

Ness Information Service  
Nessletter No.17  
August 1976

'Hepple Holidays '76)

I and my family once more spent our two weeks holiday, July 24th to August 7th, on the shores of Loch Ness in a caravan. We did not enjoy as many very calm early mornings as usual, because the wind was steady, and this raises fairly large waves, and makes sitting around in a canoe rather tricky. During this period there was much happening on the scientific front, and I was able to see at first hand the equipment being used to search for Nessie. We met up with old friends and one or two N.I.S. members; the children enjoyed the water, and we all had a very nice time again.

Academy of Applied Science

Bob Rines and his team are once more working at Loch Ness, they had their equipment suspended from a large raft when I was there. They started the season working from the stern of 'Hunter' an 18ft cabin cruiser anchored off Temple Pier, hauling the 300lb of gear up and down by hand, then progressed by building a 15 foot square raft from new (50 gallon) oil drums, timber and plywood. This was moored in 120 feet of water off the pier, with the equipment 35 feet below, winched up and down for servicing and adjustment. At one end of the raft was the 'old gear' (which got the pictures in previous years) consisting of the strobe flash unit and the elapsed time 16mm camera. At the other end looking towards but slightly to one side of the strobe set was the new rig, made up of a television camera (adapted by Ike Blonder to extend its range to 30 feet) Under this was a pair of Benthos Co. 35mm cameras side by side to give a stereoscopic effect for range finding, then a special SX70 Polaroid camera with its own flash system producing 200 watt-seconds of energy. The whole package hung in a framework and was powered from shore. Satisfactory test pictures were obtained up to a 25/30 foot range. A Raytheon 731 sonar was mounted on the bottom 15/20 feet from Temple Pier looking at and beyond the raft. A control centre hut on the pier contained the sonar and video monitoring equipment. Method of operation was to watch the sonar chart which 'sees' further than the T/V camera; if an intruder was indicated, close attention was given to the T/V screen and if anything appeared the rest of the equipment was activated by one switch. When Bob Rines and Charles Wyckoff and others left in early August the system had not produced more than traces of large objects which had come into sonar range, but which had turned away before coming into camera range. Up to that time it had been a poor year for sightings. The reason may be the lack of water in the rivers, following a dry winter and summer. This makes it difficult for salmon to get into the loch, causing the creatures to feed on the fish in deeper water - the trout, arctic char, and eels perhaps.

When the Academy team left the equipment was made automatic, controlled by a Raytheon 725 sonar and a small computer which triggers when a large object comes within range. The equipment is being maintained by local volunteers who change film, and make regular checks.

Bob Rines is hoping to get back in October for the late salmon run and will be operating the new gear again.

During July with the help of Tim Dinsdale as skipper the 12 ton vessel 'Malaran' was used on all-night Nessie hunting experiments using a strobe light 35mm camera unit and fish finding sonars. The object being to locate fish concentrations, and hopefully monsters. Several interesting sonar contacts resulted.

### The National Geographic Magazine

A team from the National Georgraphic arrived in early July with plans for a series of underwater experiments in an attempt to obtain good pictures of the creatures. I was able to talk to Emory Kristof, staff photographer and diver, who gave me details of the equipment and of the programme. He also took me out in the boat when servicing the camera. Their purpose is to feature Loch Ness in an article on the Great Glen. There is no question 'whether or not' a monster exists. The only question is 'can they get a photograph?' Their mode of operation differs from Rines' in a number of ways. They have bouyant equipment anchored on the bottom in 150 ft of water some 100 yards east of the Academy raft in Urquhart Bay; it is held some 30 feet from the surface which enables them to make use of the faint surface light in daytime. They are using a wide angle fish-eye lens. It is fitted to a Nikon still camera with a 250 exposure motor driven magazine. This is mounted in a custom built domed perspex case along with the sonar gear, attached in the centre of a ladder-like structure. Above and below it are the strobe lights, at the top of the ladder is the sonar transducer and at the bottom a short arm extending forwards for the attachment of baits. There is also provision for an underwater loudspeaker, for use in the baiting programme, which ranges from the use of a steady burning light to a flashing light, then on to dead fish, "very" dead fish, live fish, and pure sound. The sound starts in a wide 52 to 500 cycle range and then through stages to a low range of 40 to 80 cycles, using a U.S. Navy J9 speaker which is capable of transmitting the low frequencies. Each "bait" is used for three days only and the camera is activated by anything the sonar picks up, even fish. They are most hopeful of the low frequency noise as it has been used successfully by the University of Miami to attract sharks. Divers are employed to bring the camera box to the surface for servicing, and they are being helped in this by the Inverness Sub-Aqua Club. Cost of the set-up is put at around 30,000 dollars, but I am pleased to report that in keeping with the best monster hunting tradition everything did not work properly at first. The fault was in a circuit operating too close to its limit. As soon as the voltage fell below 12, it shot off all the film! The cure was to put more batteries in and run off 15 volts.

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This is/very professional effort but it is a 'one off' attempt. Success this year, or not at all.

