

Ness Information Service

Nessletter No.31

December 1970

Potomac

Late in September about fifteen people reported seeing strange creatures in the Potomac river close to its confluence with Chesapeake Bay. They have been seen three times and are described as being 25 to 30 feet long, although one witness did report 'young ones' about 10 feet long, and greyish in colour. Donald Kyker and his wife were the first to report what they had seen, it was about 30 feet long and stuck a head and neck about the thickness of a telegraph pole out of the water and then dived, it was about 50 yards from the shore. Mr Kyker said at first he thought it was a sea otter followed by its family, but the leader had a head and the 'humps' had not. His next thought was that it was a practical joke, a man-made object being towed, but there was nothing around to tow it. Mrs Kyker said she was sure it was not porpoises which she had seen many times before and was able to recognise. She also said that until she read a local paper she did not know that another family had reported seeing a similar creature a week before. The executive secretary of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Robert Norris, to whom the Kykers had made their report, said he would 'guess' it was porpoises, he has been on the river all his life (65 years) and he had never heard of anything like this being reported. He went on to say that some ten years before a whale had got into the James River but these latest reports did not sound like a whale at all. The report in the paper was from Mary L. Lewis who said she had seen four or five 'serpents' with heads the size of two fists and necks raised three feet above the water.

After their sighting the Kykers called their neighbours, the Smoots, and alerted them to the creatures going down river. When they looked out they saw one heading towards Chesapeake Bay. Within the hour they saw three more heading up river, one large one and two smaller ones. Mr Smoot took a shot at one of the smaller ones, (words fail me..Rip) hitting it in the neck with a .22 shell. It rose up and then dived, he went out in a boat but there was no sign of it.

At Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Biological Laboratory, an official said, "There have been eels that big reported on the Australian barrier reef, but nothing comes to mind that would fit that description here. You got me, I'd like to see it."

Canada

The Res Bureau Bulletin, (details in NIS 30) lists in issues No 38 and 39 the inland bodies of water in Canada which are reputed to have aquatic monsters. This mammoth job of checking newspaper files and other sources of information has resulted in the amazing number of 33 different places where 'monsters' have been reported. They have also been investigating 'Sea Monsters' over the years, and have come up with more than two hundred, spread over the years from 1656 up to the present day.

In No.39 they also carry a report from Lake Okanagan. No date is given, but the Vernon Daily News of August 16th says a recent sighting was made by Alice Blais and a friend near Ellison Provincial Park. "He had humps about four feet high and appeared to be about 35 feet long. He was dark green in colour. As the girls rowed for a closer (?) look, he dove away."

Body on Shore

In September I had a little excitement, when an ex LNI and present NIS member telephoned me to say he had seen a body on the sea shore. Dave Pattison who works for the Ordnance Survey was in Carradale, which is half-way down the eastside of the Cambelltown peninsular which is in Kintyre. He heard about the body from local people, it had been seen from the sea by two fishermen in a small boat. It was in an inaccessible position some two miles south of the village, lying draped over a rock at

the high water mark. Dave went and had a look at it, which involved a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walk along the shore-line, some of it was in the water and he could not get right round it. But he was able to take a number of black and white photographs of it, also do a good job of measuring. The remains seemed to be of a creature with a body some five feet long, a bony neck about two and a half feet long, a tail twelve feet long, and one flipper showing which was about 18 inches long. The whole lot in a very decomposed condition, and very much alive with maggots. What appeared to be the head was one foot long and narrow. The last spring tide had been 3 weeks earlier and presumably had brought the body ashore.

Dave heard that someone from Glasgow University was coming to examine it but as days passed he did not arrive. I had in the meanwhile passed the word on to my contacts, and we all waited for word from the experts. It came from a marine biologist from Oban, who came and examined the body and took tissue samples. The result was unfortunately as I had feared, the remains were those of a basking shark, In 1969 while I was at Loch Ness with the LNI we had a similar episode with a body on the Isle of Skye. That turned out to be some sort of small whale.

Newts

Back in 1977 I received a letter from Timothy Flynn concerning the 'Japanese' newts he keeps at home in an aquarium. They are brownish with a red belly and four inches long, and are I believe a type of salamander. The point Timothy made was these little things from time to time just float around on the surface, and as small as they are present a remarkable likeness to some of the Loch Ness monster 'hump' reports. Lying with head and tail drooping and back forming a 'hump' very much like the 1955 McNab photograph.

