

Animals & Men

The Journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology



EXPEDITION REPORT:

CHRIS MOISER VISITS THE GAMBIA IN SEARCH OF LEGENDARY DRAGONS

An African Owlman; Lara the Lynx; The Myakka Skunk Ape
Photographs; The Bosnian Beast; News; Letters and much
more...

Issue 24

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Animals & Men # 24

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Animals & Men

CFZ, 15 Holne Court, Exwick,
Exeter, Devon, EX4 2NA,
England

<http://www.eclipse.co.uk/cfz>

email address: cfz@eclipse.co.uk

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THE GREAT DAYS OF ZOOLOGY ARE NOT DONE

My Dear Friends

Welcome to another issue of the world's only dedicated fortnightly zoological magazine.

I wish to apologise for the delay in this issue but as everyone who regularly reads these pages will be aware, the year 2000 was possibly the worst ever in the annals of the CFZ and it has taken us many months of toil to get back onto some semblance of the straight and narrow once more. This has involved complicated deals about infrastructure and equipment and although the delay between the last issue and the present issue of this magazine is annoying it has, unfortunately, been unavoidable. All of us on the core faculty of the CFZ are hoping that the next few months will be a little easier. BTW For those who didn't know, Linda and I won't be getting married and are no longer together.

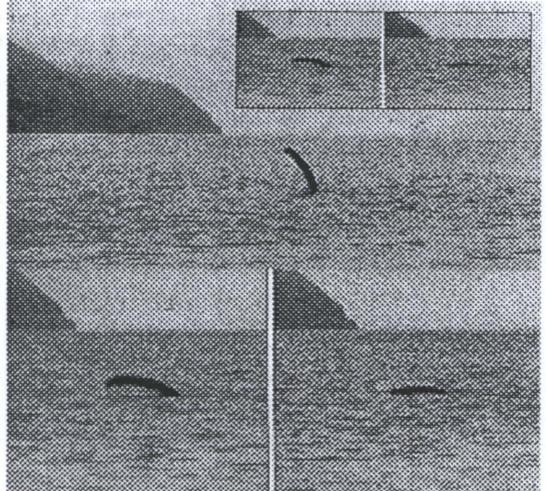
We can, however, announce that our publishing schedule is almost up to date and all subscribers will find a peaty typeset list of our current publications tucked unobtrusively inside the front cover. Unfortunately, because of the unavoidable delay between issues there is a far greater amount of news than usual and so we have taken the executive decision to include a bigger Newsfile section than usual in this issue. Sadly the obituary section is also larger than usual because quite a few luminaries of cryptozoology and forteana have recently died.

As we were going to press we received the following pictures purporting to be of the Loch Ness Monster. Gary Campbell of the Official Loch Ness Monster Fan Club has been quoted as saying "I have seen many film clips of strange things on Loch Ness, but this is one of the most unusual and exciting. I have shown the video to several experts and they cannot say what it is. That leaves one alternative - Nessie."

Sorry dude. Everybody else seems to agree that it is inanimate, and we think that it looks like a bicycle inner tube. We wonder how much the *Daily Mail* actually PAID for the pictures? Not convinced, guys

However, we believe it is important to feature such pictures even when they turn out to be hoaxes or misidentifications. In this issue we feature several pictures purporting to be of

cryptids which have turned out to be of no such thing. Although there is no proof we feel that it is highly likely that somewhere along the way these photographs of 'Nessie' are the result of someone pulling the wool over someone's eyes. Funny old world, innit?



So until next time enjoy the magazine and continue to support us for another year. (By the way, Richard's latest libellous picture of yours truly depicts me in the guise of one of the Scottish "Earth Hounds" as described in *Mysteries of Planet Earth* by Karl Shuker.)

Slainté Mhor

Jon Downes (Editor)

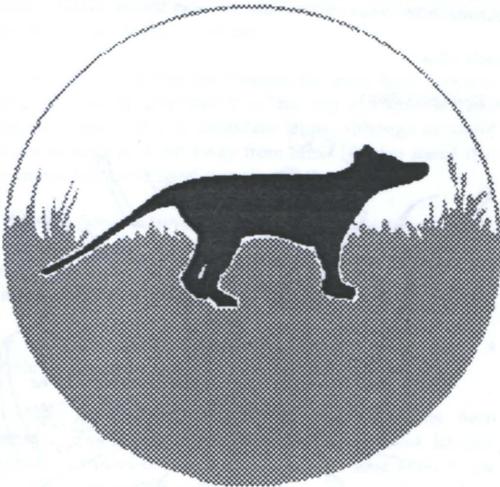


NEWSFILE



by Jonathan Downes and Richard Freeman

NEW AND REDISCOVERED



WELL? IT'S THE FUNKY PHYLUM OF DISCO ISLAND...

Only four new phyla have been discovered in the last century. The most recent – a 0.1 millimeter long freshwater organism has recently been discovered in Denmark. Studies of the animal named "*Limnognathia maerski*" show that it shares some characteristics with certain seawater life-forms.

Its most remarkable feature is a set of very complicated jaws. It has now got its own branch, *Micrognathozoa*, on the tree of the world's known animals, which are divided into slightly more than 30 families. *Limnognathia maerski*, which reproduces through parthenogenesis, uses its jaws to scrape the bacteria and algae it feeds on from underwater moss growing in icy wells which freeze over during the long Arctic winter.

The animal was found in samples taken in 1994 from a well in Isunngua on Disco island in northwestern Greenland. A colony of the tiny creatures, all females, is in a refrigerator at Copenhagen University.

PYTHON PARADE

Recent research by Harvey, M. B., D. G. Barker, L. K. Ammerman, and P. T. Chippindale, 2000. Has revised the classification of Indonesian Scrub Pythons creating three new species. This research is based on museum specimens and new material recently collected in eastern Indonesia.

Morelia kinghorni (formerly *M. amethystina kinghorni*) and *M. amethystina* (formerly *M. amethystina amethystina*) are recognised as species, and three new species are described.

The phylogenetic relationships of scrub pythons are resolved using morphological and molecular characters. Scrub pythons are most closely related to *Morelia boeleni* and have undergone both ancient divergences and a relatively recent radiation.

Scrub python populations exhibit interesting colour and pattern polymorphism and ontogenetic change, and these characteristics vary among populations. Basically, the authors raised a few island endemics to

full species status. Nothing "new" *per se* was actually discovered. New species are *M. clastolepis*, *M. nauta*, and *M. tracyae*. The authors note that there are probably more "hidden" species in the complex.

HOLIDAY IN CAMBODIA

A British-led expedition to a formerly closed part of Cambodia has discovered several new species of animal and rediscovered the wolf snake and large numbers of Siamese crocodile, long thought to be extinct in the wild.

The wolf snake is a non-poisonous black and white snake, remarkable for its long, dog-like fangs. It is thought to depend for its survival on its resemblance to the highly-poisonous krait.

I AM THE SNOOD SAID MR SNOOD

Two jellyfish caught at Toba port in Mie Prefecture, in western Japan, in 1992 have been found to belong to a new family, a researcher at Toba Aquarium said Monday. The report on the findings by Takushi Horita, 42, a researcher at the aquarium who found the jellyfish, appeared in the latest issue of a zoological journal published by Leiden Museum in the Netherlands.

The jellyfish, two centimeters in diameter and 1.5 cm long, is a type of comb jelly and has four gonads, half the usual number in jellyfish. It was given the scientific name *lobato lampea tetragona*. There are about 80 kinds of comb jelly in the world, and about 20 of them are found in Japan, Mr. Horita said.

RARE BEAR

The following story was sent to us from the Earth Alert website.

March 1 2000: A group of people in China's Quinling Mountains reported sighting a rare brown giant panda last week.

At least 10 residents of the community of Sanguan-miao, located in the reserve, were planting corn when

the giant reddish-brown panda ran past them. They followed the bear into the reserve and said they could hear him chewing on bamboo. Foping Reserve researcher Yong Yange, who has studied giant pandas for 30 years, said the bear matches the description of one sighted by researchers in 1985.

That sighting was believed to be the first ever reported of this rare colour morph. Another of the rare bears was spotted in 1991. However the story of the anomalous Pandas in this bizarre wildlife refuge was not over. Several months earlier in 1999, the *Xinhua News Agency* reported (03 Aug) that a pure white giant panda was found in the same reserve.

The white panda was discovered by a group of 12 visitors to the region. "I saw the white panda walking through a bamboo forest and rushing into another one," said a witness, adding: "There is an opening of about 20 metres between the two bamboo forests, so we could see it clearly."

The first white panda was found in this area in 1990. It could be hypothesised that these occurrences of unusual colour morphs of this rare species in such a small area are an alarming warning sign of the diminishing gene pool of the panda population in this area.

NEPAL APPAL

The *Xinhua News Agency* reported on 03 Aug 1999 that a villager in the Tanahun district of western Nepal saw a mysterious animal that has been reported as attacking villagers and causing general panic. "I saw the mysterious beast with the aid of torch light while it was about to bite me." said Habi Julla Miya, a victim and eyewitness of the animal.

Miya said the animal resembled a Tibetan hound-like dog in appearance, but had a white stripe on the neck and a tail somewhat bigger than that of a dog with the remaining part of the body entirely white.

The animal went away slowly after a short confrontation with Miya, leaving him with three sores on the head. About 20 people in the district have been attacked by the animal in the past four months - some with minor injuries and others with serious injuries. One man was killed three years ago by the still unidentified animal.

REWARD FOR A MOON FACED SNAKE

On 30th Aug 2000 the *Mainichi Daily News* reported that a bounty had been placed on the head of a mythical reptile which was described as a snake-like creature with a moon-face and what looks like a silly grin.

People from throughout Kansai and as far away as the Kanto region have thronged to the town in central Okayama Prefecture in the hopes of finding a tsuchinoko, a presumably mythical reptile bearing at least some resemblance to a snake. And if someone is lucky enough to find one of the fabled creatures, they stand to receive a 20 million yen reward from the Yoshii Municipal Government.

Though none from the teeming throngs of bounty hunters has yet managed to get their hands on the cash they stand to earn from catching a tsuchinoko, Yoshii retailers have certainly developed a yen for the creature. Sales of locally produced tsuchinoko rice cakes, tsuchinoko cakes and tsuchinoko wine have skyrocketed.

Tsuchinoko fever hit Yoshii on May 21 2000 after a farmer cutting grass swore he saw a snake-like creature with a face resembling cartoon cat Doraemon slither across his field. The farmer slashed the creature with his weed whipper, but it fled into a nearby stream and escaped.

Four days later, 72-year-old Hideko Takashima was talking with a couple of friends in Yoshii when she found the creature's body lying beside the stream it had dived into to escape from the farmer. She picked it up and buried it. "It had a cute, round face and was clearly not a snake," Takahashi says.

"I've seen something like this around here before, and it makes a chirping sound." Yoshii Municipal Government officials heard the rumors of a tsuchinoko and headed out to look over Takahashi's find.

They exhumed the body and sent it to Kawasaki University of Medical Welfare to be examined. Kuniyasu Sato, the professor who probed the reptile, said that the creature may indeed have been the tsuchinoko often referred to in Japanese fairy tales, but "scientifically speaking, it was a kind of snake."

Editorial Comment: One wonders if the staff at the have reached any conclusions yet.

I would expect that this animal is some bizarre form of pit viper as I related in a previous issue of *Animals and Men*. - Richard Freeman

FIND THE FISH



EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story was sent to us early this year but there is neither a date on it or any indication where Phelps Lake is...

Last year, at least two anglers caught and released this unidentified fish on Phelps Lake. The photos have been circulated widely among leading fish biologists, none of whom has been able to classify it with any degree of certainty. Is it a strange hybrid or a completely new species? While various theories have been posed, the fish remains a mystery.

Hoping to unlock the secret, Wolf Bay Lodge is offering a free return trip to the first angler who can catch - and keep - an example of this fish for DNA testing.

- More species of new fish were discovered in Tibet according to *Yomiuri Shimbun Daily* on the 17th Apr 2001. It announced that a joint Japanese-Chinese research team has found three different fish species in a Tibetan lake dubbed "the lake in the sky" because it is located 5 000 meters above sea level.

The research, conducted by scientists from Tokai University and the Chinese Academy of Science, is the first scientific study of fish living in a high-altitude environment.

The scientists believe one of the three types of fish discovered at Lake Puma Yumu is from a species called nude fish, similar to a kind of loach found in China. The nude fish found were brown, with six feelers and no scales. A number of fish of this type, including one measuring about 20 centimeters, were found beneath small stones near a riverbank.

The two other types of fish found were discovered in the lake and a river flowing from it. Despite their similarity to trout, the researchers believe the two are from different fish species.

Yet another new fish was reported in *The Age*, Melbourne on Tuesday 15 May 2001. It reported that researchers have found a new species of seahorse. Called *Hippocampus Queenslandica*, the creature lives at around 70 metres depth and suffers decompression sickness if brought to the surface too quickly.

The new red and yellow species was around 10 centimetres long with its tail uncurled.

PARADISE REGAINED

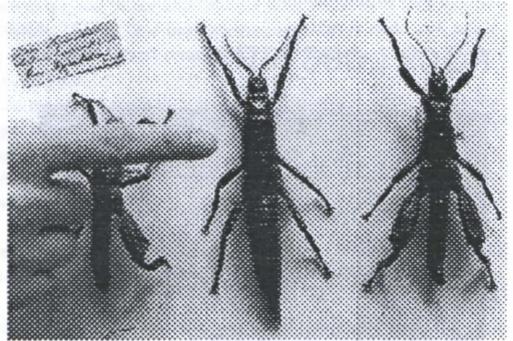
The Queensland Courier Mail for the 8th September 2000 reported that one of the Australian mainland birds believed driven to extinction – the paradise parrot – has reportedly been sighted within 100km of Brisbane.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service NatureSearch manager Ric Natrass said the agency was taking seriously the sightings from two reputable sources and planned to mount a new search for the spectacular parrot. "Speaking with both of these people, it certainly raised my hopes," he said.

Mr Natrass said the locations of the sightings would remain a secret or "we'd have the bloody countryside swarming with people looking for them".

The last verified sighting of the paradise parrot occurred in 1927 in the Burnett River region, about 300km north of Brisbane. The bird was never found again, despite several unconfirmed sightings and searches for the species.

WALKING SAUSAGE FOUND ON BALLS PYRAMID...



A stick insect that evolved before the dinosaurs and was thought to have been extinct for 80 years has been found alive on an island off the Australian coast. Jubilant scientists yesterday compared the discovery of the giant flightless insect as "the most significant event since the discovery of the Wollemi Pine". *Dryococelus australis*, which grows 15 centimetres long and has a body 1.5 centimetres thick, was once thought to have inhabited only Lord Howe Island. Lord Howe's stick insects survived the dinosaurs, only to be wiped out in 1920 by rats that arrived aboard the supply ship *Mokambo* in 1918. Scientists from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Australian Museum went to Balls Pyramid, a volcanic rock jutting out of the sea 23 kilometres from Lord Howe Island, to investigate reported sightings.

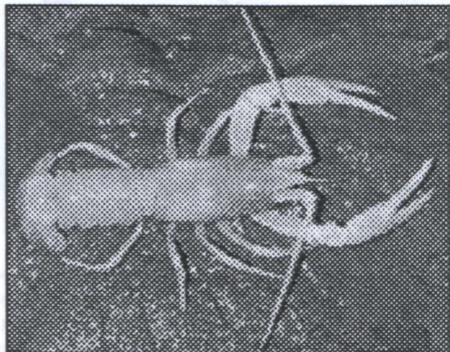
SOLDIERS AND SANITARY SERVICE ARE TRYING TO STOP THE SPREAD OF UNKNOWN INSECTS IN UKRAINE

This was the best headline we have read in ages and accompanied a story from *Pravda* on 12th Feb 2001 which revealed that a plague of unknown insects was menacing the Ukraine. The insects had crawled out of a garbage site in the Donetsk region. They look like big horned beetles and were apparently "spreading and annihilating all the vegetation in their way."

Although no pictures were available the story concluded "For the time being, experts fail to determine these strange

insects' species. But the fact is that they are not typical for Ukraine. Soldiers, rescuers of Emergency Situations Ministry, and experts of sanitary service are trying to stop the spread of the beetles."

ROCK LOBSTER



Nature on March 30, 2000 ran a spectacularly uninteresting article about biodiversity of cave dwelling creatures in parts of the United States. They illustrated it with this picture which purports to show a new species of rconectes crayfish from Missouri was discovered by cave biologists. Because this creature is not mentioned in the article and we can't find any other references to it anywhere we have no guilty feelings about having allowed the Copyright Liberation Front to nick it for these hallowed pages.