### Loch Morar

Adrian Shine sent me a short report on progress at Loch Morar. Their equipment as previously described is living up to and surpassing expectations. In good weather they get ranges of around 100 feet; clearly resolved. They have been operational since mid-June, but up to the beginning of August had had no spectacular results. However they have some very good records of fish which shows they are on the right track technically.

At present they have had some five sites under surveillance and will continue to monitor the most promising at least until the end of August. Coverage is quite good using the Snell's window effect, at the maximum, around 339,292 cu.ft. Dives are to be undertaken with the specific intention of ledge and bottom searches for remains, or even visual contact with the beast. Adrian will let me have more news of the seasons results when the expedition ends.

### Lake Champlain

Just a brief note from the Bierman-Zarzynski expedition. Joseph Bierman and Joseph Zarzynski had two weeks of shore watching in late June early July, but the lake is so large they say it is practically useless, nevertheless they believe in their search. They are planning two or three more weekend watches in September and October.

### Sightings

.....In mid-July Ian Dunn and Bill Kennedy, both of Inverness, had been out fishing in their boat with a friend. During the day the boat, a fairly powerful cruiser type, developed a motor fault. So Ian and Bill stayed on into the evening putting it right, the boat is moored at the old pier at Abriachan, which is some two miles from Lochend at the northern end of the loch. Around nine o'clock the motor being fixed they went out to test it. They had just left the mooring when a quarter of a mile away and to the south they saw a large hump in mid-loch. It was, they estimated, 3 feet high and 12 feet long. They motored towards it and it moved further into the loch and submerged. They cruised round waiting to see if anything further would happen, and saw in about the same position four humps, three smaller ones and what seemed to be large one again. They did not attempt to get too close. The humps disappeared and even though they waited there were no further signs. The whole episode took from eight to ten minutes, the colour given was 'black or dark', at one time they thought one of the smaller humps was following them. In all a very interesting experience, and when I spoke to the witnesses it had obviously had a startling effect on Ian and Bill.

.....On Sunday 1st August Nic Ashby and his sister Lalage with their parents were visiting Loch Ness, and had looked around Urquhart Castle in the morning. At about 10.45 Lalage was standing in front of their car which was parked in the castle lay-by, Nic had gone to Mrs Carey at Strone. She reported, "I looked out over the loch and noticed a small yacht without its sail up, moving towards Inverness slowly. I was waiting, looking around, when I saw what I thought were two more 'boats' appear. The bigger one was nearer the boat and nearer the shore. It was black and longer than the yacht. The other was smaller and trailing behind the first one. It was smaller than the yacht and further away from the shore.

I looked away and then back realising what they were. I looked a way again and back. Studied them for about 15 seconds and looked around for my dad. When I looked back they had gone. I did not notice any water disturbance, but I reckon, they must have been travelling at the same speed as the yacht. Obviously they were two separate monsters (or one with a very kinky and abnormal back)".

.....Around August 22nd, Anthony Luke (aged 9) travelling with his father by car from Inverness towards Urquhart Castle, he was in the rear seat, when he spotted the creatures head and neck. He told the lady in charge of the Fort

Augustus Tourist Information Office when they got there. It emerged fairly close inshore and was fully three feet in height, it was blackish-grey in colour, not moving and no features (such as eyes) were seen. (I am following this up, to try to get more information).

#### Odds and Ends

..... The Caledonian Canal, which was closed in May, was reopened on July 5th. Extensive repair work to the lock gates at Muirtown, had been carried out by a large team of men, plus a specialist contractor, and finished in good time.

..... Yet another cousin for Nessie (is reported), this time from Switzerland. A dragon-like monster has been reported 'snorting' its way across Lake Uri, witnesses say it surfaced 300 yards from shore, and a picture was taken, and published in a newspaper.

..... The British Bacon Curers Federation sponsored a hot air balloon flight over the loch. It took place on 10th August, the balloon taking off from Glenmoriston Farm and flying towards Inverness trailing as bait a side of bacon. Alas there were no positive results.

..... Frank Searle published his book this summer, it is called 'Nessie' and is the story of his seven year search for the Monster. It has raised a storm of reaction, two newspapers (Highland News August 15th and Sunday Mail August 15th) carrying large articles criticising it. The trouble stems from Searle's claimed photos of the Monster. One in the book he says was taken on February 26th 1976, but it has a most striking likeness to a Brontosaurus postcard published by J. Arthur Dixon. The card is number 3 in a series of eight, all of prehistoric creatures, which join up into one large scene. There are other pieces of evidence brought forward such as the small stuffed model monster found close to the place Frank used to have his tent pitched. The best advice I can give is anyone buying the book should also get the postcard, usually available in the same shop, and examine both for themselves. But the book will not be available for too long, as the publishers, Hodder and Stoughton Coronet Books, will not be reprinting. They said that owing to the complaints they have had from people they feel the book could harm serious scientific research, and did not wish to do this.

Well that's all for the Nessletter; please remember news and views are always welcomed and appreciated. My address is still:- Huntshield Ford Cottage, St. Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. and subs £1.25 U.K. U.S.A. \$7.00.

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