

Ness Information Service
Nessletter No. 27
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Loch Rescue

A helicopter was used on Good Friday to help seven people on board a cruiser with engine trouble. The three couples, one of them with a twelve year old daughter, had hired the 'Glen Ellen' from Great Glen Cruisers, Dochgarroch, and were heading for Fort Augustus. The weather was poor and the water conditions very rough when the boat's engine stopped. Powerless the boat began to drift back towards Lochend, they sent up two distress rockets which were seen by Mr John Menzies, of Temple Pier in Urquhart Bay, who took action. When the helicopter arrived on the scene a winchman was lowered, and found the occupants safe but very seasick. Another cruiser was called from nearby to take the 'Glen Ellen' in tow. At the same time a rescue boat from Dochgarroch arrived and escorted the two boats into more sheltered waters round the castle headland in Urquhart Bay. The cause of the trouble was found to be an airlock in the fuel system, when this was cleared the party continued on their holiday.

This incident brought reaction from two quarters, firstly the Northern Constabulary, raised the question that the rescue services on the loch are not satisfactory. At present there is an agreement with a number of people round the loch, who own boats, that they will turn out in an emergency. At the time of the incident the nearest such person was at Drumnadrochit, but the police were unable to contact him. A senior police officer stated that a report was being prepared and one of the recommendations would be that the number of rescue craft be increased. He also said "Conditions on Loch Ness can become very treacherous and this could have developed into a nasty situation!"

Then Mr Hogan, President of the Caledonian Canal Leisure Craft Operators Association, criticised holiday-makers using the canal for setting off distress rockets without being in real danger. Mr Hogan, who operates Caley Cruisers, Inverness, said "People experiencing engine trouble should drop their drift anchor and wait for help. There are many boats sailing on the loch and it would only be a matter of time before help arrives." He announced that a new directive would be issued to boat hirers and that; "flares should only be used as a matter of life or death."

Both are valid points, as I have said in Nessletters before, the loch can be a very dangerous stretch of water. I feel Mr Hogan has over-reacted, for anyone that has only cruised on other inland waterways, such as the Norfolk Broads, or the Thames, Loch Ness must come as something of a surprise. The waves can become very large, there is a lack of sheltered water and very few places where a boat could be beached safely. On the other hand when the weather is right the water can be like a huge sheet of glass, but anyone on the water should always take care for it can change with alarming rapidity.

Two Species

I received a note from Mark Barden, in which he asked if there was any evidence that there may be two types of creature in Loch Ness. I feel that the evidence in support of one creature is thin enough but there is the 'Stewart'

photograph. This was taken by Mr Lachlan Stuart, near Whitefield (opposite Uquhart Bay), on July 14th 1951 at about 6.30 a.m., it shows three sharply angled humps in choppy water. This is in contrast to the smooth, rounded, hump or humps that are more usually reported. This could be taken to indicate that there are different types of animal in the loch. It gave rise to the theory that the creatures have air sacs in their bodies, which causes them to change the contours of their backs. Myself, I have always explained this seemingly strange behaviour as the difference between male and female or between mature and immature animals. As there are many examples of such differences in the animal world.

Then I received a letter from Bill Paintin who had a comment on a book he was reading. It was a book about birds, and it discusses anatomical features and how these can illustrate relationships between the various groups and families. Among these features are air-sacs beneath the skin, which some groups have, they serve to increase buoyancy and conserve body heat.

Bill comments that it is now widely accepted that birds evolved from dinosaur stock, and that the lately presented evidence for some of them being warm-blooded, is held to explain the long lived success of the dinosaurs. Some of the smaller ones turned scales into feathers for insulation. Below a certain body size heat-loss exceeds heat-generation without insulation, unless the air temperature is high enough. The larger body sizes have less heat-loss and no need for feathers. He goes on to say, that it could be that air-sacs under the skin existed, especially in aquatic forms where they served as insulation, and they could also explain the varied back curvatures so consistently reported in Loch Ness sightings.

I know it is a tenuous connection, but there is so much we do not know, so many unanswered questions, that it is an interesting line of thought.

Books

I have now obtained a copy of 'Ogopogo' (N.I.S. 26), it seems a comprehensive account of the situation. One thing that stands out on first glance through is the similarity between the drawings of 'backs' seen on the surface of Lake Okanagan and those presented in the books about Loch Ness.

Help; can anyone tell me where copies of 'More Than A Legend' may be obtained. I have enquiries from a number of members who are after them. Also 'Beneath the Depths' by Arlene Gael is required.

