

NESS INFORMATION SERVICE

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Nessletter No 52

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New Photograph

Early in April I had a telephone call from Miles Cato, concerning a photograph he had in his possession. It had been taken at Loch Ness by a friend of his and showed something strange on the surface. The friend had no interest in it and had passed it on to Miles. It seems very peculiar to me that anyone could have the good fortune to see, and photograph, something in Loch Ness, and not have any interest in it. But then I suppose we have to accept that not everyone has our obsession with Loch Ness. Miles felt that the photograph may have something to offer towards answering the Loch Ness mystery, and wanted to get in touch with Tim Dinsdale. He hoped that if the photograph could be of use, Tim was the correct person to advise him. I was able to help him get in touch with Tim, and he sent him a print. Some time later Miles wrote to me, and let me have a print and enlargement to examine. Miles said that Tim had been very helpful but had expressed the opinion that the photograph was, unfortunately, of no great use. Two main problems being lack of background and a glassy surface, giving no means of judging scale. Having seen the prints myself I must agree that is the position.

The photograph was taken in September 1981, Miles' friend was visiting the loch for a days fishing, the surface was glassy calm, and the visibility restricted by heavy mist. I do not know which area of the loch he was on, when the object appeared. It was a brief sighting, but long enough for a camera to be picked up and used. The estimated range was 150 - 200 yards. The camera was a 110 Instamatic, and the resulting image is rather small close to the right hand side, in the bottom left hand corner is a blur. This is the knee of the cameraman. There is smooth water in the foreground and thick mist over the rest of the print. The object, dark in colour, almost in silhouette, is triangular with a small projection pointing almost directly away from the camera. It could be the thicker base of the neck, with a thinner portion and head pointing away. Unfortunately with no real detail, no background, no waves, in fact a complete lack of reference points, there is no way to tell size, distance, or even if the photograph was indeed taken at the loch. Although, myself I cannot see any real reason why it should not have been.

One thing this episode has done is to raise doubts, doubts of my own efforts at the loch. As most members will know I take my annual holidays at the loch side, spending as much time as I can on the water in my canoe. I have always said I do not want to see something in the far distance, I want a large back or head and neck at close quarters. I carry a 35mm camera in case it ever happens. But here we have someone who has had a close sighting and taken a photograph, and yet it is of no real use. If I should be fortunate enough to be in a similar position someday would I be able to produce anything of more use?

Miles, who is 18, will be leaving school this year, and intends to have a free year before going to university. He is hoping to spend some time at the loch himself, during that year.

Sightings

I have a little news of sightings so far during 1982, just a list. I am sorry that I am unable to fill in details, also we must remember that these reports have not been investigated. Therefore some of them, or all, may be cases of mistaken identity. One day in January, at 2 pm, three people near Dores saw a large dark object break the surface, then a smaller hump showed in front. It was a brief sighting, but both objects seemed connected and submerged together. Five people in a car parked in a lay-by near Invermiston reported seeing a head and neck. It was in sight for only a few seconds,

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when it popped up some fifty yards away. I have no size reported but it was described as a small head and a long tapering neck. That was some time in February. In April, also near Invermoriston, another group of tourists told of seeing something break the surface, leaving a large disturbance. During May two reports came from opposite ends of the loch. The first was a report of a head and neck somewhere in the Fort Augustus area of the loch. A few days later a large group of people in a lay-by opposite Tor Point, reported seeing a large object in the water creating a strong wash.

Almost Sightings

I have a letter from Mrs E Percival. She, and her family, had been at Loch Ness for two visits during 1981., first at Easter and then in July. They were in the Fort Augustus area. Hearing that six people staying about a mile from Fort Augustus had seen a rather unusual wake, she went to see them. But they said they had not seen anything definite, two of them thought there was a small black hump at the head of the wake, but then it disappeared. One of the men with the party had been a student at the Abbey some years ago, he thought it may have been a creature, because it was travelling fast, and it was too big to have been caused by a salmon. Mrs Percival found the episode very frustrating, they had just left the spot half an hour earlier. She has been back to the loch for ten days at Easter this year, and hopes to be back again for a fortnight in July.

Doug Macfarlane wrote to me letting me have news of his Loch Ness programme during 1981. He had been working at the new oil refinery at Nigg from April to June, and was staying about fifty miles from the loch. He was able to put in a few hours watching, usually after work in the evenings, once or twice a week. He was able to get to the loch for a weeks holiday at the end of August. He had the family with him and used the camp site at Scaniport, towing the caravan to the loch each day. Parking in a lay-by opposite Urquhart Castle on the south shore. He had no sightings, but had a similar experience to Mrs Percival. He had just left the lochside and returned to the caravan for a coffee, when he heard two anglers on the shore shouting in excitement. He looked out over the water but saw nothing. He spoke to them shortly afterwards and they said they had seen a sizeable disturbance and splashing on the surface. It seemed too large for a salmon but they did not see anything definite in the waves. Doug missed it by only a few seconds, and he had a 400mm lense ready on his camera. He hopes to be more fortunate this year, when he hopes to spend more time at the loch.