THE SALT WATER CAMEL

According to Reuters on Feb. 7 a scarce breed of Bactrian camel that resides in China and Mongolia and can drink salt water may be a species distinct from domesticated relatives.

Genetic differences are significant enough to indicate that the wild camels are of a different species, although DNA tests are continuing. Only about 1 000 of the camels exist in Asia and 600 of them are thought to live in an uninhabited area of desert, in Xinjiang province, the reports said. The area was closed for nuclear tests from 1955 to 1996.

KICK IN THE EYE

A new species of millipede has been found in Carolina. The

158-leg millipede trapped in a surprise catch by the Schiele Museum of Natural History turned out to be a species that has never before been identified on the planet.

"New species are almost a dime a dozen in the tropics, but not in an area like this," said millipede expert Rowland Shelley with the N. C. Museum of Natural Science in Raleigh, who was in Gaston County on Wednesday hunting for the arthropod. "This find is significant."

At the same time, it's not unheard of in North Carolina. Shelley is also documenting another new millipede found in Jacksonville, near the N. C. coast.

MARLIN BRANDNEW

Many thanks to Craig Heinselman who sent us the following story from the *Newcastle Herald*, March 7, 2000:

"It was a case of the one that got away for most fishermen at this year's game tournament. But scientists landed a bigger catch than they expected. A new species of flatworm living on some of the marlin caught in the competition was identified by scientists. Researchers from the University of Queensland said it was an exciting discovery and would help increase knowledge of flatworms and other parasites.

Priya Pitt from the university's department of microbiology and parasitology said the worm was round and flat 'like a 5¢ piece' and was found in the nasal cavity of a number of striped marlin. The four-person team of researchers will take samples back to Queensland to continue their studies.

INSY WINSY ILLIONOIS

Another story from Craig Heinselman proves that the work of amateurs is as important in zoology as it ever was.

The *Chicago Sun Times* of April 4, 2000 reported how a survey of the invertebrates of three Lake County forest preserves. netted thousands of specimens of butterflies, beetles, crayfish, centipedes, aquatic insects and what experts now believe may be the prize of them all: three previously undiscovered species of spiders.

The three varieties of tiny, chestnut- and reddish-orange-coloured spiders are among the group of arachnids known as sheet-web weavers because of the inch-long, horizontal webs they spin.

The weavers are just 1 to 3 mm long, and many have humps or horns. They live on forest floors in the northern United States and Canada. "These are the cutest little guys we've ever seen," said Thomas Prentice, a researcher who identifies spiders for a living at the University of California-Riverside. "They're really cool." He confirmed for the forest preserve district that the spiders were three types never before identified

ROCK RAT RESURRECTION

An Alice Springs survey of rare and endangered fauna in the West MacDonnell National Park has found more central rock rats, a species previously thought to be extinct. The survey done by the Green Corps found two Central Rock Rats in habitats at Redbank Gorge.

The corps' Damien Thomas says the findings will be put on the national register. "The central rock rat was considered extinct for about 40 years or endangered and they'd done some previous trapping programs in the mid-'90s and had no success and then by chance it was re-discovered in 1996 and subsequently we found more populations of the central rock rat out in the West MacDonnell's area," he said.

MY LOVELY HORSE

The *Japan Times* of 15th April 2001 gave new credence to an ancient oriental legend when it told the story of how horse researcher Hayato Shimizu says he has captured a photograph of a Central Asian horse that appears to be sweating blood, apparently confirming Chinese legends of a similar horse famed for its great speed. Shimizu, 39, said he took the picture in the western Tian Shan mountain range in Central Asia last August. The photo shows what appears to be blood running from the animal's shoulder area

According to Shimizu, the horse bled after running at full speed. The shoulder bulged before blood mixed

with sweat ran down the horse's side. Some animal experts say the phenomenon is caused by a kind of parasitic worm, but its mechanism is not fully understood yet. Locals believe the bleeding is evidence the horses are strong and have surplus energy, Shimizu said.

The ancient Chinese "Shiki" histories tell of a horse that sweats blood when it runs and is able to travel nearly 4 000 km in a day. According to the tales, a Han Dynasty emperor sent entire armies to catch the fabled steed. The emperor reported in the histories that such horses lived in a region along the Silk Road covering modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Editorial Comment: It was once widely believed by medieval scholars that the common African hippopotamus was able to sweat blood. The blood was actually a secretion of reddish hue that helps keep the animal's skin moist in the heat. I have never heard of this in any other species. - RICHARD FREEMAN

SRI LANKAN STRIGIFORM

On Monday, 26 February, 2001, the newsroom of the BBC World Service announced that a new species of owl has been found in Sri Lanka - the island's first bird discovery in 132 years. T

he owl, which has yet to be named, was first spotted in January by a local bird-watcher, who'd been tracking its unfamiliar call for several years. The find has since been confirmed and the owl photographed in the jungle. Ornithologists say it's remarkable the bird should elude discovery until now, as the natural history of the island has been thoroughly documented for more than a century.

Editorial Comment: One cannot help but wonder if this is the infamous Devil Bird of Ceylon, an undiscovered owl with a frightful cry. Its call has been described as being like a tortured boy who is finally strangled. Lets hope the new owl is feeling loquacious. - RICHARD FREEMAN.

KOKAKO KAPERS

On Valentine's Day this year, *The Southland Times* of New Zealand reported that the long hunt for the South Island

kokako – a bird long thought extinct – may well be over. A Queenstown man might have discovered the bird. *"This is good news, it sounds like he's on to something unusual,"* Mapua-based ecologist Rhys Buckingham said.

officer Dean Nelson said the bird had been considered extinct for more than 30 years and staff were keen to hear Mr Gavin's recording of it and discuss his findings.



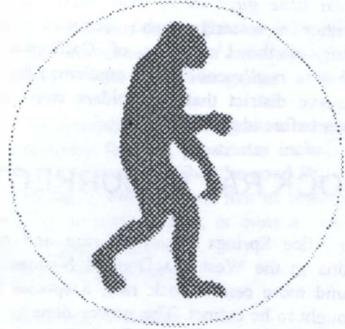
Goldminer Des Gavin heard and sighted a bird, believed to be a kokako, and found a large nest with unusual feathers in an isolated part of South Otago. He recognised the rare birdsong after watching a television programme about the kokako and returned to the area, which he would not disclose publicly.

Mr Gavin spotted a harrier hawk that appeared to be attacking something near the birdsong. He then saw a bird about two-thirds smaller than the hawk believed to be a kokako. Des Gavin's descriptions rang true with other accounts gathered over the years, Mr Buckingham said. *"What is very important here is that Mr Gavin has got tangible evidence (a nest). That's what we want. It's very, very promising"* he said.

The nest could be tested to clarify its origin. Mr Buckingham said the other convincing aspect was the location of the find in South Otago, and he hoped to speak to Mr Gavin about this.

Meanwhile, Department of Conservation biodiversity programme managers in Dunedin and Queenstown were also keen to talk to Mr Gavin about his find. Dunedin-based

BHM



SASQUATCH STAMPEDE

A story in the *Dallas Morning News* on the 15th September 2000 gave details of several sightings in Louisiana during the summer of 2000.

Bigfoot is no laughing matter to folks in the bayous of central Louisiana, where there have been four sightings this summer. Some parents are keeping their children indoors. Sheriff's deputies and wildlife officials say it's the work of pranksters, but logger Earl Whitstine isn't backing off his account.

"People have made fun of me," he said, *"but they didn't see what I saw."* Mr. Whitstine and another logger said they spotted the creature on August 25th in some cypress swamps called Boggy Bayou, near Cotton Island, about 20 miles from Alexandria.

That report prompted Larry Satcher, a fisherman, to say he had come across a similar beast in those same woods a few weeks earlier. Then Mr. Remedies, 74, came forward with his own month-old sighting, 100 miles away from Cotton Island, in Sabine Parish. He said he was mowing his lawn when the hairy creature appeared.

Allen Rivers, Zwolle's assistant mayor, said a couple of

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his hogs were killed by "something out there that's dangerous, that has some pretty big claws and pretty big teeth." Capt. Bryan Poston of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries said the hysteria is out of hand. "As far as I'm concerned, any Bigfoot sighting is a hoax," he said. "I deal in facts, and until I am shown facts, I will not give them any credibility."

Still, hundreds of folks visiting Mary Ward's bait shop in Cotton Island hardly talk about anything else. Her son Joe was one of the loggers who say they saw the legendary creature. Since then, the Wards have sold tickets and Bigfoot T-shirts to those who stop to gawk at 16 massive tracks on her Cotton Island land.

Louisiana State University lab tests of hair taken from the Cotton Island sighting revealed it was from a horse.

Meanwhile the *Arizona Daily Star*, on July 5th 2000 reported an incident in Selma [Oregon]. Grants Pass psychologist Matthew Johnson insists he's not crazy. Even when he tells people that he heard, smelled and saw the Pacific Northwest's mythical Bigfoot while hiking Saturday [July 1] with his family at the Oregon Caves National Monument. "It was very tall, it was very hairy," Johnson said.

He said he was squatting in the woods near one of the monument's backwoods trails when he spotted the creature standing upright about 60 feet away, hiding behind a tree and spying on his wife and three children.

Shortly before the sighting, his family had just detected a pungent, musky scent on the trail and heard some deep, guttural groans in the woods nearby. Rangers checked the area Sunday and found nothing unusual, officials said.

MAIM CLAIM

The *Scottish Daily Record* of 19th January 2001 announced that travellers to the Himalayas can now get insurance against a yeti attack. Adventure travel company High and Wild are offering cover in case one of the legendary hairy creatures injures a trekker. The first group to take the £1 million cover will travel

from China to the 23 000 ft North Col of Mount Everest. Mountaineer Nigel Gifford, who runs the company, said: "I have known of the presence of creatures living and roaming above the snow line for 30 years. I thought it was important the people we take up there are insured against it."

ORANG PENDING !

A news release dated 7th February 2001 told how Aripin, an Indonesian forestry ranger in the Sungai Penuh region of Mt Kerinci in Jambi, Sumatra, saw an orang pendek about 12 days previously. Exciting news like this takes time to get out of the rain forest when you consider it's approximately an 8 or 9 hour trek to the nearest paved road.

According to Debbie Martyr stationed at the scene with the Tiger Project and Project Orang Pendek, judging from Aripin's description "it can't have been anything else" Then, as if to add insult to injury, a young Master's student there in the beautiful rain forest studying behavioural ecology of siamang heard a long wailing call which, again Martyr identifies as "it could have only been that of an orang pendek."

Martyr, whose rain forest computer is held together with cellophane tape, clarinet reeds and an inadequate amount of Band-Aids went on to reveal, "what is interesting is, I am fairly certain the animal was not moving terrestrially this time, but just above the ground.

"Our team did a good sweep of the area and found no footmarks where the animal was moving. From their description of the way it was moving, I think it was actually brachiating just above ground level - maybe a foot or so at most not least because of the heavy movement of saplings etc described by our research team.

"Only Aripin got a reasonably good view of the animal, and that being partial and from behind The good thing is that Aripin is extremely level-headed and cautious, which is also unusual for an Indonesian forestry ranger. He is very interested in animals and of course knows his bear from his pig-tail macaque etc."

The colour described is consistent with the dark brown colour morph of the orang pendek - the second main morph is a rather nice honey gold which Debbie Martyr thinks is overall slightly more common.

TONIGHT WE SAIL FOR SINGAPORE

The *New Straits Times* of 25th April 2001 gave an interesting round up of recent sightings of *hantu jarang gigi* or big-foot in the vast Endau-Rompin park in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The shy, hairy and harmless creature is said to reside in the 40 197 hectare park but so far no image of it has been captured. Orang Asli who live in the forest and officers from the Forestry Department, Rela members and some campers have reported of sightings of the big-foot from a distance or finding its footprint in wet soil. The "creature" as described has dark brown hair covering its whole body, is about three metres tall and its footprint is about 45cm in size – about twice the size of an adult shoeless foot.

One area where sightings have taken place is Sungai Kencin, a tributary of the Endau River and reports include fish bones scattered on the ground as if big-foot just had its meal. Orang Asli living in the area believe that there are only three of them – a male, a female and their child. There has been several sightings in the forest near Lubuk China, Malacca and locals call the creature Ensut-Ensut. Its foot is inverted. Ghazali Yaacob, a surveyor, says villagers have reported having come face-to-face with the creature. The last sighting is of the creature running out of a burning jungle with its young one in search of shelter. In all the sightings, no one has reported of being threatened by big-foot in any way.

ANTIPODEAN APES A GO-GO

The *Gold Coast Bulletin* for 3rd April 2001 highlighted a moral dilemma facing yowie hunters as they prepared to set out to capture one of the elusive creatures on video. Australian Yowie Research spokesman Dean Harrison said that it could be morally wrong to reveal the creatures and their whereabouts. But he said that the film project 'could also add weight to the argument that logging in their known habitats was endangering them'. The Brisbane-based businessman was preparing to lead an expedition into a southeast Queensland state forest to film a yowie, said to be a hairy, powerful ape-like creature.

"We have a team of 24 involved in Operation Rotation which begins on April 26 and ends on May 4." said Mr Harrison. He said the group, which included five people with military tracking experience, would camp on a rotational basis in the state forest northwest of Esk. "That's the hot spot for yowies. We've had so many sightings from reliable witnesses." he said. Mr Harrison said the aim of Operation

Rotation was to capture on video the movements of a yowie. "Our information is that a least two clans or families of yowies live in the area. All the witnesses are of the highest calibre and integrity," he said.

LAKE AND SEA MONSTERS



THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

Erik Knutterand wrote to us recently to say how fishermen in Norway are claiming they saw the sea serpent. Two fishermen are quite sure that they observed something that could be a sea serpent in STORFJORDEN between SULA and HAREID in MORE and RMSDAL county at Sunday (March 18th) morning. For two minutes the experienced fishermen are supposed to have watched a big creature speed along the surface. NRK (the national broadcasting channel) reports that the two fishermen had their unique sighting at 11 a. m. on Sunday.

CALEDONIAN CADAVERS

On the 5th May this year the *Scottish Daily Record* announced that a party of excited day trippers believed they had solved the mystery of Nessie when discovered two snake-like creatures lying dead. On the shores of Loch Ness. The bigger of the two was almost 7ft long, had a 21-inch girth and weighed in at 46 lbs.

But nature experts later confirmed the monsters were conger eels that normally live in the sea. The discovery re-awakened the old theory of an underground tunnel link between Loch Ness and the sea.

FUNNY FOXTROTS....

The *South China Morning Post* for 03 May 2000 announced that a reward of Canadian \$2 million (HK\$ 10.5 million) for conclusive evidence of the existence of Ogoopogo – the creature of Lake Okanagan. No capture necessary.

The reward is thanks to local businessmen, who have taken out an insurance policy just in case it is found

"There have been so many sightings you have to believe there's something out there," said John Singleton, manager of Penticton's chamber of commerce, which hopes the C\$2 million reward will also boost tourism.

The reward's winners will have to meet specific scientific criteria to prove what they have found is Ogoopogo and not just an unusually large sturgeon or other fish that lives in the lake. Mr Singleton said his office has been deluged with phone calls since the reward was first reported, including some from people who are worried Ogoopogo will be hurt or killed. "You don't have to capture it. We're not going to put him in a zoo," Mr Singleton said.

OUT OF PLACE



TYGER TYGER

One of the strangest stories this year broke on the 23rd March in the Beirut *Daily Star* when an irate owner of a travelling circus denied that a tiger reportedly seen trotting throughout the South of Lebanon belonged to him. "Would anyone tell me how a tiger can vanish or escape without anyone seeing him?" circus owner Imad Idriss asked. "Is he going to take a bus?"

Residents of several villages in the region, however, say they have seen the animal. "I was driving to a bakery where I work near Nmeirieh early Sunday and nearly hit the tiger crossing the street," said Ali Mouazzen of Nmeirieh.

He said the animal jumped into a valley nearby and disappeared before he could make sure whether he hit it or not. Abdullah Badir said he saw the tiger while hunting birds in the outskirts of Nmeirieh. "I tried to shoot but was unable to hit it because of the trees and because he was running fast," Badir said.

The very elusiveness of this beastie is horribly reminiscent of some of the mystery tiger reports from Hong Kong during the 1960s which were never solved and which the CFZ Investigators have filed neatly under zooform phenomena rather than bona fide animals. Of course, Hong Kong has always been well within the range of *P. Tigris. amoyensis* (see A&M8) whereas even in historical times The Lebanon was well outside the range of the Caspian Tiger (see last issue).

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE...

Another peculiar animal which has, we feel, to be filed either as zooform or 'Out of Place' was the wolf which, according to Reuters on the 15th December 2000 was terrorising northern Belgium. They reported that the mysterious beast had killed at least 10 sheep in the previous few weeks.