Patrick McCullough, 35 Washington Street, Trumbull, Conn 06611, USA. mentions a book he has recently bought, it is 'A Pictorial History of Sea-Monsters and Other Dangerous Marine Life' by James Sweeny. He says it has 372 illustrations and 314 pages, it cost him \$5.98 and he thinks it was a good deal. He offers to purchase and send copies to anyone who would like one and sends him the cost plus \$1.60 for post and package (more for overseas).

I've enquiries about the map produced by Tim Dinsdale, as far as I know it is still obtainable from him at 17 Blewbury Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks., send £1.00 note or P.O. Also from the Big Foot Information Centre, PO Box 777, Hood River, Oregon 97031, \$3.75 post paid and ask for the 'Loch Ness Map'. Do not forget that they also send out a very good newsletter on 'Bigfoot', information from above address. While on the subject of magazines and newsletters, one that deals with all types of strange happenings, and unexplained phenomena is the

'Fortean Times'. Further information from 'Fortean Times', Box 152, London, N10 1EP, England. Mentioned in previous Nessletters but still very worthwhile.

Loch Morar

Word from Adrian Shine about work on Morar. He has been up twice over the winter, and is expecting to be back once more before the season proper. They are trying to stimulate interest in the whole area, by all branches of science. And have reached the stage where students may work in the area as part of their official studies, and they are being assisted by some members of university staffs.

It is hoped to study the geology of the loch, and answer such questions as; when did the sea leave? What amount of glacial action was there? Also, cores of the loch bottom will be taken, not just scraping debris off the bottom, but samples from below the bottom. Some work was done on this last year. Divers had found that there was not much silt on the bottom in some shallower places, and cores from deeper places showed that in some areas the bottom had at least four inches of clay.

Study of the plant life last year proved interesting, in that Loch Morar is a typical Scottish loch. With water plants down to about 30 feet in fair quantities. But a British record for depth at which plants grow was established, with the finding of Charaphyts at 70 feet. This is a ridgid plant somewhere between algae and the more advanced types. It is suggested that the clarity of the water allows this plant to grow at what is an extreme depth.

Last year they also had what seemed to be success with sonar, but Adrian said they were not happy with the calibration of the set they had. Which negates whatever results before claiming success. What he would like to see is a permanent research station set up. With funds to enable them to purchase their own sonar and video equipment. He is grateful for all the help people and companies have given over the years, along with all the equipment they have been loaned. The problem is that they only have a limited time and getting to know the gear takes up a large amount of it. Also when getting equipment from different sources it is sometimes difficult to gather it all together at the same time, or to duplicate the same type of work the next season. Whereas if they could build up their own equipment, personnel would get used to it, and in later seasons experiments could be duplicated.

None the less work will continue this coming season, although it is still in low key with no publicity; Adrian hoping to be up at Morar from late in July.

Fishing

It has been reported that the spring run of salmon has been the best for over twentyfive years. On the River Ness, at Dochfour, eight salmon were taken in one week this year, last year nine were caught but that was from January through to June. Great catches have been continuing on Loch Ness, and a conservative estimate of the number of salmon caught so far this season is - 400!

It is thought that Loch Ness holds many brown trout, and some of the medium ones (5-8lb) are taken every year by anglers fishing for salmon. One fishing correspondent suggests that the large ones feed on the shoals of char(?) and that trolling for them at about 80 to 100 feet could produce a British record breaking fish of twenty pounds or over, It is strange that the shoals of char are accepted as being there but no one has really caught many. Bob Rines' work last year being the closest we have been to really proving that they are there in quantity.

Addresses

A new member, Hilary Green asked for a list of members addresses; but as I do not produce one would any member like to write to her? - at, The Millhouse, Epton-upon-the-Weald Moors, Wellington, Shropshire.

Another is Jera Piah, Tremont on the Common, Boston, Mass 02111, U.S.A., anyone like to drop him a line? He is also interested in arranging a get together.

And Glenn W. Storrs, 19 Manchester Heights, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12603, U.S.A., would like to contact other members. He will be in England and Wales on a geology course with Leicestershire University, from mid-May to early June. He then hopes to travel north to Loch Ness, where he will be from mid-June - mid-August with short trips to Loch Morar, and to visit relations in other parts of the country. He would like to meet any others at Ness at the same time, he will be around the Temple Pier area. (as far as I know).

I have word from Paul Covell who is back at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre for the summer season. Anyone passing through with time in hand is welcome to call in and have a word, ask at the box office for him. He also hopes to get up to Loch Ness a number of times before September. His car is a white Audi 80, registration number KNJ 636L, he also has a small white caravan, which he uses for any long weekends up there, usually based down the Dore's road by the asphalt mound park.

Once more that is all for now. Remember, news and views are needed, my address is still:- Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Subscriptions are £1.75 U.K. and \$7.00 North America, other areas on application.

· Rip.