Airship

The Goodyear airship Europa has finished its week of research flights over the Great Glen and Moray and Beaully Firths. The airship, almost 200 feet long, has been based at Dalcross Airport; making its flights with the seven man cabin packed with scientific equipment. Among the work carried out has been the observation of the way sewage from Inverness is distributed. This was done by colouring the outflow from the main outlet pipes into the Beaully Firth with dyes. Other experiments have included using a new heat scanning video system which can detect minute variations in temperature, and has been used to map currents in Loch Ness and the two firths. Tests have also been made on the levels of sulphur dioxide in cloud and rain. The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology are interested in the effects of acid rain on animal and plant life. The Forestry Commission and Nature Conservancy Council has undertaken an extensive programme of aerial photography. This will enable them to study the effects of wind and storm damage on plantations. The MacAulay Institute of Soil Research have been using infra-red photography to gather data, this is to be compared with data collected by a Landstat satellite in an orbit that covers the Great Glen. Among all that, Tim Dinsdale and Adrian Shine carried out observations of Loch Ness, the first time from an airship. They also carried out a series of co-ordinated aerial and surface based sonar tests, with the help of the Project's boats.

Tall Ship

Nessletter 51 carried news of the intended use of the sailing ship 'Stina' on Loch Ness in the autumn. Mr George Andrews has written to me concerning it. He has been in touch with Mariners International and received the reply that owing to lack of response they have, regretfully had to cancel the 'Stina's' Loch Ness Programme.

Lake Champlain

Joe Zarzynski has been in touch letting me have news of his work at Lake Champlain.

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During 1981 he was able to document 17 sightings, bringing the total catalogued by the Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation to 154. Over 40% of these sightings reported seeing the head and neck. For this season Joe will be doing more work at Champlain, as well as that he will be visiting Loch Ness and Loch Morar early in August, with LCPI associate Pat Meaney. He will also be teaching a summer course at the University of Vermont on Champ and Nessie. It will be a one week course for the university's vacation college programme. I am a little late passing on this news, but any of our American members who may be interested should write directly to Mr Burt Sisco, Continuing Education Office, Grasse Mount, UVM, Burlington, VT, USA 05405, asking for a brochure on Vacation College. The moves to protect Champ took a step forward in April, the Vermont State Legislature voted 77 to 28 to endorse a resolution calling for the protection of the creatures in the lake. The resolution, which does not carry the effect of law but expresses the sentiment of the House, states that Champ should be protected from "wilful acts resulting in death, injury and harassment." It also encourages more serious scientific investigation and urges Vermonters and out of state visitors to report sightings and take pictures if at all possible. Senator Ronald Stafford of the New York State Assembly, is sponsoring a similar resolution in that House. Lake Champlain lies in Vermont, New York State, and Quebec. This makes it a very important resolution. Joe is surprised that this resolution has gathered such strength in New York State, but he is a little concerned that it might be somewhat premature. Vermont had been really primed for the legislation. Anyone who would like to write a letter of support, the address is :- Senator Ronald B Stafford, Room 502 Capitol, Albany, New York, USA 12247. Joe also said that at the moment he has four reported sightings for 1982, these he is investigating.

I have also had some news from Dave Salonin, he lives in Chomedey, Quebec, at the Canadian end of the lake. He has recently become interested in the Champlain mystery, and is now co-ordinating his researches, and investigations with Joe Zarzynski. He has a column in the Islander, a local paper published weekly, entitled 'Champ Alert'.

James Baldwin

I have a very interesting letter from James, and having just written about Lake Champlain, it is relevant. He says that he prefers to hear news of operations at Lochs Ness and Morar. Champlain is a related phenomenon, but he believes if we are to be taken seriously as investigators by the public and scientific establishment, we must concentrate upon matters here in the British Isles. He also says that he believes that the greater the depth the phenomenon is discussed in, the greater is the inspiration to members to get to the loch. It is after all important to be familiar with the water life of Loch Ness and its ecology and there is only one place to learn that. He believes therefore it will prove self-generating to discuss between members in the Nessletters the existing evidence, no matter how old, the photographs, and other matters such as Frank Searle. Many members, some of them experienced ex - LNI members, are bound to have views on such important photographs as those by McNab etc., He feels sure that the membership would be very interested and perhaps surprised at these views. If what he suggests is right, who knows what may result in co-ordinated investigation.