The closest countries with wild wolf populations are Poland and Slovakia, although there is also said to be a small group in southern France. "It could be it has escaped from a zoo or has been voluntarily released by someone," said Hughes Fanal, a director of the Flanders Bird Protection League, an animal welfare group which is co-ordinating the search for the killer.

"We have been authorised to hunt and capture it..," Fanal told Reuters.

This wasn't the only out of place wolf which turned up in our files in recent months. On the 21st August 2000, *The Aberdeen Press and Journal* printed the story of Conrad Sheward, 62, who was on a shooting trip with friends when he saw what he was sure was a wolf roaming Clashindarroch Forest, near Huntly. Mr Sheward, from Gloucester, was driving up a hill with friend Richard Brundle and Mr Brundle's 15-year-old son, Tom, when they made their apparently startling discovery last Monday morning. "We opened the locked forestry gate and drove through about 100 yards and then came to a bend," said the lawyer. "About 120 yards away, there was an animal in the middle of the road sideways on to us. It turned and looked straight at us. Initially I thought it was a huge fox. It was grey with a whitish tail but it was too big for a fox."

Mr Sheward, who has been visiting the North-east of Scotland for nine years, said he had seen wolves in the flesh at wildlife parks and was convinced his eyes had not deceived him. "I have got no doubt in my mind that it was a wolf. I would have known if it had been a dog." Mr Sheward had been staying with friend Jim Copland, from Aberdeen, who has been shooting tenant at the Forestry Commission-owned land for 18 years. Mr Copland, 73, said he had never seen or heard reports of a wolf on the estate - but was not overly surprised at his friend's apparent sighting. He said he had been told of reports that wolves were being released into the wild in the Highlands

EL PASO PUSSY

Just before Christmas came the exciting news that a Jaguar had been reported in New Mexico. These magnificent cats have also been seen in Arizona in recent years and it is encouraging to speculate that they may well recolonise the areas of the United States where they were hunted to extinction in the early 20th Century *Albuquerque Journal* Dec 14, 2000

TURN OFF THE JUKEBOX (AND DO US ALL A FAVOUR)

With the invasion of Australia by the South American fire ant discovered last week, concerns have been raised about just how much damage the crop destroying pest can do.

University of Queensland entomologist Professor Myron Zalucki says fire ants not only destroy crops and have a nasty sting but could also be detrimental to Australia's native

wildlife. The fire ant eats insects, eggs, small mammals, frogs and lizards. Professor Zalucki says the ants are virtually impossible to get rid of, once established and will not restrict themselves to rural pastures. "They have the potential to sort of ruin all sorts of productive land and pastures," he said. "I dare say our golfers would not appreciate red fire ant all over the course."

THE COSMIC JOKER STRIKES AGAIN

As regular readers of this magazine will know the cosmic joker sometimes has a very cruel sense of humour. One of the most cruel of his recent japes was highlighted in *The Guardian* on January 24th 2001 under the headline

'Extinct' bat is found - only to die of cold

An elderly female mouse-eared bat was found by a thirteen year old boy at an unspecified address in Bognor Regis, Sussex, but three days after the animal's rescue, it died.



Disappointed conservationists hope this is not the end, finally, for the rare mammal large enough to fill the palm of a man's hand. They plan to go back in the summer to establish whether others are hanging on in the face of intensive farming and the pesticides that have destroyed so many insects that make up their diet. Ms Coyte of the Bat Preservation Society said:

"The fact the bat was found within five miles of the last known colony suggests it may be a survivor from that or another colony. We know from her worn teeth she was old. She may have lived alone for the last 10 years - but we hope that there are more somewhere in the area."

The last known colony, a few miles from Bognor, was discovered in 1969 and contained several females until 1985 when they all failed to return; it is thought they may have died in a fire in a cottage where they roosted.

WAS IT A HEALTH FOOD SHOP ORDERING THEIR WRONG SORT OF CUCSCUS?

A possum of unknown species was discovered in early January 2001 in the Staffordshire village of Oakamoor by a man walking his dog. And since its appearance it has created quite a mystery - not just for villagers, but animal experts too.

The creature was found by Jeff Blundred, landlord of the Cricketer's Arms pub in Oakamoor. Jeff said: "I was out walking with my dog, George, when he started to tug at the lead. At first I thought he had caught a big rat, but the creature was still alive and attacking him.

I got George to drop it and went into the pub to get my partner Jean. We went back out to the riverside and saw the animal was in distress, so I hit it over the head with a rake.

I thought nothing of it until the next day when George discovered it again. In the daylight I could see it was not a rat, but something as big as a cat, with a pointed face and nose, thick, grey fur and a

thick, long tail. I brought it back to the pub and some of the customers who have been to Australia said it looked like a possum."

Jeff's partner Jean Worthington examined the creature and decided to hand it over to local wildlife expert Jim Plant. She said: "It was too big for a rat, it had large vicious teeth. I have no idea what it was, but some customers were convinced it was a possum."

The possum is a nocturnal marsupial, native to areas of Australia. But experts at Chester Zoo doubt Oakamoor has a new claim to fame. Pat Cade, who has worked at Chester Zoo for 16 years, said: "I very much doubt it would be a possum as it would not survive in our climate. I doubt it could even have been a pet as it is something which would not be imported with ease." But animal expert Jini Plant is convinced the creature is a possum. Jim, who lives at Cheadle, said: "I have looked it up in all the books and it certainly looks like a possum to me."

BUZZ WITH THE FUZZ

Fears of a malaria outbreak in the Isle of Sheppey in Kent have prompted environmental health officers to order a survey of the booming mosquito population. The last Briton known to have been killed by malaria after contracting the disease in this country died on this island in the Thames estuary in 1952.

Now, after a massive increase in anopheles mosquitoes in Sheppey - an indirect result of global warming, according to scientists - Swale council has asked a team from Durham University to assess the risks of a fresh outbreak and to discover why the mosquitoes are multiplying so quickly. The researchers are focusing on a colony in marshland near the town of Queenborough.

IN YARMOUTH, SHOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BLOATERS?

One of the greatest ever quotes to come the way of the *Animals & Men* newsteam arrived courtesy of a story in the *Daily Mirror* on 6th August 2000.

In typically jokey style (I mustn't be rude about the paper because a friend of mine is on the staff) it told the story of what seems to be a bona fide fish fall in Norfolk. One of the best documented occurrences of this type in years. Fred

Hodgins found hundreds of tiny silver fish (identified as sprats) wriggling away on his lawn after a torrential downpour. He said: "I heard what I thought were large raindrops hitting the windows. But when I got outside, the garden was awash with tiny silver fish." Now for the great quote: Met Office spokesman Andy Yeatman said: "This is quite common. And sometimes, it does actually rain frogs."

- Cool. A Government employee talking in a matter of fact manner about fortaen phenomena... but it all seems a little strange. Does he know something that we don't? Or is all the conspiracy theorising about Government involvement with fortaen phenomena all true after all? Maybe the rest of the *Animals & Men* editorial team should stop taking the Mickey out of Nick Redfern...

WHITE ELEPHANT STALLS

Another strange out-of-place creature from the annals of folklore was reported in India in April, according to *The Straits Times* on 23rd April.

Apparently villagers in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, who prefer not to have so many elephants around lest they destroy their crops, are sacrificing their sleep to spot an elusive white elephant believed to be in the vicinity.

Following reports of several 'sightings' by villagers since last July, the chief wildlife warden of the state, Mr Chaudhury, has asked his field officials to be on the lookout for the white elephant during their census of the elephant population that is currently under way. The rare jumbo has not been spotted officially yet, but wildlife officials do not rule out the possibility of its existence. However, they feel the picture would be clear once the census report is completed within a week. Though sceptics in the department are of the opinion that the white elephant is a product of the villagers' imagination, others are not so sure.

They point out that the topography of Arunachal Pradesh is contiguous with that of Thailand, where several white elephants have been recorded through history - and venerated.

"After all, a white elephant is nothing but an albino," Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) D. N. Singh said. "There is no reason why a white elephant cannot exist in this part of the country with a sizeable pachyderm population."

The white elephant episode began when Mr Takum Nabum, the honorary wildlife warden of East Kameng, reported a sighting in mid July last year. In a letter to the chief wildlife warden, he said that no less than nine people had seen a large whitish creature with a trunk and twisted tusks in the Papum Reserve Forest under Pakhoi Wildlife Sanctuary. This sanctuary is in the remote Arunachal Pradesh state, which shares its borders with Myanmar and China and is covered with lush tropical forests.

"The white elephant was spotted on several occasions between July 22 and August 1 last year," said Mr Nabum.

He also claimed to be one of the lucky few to have seen the white elephant from close quarters. He said that its left tusk was longer and had a reddish tip, and added that the creature vanished as soon as it saw him. The sighting of the white elephant has generated a lot of interest in Arunachal Pradesh. The state has a sizeable number of Buddhists, who revere the white elephant as an incarnation of Lord Buddha

BEST BREEDERS RECOMMEND IT

Many fortaen commentators have noted that phenomena tend to be cyclic, and of their time. For example, despite the claims of many researchers crop circles were virtually unknown prior to 1980 and many other fortaen phenomena also seem inextricably linked to a certain time period. However on 16th September 2000 *The Sun* - an admirable periodical always noted for its fair and unbiased attitude to news gathering unwittingly resuscitated a phenomenon not seen since the Victorian Age (albeit with a modern twist)

We have left the original tabloidese intact .

STUNNED Elaine Sheridan was left hopping mad - after finding a live TOAD in a tin of dog food. It flopped out as she spooned the Winalot chunks into her three dogs' bowls. The two-inch beast should have croaked after spending THREE MONTHS vacuum-packed in a tin which was shipped in from FRANCE and is supposed to have been HEATED to

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110°C. Incredibly the amphibian survived by putting itself in suspended animation.

Mum-of-one Elaine, 46, said: "When I opened the can I just screamed - I couldn't believe it."

And hubby Neil, 50, of Bradford, West Yorks, said: "You hear of foreign bodies being found in food but you don't expect it to be a toad from France."

Expert Dr Roger Meek said the toad could have survived three months in a vacuum by "shutting down its metabolism. But Neil insisted Winalot could not have cooked the food fully because the toad would die at 110°C. Now the Sheridans are keeping it as a pet in its own vivarium - after naming it Buddy after the telly toads in the Budweiser advert.

WHAT A CARRION!

The *Evening Standard* on 25th August 2000 reported some more welcome news for British birdwatchers. After an absence of some 73 years The Eurasian griffon vulture, a carrion-feeder the size of a barn door, appeared over Sark in the Channel Islands before moving on to Guernsey after eating part of a dead rabbit. Griffon vultures are usually seen only as far north as Spain or Portugal. It is believed vultures are drifting north in warm southerly winds.

OTHER STORIES

YIP YIP

Possibly the best story of the year so far broke on *Thursday, 3 May, 2001*, when BBC Teletext and various newspapers told the heart-warming tale of how a drugged baboon smuggled onto a Yemeni

plane caused havoc after it awoke and broke loose during a flight.

The incident occurred 90 minutes into the scheduled flight between Sanaa and Damascus. Chaos reigned, as women and children screamed and crew members struggled to catch the escaped baboon, the agency said. The baboon turned out to be part of an illegal consignment of Hamadryas baboons that a smuggler had knocked out with anaesthetic and then brought on board in two boxes. Security agents on board the plane arrested the smuggler, who was named as Badih. He is reported to have admitted he was taking the baboons to Syria to sell for \$3 000.

The baboons are now said to be in police custody at Damascus Airport, awaiting repatriation to Yemen. The Hamadryas baboon species is unique to the mountains of Yemen and the south-western Saudi province of Asir.

CROC COCK

On 20 January 2000, Reuters told the touching story of how Kenyan wildlife wardens had to intervene to stop a group of prostitutes from stealing the genitals from the carcass of a crocodile they killed in Lake Victoria. Apparently prostitutes from Mbita town attempted to remove the crocodile's genitals after wildlife officials had killed the beast while hunting for a rogue hippo.

Reuters reported that crocodile genitals were highly regarded by prostitutes as a strong love potion. "Many wananchi (people), including the whores, left the scene disappointed after the wardens hired a boat that carried the carcass, tied it to a boulder and sank it to the bottom of the lake," they said.

PACHYDOOM

Over the years various people living next door to the CFZ have had strange encounters with our livestock, but even the woman at number nine should be pleased that she ain't living next to these folks! The following story from the *Houston Chronicle* of 17 Jan 2000, tells how a warning from his grandson caused Robin Walker to look up from his living room couch.

Walker was startled to see an elephant pressing its head against the sliding glass door leading to his back yard. "Papa, I think we got a problem." 5-year-old Zachary Mitchell told his grandfather. Walker, a 42-year-old

machinist. said he feared that the beast looming in his doorway would burst into the living room.

Believing the elephant was drawn by the family's presence, Walker took his wife, Debbie, 49, and Zachary into the back of the house. The elephant lost interest soon after they left the room and stopped pressing against the door, he said.

The Jan. 5 close encounter with an elephant was not the first Walker has had since he moved into his house in Texas, in eastern Cut and Shoot 15 years ago.

In court Walker explained that an elephant has escaped from his neighbour's property at least once previously. But this was the first time one had ever tried to come into his house.

The elephant is the property of Walker's neighbour, Bill Swain, a 51-year-old animal trainer and his trapeze-artist wife Mayola, 49, who have kept elephants on their seven-acre property since 1974. Swain, owner of Trunks and Humps Inc., said he is making every effort to be a good neighbour and taking steps to make sure his elephants stay off Walker's property.

Swain said, "I didn't realise he was that bitter."

THE ONLY WAY I GET MY KICKS...

EDITOR'S NOTE: OK folks, we haven't had one for a while so here, to win a free year's subscription to this august publication is another one of our phone-in competitions.

Why have we used the above headline for a story about Beavers? The first person to phone with the correct answer wins....

The Electronic Telegraph on Tuesday 1st May 2001 noted that ten wild European beavers arrived at Heathrow airport for a conservation experiment that could lead to their reintroduction into Britain 400 years after the species became extinct here.

The beavers, a gift of the Norwegian government, were brought back by Kent Wildlife Trust which intends to use them to restore a fenced wetland reserve to its "natural" state.

The trust hopes that in five years' time it may be possible for the beavers to be used to colonise other parts of Britain.

The European beaver, *Castor fiber*, was widespread across Britain before the 12th century when it was effectively wiped out, although it is thought to have lingered on in parts of Scotland until the 17th century. In Kent, the animal was driven to extinction more than 1 000 years ago by trapping for pelts and castoreum, a substance that contains the active ingredients of aspirin.

Across Europe, beavers came close to extinction in the 19th century, surviving only in the Rivers Loire and Elbe, and were only saved through re-introductions across Europe over the past century.

In Norway, the population now numbers tens of thousands after re-establishment in the Twenties. This is only the latest of many reintroduction attempts, most notably in Dorset during the late 19th Century and at intervals throughout the 20th Century in various parts of Scotland.

To the best of our knowledge no-one has yet managed to explain why various 'wild' beavers were shot and run over in parts of Essex during the 1970s and 1980s. Manfully suppressing some third rate Essex Gurr! jokes we suspect that there was an unofficial reintroduction programme in the Benfleet area some time during that period.

In the light of the above story the folks at *Animals & Men* could not resist including the following news snippet. According to the Associated Press in April 2000 Beaver College in Glenside Pa. is seriously considering a name change

To quote the school's press officer: "The word 'beaver' too often elicits ridicule in the form of derogatory remarks pertaining to the rodent, the TV show 'Leave It to Beaver' and the vulgar reference to the female anatomy, (...). And at a time when more and more high school students are researching colleges on the Web, some Internet filters that screen out sexually explicit material are blocking access to the Beaver College website.

"The filters have even blocked delivery of e-mail originating from the school."

GREEN DOG



Just as we were going to press we received this picture of a bright green puppy which is very reminiscent of the Green Cat described in issue seven of this magazine.

Unfortunately the captions to the picture are all in Portuguese which means that although we can hypothesise that the creature originated in Brazil we can't really comment any more until someone lets us know the true story. C'mon guys, someone out there must know the truth about this singular beastie...

