Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn W. Watkins

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How to be attractive and still be a lizard is satisfactorily accomplished by the beautiful little geckos, several interesting varieties of which live in various sections of the United States.

To most people just the word "lizard" scares them half to death. They think lizards are slimy, venomous and dangerous, as well as repulsive. To most folks, anything having the familiar shape of an alligator with four legs and a long tail is an unattractive lizard, yet the docile little gecko is attractive, gentle and perfectly harmless.

With but few exceptions the gecko is nocturnal, feeding and scurrying around only at night and therefore unknown and unseen to most of us. There are some species of these attractive lizards that have suction pads on the feet, others live only in restricted areas and are never found outside those immediate vicinities. The small "reef gecko" inhabits only the southernmost section of Florida and is found most often in and around Key West. This little creature probably escaped from the Wes Indiets, is truly tropical and commonly called the "least gecko."

Wide Range

The banded gecko is common in Texas and is at home in deserts or the rocky slopes of mountains, wherever insects are in good supply.

Seldom over four or five inches in length, it is blotched and spotted with bright splashes of yellow and is commonly known as the "ground gecko."

There is one kind of gecko that prefers wooded regions, living among low bushes or on trees where it hides during the day under pieces of loose bark. A third, and interesting, group has elected to live among human dwellings where some of the members have become as fearless and confiding as domesticated animals. Even these wild creatures that tame themselves divide themselves into two divisions, those that want to live inside the house and the other group that prefers to live outside but in close proximity to houses.

When, and if, the inhabitants of the house adjust themselves to having a lizard in the home, they are well repaid for their tolerance for a pair of geckos will completely rid the premises of all insect life in a very short time. In the house where geckos live there would be no need for window screens or poisonous insecticides.

Facets Unknown

There are many facets of gecko life that are still unknown to scientists and laymen alike. There are many pages in their life history still blank. One interesting characteristic, frequently observed and actually marveled at, however, is the little creature's ability to express itself by its voice.

Geckos seem very vocal, rather an unusual trait for reptiles. Some species are remarkable for the sounds they utter, shrill cries produced by striking the tongue against the palate. Those interested humans who have taken the trouble to attempt to identify the voice of the gecko describe the voice as a variety of calls, such as "yecko" or "cheko, cheko" or even as "tok, tok, tok."

A group of the little creatures congregated together can make considerable noise, enough at times to make sleep nearly impossible in the neighborhood. Imagine being kept awake at night by a group of conversing geckos calling to one another and discussing conditions in Lizardland.

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