This letter was brought back to mind the other day as I was reading the current issue of the magazine Aquarist. I came to an article by Dr Andrew Allen on Alpine newts (*Triturus alpestris*), and a sentence caught my memory. "The glory of the Alpine newt is its velvety or lightly granulated skin, which appeals to the eye through its luxurious texture alone." Now here once again we are dealing with a small animal, but in a number of Loch Ness reports we have skin texture described as rough, textured, uneven, like coke. If we scale up the small newts 'lightly granulated' skin this is what we come up with. But newts, even 30 feet long ones are cold blooded and as such would not be able to operate in the low temperatures of Loch Ness. This is what I have always thought, as a layman my knowledge of the metabolism of cold blooded creatures is limited. And it is always trotted out by the experts as the reason the Loch Ness monster can not be a reptile or amphibian'. But wait, the article goes on to give the distribution of the Alpine newt. "In Southern Europe, this newt is confined to high altitudes; in the Alps, Carpathians, Abruzzi, Greek mountains, and in the Cantabrian mountains of Spain. In these regions it inhabits cool, plant-free ponds in the pine forests; and springs, streams and puddles on the mountain face. It is one of the truly high altitude species, living to heights above nine or ten thousand feet." "Dr Allen has watched these newts moving just beneath the ice in Alpine pools, and swimming quite freely in chilly puddles only a few yards from the snow-line. It is also among the most aquatic of European newts. Many individuals spending the entire year in the water. Except for migratory journeys, most remain in or very close to water for their entire lifetime.

So here we have a cold blooded creature that is capable of living a normal life in really cold water. It does not answer the Loch Ness mystery but it once again gives us a parallel in the animal world, and food for thought.

Address

Mrs Elsie Kardos, 24 Westwood Road, Yonkers, NY 10710, U.S.A.
(914)337-3168, asked for address and telephone number to be included in a Nessletter. Anyone like to write to her? She also gave me an American address of a firm of bookfinders, it is; Annelibris, P.O. Box 782, Stratford, Conn 06497, U.S.A.

UFO?

In early December Mrs Pat Coleman, while driving on the new Longman stretch of the now A9, saw a very bright light in the sky. It was 7.30 am and still dark, the light was high in the sky above Inverness. She pulled into a layby and watched with her young son for over an hour, the light was much brighter than any she had seen from an aircraft. It remained motionless for a long time, then moved off as the sky began to lighten. As it disappeared into the clouds two RAF aircraft flew over and seemed to go in the same direction. An RAF spokesman later commented that they had no reports of unusual aircraft in the area at the time, and that it may have been an helicopter. Another very bright light seen hovering over the Ardersier area a few days earlier had been a helicopter with its landing lights on. The Dalcross Airport has no radar and when there are diversions helicopters put their lights on so the control tower can keep an eye on them; but they then come into land! Which Mrs Colemans did not do.

'Smith Film'

Nessletter number 23 August 1977 carried a report on a piece of super-8 colour film. During the time since then it has been examined by various people, among these has been JARIC, and I have just received their report via Tim Dinsdale.

REPORT ON THE 1977 'SMITH FILM' BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE'S "RAF PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETAION EXPERTS"

LOCH NESS PHENOMENON

From the poor quality imagery it is not possible to determine whether the object in question is animate. However some measurements and assessments have been made.

2. The measurements which follow accept the height of the camera above water level as 5 feet (1.52m), but in mensuration terms this is a critical figure.
3. The distance of the object from the camera is between 515 and 550 feet (157m and 167.6m), and although delineation of its limits is difficult it has an apparent uniform width of approximately 9 inches (0.2m). During the filmed sequence the object has a maximum height above the water of 2½ feet (0.76m). It is not possible to determine whether the object moved in a direction away from or towards the camera but, during the period of filming, some 10 minutes, it moved across the line of sight for a distance of less than 2 feet (0.6m).
4. Two densitometer traces are included at Annex A. They show that the object is roughly rectangular in shape, but, accurate and pointing is not possible on imagery of this quality.
5. The object rises and descends vertically through the water three times during filmed sequence appearing at varying heights above water; the swell and wave action do not appear to change noticeably during this period. The vertical movements are controlled and there is no perceptive lateral or upward motion: this suggests that the object is heavy and mostly submerged. No shadows, wake or ripple action can be determined near the object.

NB The original super-8 colour film, now known simply as the 'Smith Film' was submitted by Tim Dinsdale together with the camera used, and a complete set of reports made by the photographer and her husband as to the circumstances of the shooting at Loch Ness on 22nd August 1977 - together with their sketch map - and a report from another observer, to David James MP, who, through the good offices of the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau gave this material to the MOD, for subsequent study by JARIC, the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre for the RAF, whose previous analysis of long range movie film shot at Loch Ness has been so precise, expert, and invaluable.

TD.

Odds & Ends

*****Map. It has been a problem for some time to find a good map covering all of Loch Ness. A short time ago I came across one that does. It is number 55 of the 'National' map series by Bartholomew to a scale of 1:100,000. It covers Inverness and Moray Firth, taking in Fort Augustus to Invergordon and Achnashoon to Grantown-on-Spey.

*****Silver Charm. Some members like to collect bric-a-brac and sundry items using Loch Ness and the monster as the theme. There are a vast quantity of these on sale in the Inverness area, most being rather poor taste and quality, mainly angled at the tourist. One very good one that is on sale nationally at branches of Samuels the Jewellers is a silver charm. It is a delightful model in silver taken from the painting by Sir Peter Scott of Nessitoras rhombopteryx. It is about 30 cms long and would make a nice addition to a charm bracelet or even a necklet on its own chain.

