



## **Galapagos**

*What's that iguana eaten?*

### **David Robinson**

At very low spring tides when rocks which are normally covered, are exposed, the iguanas graze the red algae. Martin takes the chance to sample the weed, with a watchful eye on the waves. The samples are analysed to identify the species. Each has a particular energy content and the growth rate of each is known. If you know what's in the animal's stomach you get a picture of the energy balance. What, and how much it has eaten. To an expert the chewed fragments from the stomach are identifiable. The purple colouration comes from the seaweed itself.

For a complete picture fresh faeces are collected from the rocks. Dried and analysed for energy content. Altogether the researchers have a snapshot of the energy balance of the animal over a day. What it eats. How much it eats. What it loses. And as a result, how much energy the iguana has extracted from its food.