



Bob MacCargar cradles his little buddy, Pitter-Patter. (Cameron photo)

Help ...

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rooftop in Albany, N.Y. When Pitter hit the ground he broke his jaw. He was 14 pounds lighter than he is now, an obvious victim of neglect.

After four years in MacCargar's devoted care, Pitter is a picture of health, but an aggressive streak remains as evidenced in MacCargar's heavily scarred forearms and biceps.

In spite of a difficult operation to neuter the iguana in an attempt to reduce his hormone levels, Pitter's orange scales indicate that testosterone still courses through his veins. He is difficult for an expert like MacCargar to handle - impossible for anyone of lesser skills.

"I hate the pet trade," says MacCargar. "There are so many of these animals around that, if they didn't import another iguana for the next 20 years, there'd still be enough of them for anyone who wanted one."

MacCargar doesn't begrudge others a desire to own an exotic animal. His reptophilia began in 1972 at age 8 when he saved up for his very first iguana, then sold under the moniker "Chinese dragons."

Including Pitter, who is lodged in his own small room at C&G Paint and Auto Body, over 100 ailing iguanas have passed through the MacCargar household.

Before he made his reputation as one of the nation's most knowledgeable iguana rehabbers, MacCargar took in more patients than he does now, including many animals dropped off by disinterested owners. That benevolence often led to as many as 15-18 big green lizards sharing the home with MacCargar, his wife, Debbie, and two sons, Sam and Joel. The living situation almost cost him his marriage.

"I like my cat," says Debbie with a fire in her eyes that warns against any more iguana questions as she vacuums Pitter's cage and delivers him a heaping plate of collard greens and bananas.

"They tolerate it," admits MacCargar of his family as he holds onto an increasingly agitated Pitter and waits for Deb-

bie to evacuate the lizard's room.

Today, MacCargar takes in only the most hard-luck cases and then only those that come to him through the Triangle Iguana Rescue - a network of volunteer hobbyists and veterinarians in the Raleigh area.

After they are nursed back to health, the animals are adopted only to those capable of providing the daunting requirements of housing the large, tree-dwelling, tropical reptiles.

"A dog or cat will live in your environment. Reptiles require their own environments," warns MacCargar. "The last thing we want is to adopt an iguana to a home where the

care would be less than what we can provide for them."

As Pitter returns to his "cage" and tucks into the plate of veggies, MacCargar worries about the next wave of young iguanas being sold in pet stores across the nation.

"I shudder when I see the people come out of the pet store with a little hatchling iguana, a 10-gallon tank and a container of iguana food. Those little guys are doomed," he laments.

In a silent display of lizard aggression that looks like he concurs with his owner's fears, Pitter nods his massive head and yawns to expose a row of sharp teeth rooted in powerful jaws - buyer beware.

Reviving lizards on their last leg

Bob MacCargar's body shop doubles as iguana hospital

By JAMIE CAMERON

Tideland News Writer

Bob MacCargar paints cars for a living and looks the part.

His earnest face, framed by wire-rimmed glasses and a salt-and-pepper mustache, drips with perspiration as the summer air blends with glaring ultraviolet curing lights and glowing acetylene torches on a busy day at C&G Paint and Auto Body in Cedar Point.

Tattoos illustrate the thick arms of this middle-aged husband and father of two.

Looks can be deceiving – one wouldn't expect the native Long Islander's favorite topic of conversation to revolve around the beneficial effects that increased micro-watts of UVB light have on Vitamin D levels in the bloodstream of captive green iguanas.

MacCargar paints cars for a living, but his passion is the rehabilitation of iguanas abused at the hands of an uncaring pet trade or unprepared pet owners.

In a small room connected to the hangar-style workshop,

MacCargar draws a bath in a large washbasin for one of the five iguanas currently under his care. With a flourish, he steps out and returns with "Pitter-Patter" – an 8-year-old male iguana, some 5 feet in length and 18 pounds in weight – cradled in his arms.

"I think they're absolutely fascinating and intelligent creatures," says MacCargar as he deposits Pitter into the sink and gently scrubs the lizard's tangerine skin with a long-handled, hard bristled brush.

