

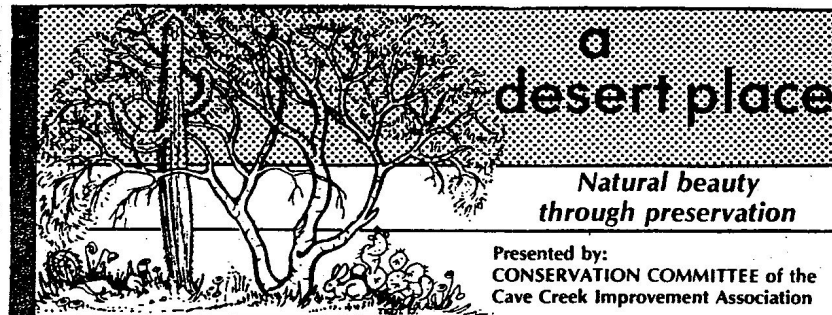
The Gila monster is a protected and rare species

The Gila monster is indeed a fearsome looking creature, with his large reptilian head, wide mouth, and darting black tongue; however, he has a slow waddling gait, dragging his huge bulbous tail behind him, and unless cornered or harassed, prefers to stay out of man's way -- the heavy tail stores fat, so that he can subsist during the desert dry times.

His body is covered with circular beaded rings, somewhat like Indian corn, with the body varying in color between a deep salmon pink to a pale pink or orange to rust shades. The legs are dark brown or jet black. This writer has also seen a rare young Gila of pure white, with black patent leather feet!

The size of a Gila can vary anywhere up to 2 feet.

He is seen in the spring, dragging himself along with some pre-direction in mind, frequenting washes and canyons, but mostly down on the flat desert areas. One catches a glimpse of him for one or two days, and then he is gone.



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He feeds on rodents, small lizards, reptilian eggs, and alas, on our precious quail eggs.

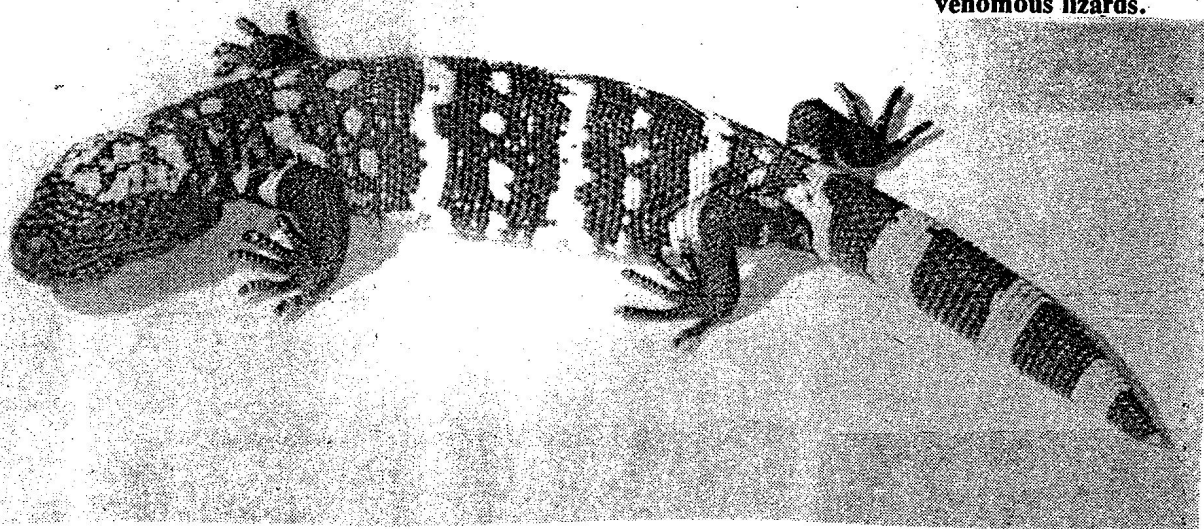
Although slow moving, when surprised he will whip around with great speed, spitting 'fire and brimstone' with a mighty hiss!

Finally, a word of caution -- do not try to pick him up, as again he is quick to grab a finger or arm, and will hold on with a vice-

like grip of his wide jaws; and at the same time masticating the flesh, and thus injecting his venom by chewing it in.

The Gila monster is now legally protected, as its numbers have decreased immensely, and he has become a rare species.

So, stop and admire and observe from a distance and do not touch -- he wants to be alone!



This midget monster, otherwise known as 'Heloderma Suspectum' is a close relative of the Mexican Beaded Lizard, and both claim fame to being the only venomous lizards.