EXTINCTIONS

SPIX'S MACAW

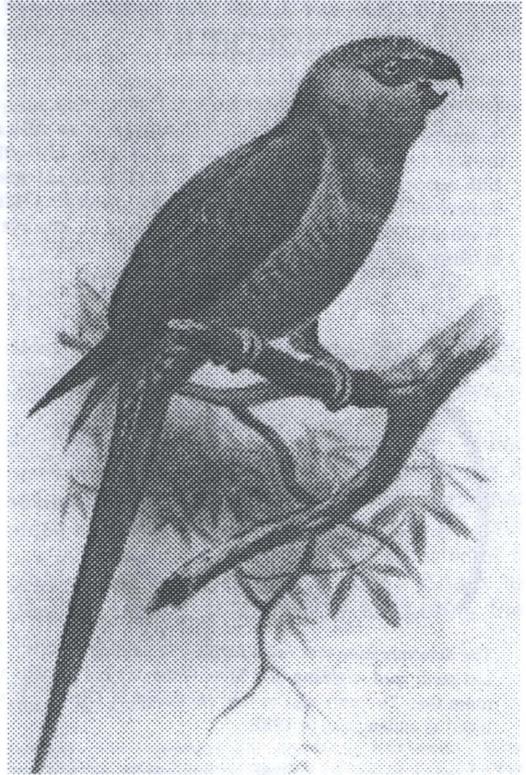
Experts fear that the last remaining wild Spix's Macaw might be dead. A blue-plumed parrot believed to be the last of its kind in the wild has disappeared and might have been killed.

Researchers announced sadly that they hadn't seen the 19-year-old Spix's Macaw for two months, an indication that it might have been fallen victim to a hawk's claws or a poacher's trap.

Wildlife biologists in northeastern Brazil for the past 10 years have kept close tabs on the bird, whose

breed was pushed to the edge of extinction by poachers supplying the illegal exotic bird trade.

"If he died, it's a terrible situation," said Yara de Melo Barros, field director of the government-backed Spix's Macaw Conservation Project, begun after the species' sole survivor was discovered in 1990.



Though 60 Spix's Macaws live in captivity around the world, there is a slim chance any can survive in the wild without the male bird to teach survival skills, she said.

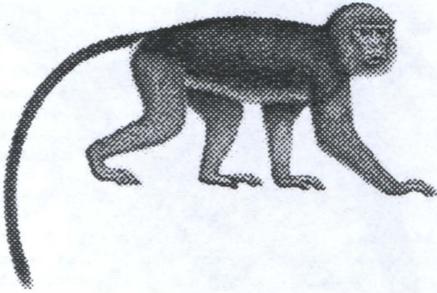
The remaining wild male was to raise six young captive-born Spix's Macaw chicks. Barros said the bird has never before disappeared for more than 15 days from its habitat of scrublands and palm-tree stands near the village of Curaca, 1300 miles north-east of Rio.

Researchers are looking for the animal, but if it isn't found.

the only way to stave off the Spix's Macaw's extinction is for a parrot pair of another species to raise the chicks born in captivity, Barros said. But that has never been done successfully with parrots.

MISS WALDRON'S RED COLOBUS

Scientists have pronounced a type of large West African monkey extinct, making it the first primate to vanish in the 20th century. Anthropologists for the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York failed to find the monkey, a Miss Waldron's Red Colobus, in a six-year series of forest surveys in Ghana and Ivory Coast that ended in 1999.



The determination was not a surprise to wildlife experts. The last confirmed sighting of a Miss Waldron's red colobus was more than 20 years ago in the rainforest of Ghana. It was listed as endangered in 1988.

Scientists blame its demise on hunting by humans and the disruption of habitat by logging, roadbuilding and farming.

A study documenting the extinction was published in the October issue of the journal *Conservation Biology*.

The Miss Wadron's red colobus was discovered in 1933. There are five more varieties of red colobus, all of which are rare.

OBITUARIES

By Jonathan Downes except where stated

Dom Gregory Brusey (1913-2001)

Dom Gregory Brusey who has died aged 88, was a monk, organist and teacher of music; he was best known, however, for having seen what he believed to be the Loch Ness monster while walking in the gardens of his Benedictine monastery.

In the autumn of 1971, Brusey and a friend were enjoying a stroll at the monastery of Fort Augustus, on the banks of Loch Ness, when Brusey observed a commotion about 300 yards out from the shore. *"We saw quite distinctly the neck of the beast standing out of the water to a height of about 10 ft.,"* he recalled. *"It swam towards us at a slight angle, and after about 20 seconds disappeared. It gave us a feeling of something from another world."*

Though he recounted his experience on a television programme about "Nessie", he regretted the attention it attracted, feeling that *"we ought to leave the monster alone. I am a champion of the unknown. Mystery intrigues people, and so it should remain."*

DAVE SHENTON (d 2000)

In late January Tony Shiels wrote to us with the sad news that Dave Shenton, one of the tangential players in the saga of the Owlman of Mawnan had died. At Hallowe'en 1986 Tony was at the centre of a media storm when the Bishop of Truro, and the local newspapers accused him of having committed unspeakable acts of blasphemy inside Mawnan Old Church whilst attempting to invoke the Owlman. The affair was somewhat of a 'five minute wonder' in the press and the actual sequence of events remains obscure. Ten years or so later Tony told me: *"I did a few bits and pieces inside the Church. There was a lot of misreporting that I was throwing out challenges to God and saying I'd smack him in the gob. I don't*

think God has a job, and I wouldn't do that anyway to the deity. He'd give me a harder smack back wouldn't he?" Eventually – more by luck than by judgement – I pieced together the true story.

He had indeed visited the church with a local radio team, but the “huge crowd of people” turned out to be ONE rather shy bloke called ‘Dave’. He told me that there was no blasphemy, no swearing, no naked witches and no cigars, and that the wizard had entered the church, muttered a few things under his breath in a foreign language and then left again. It turns out that the radio team had approached my friend and asked him what he had planned to do to celebrate Hallowe'en. He said: “*Buy me a drink and I'll show you.*”

This the radio people did, only to find that like many wizards, my friend has a legendary capacity for the stuff.

Finding at the end of the evening that they had nothing to show for their severely depleted expense accounts, I have a sneaking suspicion that someone decided that it would be a good idea to concoct a bizarre tale of blasphemy and psychic mayhem.

Now Dave is dead. He was a nice guy, as well as being a pivotal part of one of the more bizarre bits of *fortean*a to take place during the closing years of the 20th Century and he will be sadly missed.

JOHN GORDON (d 2000)

In the same letter, Tony told us that another bit player in the bizarre events of Cornwall during 1976 had also died. John Gordon was the man that I had always suspected as being the real hoaxer of the Mary F photographs had recently died. During my long and tortuous researches into the truth about what happened during the long, hot summer of 1976 at least three people hinted strongly that John had been the real perpetrator of the Mary F hoax.

I hinted as much in *The Owlman and Others* but as my informants had been speaking strictly off the

record, and also because, at that time John was still alive I was not really in a position to reveal the fact. Now he is dead it seems a reasonable premise to do so. I only met him once, during a particularly boozy evening at his London flat, but I was impressed by his kind and gentle nature. He was a good man and I am sad that our acquaintanceship is not going to be renewed.

DAHINDEN, RENE (1930-2001)

One of the greatest hominologists (those who study Sasquatch, Bigfoot, Yeti, and other unknown hominoids) of the modern era died at 8:40 pm Pacific Daylight Time, on 18 April 2001, in British Columbia.

Born in Switzerland, Rene Dahinden moved to Canada in 1953. Two months after he arrived, he heard about the Sasquatch and within three years was conducting serious research on the hairy primates, sometimes with British Columbian researcher and chronicler John Green whom Dahinden met in 1956.

Since then Dahinden conducted numerous field investigations throughout the Pacific Northwest, interviewed many witnesses, and examined apparent physical evidence for the legendary creature.

Dahinden was the first to show the Patterson Gimlin Film (taken on October 20, 1967 at Bluff Creek, California) of a Bigfoot in the former Soviet Union, and he worked hard to see to it that the film got the scientific attention he felt it deserved. In recent years, with Dahinden's acquiring of the photographic images of the Patterson-Gimlin film, some of his time was occupied in technical legal and copyright affairs.

His only book, *Sasquatch* (McClelland & Stewart, 1973; republished as *Sasquatch Bigfoot*. Firefly, 1993), was written with Don Hunter. In the Hollywood Bigfoot family movie comedy *Harry and the Hendersons* (1987), the Sasquatch hunter, a character played by David Suchet (better known to television viewers through his mystery series role as Agatha Christie's Belgian detective Hercule Poirot), was loosely modeled on Rene Dahinden.

Dahinden was open and friendly, entertaining and interviewing researchers from around the globe. He travelled to San Francisco to visit me in 1974, and I was touched by

his humour, insights, and encyclopaedic knowledge of the field. He will be missed by cryptozoologists worldwide.

- Loren Coleman

(Appreciation to Larry Lund and John Green for specific temporal information on Rene Dahinden's death.)

ROY STRINGER (d 2001)

Roy was responsible for the CDROM *Of Monsters and miracles* which accompanied the 1995 *Fortean Times* exhibition at Croydon Museum. He was a lovely bloke and it was a great privilege to have worked with him. As Ian Simmons says:

He was great fun to work with, a first class interactive designer and someone who grasped the fortean spirit very swiftly.

I am sad to have to report that he died of cancer in early February. Rest in Peace old pal....

JOEY RAMONE (1952-2001)

At 2.40pm on 15 April of this year one of the greatest characters in the history of rock and roll passed away at New York's Presbyterian Hospital: Joey Ramone, lead singer with arguably the finest rock band to ever walk the planet, The Ramones. Joey had recently been diagnosed with lymphatic cancer but sadly failed to respond to treatment and he was laid to rest on 17 April at Hillside Cemetery in New Jersey.

The Ramones formed in 1974 and were the perfect backlash to the horrendous wail of bands like Yes, Led Zeppelin, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Genesis and their 19-minute nonsensical songs and god-awful guitar solos. For The Ramones, it was all 2-minute songs; stripped-down, buzzsaw guitars; unforgettable, foot-tapping choruses; a wall of feedback; a "1. 2. 3. 4!" beginning to every tune; and hugely-entertainingly-sick lyrics on everything from mental illness to geeks and from murder to pinheads with a liberal dose of lost love thrown in.

Joey was born on 19 May 1951 and was originally the drummer in the Ramones; however, his unique style was not what the band wanted and he switched to vocals and lo and behold the greatest front-man in rock (well, in my opinion!) was born! Alongside band-mates Johnny (the mop-topped, never-smiling, 6-stringer who influenced a whole generation of punk guitarists and whose own Mosrite guitar was always strung way below his waist - thank god!), Dee Dee (all frantic movements and drug-induced hazes) and Tommy (the drummer who played on the bands first three albums before quitting to be replaced by Marky), Joey (6 feet five inches tall and about 140 pounds!) brought a unique talent to the band that, as with the rest of his gang of misfits, resulted in a glorious wall of sound that lasted for 22 years and almost as many albums.

But what is Joey Ramone doing in a magazine largely noted for its Fortean content, you may ask? Well, the Ramones were quite partial to Fortean! Check out songs like Pinhead (which contains the immortal line: "I don't wanna be a pinhead no more, I just met a nurse that I could go for, "); I Don't Wanna Go Down To The Basement; Worm Man; Animal Boy; Ape-Man Hop; Pet Sematary; Zero Zero UFO; and Chainsaw.

Always in jeans, sneakers and black leather biker jackets, The Ramones split acrimoniously after their final concert on 6 August 1996. And even though at the time they were in their mid-forties, the group still looked like a gang of New York hoodlums ready to pull out their flick knives and do battle (and recent photos of Johnny show that his mop-top is still intact!).

Thank god that The Ramones never grew up, changed their image or changed their musical style. In a world of fake pop, contrived boy bands, formula rock and groups that sold-out years ago or got old and fat, you could always rely on The Ramones. They knew what they liked and they knew what their audience liked and they stuck to their guns. They may not have made it to the big league but they left a huge mark in rock history and will never be forgotten.

It's hard to believe that Joey Ramone was almost 50 years old when he died and on stage he really did appear ageless but along with his "brothers" he will always be remembered as one of the true pioneers of pinhead punk. Sleep tight Joey.

- NICK REDFERN

CARRUTHERS
(1986-2000)

ISABELLA
(1985-2000)

In *The Owlman and Others* I wrote how every visitor to the CFZ was greeted by a one cat welcoming committee called Carruthers (after Dennis the Menace's next door neighbour's pet crocodile).

My ex-wife and I acquired him from the Cat's Protection League in Shaldon in August 1986 and as the warden handed him to us (mewing piteously inside a large orange coloured box) she warned us that he was very shy and might take some time settling in. She needn't have worried, because no sooner had we opened his ignominious carrying carton but he strode out into our sitting room with his tail in the air and became the boss of our ever shifting population of cats – a position he was to fill for the next fourteen years. He was particularly good friends with Toby the dog and fathered a litter of kittens with Isabella (my little black cat). All three animals, who had been a great comfort to me over the years died within a few weeks of each other during the summer of last year. All three are very sadly missed, and although we have new cats and a dog, things will never be quite the same.

CUDDLES THE
AMPHIUMA
(d. 2001)

Probably the most interesting animal ever to have been a long term resident of the Centre for Fortean Zoology Menagerie was *Cuddles* – a large two toed amphiuma. She (because we assume she was female because of her size) appeared in the *Owlman and Others* movie as Morgawr and also made a guest appearance on several TV Shows including the first series of *Fortean TV*. In her memory we are reprinting an article which originally appeared in *The Planet on Sunday*

FLUMP

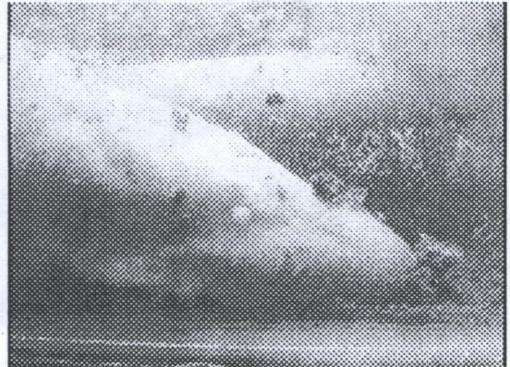
The Chinese Soft Shelled Turtle
(d. 2001)

Also sadly deceased is Flump, another long term inhabitant of the CFZ Menagerie. Named Flump by my daughter because he was 'cute', he was one of the most aggressive creatures we have ever owned, but was a firm favourite with all our visitors. Sadly he died in the early spring

UN-NATURAL
HISTORY – A LONELY
HEARTS CLUB

By Jonathan Downes

A girl-friend of mine used to say that one of the most annoying things about being involved with me was when we went to a pet shop together. Apparently I always behaved in exactly the same manner. (Indeed, according to my present associates – I still do) I would stride in the door as if I owned the place and then sidle sheepishly towards the darkest recesses of the back of the shop. I would then proceed to ignore the pretty things in cages and follow my own agenda.



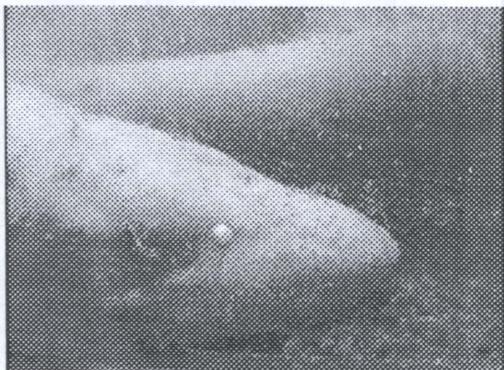
Not for me cages full of blue budgerigars twittering away a pointless existence of sunflower seeds and cuttlefish. I eschewed tanks of neon tetras, or boxes of hamsters, scurrying around busily. No, as my quondam lady-friend so

sagely pointed out, I would unerringly make my way towards a murky corner where I would find something large, slimy, dark brown, expensive and smelly, which probably delivered a nasty bite, and I would usually buy it!

It was in this manner that I obtained what is probably the strangest animal in my collection! Regular readers of my musings in these pages will know that for the last fifteen years I have shared my living space with a rather disreputable mongrel called Toby, but may not be aware of the other creatures who inhabit my house. I have several snakes and a number of turtles, and even a breeding colony of rare South American red stick insects, but best of all can be found lurking in a huge glass tank on my landing....

But I am running away with myself.

About ten years ago, Toby and I were visiting friends in Enfield, Middlesex. Whilst in the neighbourhood I went to check out (as is my wont) the local reptile shops. Lurking in the corner of an unimpressive looking series of portacabins and prefabricated huts was an establishment which claimed to sell 'exotic pets'. Sadly, this magnificent establishment ceased trading many moons ago, but for a long time it was the source for many strange and bizarre beasts. On this particular occasion I was not particularly surprised to find a large and unpleasant looking tank full of muddy water and decaying waterweed hidden in a corner. It was labelled "Conger Eel", something which it most definitely wasn't!



Conger Eels are large, elongate fish found in most of the oceans of the world. They can sometimes reach an immense size and it has been speculated in some quarters that outsized conger eels, such as the one reported near Brixham in Devon in the early 1970s are responsible for many of the reports of great 'sea serpents' that have been made by sailors from times

immemorial. However, although there are a number of different species of varying colours, sizes and shapes in the world's oceans they all have one important thing in common.