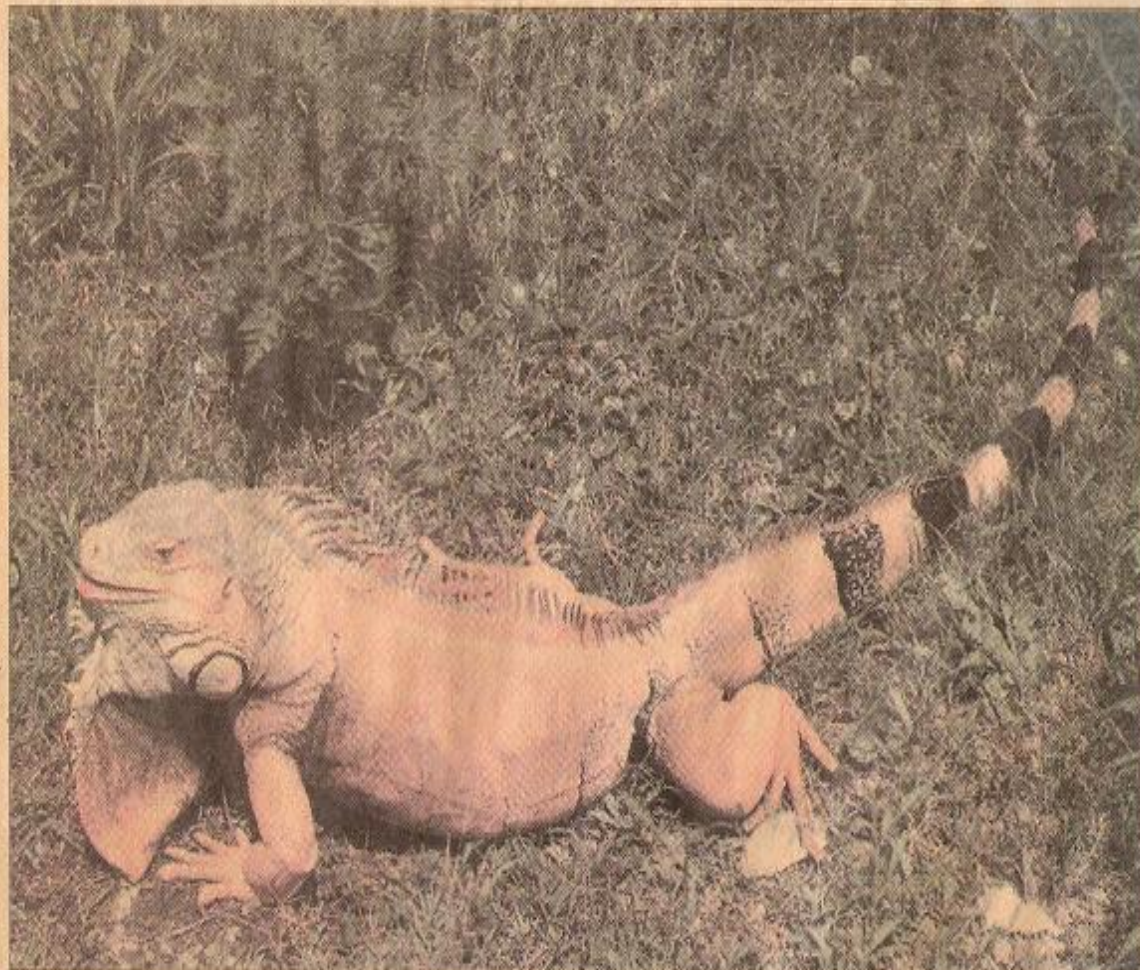
Without question, the big,

tropical reptile enjoys the attention. As MacCargar scratches the iguana's sides, Pitter arches his back and leans into the brush. When the grooming stops, the iguana flattens his muscular legs close to his body and undulates his powerful tail – swimming in place, as a bird

would fly in a wind tunnel.

Though he is content now, Pitter is plagued by demons. MacCargar explains that the animal frolicking in the tub was rescued four years ago after he fell from a four-story

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Pitter-Patter, an 8-year-old male iguana, 5 feet in length and weighing 18 pounds, has flourished under the care of Bob MacCargar. (Cameron photo)