for the "Lost Lizards of Los Angeles." That's what experts are calling an unusual wildlife safari they plan to launch in backyards across the county.

Museum officials hope to recruit volunteers to poke around flower beds and peek under leaf piles and backdrops for a first-of-its-kind Los Angeles lizard census.

There are thought to be 4,675 lizard species worldwide. It is unknown how many of them exist in heavily developed Southern California.

While the museum's lizard search will begin in late spring and extend into summer, the counting will actually start Saturday, when about 20 local amphibian experts fan out across Exposition Park to hunt for salamanders. They are feared for the likelihood that they will come up empty-handed.

But Brown and others say there is a good chance that new lizard breeds will be discovered by volunteers conducting the "Lost Lizards of Los Angeles" survey.

"The chance of finding a new species here is the same as in a rain forest. Our own backyards in some ways are as unknown as some remote jungle," he said.

Proof of that is the dove Brown accepted from a museum trustee who challenged him to find a new species of any type in the yard of the trustee's Brentwood home.

"I found one: a small fly. It doesn't have a name yet, but it will. And no, it won't be named after me. That would be pure taste," said Brown, a Monterey resident.

Answer the following questions in full sentence.

1. Who is in the picture and what are they doing?
2. What is the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles planning to do?
3. How many lizard species are there world wide?
4. When will the museum's lizard search begin?
5. What are the chances of finding a new species?
6. What is happening on Saturday?
7. What do some people think lizards look like?
8. Name three creatures that you have seen in your backyard.
9. What new species did Brown find in a Brentwood backyard.
10. Draw a "new" lizard species and give it a name.

New Species