They are all marine fish which cannot live in fresh water and would therefore be impossible to find in a tank of muddy gunge in a pet shop in Enfield. "What on earth is this?" I asked the proprietor of the establishment. He grunted, rolled up his shirt-sleeves and reached into the interstices of the tank where he groped around for a while before pulling out the last animal that I had expected to see. It was a two toed amphiuma - a rare and obscure eel-like salamander from the swamps of the southern United States.

"'Ere: Conger Eel", he said.

These bizarre salamanders are sometimes known as "Congo Eels" which is, by the way, a complete misnomer. They ain't eels and they have never been anywhere near The Congo, but with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to see how the confusion in the mind of the manager of the pet shop had come into place.

Now, although I am somewhat of an old romantic I don't really believe in love at first sight. Except in this case. When I saw this two foot long wriggly thing, writhing in coils in the grasp of the pet shop owner and doing its best to bite him, I knew from the bottom of my heart that this was a beast that I definitely had to own. If I have ever fallen in love at first sight in my life it was then!

"How much is it?" I asked diffidently (expecting it to be far more expensive than I could possibly afford. In

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the few seconds that it took for the proprietor to reply I was desperately trying to figure out whom I knew in Middlesex who could possibly lend me any money should I have to spend more than the hundred pounds I had on me in order to secure this once in a lifetime pet.

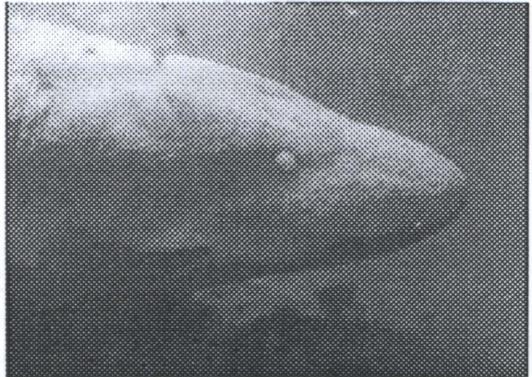
"Twenty five quid to you, Squire," he grunted, and as he did so a wicked thought came into my mind. Adopting the persona of a slightly dodgy cockney used car salesman acquaintance of mine, I put my hands in my pocket, shrugged my shoulders, opened my mouth (and with tongue firmly in cheek) drawled "Naaaaah".

"Naah", I repeated. "No call for 'em, is there?" The proprietor looked at me with new respect. I resisted the temptation to tell him that "you couldn't get the parts for them no more", but instead came out with a string of other platitudes that I had gleaned from my adventures within the Used 'Motah' trade. Much to my surprise (and I have to admit, glee), my ruse worked and I managed to beat the bloke down, and ten minutes later I was ten pounds poorer and the proud owner of a two toed amphiuma.

It was only then that my problems began. I found, much to my dismay that although I had (and have) an enormous library of books dealing with the husbandry of various exotic animal species. I had practically no information about the care and treatment of these incredibly obscure beasties. Much to my consternation, within only a few weeks of acquiring "Cuddles" (as he soon became rather obscurely named), I discovered that all the information that I did have on the species appeared to be wrong! Over the years I have ignored everything that has been written on the species and just got on with it, and apart from one night when "Cuddles" managed to escape from his tank and climb slither down the stairs to my kitchen floor where Toby found him the next morning, he has been reasonably easy to look after. But why, I can almost hear you all asking me, why, are you telling us this heart-warming story about the day that you acquired an exotic pet? It is simple, gentle readers. I want your help.

"Cuddles" is the only two toed amphiuma that I have ever seen. He has grown mightily over the last decade and is now nearly four feet in length. But although he is the only member of his species that I

have ever encountered for sale, I am not arrogant enough to suppose that he is the only amphiuma that has ever been offered for sale within the United Kingdom. Having proved that I am a dab hand at amphiuma husbandry (albeit by doing all the wrong things) I now want to have a bash at breeding these slightly unprepossessing creatures, and as everyone knows, even if you are a large eel-like salamander from the Okefonokee swamps of Georgia, it takes two to tango!



Statistically it seems likely that someone amongst the hundreds of thousands of people who read the Planet on Sunday each weekend may also be the proud owner of a two toed amphiuma, or at least may know someone in that enviable position. If you do, and either want to sell your beastie to me, or lend him to me for breeding purposes, or even merely want to exchange information on what must be probably the most exclusive club in Great Britain, write to me c/o The Planet or e-mail me on jon@eclipse.co.uk

"Cuddles" is in his prime and is hot to trot, and this particular journalist rather wants to be the foster father of a clutch of amphiuma tadpoles!

EDITOR'S NOTE: the final paragraphs of that article are now sadly out of date. However, I still persist in my hope that I shall eventually manage to breed amphiumas so if there are any readers out there who can procure me any specimens I would be eternally grateful. I am also always interested in the following species:

- Soft shelled turtles
- Sirens
- Caecelians
- Mudpuppies

NEWSFILE

XTRA

SKUNK APE FEVER

By Richard Freeman



Recently startlingly clear pictures purporting to show the fabled skunk ape, a kind of swamp sasquatch have been turning up on the internet. Despite the clarity of the shots their providence is highly questionable. The creature, or so the story goes started turning up in the garden of a woman in Mayakka Florida in September or October last year. The woman left fruit for the beast which made a noise described as a "pant hoot". The woman took two shots of the huge shaggy animal as it lurked behind some palms and in December sent the shots to the sheriff's department. They were subsequently released to the public by one David

Barkasy the proprietor of the Silver City Serpentarium, a local animal attraction.

The animal was said to be around 9 feet tall. It seems to be crouching behind the palms. Its chestnut brown coat is long and shaggy and it sports a whitish beard that many elderly apes display. The figure has extremely elongated arms and broad shoulders. The eyeshine from the camera flash is apparent.

The subject most resembles an adult but sexually immature male Sumatran orang-utan (*Pongo pigmaeus abili*) with its long coat and distinctive beard. The large facial disks particular to orang-utans only appear in sexually dominant males as a display of their potency. The creature actually reminds me of a Sumatran orang-utan called Toby, whom I used to work with. The touted height of 9 feet is far larger than any orang-utan and the colour of the fur is darker than the orang-utan's gingery hair. Such an ape could conceivably exist in Florida's semi-tropical climate and smuggled specimens sold as pets are, sadly, not unknown. However adult male Sumatran orang-utans are uncommon in captivity and could someone keep such a large creature as a pet unknown to their neighbours? Needless to say no species of new world ape has ever been discovered in fossil form or in the flesh.

The whole story seems to me to stink like a truck load of week old bloaters.

Firstly the witness wished to remain anonymous. Secondly why did she wait so long before taking the pictures to the sheriff? On top of this one could cynically argue that Mr Barkasy's Serpentarium could be in for a lot of extra business with the publicity the skunk ape photos bring. Again why did Barkasy wait so long to release the evidence. The cherry on the cake is that as far as I am aware the negatives have not been made available for examination.

The pictures, impressive as they are, cannot stand alone. If you were to ask my opinion of the creature in the pictures I would say it was a hoaxer in an ape suit. I ardently hope I will be proved wrong.

NEWSFILE XTRA

THE BOSNIAN BEAST

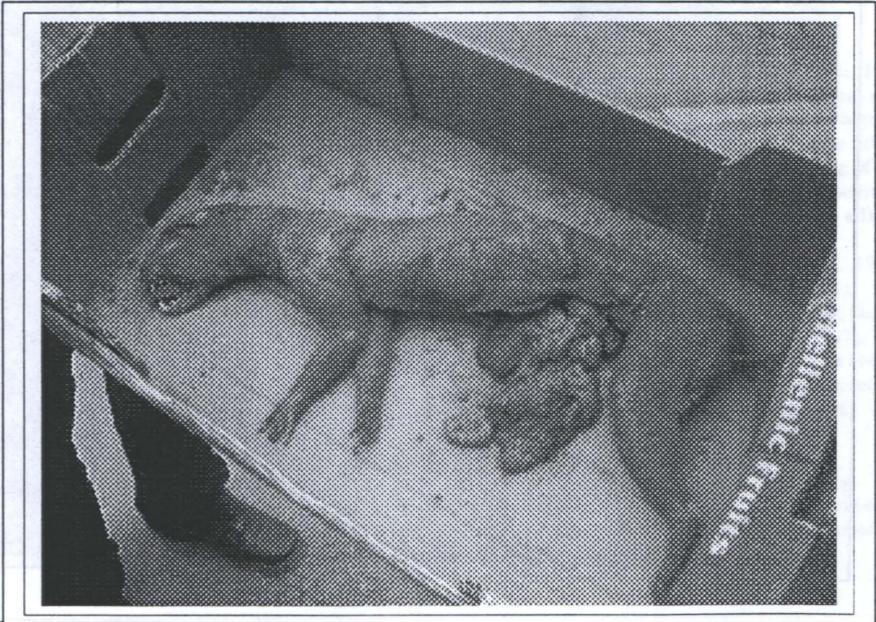
By Jonathan Downes

The story originated, as so many do, with our USA correspondent Loren Coleman. He sent out the following e-mail in mid February:

Breaking: New (?) Animal claimed from Zenica, Bosnia - Dateline 15 February 2001 // Zenica, Bosnia. Zack Clothier has passed along information he has received from a contact near Zenica, Bosnia. Please examine the photograph of this animal to see if any identifying data can be assumed. The report is of an unknown or newly identified animal that was found in Jalija two days ago. (Jalija is a historic part of Zenica, an old town in central Bosnia.) Can anyone add any insights to this "news."

The subject of this photograph sparked immediate interest on various cryptozoological discussion groups online, and after a while most pundits agreed that it was a skinned mustelid probably a marten of some kind. As I have shown in my 1996 book *Smaller Mystery Carnivores of the Westcountry* there are two species of marten co-existing over most of Europe, and both species have at various times been used for the fur trade. The Zenica corpse is almost certainly of a skinned stone marten (*Martes foina*) which has had its fur removed for commercial reasons. The CFZ are lucky enough to possess a mounted specimen of this species and on closer examination there is really no doubt at all as to what the animal is.

It is interesting to note, however, that with the advent of digital cameras and global, almost instantaneous communication photographs like these are becoming ever more common. Most notably has been the relative glut of 'chupacabra' photographs which have surfaced over recent years. So far they have all been rotting or manipulated corpses of known animals. However there is nothing to stop legions of cryptofreaks worldwide hoping that eventually our luck will change and that a photograph of a genuine unknown animal will appear one morning in our e-mail inbox.



NEWSFILE XTRA

Lara The Lynx of London Town

By Paul Crowther

Although on first glance the capture of a Lynx in Goldersgreen London has little to do with the Beast of Bodmin, this is an observational conundrum.

It is now a fairly well documented fact that Lara the Lynx was captured in London; what is not so well known is that there are several versions of the event. The National newspapers ran reports of the story on Tuesday 8th May 2001 while the BBC and ITV ran the story on their text facilities twenty-four hours earlier.

This is easily explained because the Monday was a Bank Holiday. What is not easy to explain is that each source gave a different location for the actual capture of the Lynx. Cricklewood was one site and Goldersgreen was another. Even more perturbing is that the Lynx was actually caught on Friday 4 May 2001.

The actual location in this case is not the important factor. After scouring all the available sources of information on the captured Lynx the following facts emerged. The Lynx was female, about eighteen months old and had a slightly damaged left hind leg, she was slightly emaciated but otherwise in good condition.

The cat was sitting on a back wall when it was reported to the authorities and by the time the authorities arrived it was hiding under a shrub in the garden enclosed by the wall on which it was first observed. The RSPCA and London Zoo took two attempts to dart the poor cat and, after being jabbed in the backside, Lara took off.

The officials commenting on the event said that it was by sheer chance that there had been no students playing in the sports field that the cat escaped across - the suggestion being that the cat was a potential danger to humans!



I immediately contacted Mike Thomas at Newquay Zoo to consult on the aforementioned evidence. The consensus of opinion was as follows - The Lynx was an illegal pet - it had to be, as no one had claimed it, or informed the relevant authorities of its escape. It may have been involved in a slight road accident, hence the damaged leg, but of most interest was the animal's behaviour.

The cat had been sitting on the garden wall as if waiting to be fed and further more it stayed in the garden still anticipating being fed after a period of time. The report said that the Lynx was in good condition except for being slight emaciated, therefore Mike and I concluded, the Lynx had escaped or been released no more than five days earlier.

This leads us to believe that the Lynx was heavily reliant on a person to feed it as there must surely been food that was easily scavenged from bins; there are a lot of bins in London.

The net result is that there now resides in London Zoo a Lynx of unknown origin, very probably an illegal import or worse an under-the-counter sale. Mike and I proposed to anyone who would listen that the Lynx was DNA fingerprinted. This would identify the origin of the Lynx in terms of place of birth if it was an under-the-counter sale the repercussions for the Zoo or registered private owner of the parents would be catastrophic in the extreme.

As interesting as it is going into the Lynx's background there is one very important question left unanswered. Why did it take so long for anyone to report seeing it? The idea that a Lynx could roam around London for approximately five days without anyone noticing it does beggar belief. If a Lynx can roam around London for five days without being detected by the numerous people who live and work in that area of London, who is to deny that a similar exotic cat can not survive and go un-noticed on Bodmin Moor for years!

To add to the mystery there has been no further official coverage of the story from the press, London Zoo are keeping very quiet on the subject. Just where did the Lynx come from and what are the "officials" oing to trace the origins of it?

A phone call to the press office at London Zoo did not throw much light on the situation although they

did say that the staff had similar feelings over the treatment and housing of Lara, i.e. they were fairly sure that she was a very domesticated Lynx. As for tracing the origins of the cat, the Zoo said that was a RSPCA / police matter, but no one had taken DNA samples. However the zoo was under the impression that the police were in the process of acting on a tip off. So there could be more to report at a later date...

Perhaps it could be tied into the Bushmeat trial currently taking place in Southwark crown court London. It is worth noting that the person being prosecuted did say that he could get lion and tiger meat to order for £5 000! - and is being prosecuted for the illegal import of CITES-protected animals.

Paul Crowther
24, Mayfield Close
St. Austell
Cornwall
P125 3PD
Tel St. Austell 76745 (home)
Tel 01752 305293 (work)

(Head of photography at Plymouth College of Further Education. Beast of Bodmin image debunker, works with Mike Thomas of Newquay Zoo and Chris Moiser of BBCS.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Because of the sheer number of questions that this episode poses it seemed appropriate for us to quote the original press release from London Zoo in full. As Paul has intimated it is more interesting for what it doesn't say than for what it does. Thanx to Danny Bamping of the BBCS for getting the press release to us.

08 May 2001
PRESS RELEASE

London Zoo rescues a roaming European lynx from a Golders Green Garden. On Friday, 4 May 2001, London Zoo received a call from the Barnet Borough Police based at Colindale Police Station, North London, requesting assistance with a big cat sighting in the Golders Green area.

A member of the public had seen an animal sitting on the wall of her back garden, which she initially thought was a leopard, as it had a spotted coat.

London Zoo's Head Keeper of Big Cats, Ray Charter and a colleague, Terry Marsh, were

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driven with a police escort to a residential area in Golders Green, where the cat had allegedly been seen in the large garden.

"We get numerous calls at London Zoo reporting big cat sightings and so far all of them have proved incorrect - it usually turns out to be a large domestic cat," commented Ray Charter, "so you can imagine my surprise when I bent down to look under the hedge expecting to see a large ginger Tom, only to be met by a much more exotic face!"

After several attempts to catch the cat with a hand net in the large open area, it was finally contained in a smaller area under some steps of a nearby flat. Having assessed the situation, Ray decided to call London Zoo's Senior Veterinary Officer, Tony Sainsbury, who sedated the animal with a blowpipe. Once sedated, the animal was given a veterinary examination and was found to be a female European lynx of approximately 18 months.

"The lynx was underweight, but in a fair condition" says Tony Sainsbury.

"She is currently recovering in our hospital and we will do a full veterinary examination in the next couple of days. She seems to have a problem with her left hind leg which we will examine under anaesthetic."

The origin of the animal is still unknown.

"It is difficult to speculate where the animal came from," said Nick Lindsay, Senior Curator for London Zoo and Whipsnade Wild Animal Park. "In order to own an exotic cat species you are required to have a Dangerous Wild Animal License from your Local Authority."

There was some concern from local residents regarding the danger that was posed by this animal.

"If left alone it is unlikely that the animal would have harmed a person" continues Nick Lindsay. "However, if it felt threatened or cornered it could give a nasty scratch or bite. It was more likely to be frightened than dangerous."

