Going Loco Over Geckos

June 7, 2011 By SharonMae

I have heard quite a lot of stories about the so-called buy and sell business of gecko lizards which is said to be thriving here in the Philippines. I think it’s been circulating for about a number of years now here in our Davao locality. What was quite unbelievable with it was the price that went with every captured gecko lizard which is said to reach a million depending on the weight.

At first I merely disclosed it as pure “sabi-sabi” or hearsay simply because I would not believe that someone would risk spending a fortune on something as seemingly ordinary as a lizard. But I was up for more surprising things about it when a neighbor told me that the gecko trade is alive here in Mindanao.

This is what happened. Our neighbor was asking me if I know of someone who is willing to sell captive geckos and even ordinary house geckos. Ever the curious girl that I am I immediately asked her why. She proceeded to tell me that she has access to a so-called “direct buyer” from abroad who buys geckos in the Philippines as well as from various parts of Asia. Our neighbor told me that the buyer’s purpose is to sell the geckos in turn to doctors and persons in the medical field. So I was like saying “huh?”, “really?” At that instant I was partially convinced that this gecko thing is something that is getting serious.

Good Morning, Mr. Gecko

That night I went around our house staring up and about, hoping to catch a glimpse of that elusive gecko or “tuko” as we call it here, because of its sound which is normally heard during late afternoons and even way into the night time. Our place here in Panabo is densely populated with coconut trees which is also a favorite haven/nesting place of geckos.

One quick glance at our ceiling and sure enough, there it was, with its great, scary eyes. I immediately felt like in a combat mode that evening, ready to try my hand at catching a “tuko”. 
However, my hubby warned me not to get near it or else suffer the wrath of its fury. So we ended up looking for helpful facts online regarding this seemingly hard-to-catch lizard. What I discovered was quite unbelievable. I found out that the buying and selling of geckos is openly advertised even on so-called advertising sites.

Hello Gecko

So why would foreigners and even local persons alike seem so keen in buying and selling geckos? These are at least the major reasons given: for medical purposes, as pest control method and as exotic pets. The reason why more and more foreigners are said to be on the prowl for geckos is because it is a probable cure for AIDS, specifically its tongue and saliva while the blood and bile are supposed to suppress tumor among cancer patients (Source: tocaygeckoprice.blogspot.com). As a pest control method I’d say it is somewhat valid since lizards have always been known to feed on ordinary bugs and insects.

Well you may be wondering what was the ending of my so-called gecko encounter. So then, here is the continuation of my not-so-ordinary experience. As my neighbor volunteered to bring in her cousins who are said to be experts in the field of capturing geckos, my hubby and I decided to why not give it a try. P50,000 for a 300gram gecko is quite a steal if it indeed was true so the next night a couple of teenagers were crawling atop our ceiling in search of big and mighty geckos. They caught 2 geckos, one with a head as big as a spoon. However, I was disappointed because it did not meet the minimum weight requirement of 300g according to them. I was instructed to feed it with left-over rice and raw chicken liver. The works!! I was given an empty aquarium wherein the 2 poor geckos would be billeted and fattened until they reach the minimum weight. Two days passed and then four, five days. I kept on peering at the glass cage. I felt that the lizards were not too happy with the course of things and I noticed that instead of fattening them up they are actually shrinking in size! Squinting my eyes I was afraid it wasn’t just my imagination, the poor lizards sure were thinning out and the eyes seemed to bulge out even more.
So my hubby and I decided once and for all, we had to set the geckos free. I could see flying money (goodbye, p50,000) in my imaginary cloud but gently shrugged it off. My conscience got the better of me and we decided to release the geckos, leave them to their usual hiding places and give them the peace they deserve.

To date, I still haven’t heard of someone having been paid a million for a gecko weighing at least half a kilo. Maybe there really were true cases or maybe none at all. Money is something that is really big deal everywhere especially when you’re talking millions so I am thinking maybe there were no true confessions out in the open (if indeed someone received a million bucks by selling captive geckos) to avoid attracting negative minds, to say the least. As for me, I am happy and contented to be seeing an occasional gecko around our house and I smile quietly when an occasional gecko’s head sticks out of our window. They are truly at home here and I’m fine with that, honestly.

Ref.: [http://liveinthephilippines.com/content/going-loco-over-geckos/](http://liveinthephilippines.com/content/going-loco-over-geckos/)