

Feral February Episode 8 – You™re a monster!

Description

Throughout the month of February, which I am calling “Feral February,” I am going to do something a little bit different – I™m going to create a series of theme posts every week day about my favourite things in the world: Animals.

Today™s animal is the Gila monster!

The Gila (pronounced HEE-luh) monster is the largest lizard in North America, with a length of over two feet and weighing over five pounds. It is also one of the most easily identifiable, thanks to its bumpy skin with black bands interspersed with bright yellow, pink or orange bands – which serve to warn potential predators that it is poisonous.



Gila monster. Photo courtesy of Tim Flach. [Source](#).

One of only a few poisonous lizards in the world, Gila monsters live in the southwestern United States in desert habitats, where they hide in burrows to escape the worst of the heat. Their venom is neurotoxic, which means it blocks nerve impulses to muscles, causing paralysis. However, while getting bit by a Gila monster would hurt, the worst part would be getting them to let go, as their venom is not lethal to adults so they hold on and chew their venom into the victim.

Gilas are relatively slow-moving lizards, which hunt small mammals and the eggs of various birds, including quails and doves, as well as those of other lizards.

Daily dose of trivia:

Gila monsters have really big tails that get smaller in the winter and bigger in the spring and summer. This is because, like the hump of a camel, it is where the lizard stores its fat. In fact, because Gilas move so slowly and are not very active, they can go months between meals!

Category

1. Feral February

Tags

1. animals
2. Feral February
3. lizards
4. venom

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