DI Paul Anstee from the Barnet Borough Police says "The Police are extremely grateful that they had the back up of London Zoo's expertise in dealing with this unusual event." The animal will remain in the care of London Zoo while she recuperates and her future is decided.

For more information:

The Zoological Society of London's PR Office

Notes for Editors

- The European lynx is also known as the Northern or Eurasian lynx. It is typically found in northern forest & Steppe across Europe and Asia.
- Head and body length: 80 - 130 cm (Tail length: 10 - 25 cm)
- Shoulder Height: 60 - 75 cm
- Weight: 20 - 38 kg
- It has a stocky body with long powerful legs, a short black-tipped tail and prominent tufted ears.
- The dense fur varies in coloration but is the upper part of the coat is normally a yellowish brown with darker spots and the lower part is lighter in colour.
- The paws are often large with thick hair to aid travel in snowy areas.
- It also has a neck-ruff with black and white markings which fans open as an aggressive visual signal.
- The harsh environments these animals typically inhabit mean they have a very broad diet, from small deer to rats, mice and lemmings, but normally they prey on rabbits and hares.
- They give birth to between 1 - 4 young that begin to accompany their mother at about 3 months old. Mated pairs or a mother and young sometimes hunt together.
- The Eurasian Lynx has been intensively hunted and trapped for its valuable fur, and because it is considered a threat to game and livestock. It is a CITES listed species and re-introductions have recently taken place in parts of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia.

Editor's note: As we go to press there has been no more news. We have to agree with Paul Crowther that Lara is certainly an escapee from captivity, although it is interesting to note that Cricklewood is very near to Barnet which has been the site of various ABC reports over the years...

Ninki Nanka – The Dragon of the Gambia Expedition Report

By Chris Moiser



Despite having visited the Gambia regularly since 1980 I had not heard of "Ninki Nanka" until late in 2000 when I read the article "African Pterodactyls" by Dr. M. D. W. Jeffreys. This was first published in the *Journal of the Royal African Society* in 1944, but has recently appeared on the internet.

Whilst pursuing the concept of the continued survival of small pterodactyl like animals in central and west Africa Jeffreys does, in his introduction, refer to "... a native tradition of an enormous monster that comes out at night from the ooze and slime of the mangrove marshes and devours whatever it meets. To those who gain the confidence of the older fishermen, terrifying stories are told of the 'Ninki Nanka', as the reptile is locally called."

This story had the sense of something worth investigating but such poor referencing that trying to find Jeffreys' original references seemed impossible.

A quick chat on the telephone with Richard Freeman led me to believe that Arthur C. Clarke, may have mentioned the animal in one of his books, but this suddenly became impossible to find.

My own Gambian texts were searched and revealed nothing, and an internet search only revealed the great Paris-Afro-Pop hit *Ninki Nanka* by Toure Kunda. Originally released on an LP called *Casamance Au Clair De Lune* in 1984 it has been described as "one of the most powerful vocal pieces ever put to tape. . .

Toure Kunda are three brothers from the Casamance region of Senegal, and I suddenly realised that one of my favourite African pop songs was actually about a cryptid! (I skipped French at school for reasons that are from cryptozoological, although possibly biological!). As Casamance is the region of Senegal immediately to the South of the Gambia, it added to the insult that the group actually came from an area which could easily be in the animals range (if it existed?).

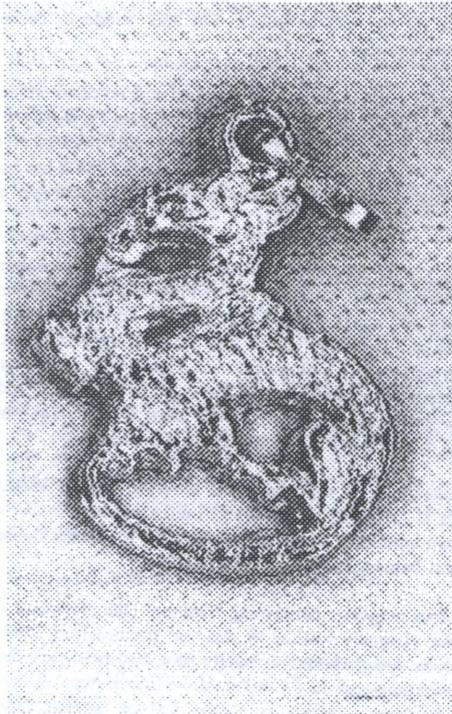
Despite the fact that the local libraries seemed suddenly bereft of Arthur C. Clarke books I did ultimately find a copy, but not until after I took my students on Plymouth College's annual January migration to the Gambia.

Previous enquiries concerning "Gambo" (the plesiosaur type animal allegedly washed up dead on the beach in 1983) in the Kotu area, where we usually stay, had been remarkably unrewarding and so I didn't hold out much hope of finding out anything. Africa is always full of surprises and it certainly was this time.

The first person I spoke to was a hotel cashier from the Mandinka tribe, I have known him for about three years and we always joke about the exchange rates on my travellers cheques. He was firmly of the opinion that Ninki Nanka was a total myth, very much in the vein that it would be used to scare small children into going to bed at night.

My next contact was Adama Touray - he runs the silver jewellery shop in the tourist market between Bungalow Beach and Kombo Beach Hotel, he was trained for ten years, as a silversmith by his father, and calmly told me that he had made Ninki Nanka jewellery, he didn't have any in stock at the moment, but could I call back on Tuesday? Needless to say I did return and acquired two beautiful little silver dragons.

Tony Barber, my colleague, friend and partner in organising the Gambia trips also acquired two and had them made into earrings for his wife.



The silver model of Ninki-Nanka

The next person with whom I raised the issue, was Assan Njie, a local taxi driver, character, and very good friend whom I have known for five years. Assan is a Wolof man, and was certain of his facts Ninki Nanka is a real animal. It is very scarce and now only lives up river. It is also a terrible animal. he knows several people who have seen it, but they have gone mad. A few years ago a bridge in the Upper River Division of the country had collapsed and killed four people, that was the work of Ninki Nanka, one had been living in a hole near the bridge when it was disturbed.

The animal apparently lives in a large hole in the ground, possibly under a tree, and occasionally goes out to sea. If it swims in the river it leaves a wake like a boat. He described the animal as being like a very large snake, but with horns, including one in the middle of its forehead. Even more interestingly he said that there had been a large hole made by Ninki Nanka about a mile down the coast behind where the

Palma Rima hotel now stands. This hole had been inhabited until shortly before the Palma Rima hotel had been built (about 1991), and the locals in order to prevent the animal from returning had planted a tree in the hole. Unfortunately our discussion was then interrupted and we were not able to resume it. Assan did see the silver Ninki Nankas though and pointed out that it did have a horn in the middle of the face which possibly wasn't obvious on the jewellery. He did agree with the pair of horns at the back of the head.

In the meantime Tony, who was starting to pick up on the enquiry, asked his school-teacher friend, Kebba, about the animal. Kebba is a member of the Jola tribe and follows the teachings of Islam. Despite this it became clear that Kebba was aware of Ninki Nanka but would not talk about the animal and seemed concerned that we would. That really completed our first limited investigations in the Gambia on this subject. It was very interesting though to find that out of four locals interviewed, one thought the animal was a total myth, one made jewellery of the animal and did believe, one firmly believed, and the fourth, a professional person, following a modern religion was that concerned that he would not even speak of the animal.



Chris' drawing of the creature portrayed in the silver model

It was only on our return that I was able to get hold of the Arthur C. Clarke book, *Chronicles of the Strange*

and Mysterious. As luck would have it this contained more information than I had been able to find in writing previously. Quite simply after the airing of Professor Clarke's television series *The Mysterious World*,

Clarke received a letter from a doctor Thomas Hardie Dalrymple. Doctor Dalrymple had been a medical officer in the West African Medical Service, and in 1935 was based on the River Gambia. Although Dalrymple never saw the animal himself he did have three relevant experiences.

The first was when he was disturbed one night by a lot of excitement amongst the natives. On enquiring the next morning he was told that "NIKENANKA" had appeared.

The description he took was "the face of a horse, a neck like a giraffe, a body like a crocodile and about 30 feet in length." It apparently only appeared from time to time, on moonlit nights.

Normally living submerged in the mud in the mangroves. Several months later Dalrymple was told about another Nikenanka on the prowl, but had to give up his search for it due to the swarms of mosquitoes.

Dalrymple's third experience was even more bizarre. When visiting one of the up river trading companies he heard a commotion in the market and went to investigate.

A group of natives had found an imported educational magazine called *Animals of the World* and were shouting that a white man had photographed Nikenanka. The picture that they were looking at was a concrete dinosaur in a New York park. Dalrymple then continued by describing some sightings of other strange animals in different parts of West Africa without returning to Nikenanka.

The Gambia, as West Africa's smallest state, and the one visited most regularly by tourists may seem an unlikely place for an as yet unidentified dinosaur-like cryptid.

However the country is almost three hundred miles long and most tourists do not travel deeper inland than the airport, about ten miles from the coast.

Interestingly on the river side of the airport the mangroves are almost a mile wide before you finally reach the river. No one other than a few wood gatherers and the odd fisherman really bothers to do much with the mangrove, and although they become narrower as one heads up river, there is still a reasonable quantity of mangroves for possibly a hundred miles up river from the coast.

As one heads up river there is also a great reduction in the population and often news of what happens up river is just not relayed down to the coast and the capital. Other news stories that do get to the coast, possibly acquire a slightly different slant. When I was there in the summer of 1993 there was a serious pollution incident in the Upper River Division of the country. A black foul smelling substance killed thousands of fish and caused many stomach upsets in the local population.

The Gambian Daily Observer reported several possible causes of the incident, these included the idea that the "decayed remains of a dragon may have been washed into the river by heavy rains" (July is the start of the rainy season).

The idea of a totally new species being found in the Gambia is not entirely ridiculous, A new species of lizard was recorded in 1922, (Boulenger 1922). Similarly despite the high population density in the coastal area it is still possible to find relative large reptiles other than the "sacred crocodiles" in this area.

In 1994 two large pythons were killed at Bakau in the womens garden. One was stated to be twelve foot in length. The other appeared to be not much shorter. From the photograph both were clearly African Rock Pythons (*Python sebae*). Two similar sized snakes had also been killed there two years previously.

A new lizard six inches long, and a couple of medium sized pythons are hardly evidence for the existence of a scientifically unknown cryptid of possibly thirty feet in length but they do add a touch of circumstantial evidence that is at least consistent with existence of a fierce, but shy, giant cryptid.

Whilst the investigations from the Gambia were at least partly consistent with the existence of a real animal there remained a further surprise after we returned.

Tony did rather an advanced internet search and found a paper, in French, the date of which seems uncertain. It was referenced as having been published in 1914, but refers to work published in 1943, and appears to date from 1944. The

paper is by Beatrice Appia and is entitled "Notes sur le genie des eaux en Guinee" or "Notes on a water genie in Guinea".

In fact the content is a bit broader than the title suggests as the paper refers to inquiries in Casamance (Senegal immediately South of the Gambia), over what is now Guinea Bissau (then Portuguese Guinea) and Guinea Conakary (then French Guinea and the Fouta Djallon - the area in which the head waters of the Gambia river arise).

Tony's ability to translate French is better than mine and, with his trusty French-English dictionary, he commenced a translation.

His results were interesting, but not really consistent with Ninki Nanka being a flesh and blood animal. It seems that all the research was performed by questionnaire, assuming from the start that Ninki Nanka was a genie or spirit.

The author had interviewed a number of people in each of the areas and recorded what she was told. She refers to it throughout as a giant serpent and suggests that details of its habits are kept very secret by the natives.

There is a general consensus that it lives in the water and that the baby ones may live in baobob trees before moving into the water as they grow larger; its sightings also seem to be associated with rain, and particularly with the start of the rainy season.

She also revealed that it went by several names

- Ninkinanka in Casamance (but it is also referred to as "landouman" there)
- "Niniganne" in the Baga country, in French Guinea.
- "Ninger" or "Ningiri" in the Fouta Djallon.
- In Portuguese Creole it was called "Rianse'ou".

All cultures seem to accept that it is dangerous, but some suggest that keeping it may give great advantage or wealth to its captor

It appears also that possession of part of it is also advantageous and may bring wealth.

This was taken to an extreme by one group of boatmen who were fraudulently selling mica chips as Ninki nanka scales. Essentially Appia's research was performed to the South of the Gambia, but it did focus in part on some of the same tribes. However none of the descriptions from south of the

Gambia seems to acknowledge the presence of limbs, although one does describe the presence of horns.

Without seeing the Appias' questionnaire it is of course impossible to see whether it assumes the existence of Ninki nanka only as a spirit, and did not give the interviewed natives chance to refer to physical encounters or other more substantive evidence.

This is particularly frustrating as there is good reason to believe that Appia questionnaires were being answered at the same time that, further North, Dalrymple's natives were actually claiming to see Ninke Nanka. I offer no conclusion, just the standard plea of the African field researcher, there is clearly a lot more evidence to be collected, whether of a myth or of some cryptid animal that is either still alive or has died out recently.

Perhaps things haven't really changed since Pliny's time (c. AD 77) - *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi* (There is always something new from Africa).

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More on the terror of Gambia

by
Richard Freeman

The CFZ has uncovered more information on Ninki-Nanka in the months subsequent to Chris's trip.

In 1911 the British authorities began draining a large lake close to Bathurst (now Banjul) in order to provide water to the capital. Many crocodiles inhabited the lake but the locals were in more fear of a dragon that was said to reside in the depths. When the night watchman was found dead one morning the dragon was blamed. A native wiseman suggested that a large mirror be erected beside the lake as the one thing that dragons fear is their own reflection. The mirror was duly erected and the dragon was never seen in the lake again.

This story is interesting in that it has analogues in both western and middle eastern folklore concerning the basilisk or cockatrice.

This fabled reptile sprang from a cock's egg hatched by a snake or toad. It's gaze was fatal to all living creatures with the exception of the weasel. This included itself. If it saw its own reflection in a mirror the basilisk would expire.

Shortly after Chris's return our friend Matthew Hall visited the Gambia on holiday. We asked him if he could enquire about Ninki-Nanka. He elicited several interesting stories. One man told him that the creature had existed in the time of his ancestor's ancestors, ie about 100 years ago.

It was extinct today. When asked to draw a picture of it in the sand he produced a crude illustration of a long necked animal with a large body and small legs. When asked what kind of animal Ninki-Nanka was he replied "a kind of dragon".

Another man told Matthew that the monster was not extinct just rare and that people still see it from time to time.

Upon enquiring about the bridge Ninki-Nanka was supposed to have destroyed he was told that this was

caused by a flood. However Ninki-Nanka was supposed to control water and bring floods. This has parallels with Oriental dragons who are linked with water (see my expedition report on the naga of Thailand last issue).

On asking about the corpse of Gambo (a totally distinct pliosaur like animal supposedly washed up on Bungalow Beach in 1983) he drew a blank but was told of a supposed Ninki-Nanka corpse buried on South beach. The monster was supposedly killed by an old wise man with a machete. Only very old very wise men can hope to kill Ninki-Nanka. How anyone could kill an rhinoceros-sized reptile with a machete is beyond me! Perhaps the stories of Ninki-Nanka have been muddled up with Gambo; after all, the head was supposedly hacked off Gambo's corpse by natives with a machete.

Matthew also brought us back some sand from Bungalow Beach for chemical testing to see it would be conducive to preserving flesh.

So what is Ninki-Nanka? It could be a giant monitor lizard. Semi aquatic species in this group tend to have elongate necks. A swamp dwelling monitor of similar size to the Australian *Megalania Prisca* would fit the bill nicely.

Alternatively it could be something much stranger. The extreme fear it causes in witnesses seems to linger for years after the event. Chris was told of people still experiencing problems with it 4 years after the event.

This strongly reminds me of Georgina Carberry's experience with a strikingly similar monster in Lough Fadda, Ireland in 1954. Interviewed by pioneering researcher Ted Holliday she described her unbelievable terror at the sight of the creature. It haunted her dreams for years after.

She did not dare to return until 10 years later and then only with friends.

She did not linger after dark. So our African beast could be a dragon in the most literal sense of the word. A paranormal entity of the same ilk that terrorised medieval Europe and is still seen today.

Hold onto your hats gentle readers. The next CFZ expedition is planned for this December and will plumb the green hell of the Gambia's interior in search of this very beast! More details will follow in the next few issues.

AN AFRICAN OWLMAN?

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are indebted to Chris Moiser for the following article which first appeared in *The West African Review* of September 1939. In previous issues of *Animals & Men* we have noted how the archetype of the owlman, so notorious from southern Cornwall has been repeated from all over the world. It is particularly interesting, therefore, to read this pre-war account from what is now Ghana....