I agree with James on this matter, apart from Lake Champlain, perhaps. Anyone care to comment? I cover Lake Champlain for a number of reasons. Joe sends me news, we have many American members, (who perhaps could never hope to get to Ness, but could make Champlain), if it could be proved that Champ is indeed large, alive, unknown, it would be a tremendous boost to our efforts at Ness, and vice versa.

James also comments on the letters of Bill Paintin and Roland Watson. He found them interesting, while he disagrees with them entirely, but he does feel that we must always try to be open minded about the problem, and that members would be interested to hear of actual experiences. Can any members provide accounts of such experiences?

One other point that James brought up is that of being suitably equipped photographically. He is planning a visit to the loch this year, no fixed dates as yet, and wonders what happened to the 16mm Bolex cameras he remembers from the 1972 LNI expedition. If such assets remain it occurred to him that they could possibly be made available to members. Following on this theme, he wonders if any members have or know

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of any useful spare photographic equipment that could be made available. It could be deposited with a suitable contact at the loch. Some form of indemnity or insurance would need to be arranged.

I do not know what happened to the LNI cameras. When I started NIS, in 1974, I had hoped to be able to provide some sort of equipment service. Unfortunately finances have so far never been adequate, but I still like the idea.

Cryptozoology

The purpose of the International Society of Cryptozoology is to serve as a focal point for the investigation, analysis, publication, and discussion of all matters related to animals of unexpected form or size, or unexpected occurrence in time or space. The Society will encourage the scientific examination of all evidence related to these matters. It recognizes that much emotional debate has resulted over the possible existence of such animals, and that future work in this area will not be without controversy. However, the Society will attempt to address these issues in a strictly objective manner, following established scientific methods. Many animals which today are well-known and accepted were once controversial - or at least "unexpected". Some of the more interesting of these precedents are :- the gorilla, accepted only in 1855, the okapi, a Miocene giraffid, described in 1902, the coelacanth, found in 1939, a true living fossil, "Megamouth", a totally new species, genus, and family of shark, found in 1976. Today we are confronted with a wide variety of reports of such "unexpected" animals, often appearing under the popular label of "monster". Some of those which the Society is concerned with are :- reports of very large octopi, spanning 150 feet or more; the possibility of the persistence of Stellar's Sea Cow in the Bering Sea; reports of "sea serpents" in many global marine environments; reports from northern latitudes of "lake monsters", Loch Ness and other Scottish lochs, and in Irish, Swedish, Soviet, Canadian, and U S lakes; reports of long-necked animals in the swamps of Central Africa; and reports of large hominoids in the Himalayan region (yeti), Soviet Union (aimas), China (wildman), and North America (sasquatch). Anyone who feels they may be interested in the Society is invited to contact : J R Greenwell, Sec/Treas, International Society of Cryptozoology, P O Box 43070, Tucson, Ariz. 85733. U S A.

I am indebted to Ian Lyster for the above information.

Tail Ends

6 berth motor sailers are available from Loch Ness Charters for week-end hire. Sail or motor with a 25 h p Volvo inboard diesel engine. From £25 daily, details : Loch Ness Charters, Dochgarroch, Inverness tel (0463) 36931.

Books, word from Lionel Leslie that his book 'The Waterhorse' has been accepted by his publishers, and is due to go into print later in the year. It is mostly concerned with the expeditions in Connemara (Ireland), but also covers some of his experiences at Loch Ness 1962 - 69.

Mrs K A Gosling, Ferns, Hawkchurch, Nr Axminster, Devon EX13 5TZ has 'Loch Ness Monster' by Tim Dinsdale, 'The Great Orme of Loch Ness' by F W Holiday, for sale, both in perfect condition, £5. S A E to her please.

Johnny Long is looking for a book, 'The Warm Blooded Dinosaur', can anyone help with that, reply to me please.

Loch Ness & Morar Project are now using converted barge 'Phyllis', still need volunteers for some weeks, contact address in NIS 51. NIS at the lochside, Johnny Long is hoping to spend 10 days at the loch sometime during August or September, either camping near Boleskin, or at the Foyers Hotel. He will be on foot or cycling, generally recognised by oversized parka and general scruffy appearance.

I hope to be there from about July 26th to August 6th, the family and I will be at the old pier, Abridhan, in Bedford Dormobile CXG 583K.

Well another Nessletter for now, must go and start packing for the loch. Thank you for your letters, please remember your news and views are always needed. My address is still :- R R Hepple, Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ. Subscriptions U S A & Canada \$9.00., U K £2.50.