



For Immediate Release

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GILA MONSTERS AND BEADED LIZARDS

Conservation Lecture reveals the truth behind endangered reptiles' nasty reputation

ATLANTA – October 20, 2008 – Dr. Daniel Beck's adventures with venomous lizards are more intimate than most: a gila monster once crawled into his sleeping bag. Not only did Dr. Beck survive that awkward encounter, but he has also dedicated his career to searching for his bedfellow's cousins – some of Earth's most feared and mythologized creatures. On November 6, Dr. Beck will separate truth from legend and fact from fiction in *Gila Monsters and Beaded Lizards: New Icons for the Value of Biodiversity*, the final installment in Zoo Atlanta's 2008 Conservation Lecture Series.

Regarded for centuries with near-hysterical fear, the venom of gila monsters and beaded lizards may actually hold the key to the treatment of human diseases like diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer's. Fascinating, entertaining and at times unexpected, Dr. Beck's presentation defies one of the animal kingdom's worst reputations in favor of saving a critically important group of animals from extinction.

Dr. Brad Lock, Zoo Atlanta's Assistant Curator of Herpetology, joins Dr. Beck in offering compelling insights into the enigmatic lives and habits of these elusive reptiles, as well as provocative evidence for the effectiveness of replacing extermination with education.

Presentation begins promptly at 7 p.m. in the Coca-Cola World Studio of Zoo Atlanta's Conservation Action Resource Center (ARC); doors open at 6:30 p.m. The Conservation Lecture Series is free for Serengeti Members and above; \$5 for all other Zoo Members; \$7 for non-Members. Reservations are required. Please make reservations at least one week in advance by visiting zooatlanta.org or calling 404.624.WILD.

About Daniel D. Beck, PhD

A Professor of Biology at Central Washington University, Dr. Daniel D. Beck is the author of *The Biology of Gila Monsters and Beaded Lizards*. A preeminent authority on helodermatid lizards, Dr. Beck has devoted 25 years to the study of gila monsters, beaded lizards and their relatives in the deserts of the U.S. and the tropical dry forests of Mexico.

About Brad Lock, DVM

A veterinarian with particular expertise in herpetology, Dr. Brad Lock is Assistant Curator of Herpetology at Zoo Atlanta, where he manages the care of a collection of more than 400 reptiles and amphibians. Dr. Lock, whose interests include research on clinical pathology and disease in reptiles and studies on reproductive hormones in snakes, also serves as the Zoo's primary liaison for field conservation programs for critically endangered Guatemalan beaded lizards.

About Zoo Atlanta

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and an outdoor family experience. From well-known native wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with more than 800 animals from around the world. One of only four zoos in the U.S. exhibiting giant pandas, Zoo Atlanta is also home to one of the nation's most recognized collections of great apes and is a global center of excellence in the care and reproduction of vanishing amphibians and reptiles. Zoo Atlanta is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or visit zooatlanta.org.

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