*****Belt Buckle. On a similar theme to the above item, Bigfoot News no. 49 has details of a belt buckle. It is solid brass, on the front is depicted a 'Bigfoot' that conforms to the general idea as to the appearance of these creatures, on the back, notes on the history of them. It is priced at \$10. post paid, further details from; The Bigfoot Information Centre, P.O. Box 777, Hood River, Oregon 97031, USA.

That brings to close another Nessletter, may I take this opportunity of wishing all members a Happy Christmas and Good New Year. Please remember news and views are always welcome, my address is still, R.R.Heppele, Huntshildford, St.Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham. Tel. Wearhead 359.

Rip.

Report on the circumstances and sequence of events concerning the filming of an unknown animal in Loch Ness on 22nd August, 1977.

On the late afternoon of Monday, 22nd August, 1977, we were standing at water level on the South East shore of Loch Ness, having parked our car on the road above, in the last of a series of lay-bys coming out from Inverness. Off to our left, on the opposite shore, could be seen Urquhart Castle. After a fairly calm day, it was becoming cloudy with the sun breaking through from roughly in the direction of the Castle. There was a certain amount of wind and the water was getting choppy.

At approx 5.05 p.m. an object emerged, raising vertically from the water, off to the left of the lay-by and in front of Gwen's eyes. Gwen drew Peter's attention to it and then later focused 35 x 60 Telestar binoculars on what appeared to be a strangely thick, periscope like object. It had what was undoubtedly a thick rectangular shaped head, with no visible features, on a powerful long neck, at least a foot thick. Whereas, to the naked eye it appeared almost black, through the binoculars it was clearly a bright brown, although partially in silhouette the texture through the binoculars appeared to be leathery.

At one point it was standing at least the height of a man above the surface, with no obvious tapering or thickening of the neck at top or bottom. As it began to sink vertically in the water Gwen started to film it with her Prinz T3 Zoom cine-camera loaded with 8mm super colour film. Eventually it submerged completely.

As we continued to stare at the empty space, the object re-appeared, much as before, and Gwen recommenced filming until it again submerged. This occurred a third time and after the third submersion Peter looked at his watch; it was 5-15 p.m.

The three appearances were filmed but the full extent of the neck seen was not caught on film, as it did not come up so far during the second and third sequences. During the second or third appearance the object was seen to turn its head either directly away from or directly towards us and sunlight was reflected brightly from it.

Much of the film is jerky because our young son was pulling at his mother's skirt in annoyance at being temporarily disregarded.

Attempts at working out the distance of the object from the photographer have resulted in an estimate of 520 feet. The height of the camera above water level was approximately 5 feet.

The fourth, much briefer sighting, was not filmed, but I had two other witnesses whose names and addresses were taken and one of these witnesses also saw the submergence of the third sighting. The foregoing facts are as accurate as can now be related, based on memory and also on brief notes made shortly after these sightings.

P.M.SMITH ACCA, AAI
G.A.SMITH B.S.

16th February, 1978.

Copy of report sent to Tim Dinsdale by Christopher Idle, of Ardsley, Barnsley, Yorkshire on 5th October, 1977 concerning an experience he had in a boat on Loch Ness co-incident with the "Smith Film" recording.

Report reads " My friend and I were holidaying and collecting ideas and information for our 'O' level biology project, "Pollution of the Environment". At the time we had a long line with various hooks and bait going out into the water, but it was weighed down with a large stone, so there was no possibility of a marker buoy bobbing about 'monster' like on the surface. I had been for some food and saw my friend John away up the shore, I rowed up to him. He told me they had seen something surfacing and dive several times. We spoke to the Smiths who said they had filmed it, then I rowed back down the loch.

As I turned into shore from about 50 yards out, a large black THING poked several feet out of the water, just behind the stern of the boat, and so near that I think I could have hit it with one of the oars. Being of a kind nature though and not knowing whether the natives were friendly I beat a very fast strategic withdrawal. I did not wish to become the mangled evidence over which you and your friends could rejoice; nor an entry as a "first to be eaten" in the Guinness Book of Records.

The object I saw stuck up about 4 feet above the surface of the water, and the neck tapered from about 1'6" wide at the surface to about 9" where it joined the head. This seemed to have the same shape as the head of a sheep but possibly a little larger, with no clear place where the head and neck joined together. There were no obvious features that I noticed; no mouth, eyes, nostrils etc. But it was all over in 10 seconds at the most. I could not say whether it was alive or not. Life implies controlled movement in this case, since nothing else could be observed..... such as temperature nor making sounds. I had just rowed over the spot where it appeared; it seemed to come to the surface moving vertically, paused, and then sank with the head dipping forward; the whole head/neck lowering into the water. The water was fairly rough and I saw no humps, fins, flappers or tail. I noticed no wake on the surface or shadow below water, but I think it is fair to say that I was very surprised by the whole episode.

The surface had the appearance of black leather and it was certainly not a log. There was no wallowing in the waves, no sign of wood-grain, sticks, twigs, splinters; nor was it an otter, deer or a mass of rotting vegetation which some writers have suggested may have been mistaken for a monster"