

We Can Thank Geckos for Stickier Tape



by Ned Hickson

- a trained humor columnist - must stop and say:

"Wow! This is quite possibly the most important scientific discovery since..."

"The glow-in-the-dark mouse!"

(For me, the yardstick by which all modern scientific discoveries are measured.)

Thanks to researchers at Lewis and Clark University and the University of California Berkley, we are on the verge of another milestone in scientific achievement - something that could quite possibly change the world as we know it!

At least in terms of adhesiveness.

Gecko Tape.

After hearing this exciting news, you're undoubtedly thinking the same thing I was:

Ewwwww.

But rest assured that this new tape is NOT actually made from geckos. How-

ever, it is strong enough to support the entire body weight of a full grown elephant - which apparently is just one of its many practical applications.

However, before we get to that, part of my job as a journalist is to take highly technical information and, through a rigorous process of study and research, find a way of explaining it to you, the reader, in such a way that I, the journalist, look smart. To do this, I will be using terms like setae, and spatulae, and Van der Waal forces. I might even include the term proluminal crotominoids (pronounced pro-loom-i-nal crow-tom-i-noids), which essentially means that I've run out of actual scientific terms and am now making them up.

That said, I will explain the science behind Gecko Tape. To begin with,

geckos have 100 times the wall-climbing ability of spiders. Something that, back in the 1960s, nearly led Marvel Comics to pass up spiders and introduce the *Amazing Gecko-Man!* who, along with his ability to climb walls, would possess other gecko-like superpowers - such as licking his eyelids and detaching his rear end as a means of escape. (The idea was shelved after sketching just three panels of a fight between Gecko-Man! and Doctor Octigrab.)

The secret to the gecko's clinging ability lies in its toes, each of which contain microscopic setae (tiny hairs). At the tip of each setae is a spatulae (pad) that is approximately 10 millionths of an inch across, which the gecko laces with poluminal crotominoids (Super Glue) before climbing. This produces an effect

called Van der Waal forces, which I haven't figured out yet, but nonetheless would be a really great name for a Bruce Willis movie.

After years of study, researchers have discovered that the combination of setae and spatulae cause electrical charges around molecules to become unbalanced, resulting in an unnatural attraction to each other, such as Brigitte Nielsen and Flava Flav.

Scientists have now found a way to duplicate the gecko's setae and spatulae in order to create the most adhesive tape known to man.

The next big challenge, of course, will be packaging. It's not like you can sell it in a roll like duct tape. How will you ever get it apart?

Still, when they do eventually figure it out, I'll be the first one in line. I plan to buy several rolls and

leave strips of it all over the house.

I mean, heck—what better way to catch a glow-in-the-dark mouse?

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