LIVING MONSTER OR FABULOUS ANIMAL?

J B DANQUAH ON THE
SASABONSAM OF THE GOLD
COAST

The photograph reproduced with this article is of a carving reputed to have been executed by Osei Bonsu the

Asantehene's famous carver. It is a representation of the Sasabonsam.

There is a two-fold interest in the original as a work of art. First as to Osei Bonsu's craftsmanship, and second as to the conception of the object itself. Of the first there is scarcely need to speak, for the execution is so perfect that all that one can say is that only the Asantehene's carver could have achieved this supreme perfection.

But it is not so easy with regard to the conception itself. The ability to envisage an animal or monster so contrary to all the other classes of animals, men or beasts, and yet so well proportioned and balanced as to suggest credibility in the possible existence of such a being, is an ability that is rare, even in an Asantehene's carver.

There are the very short arms and, in contrast, the long, twisted legs.

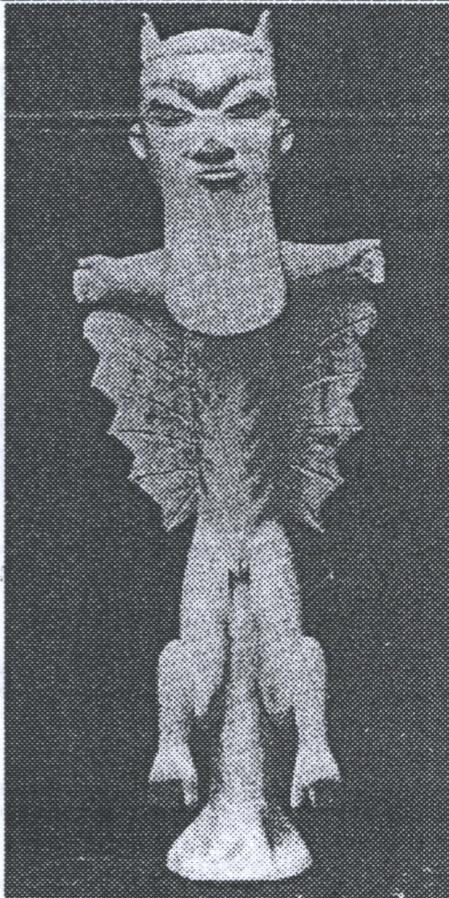
To balance the want of long arms, note the width and proportion of the web-like wings. The question which occurs to the student's mind is whether man has at last outdone nature in the imagination and creation of beautiful harmonious objects. . On the other hand is it unreasonable to suppose that whoever carved the object must have seen a natural or living object and copied from it?

In European Art

This must not be taken in disparagement of the ability of Osei Bonsu to conceive, entirely from imagination, an object of such a nature.

There is, for instance, in European art, a representation of the unicorn seen in the King's coat of arms. No one can ever swear to having seen a unicorn, and we take it therefore that its conception was purely imaginary. But the unicorn is only peculiar in respect to its unique or single horn. In all other respects, it is a horse. Can we say the same of Osei Bonsu's carving?

Perhaps we can.



The writer's interest in this matter is dictated purely by self-interest.

The carving was being photographed recently in the open air' and naturally a crowd gathered at the sight of such an unusual object. One of the crowd was heard to say that he had seen such a creature at Sunyani in Ashant: and that the one he saw had bones (ribs) at the sides much more prominent than could be seen in the carving. Now that was a remarkable statement.

All the authorities have held that the sasabonsam is an imaginary monstrous being. In Christaller's "Dictionary" it states that the sasabonsam is conceived as having a huge body of human shape, but of a red colour and with very long hair, living in the deepest recesses of the forest, where an immense silk-cotton tree is his abode. He is regarded as inimical to man, especially to the priests, but is a friend and chief of the sorcerers and witches.

Another interpretation used by Christaller is that it is a human spirit which on account of its quarrelsome disposition had to leave the *asaman* (land of spirits) and is now living in the depths of the forest. They are not said to be common. The third explanation given by Christaller is short but significant, a 'kind of bat' And then he adds in Twi "*Aboa a otu se oha: okyere nmpa* - animal that flies like a bat; it catches human beings - apparently something that an Akuapem man told him.

Evil Influences

The late Captain Rattray in *Ashanti Proverbs* No. 56 (p. 47) states that the word sasabonsam is derived from *bonsam*, devil, or evil spirit, and *sesa* (*sasa*), the word used of a person being possessed of a spirit or devil or the ghost of a person who suffered accidental death. Rattray adds that the power of the sasabonsam is purely for evil and witchcraft, and the *obayifo* (witch) is its servant.

Its legs are long and dangle down to the ground and have hooks for feet which pick up anyone who comes within reach. It has iron teeth. There are female and male sasabonsam and little sasabonsam.

Mr. A. W. Cardinal in *Tales Told from Togoland* holds much the same view and suggests that the sasabonsam are either connected with stories of giants - or are huge lions with hair on the body.

He adds that some of such hair was given to him by the son of a hunter reputed to have killed one of these monsters.

This being the sum and substance of a n educated Gold Coast man's knowledge on the subject of sasabonsam, interest was immediately aroused when it was suggested that someone had seen the monster in the flesh, and this is the story as the young man told it.

One day a man, called Agya Wuo, killed sasabonsam and brought it to the town. First of all, he came and told the townspeople, and an *apa* (a scaffold of sticks) was prepared

to go and fetch the sasabonsam from the bush. They brought it to the town and everybody saw it. "It is taller than myself, very very tall." (The boy is well over 5 feet 6 inches.) The ankles of the feet are very, very narrow (*ketekete koraa*).

The hands are long and can be stretched. When first it was brought, it was not quite dead, and it made noises: "Ho, ho." Then when it died the hands got pulled in, and only a small portion (the palm and fingers) could be seen.

Great Size

It has fingers like a human being. The forehead is very smooth (*firefire koraa, torotoro koraa*).

There is abundance of hair on the head, long hair like a woman's hair, but hard or stiff. The claws are very hard and very long (*denneennen; atenatenen*). It has wings like a bat, and they can be stretched out into the " lorry " road. [The speaker meant about 20 feet.]

The wings are very thin, but it is not easy to tear them, unless by cutting. There is plenty of hair at the hack, but on the stomach not so much hair. There is plenty of hair at the sides, ' from the armpit down.

The legs were straightened out when I saw them, but it was said the sasabonsam could twist them around a tree.

The arms are very long, reaching downwards to the feet. The back of the armpit is very, very soft (*betebete - tender*) and if you put a pin in it, it goes in and comes out again like rubber or a tyre. There are big knots on its legs. There are scales, like those of a crocodile, over the eyes, the ridges.

The teeth are very long, like those of a dog, sticking up and down.

The skin is spotted black and white. It has no heels, but the leg continues with the sole of the feet. The hands are the same, the palm indistinguishable from the rest of the arm by any noticeable break. It has short horns. Two of them. The lips are like those of a human being, but wider, more stretched to the sides. You can see big bones at the sides, very big bones.

The chest is not like that of human beings, but like that of a fowl, with a ridge in the centre. The sasabonsam was rolled into a bundle and tied together to be conveyed to Kumasi. The man said the animal was sleeping in the hollow of a tree and crying. The cry was like that of a bat) but deeper. It had

a long beard. The nose is like that of a man, but more prominent. The man hearing that the animal was crying, came home to prepare for shooting it. He had seen a part of the animal, a hand hanging from the hollow at the top. He could see, however, that it was not a human being's hand.

Coming home, he asked advice and loaded the gun with certain things. He did not use ordinary pellets. Mr. L. W. Wood, the District Commissioner, came there and the body was taken to the bungalow and photographed. It was in 1928. February 22nd.

Official Quoted

Before he left, the boy gave his full home address. The writer has since checked up the particulars in the last paragraph of the story and found that Mr. Wood, now Assistant Colonial Secretary, Accra, was stationed at Sunyani as District Commissioner in February, 1917.

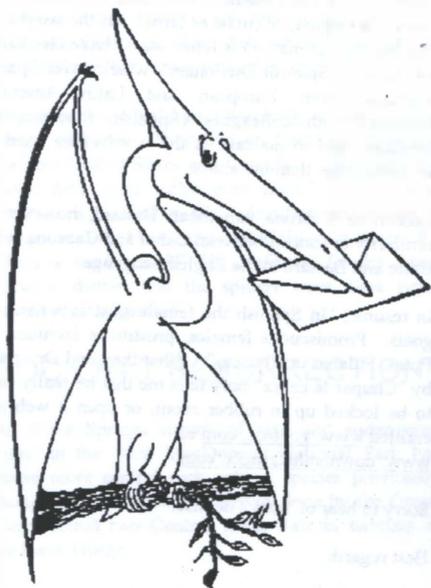
He was confirmed in his appointment later in the same year and apparently remained at Sunyani until the beginning of 1918, when he was stationed at the adjoining district, Ejura.

Mr. Wood was in the Western Province of Ashanti in February, 1918. He was not, however, in Ashanti in 1928. He adds that it is possible he took a photograph of the above description but cannot confirm this.

With some caution, he says that he may have taken the snap and the film, when developed, may have shown nothing!

It is significant that February 22nd, 1928, was a Friday. So also was February 22nd, 1918. Is it possible that the narrator has mixed up his dates?

It may be that some readers in England or West Africa, who know anything of the nature of bats and monsters, may be able to assist in finding out the facts concerning the existence or non-existence of the sasabonsam.



LETTERS TO YER EDITOR

The Editor and his band of merry men
welcome an exchange of
correspondence on any subject of
interest to readers of this magazine.
We reserve the right to edit letters
and would like to stress that opinions
voiced are those of the individual
correspondent rather than being
necessarily those of the editorial team
or the Centre for Fortean Zoology.
Every attempt is made not to infringe
anyone's moral rights or copyright,
and we apologise if we have
unwittingly done so.

THEY WALKED IN LINE

Dear Sirs/Madams et al,

I read with interest your report of Nagas in Nong Khai (Richard Freeman), Thailand. As I have a particular interest myself in a similar story. If any of you know anything behind the story of the attached photo I would love to hear as I am trying to find out whether the photo is a hoax or real. Sorry I missed of the fishes tail, my scanner ain't big enough.



Being a nosy Brit and keen fisherman, with nothing better to do, I find big fish tales really appealing. The caption at the bottom is in Laotian and reads (I have been told) Nagas Fish. The photo was reputedly taken in Nong Khai in 1972, during the Vietnam War, and graces the walls of a few of the bars in NE Thailand, where I spend a considerable portion of my time.

Most of the Thais I have spoken to, believe the fish is/was real. But it would be unholy to try and catch/disturb one. Any info would be really appreciated and settle a few arguments.
Regards

Paul Farrell
Thailand
email: farrell@kknet.co.th

Dear Paul

The creature in the picture is unfortunately not a naga but an oar fish (*Regalecus glesne*) Also known as the "King of Herrings". This species does indeed sport a naga-like crest but it is a fish, not a snake. It inhabits the deep seas and

despite its huge size (reputedly up to 45 feet) it is totally harmless. When it is washed up on the shore or on the surface it is usually dead or dying.

Such a deep salt water fish could not exist in the Mekong river much less crawl across the land. If the naga exists it is probably a gigantic snake. However you can see how an oar fish that turned up on the coast of Thailand would add to the legend.

Whilst I was in Thailand, the owner of Pata Zoo in Bangkok also claimed that the Naga could be a gigantic oarfish. Unfortunately there are no freshwater species.

This particular specimen was washed up in Sandiego Ca. In 1997. It was found and photographed by US Navy SEALS and was 23 feet long. It apparently died after being hit by a boat. It is interesting to see how this picture, which is after all, quite a well known one, has turned up in a book published in Laos purporting to be of the Naga.

Yours
Richard Freeman

ATROCITY EXHIBITION

Jon,

I've just read your very interesting 1997 article "*How many Goats can a Goatsucker Suck?*"

EDITORIAL NOTE: The article in question originally appeared in *Sightings* magazine during the summer of 1997. It is also on our website and has been included in my new book *Only fools and Goatsuckers*. - Jon

I noted that you quoted one "Dr. (?) Olmo-Terron" on his highly creative translation of the word "cabra". Cabra means

Goat. Cabra Loca means Crazy Goat or loonie! Una cabra is a single goat (male or female) as the word itself (not the subject matter) is feminine. I have checked in my several Spanish Dictionary's which cover Spanish language, both European and Latin American, consulted with colleagues (Spanish, Peruvian and Mexican) and in no case is the word cabra used for anything other than the above.

Cabron or Cabróna can mean Bastard, however the similarity in context between Cabra and Cabróna is like Baste and Bastard in the English language.

In resume, "In Spanish 'the female goat is a name for goats. Promiscuous females, prostitutes included, are Putas, Fulanas or Chuscas". What the good Dr. means by "Chupar la cabra" only tells me that he really ought to be locked up in rubber room, or open a web page entitled www.goatsex.com or www.downonthefarmxx.com.

Sorry to hear of Toby's demise.

Best regards,

Gary Thomson
Madrid,
Spain.

TRANSMISSION

Hi gang,

Just a note to bring you up to date on the Steve Piper video, which, as you probably know, Steve claims to have taken in the Brindabella Mountains just west of Canberra about 4 weeks ago. The story came to light when Steve contacted local cryptozoologist Tim Bull (aka Tim the Yowie Man) and Tim is now acting as Steve's agent,

Tim can be contacted at tym@yowieman.com.au and a couple of stills are on www.yowieman.com.au

The stills didn't excite me very much, but Tim screened the video for me several times and that was much more impressive - although it is not clear enough or detailed enough to actually prove anything.

Animals & Men # 24

It is clearly a bipedal creature, quite bulky, and apparently hair-covered.

It is not a kangaroo or other wild or domestic animal and it is almost certainly not a hiker or hermit who just happened to be walking past. It is not, as has been suggested, composed of doctored out-takes from the Patterson film.

I think it is either a man in a gorilla suit - or a yowie. The film site, which I have visited, is in an area which has produced several yowie - and, for that matter - other strange animal reports over the past 100 years - so the film might well be genuine.

Steve Piper went to ground straight after the film was shown on local TV and so far I have been unable to interview him.

Next Sunday, however, Tim has arranged for Steve to meet Tim, myself, Paul Cropper and US bigfoot researcher Danny Perez (who is in Sydney for the Olympics) at the film site. I'll use electronic distance measuring equipment to figure out how close Steve was to the creature.

Tim says Steve seems a decent, truthful bloke; if he strikes me the same way I'll be inclined to believe the video really does show a yowie. For the moment I'll have to reserve judgement.

I'll keep you posted.

All the best,

Tony Healey

THESE DAYS

Hi Richard

Forgot to tell you about a pike attack story on a person I have that you might want to investigate per the article in latest *Animals & Men*. Between 1984 and 1991 I worked for a company in Walsall called SJ Dixon - a paint/wallpaper supplier. We would get paint deliveries from all the various manufacturers (Dulux, Crown etc) and one of the companies was Permaglaze of Leicester.

They had a driver at the time named Derek Yorrall (surname spelling might be incorrect). Derek was probably late 30s when I first new him.

He was a good bloke and told me how when he was a kid (so probably 1960s) he'd been swimming with friends and either he or a friend (I can't remember now) was attacked by a very vicious pike.

Because of the teeth they had to kill the pike, cut it off at the head and go to hospital with the head attached. I haven't spoken to Derek for probably 10 years (I think he stopped doing the Dixon's run in about 89-90 and I've never seen him since.

But Yorrall isn't that common a surname and if you check directory inquiries for Leicester or go via Permaglaze Paints at Leicester you might stand a good chance of locating Derek. If you do, say Nick from Dixons in Walsall told you the story.

All the best

Nick Redfern

UNKNOWN PLEASURES

Dear CFZ,

I am writing to let you know about a web-site I have set up to promote a novel I have written, and present a little information about Mystery Big Cats in Australia. As you have an interest in cryptozoology, I thought you might like to check it out.

The address is:

<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~nickcostello>

and the link to *Zeus Publications* is:

<http://www.zeus-publications.com>

The novel is a murder-mystery titled *The Shadow Trackers*, which was short-listed in a national book-writing competition in 1997, but remained unpublished until recently. It is loosely based on my experiences as a member of *Rare Fauna Research* - now called the *Australian Rare Fauna Research Association*. I imagine you've seen their website.

If you visit my website, you will find a little information about footprint analysis and sightings, designed to help novice investigators sift fact from fiction. Just click on the

Big Cats in Australia link on the left of the page, and there it is. I hope you find it interesting.

