

Sea lizards are unusual animals that are found in only one place in the world. Read the many interesting facts about sea lizards in the article below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Sea Lizards

by Cathy Fredrickson

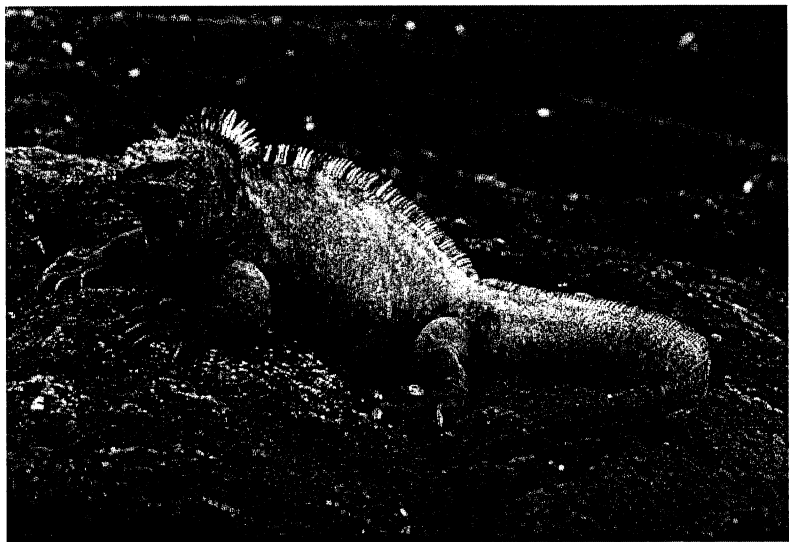
1 **L**izards that swim in the ocean?
2 It's true, but they're only found in the Galápagos Islands off the coast of South America. This amazing group of islands is home to many unusual animals, including marine iguanas, which live in huge colonies on lava rocks along the shore.

3 In 1835, English biologist Charles Darwin made a voyage to these islands and called the marine iguana "a hideous-looking creature, of a dirty black colour, stupid, and sluggish in its movements." It may be ugly, but a marine iguana is harmless and gentle. With a row of spikes down its back and tail, this iguana, which can be more than four feet long, resembles a miniature dragon.

4 When the sun is hot and the tide is out, marine iguanas know it's mealtime. They wade into the surf, the large male iguanas swimming as far as a hundred yards from shore and holding their heads just above the water. The lizards' short legs are

useless for swimming, but their long, flat tails swish back and forth to help them move gracefully through the water. Then they dive, sometimes as deep as sixty feet, until they reach the ocean floor. There the iguanas cling to undersea rocks with their sharp claws. They push their flat snouts close to the rocks and graze on the delicious fuzz of red and green algae.

5 Like other reptiles, marine iguanas aren't able to breathe underwater. They hold their breath during dives, which usually last for five or ten minutes. But during his voyage,



Darwin was amazed when he witnessed one marine iguana survive after being trapped underwater for an hour. How did it live that long without breathing?

6 Actually, marine iguanas can slow their heart rate from one hundred to as few as thirty beats per minute. By slowing their heart rate, they use less oxygen and don't need to breathe as often.

7 Even during the hottest part of the day, the water around the Galápagos Islands can be very cold, and the cold-blooded iguanas need to warm up after feeding time. They crawl ashore onto warm, dark lava rocks and spread themselves flat on their stomachs to absorb heat. Once they've warmed up, iguanas lift up on their

stubby front legs and cool off as sea breezes blow underneath their bodies.

8 Because their favorite food is salty algae, marine iguanas need a way to get rid of extra salt. When enough salt has collected in special glands near their noses, marine iguanas jerk their heads a few times and sneeze a series of quick, wet, salty blasts. Eventually, they build up a white crust of salt around their noses.

9 When the sun sets on the islands, the temperature drops. Iguanas need to conserve body heat overnight, so they sleep together in messy heaps on the lava rocks. When the sun returns to warm the rocks once more, the marine iguanas wake up and get ready for another day of swimming, grazing, and sneezing.



Reprinted by permission of SPIDER magazine, 2001, February, copyright, © 2001 by Cathy Fredrickson. Photographs: © 2001 Ralph Reinhold/Animals Animals; © 2001 Richard Kolar/Animals Animals.

Mark your choices for multiple-choice questions 35 through 38 by filling in the circle next to the best answer.

- 35 According to the article, which of the following helps the marine iguana swim and dive?

- (A) its head
- (B) its legs
- (C) its spikes
- (D) its tail

- 36 According to the article, how do marine iguanas stay underwater for long periods of time?

- (A) They are able to breathe underwater.
- (B) They have special glands that help them breathe.
- (C) Their hearts beat more slowly when they dive.
- (D) Their snouts press against algae to get air.

- 37 According to the article, why does a marine iguana sneeze?

- (A) to shake off cold air
- (B) to get water out of its nose
- (C) to clear salt from special glands
- (D) to get ready for a very deep dive

- 38 Read the sentence from paragraph 7 in the box below.

They crawl ashore onto warm, dark lava rocks and spread themselves flat on their stomachs to absorb heat.

What does the word *absorb* mean?

- (A) take in
- (B) hide from
- (C) let go of
- (D) forget about