



## Canadian Nights: A chameleon tests the limits of the term "cold-blooded."

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"Roy, Cabo is under a bucket on the side of the street in front of your house," said my brother Matt as he walked into my office and took off his gloves.

"What are you talking about, Matt?" I asked.

"That's right, I was knocking on your door and a dog across the street started barking. Then the guy walking the dog yells out, 'Hey there's a little dinosaur over here.' I walked across the street, and there was Cabo, walking across George's frost-covered lawn toward your house. I tried to pick him up but he hissed and snapped at me, so I let him cross the street. Then I threw a bucket over him until I could find you."

That was 12 days after Cabo, our 2-year-old veiled chameleon, had escaped. He had survived 12 October days in northern British Columbia, many of which were bitter cold with sleet, heavy frosts and temperatures well below freezing. I could not believe he was alive.

Although my house is located in town, it is adjacent to a grassy area filled with packs of marauding crows, cats, dogs and kids with bee-bee guns and slingshots—not a good environment for a chameleon.

When we realized Cabo was missing, we put up posters, canvassed the neighborhood and looked in trees until our necks and eyes grew sore. Then the sleet and frosts came, and we all gave him up for dead. So you can imagine my excitement to have him back again, not looking much worse for wear, other than a little weight loss.

I put him in his giant coffee plant under his heat lamp and tried to feed him some live crickets. He wanted nothing to do with them.



Cabo, a male veiled chameleon similar to the one pictured here, was lost in the cold Canadian autumn for almost two weeks.

Next, I tried to feed him some tent caterpillars that I had collected and frozen during the summer. He had eaten them many times before but now declined the offer. For the next three weeks I had to force feed and water him. Finally, part way into the third week, he made an attempt to snap up a caterpillar with his tongue. Sadly, his tongue extended only a fraction of its normal length; no matter how hard he tried, he could barely flick it out. I decided it must've been injured by the cold.

Over the next six months, Cabo's tongue began to heal. Now, in the seventh month since his return, he can extend it some five to six inches

—not its full length, but his recovery looks promising.

Cabo ignores open doors and windows now and no longer strays from his coffee plant or the warmth of his heat lamp. Many times since his return I have wondered what in the world he did from day to day for those two weeks in October. What did he eat? What did he encounter? Where did he sleep? And what was he thinking on those frosty autumn nights in the Canadian wilderness, far away from his heat lamp and even farther away from his native Yemen, where temperatures rarely get below 68 degrees Fahrenheit, much less 23 degrees? 