For the record, I'm no expert in animal-tracking, but I did pick up a thing or two while investigating reports of panthers, pumas and thylacines in Victoria during the 1980s. I am no longer active in the field, but if you have any specific questions about big cats in Australia or my book, don't hesitate to send an email. Rules of confidentiality apply to specific *Rare Fauna Research* information - and I have no knowledge about current activity - but I will try to answer any questions you have as best I can.

Best wishes,
Nick Costello

SHADOWPLAY

Dear Jon,

From the current *Cornish Guardian*.

Fishy Tale

The fishy tale of how a large rotting salmon ended up at the top of a flagpole in Lostwithiel is still to be solved.

The flying fish was discovered hoisted up the pole near the War Memorial last week, with council handyman Pete Turner given the unenviable task of taking the smelly and slippery customer down.

"It was an absolutely enormous salmon that unfortunately was well putrified and pretty stinky," he said.

But - did anyone salute?

Nigel Ayers,
Cornwall

EDITORIAL COMMENT: Peter Chandler is a gnat expert whom I contacted via the Natural History Museum in London with regard to the luminous gnat lava I stumbled across in the caves in Thailand. Here are his thoughts on these odd insects. - RICHARD

COLONY

Dear Richard,

It was very interesting to hear of your find. You are obviously familiar with the New Zealand Glow-worm, which is the best known luminous gnat and in which adult females as well as larvae are luminous. The genus *Arachnocampa*, to which it belongs, also occurs in Australia, where there are three species with similar habits to *A. luminosa*. *Arachnocampa* belongs to the family *Keroplattidae* and is the only known genus of the subfamily *Arachnocampinae*. The other two subfamilies *Macrocerinae* and *Keroplattinae* include numerous species and have a worldwide distribution. Most known larvae spin webs, which are often on dead wood or fungi and some are carnivorous while others are spore feeders.

Several of both subfamilies are known to live in caves. There are *Macrocera* species living in caves in Europe and North America (see Peck, S. B. and Russell, D. R. 1976. *Canadian Entomologist* 108: 1235-1241). In the *Keroplattinae* there are *Neoditomyia* species in caves in South America (see Coher, E. I. 1996. *Pan-pacific Entomologist* 72: 152-159), although these are not said to be luminous. Fulton (1941) recorded *Platyura fultoni* with luminous larvae from the West Indies (*Ann. Ent. Soc. Amer.* 34: 289-302). Larvae of *Keroplatus* itself, which are spore feeders on bracket fungi, have also been described as weakly luminous although I have not observed this when finding these larvae myself.

I don't know of any previous Asian species with this habit, but it is not too surprising that they exist. It will probably prove to be a member of one of these other groups, rather than a close relative of *Arachnocampa*. Cave dwelling fungus gnats, including the New Zealand glow-worm, are often found outside caves and it is therefore possible that the Thai specimens belong to a described species, but it will be necessary to rear them or find emergent adults to confirm this, as the biology of most species is unknown.

I hope that somebody will be able to collect material on a future visit to these caves.

Best wishes
Peter Chandler

INCUBATION

Hi Jon:

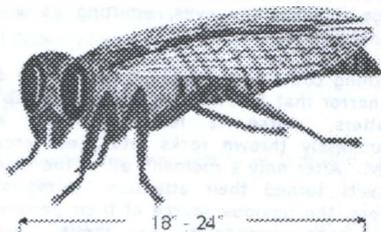
I have enjoyed listening to you and Nick on the Jeff Rense show. Looking at your web site, I was amused to see that you are a Leo with Scorpio rising. Well, I am a Scorpio with Leo rising, which somehow has led me to this email.

In the subject area of cryptozoology, I have not been able to track down anything like what I witnessed as a boy in Washington State, USA. The time frame was in the 1960's. I lived in a very rural area that was gradually succumbing to suburban growth. In the meadow behind our house (an old vineyard) I literally stumbled across a nest of extremely large flying insects. By large, I mean somewhere between 18" and 24" long.

Is there anything anywhere in "the literature" (Fortean or otherwise) that mentions such hormongous flying insects? I have written down my account of this experience.

I have also had a fairly wide variety of ET experiences, many of which involved contact with a range of "crypts", not the least - by almost any measure, not to mention stench - of which is the Sasquatch. (That happened up in British Columbia and Alberta, Canada, and I have not included it yet on the web site yet.)

Best regards,
Ken Bakeman



Editor's note: Here, in its entirety is Ken's account of the incident from his website....

A Nest of Terror

(late Summer 1963, age 10)
Copyright 1999 Kenneth Bakeman

The weather acted like it couldn't make up its mind. For a few minutes the sun would shine through a nearly clear sky and then strong gusts of wind carried in large clouds which pretended to threaten rain.

For the last few days my friends and I had been waiting for enough wind to fly our kites and now, in the temperamental constitution of this late summer day, we were provided with more than enough power to lift our aerial contraptions. The staging ground was the meadow behind my house.

There were about eight of us kids, each with our own preferred kite design. Some kites required long, heavy tails of knotted rags to tame their flighty natures. John Jay had a new style kite, designed in the shape of a streamlined bat - a mere triangle of black plastic stretched out over two intersecting dowels. We made derisive jokes about the airworthiness of this kite until John Jay launched it by merely letting out a little string. The thing immediately shot up into the air several dozen yards and was nearly out of sight a few minutes later. John Jay said, nothing, but had a big smile on his round face.

Meanwhile, the rest of us boys were running down the field trying to get our bulky, old-fashioned paper kites up into the air. Fortunately for us, there was more than enough wind to buoy them and soon eight kites vied for dominance in a rather tightly congested air space. Collisions took place right away, entangling two or three kites at a time. We tried to cross over the strings, trace places, crawl under or over each other - anything to untangle the mess of kite lines. Tempers grew hot and the original fun of watching the invisible forces of nature loft our frail inventions had shifted to a yelling match between boys blaming each other for causing the snarl up.

In the midst of the debate, John Jay had discovered how to steer his kite - which was still free of the fracas - so that it could perform dive-bomb manoeuvres. While we other kids were attempting to extricate our kites from the lock-up, John Jay began to attack our vulnerable paper models. He had ripped apart my kite in a brutal assault and the smile that

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previously decorated his youthful, angelic face had taken on a sinister, sneering twist. Just before a fist fight broke out, the loud clanging of Lola Risbell's cow bell summoned her three boys to come home to their Sunday supper. John Jay, apparently satisfied with his revenge, reeled in his offending kite and made a quick get-away. The other kids had lost their enthusiasm to continue, and now that it was late in the afternoon, they picked up the battered remains of their kites and went home too.

I was left alone in the meadow. My kite was in a shambles - it would never fly again. That was a dollar seventy-five cents (plus tax) down the drain thanks to John Jay. But one of the Risbell kids had left behind their relatively undamaged kite, and now with the wind still blowing, I took solace in the privacy of the empty field to enjoy a final, unmolested kite flight. The wind had shifted directions. Strangely, it was now coming from the east.

I moved further out towards the centre of the meadow, watching the kite begin to soar upwards as more and more string was let out. Continuing to back up, I suddenly fell over backwards, stumbling helplessly over a large gash in the ground. The string escaped from my hand, allowing the kite to sail away in the easterly wind.

Regaining an upright posture, I sadly observed the kite skittle off into the distance, appearing to become smaller and smaller until it could barely be seen anymore. I dusted myself off and turned my attention to what had caused me to fall over. What presented itself was an opening in the ground, a large slit about four feet wide and a little less than one foot high, camouflaged by the heavy summer growth of meadow grass. Freshly excavated dirt was piled up around the outside of the opening. The fissure extended back and down into the earth, looking to me like the den so some kind of animal. I was familiar with gopher holes and rabbit holes but this was much bigger than either of those. Whatever had made the hole - and was presumably now inside of it - had to be fairly large, big enough to dig out well over three cubic yards of dirt.

Stepping back a few feet, I felt a certain concern about possible danger surrounding the current circumstances. But drawn into the quandary, I decided to round up a few large sized rocks (which were conveniently at hand due to the creature's excavation efforts) and throw them into the opening to see what might result. The worst that I could imagine was that a slow witted, sleepy rodent would expose itself for my viewing. After selecting a few

apple-sized rocks, I knelt down on my hands and knees to peer into the small cave. It was pitch black inside and nothing was to be seen. The den was deeper than I had previously thought.

I stood up and got ready to heave in a projectile. In a moment of studied caution, I decided to roll in one rock, just as a test, to see what would happen. I lobbed in the stone and waited. Nothing happened. Figuring that the cave was either vacant or that the animal was too deeply entrenched in its lair to notice, I lugged in three more large rocks with a considerable degree of force. From within the fissure I detected a low-pitched buzzing sound. This was rather unnerving since it reminded me more of baritone wasps than rabbits or gophers. Moving back in alarm over this unexpected animal noise, I was torn between running away and waiting around to see what might happen next. But, impatient to have my curiosity satisfied, I threw in two more large sized rocks as hard as I could. The buzzing escalated to an intense level, sounding like the angry occupant had decided to exit it's den and was now approaching the opening.

In excited anticipation, I stepped back a few feet and braced myself for whatever might be crawling out. Not one creature, but at least six, partially emerged from the fissure, and then fully came outside. I stood transfixed in terror by what I saw. Their bodies were over two feet long, bodies looking like huge insects with silvery wings folded back over their black frames. Their loud buzzing continued unabated, and like a language, the tones went up and down with hints of clicking and hissing. What struck me was the power of their legs. They had legs as big as a chicken's. Also, almost their entire heads - which turned eerily - were composed of huge, black shiny eyes, emitting an alarming signal of intelligence.

Nothing could have prepared me for the degree of horror that I now experienced. And to make matters, worse, I felt guilty for having mercilessly thrown rocks into these creatures' nest. After only a moment, all of the enormous insects turned their attention to my solitary figure, the obvious source of their perturbation. My gaze connected to theirs, and an unmistakable telepathic communication was projected to me, "You have injured ours!" I began to make backward steps in a futile effort to distance myself from both the liability of my actions and the possible consequences of having

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thrown large rocks at intelligent, two-foot long insects. But the creatures that I had violated began to creep closer to me, convening a hasty dialog between them that I instinctively knew concluded with, "Attack!"

I turned heel and ran for my life. The monstrous bugs had become airborne and like miniature aircraft were nipping at my shoulders and neck. Hysterically, I ran pell-mell through the meadow grass. The flying insects were easily able to keep up with my laboured, terrestrial pace. After only a few dozen yards of frantic running, I knew that there was no way that I could escape my pursuers. The bites were like painful pinches, not drawing blood, but extracting a heavy toll on my nervous system. Becoming exhausted, I was having difficulty negotiating the uneven terrain of the wild field. My mind begged for release from this unbearable predicament. If only I could lift up into the air like a kite I might be delivered from this gruesome fate. My hands paddled the air in a pathetic effort to become airborne. But in the next step my foot sank into a depression in the field causing my body to sprawl onto the ground, flipping head over heel until it came to a half in dishevelled heap.

I looked down at the boy who was lying unconscious in the grass. Trying to control my breathing - a symbolic effort at best since I didn't actually have physical lungs - I fervently hoped that the body wasn't broken. Even though the physical form hadn't been able to fly away, the soul part, me, exploded out of the body after the child's head bashed against a rock on the ground in the finale of the chase.

From my current vantage point, some fifteen feet above the ground, I stared at this body that I usually occupied, feeling too fearful to re-enter it. I looked carefully to see if there was any bleeding but no blood was visible. Perhaps the skull had been cracked when it hit the rock. The thought of enduring the pain of a severe physical injury was too much to bear, and although I felt guilty for vacating my biological counterpart, I hung back in a torment of indecision. Thankfully, the enormous insects were currently nowhere to be seen.

Apparently they had retreated, satisfied that the invasion of their nest had been forestalled and the attacker sufficiently avenged. Clearly,

their attention was turned back towards efforts to create progeny.

I somehow understood that out of desperation they had chosen a foreign region of space-time - Earth's bio-habitat - to incubate their offspring. Perhaps this was a last hope for the survival of their archaic species, a near vanished race. Meanwhile, my body lay minus it's principle constituent - its soul - and all other considerations fell around me like sifting dust in the wind. To reconnect was most important, but the linkage was frail. Tethered only by a small vein of life-force, becoming more fragile with each passing moment, we were slipping apart.

Part of me wanted to rejoin the physical form but another dissenting portion had become enveloped in a gray cloud of terror and was drifting further and further away, like the kite that escaped the child's hands. The string stretched too thin, and the fearful fragment detached. It was imperative that the remainder of 'me' re-enter the child's body before the connection severed completely. Something was on my face. Instinctively, I made a swipe at the foreign object with my hand, only to discover that it was a leaf that had blown onto me.

I lay on the ground, feeling extremely weak. It was all I could manage at first to roll over onto my side in a preliminary effort to stand upright. My head was pounding with pain. My gaze took in a large rock next to me. Somehow I had fallen down, hitting my head on this rock. Dizzily, I stood up and looked around as though something was lost. Was it somewhere in the grass? Hastily, I searched my pockets thinking that maybe a clue could be found by detecting something missing there. But my pockets were empty, as usual, and if anything was misplaced, it probably didn't originate from my clothes.

Standing still, I sensed a voice that seemed to be speaking to me from far away. Very faint and difficult to hear, the call faded in and out like a weak radio station and in a few moments faded completely into silence. I staggered home, careful to take a wide detour away from the centre of the meadow.

* * *

Author's comment: Thirty-four years after this experience, a soul-retrieval was performed for me. Five pieces were 'returned', one of them, according to the Shaman, was a fragment that split off due to fear when huge, insect-like beings chased me through a meadow when I was a boy.

WILDERNESS

Dear Jon,

I thought you might be interested in this Lynx sighting by my father. - On Saturday, April 14th 2001, my father Ron, (48), was returning home from Rainham in his car. Upon nearing Chatham he decided to take a country lane known as Shawstead Road, which runs from Wyevale Garden Centre to Shawstead Refuse Site.

It was 7:50 pm and growing dusk but vision was good. At around 300 yards from the local rubbish tip my dad spotted an animal about fifty yards away in the field to his left. The animal sped up the sloping field towards North Dane Wood, some 150 yards away at the top.

My father slowed the car and viewed the creature through various gaps in the hedgerow. He believed that he'd startled the animal which may have been looking for food in the undergrowth.

My father watched the animal speedily reach the top of the field where it then stopped and sat down on its back legs, just yards from the edge of the wood. My dad decided to drive a few yards in order to turn the car around. Upon returning to the spot he was able to wind his window down and see the animal. However, the creature now stood up and walked off into the thicket. It did not return.

He said that he watched the creature for more than a minute and a half and he described it as "the size of a fox but more fawn in colour". It was definitely feline, although he could not see its head as it ran away from him. He also stated that the animal had no tail and was slender.

At first my father believed he may have been watching a hare but it did not have the characteristics. Everything about the animal was feline and he believed he'd seen a small lynx, possibly a Siberian species.

The same sort of animal was seen over the New Year - a couple on a housing estate just five minutes away.

Although sightings of lynx in Medway have not been common, my father is still adamant as to what he sees. Sightings of rusty-coloured and fawn cats date back to the early '70s with regards to this area.

Neil Arnold,
Chatham, Kent

BOOK REVIEW

Planet Zoo: One hundred animals we can't afford to lose. By Simon Barnes Orion
ISBN 1 85881 488-X

This book is aimed at children but that should not put you off as it is far better than many adult books on the same subject.

Written in an intelligent and none condescending manner it is an introduction to endangered species and conservation.

100 species of animal are showcased, detailing the many reasons behind their peril.

The animals range from the familiar such as rhinos and elephants to little known creatures such as the no-eyed big eyed wolf spider, the Iowa Pleistocene snail, and the pink fairy armadillo.

There are some omissions that I personally would have included in the list, the thylacine, the mountain gorilla, the Komodo dragon, and the Round Island boa, but the list is Barnes's own and overall the book is unfaultable.

The text is matched by fine illustrations from Alan Marks and despite the grim nature of the subject never fails to inspire hope.

There are also conservation success stories like the white rhino and the Arabian oryx to prove what can be done.

Thoughtfully the final animal on the list is *Homo sapiens*. Hopefully this book will be a great inspiration for tomorrow's conservationists.

RICHARD FREEMAN

Animals & Men

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The **C**RYPTOZOOLOGY FILES By MARK NORTH

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BURP!

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LOCATION: THE ANNUAL CRUFTS DOG SHOW
EARLS COURT, LONDON.

CASE: PHANTOM BLACK DOGS

AN UNUSAL BREED FROM BUNGAY, SUFFOLK, TAKES FIRST PLACE
AS ALL OTHER ENTRIES TO THIS YEARS DOG SHOW HAVE

MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED!

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Typeset by a one eyed dwarf who's rolling dice along the wharf
"Tonight we sail for Singapore. we're all as mad as hatters here"