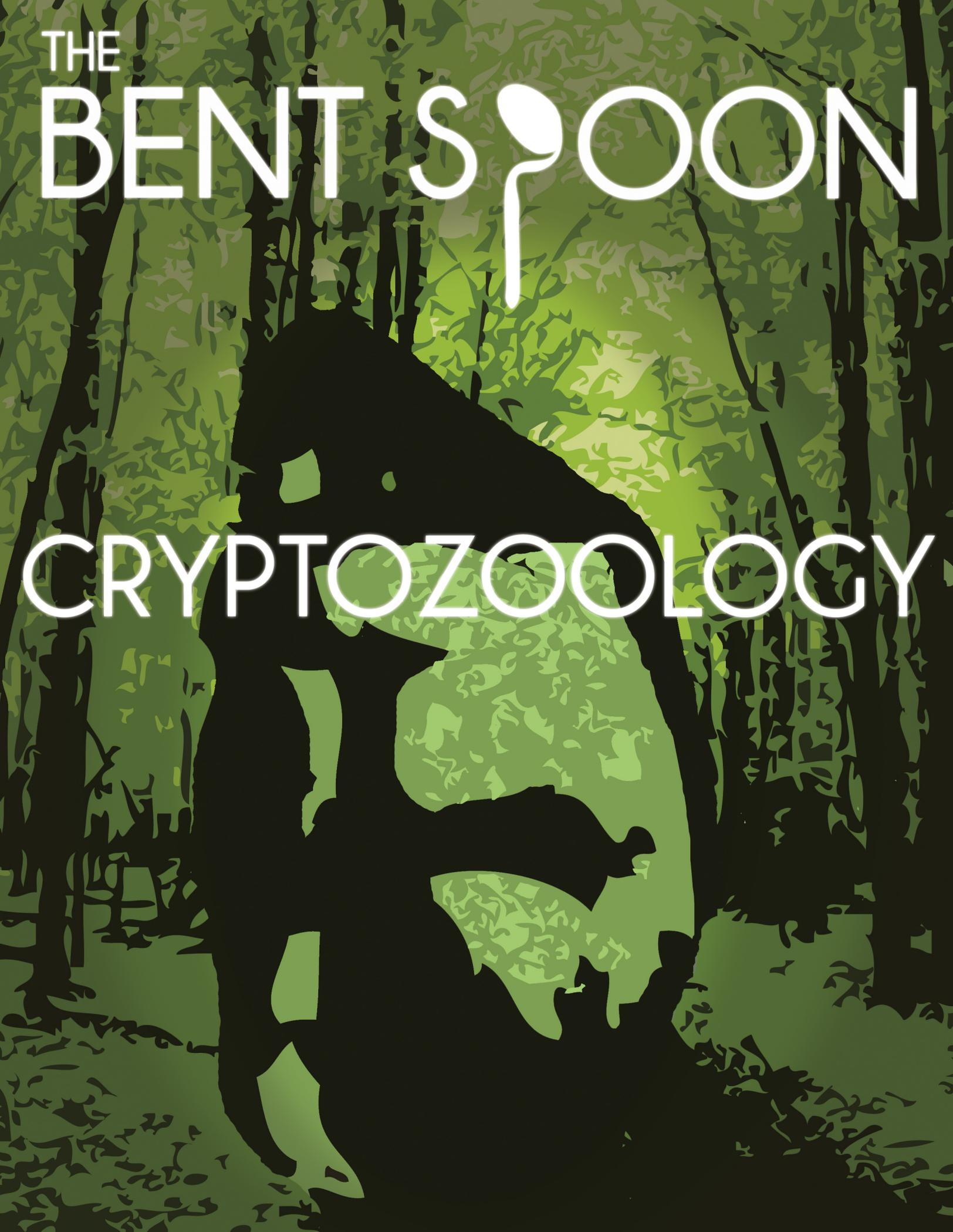


THE

BENT SPOON

CRYPTOZOOLOGY



THE BENT SPOON

In the landscape of paranormal media, there are traditionally two unique, yet separate, brands. One geared toward the believers, and the other more skeptical in nature. The problem is that the true believers rarely, if ever, embrace a skeptical attitude or ask tough questions of their community; instead preferring to surround themselves with like-minded individuals that reinforce their own belief systems. And the skeptics, likewise, promote science and critical thinking largely to those already open to it, or who are active participants in the skeptical community. This results in an echo chamber effect, wherein the same ideas are bounced back and forth, guru-student relationships are inadvertently created, and neither side ends up learning much about the other.

Enter: The Bent Spoon.

The Bent Spoon is a skeptical magazine for the true believer. Within its pages you will find Q&A between those with opposing viewpoints, interviews with leading investigators and thinkers, as well as articles which will not only provide in-depth analysis, but also be critical of both believers and skeptics alike. Along with reviews, comic strips, and other lighter fare, The Bent Spoon hopes to foster an attitude of outreach, forming a middle ground where believers and skeptics can come together and have a conversation about the issues and questions we've all given thought to.

The Bent Spoon. Where extraordinary claims meet ordinary explanations.



Created by Bobby Nelson & Nicholas Callis

Contributing writers:

Bobby Nelson

Nicholas Callis

Jason Korbus

Rachel Wolf

Benjamin Radford

Editing:

Jason Korbus & Stephanie Elisa

Cover design:

Nicholas Callis

Special Thanks to Ben Radford, Blake Smith, Karen Stollznow, and Ken Gerhard

the burden of proof

by Rachel Wolf

Skeptics are constantly barraged with the arrows of blind belief. Skeptics are seen as the challengers to status quo, but in reality, they are the upholders of natural law. Simply put, everything is, or was, a blank slate. Let's use religion as an example. In today's world, in the US, religion is something that we aren't 'allowed' to question. Churches are given a tax-exempt status by the government. Religious officials are often called to consult on political or even medical issues, sometimes with no other credentials other than expertise of their religion. Religion is a human-made concept, imposed upon a natural world.

Skeptics, who question this challenge to the status quo, are constantly told, in crude terms to 'put up or shut up'. To provide sufficient proof of their skepticism. Skeptics are wrongly assigned the burden of proof. It's time to set the record straight.

First let me start off by admitting that I am not a lawyer. In fact, researching this article had me read-

ing legal text, consulting an actual lawyer, and pulling my hair out. I keep telling my mother that there was a very good reason I never followed through with law school. Basically, I read some basic articles and book chapters and to find some support for my argument. If you have better information, please share it, because I'd really like to learn more.

Nearly all of us are familiar with burden of proof on it's most basic legal level: innocent until proven guilty. In US law, the burden of proof is defined as the 'obligation on a party to prove the allegation made by him against another party.' In law, there is a saying in latin (why lawyers still get a boner for latin is beyond me) that goes 'semper necessitas probandi incumbit ei qui agit'. This translates into 'the necessity of proof always lies with the person who lays charges.' This means the person challenging status quo, making a claim, has the legal responsibility of proving it.

In law, there are 2 burdens of proof. First is the burden of persuasion,

meaning that the presumption of innocence places all burden on the prosecution, like I said above. The second is evidential burden. This is where things get a bit interesting. Evidential burden is when prosecution presents evidence to challenge the defense. This is where the back-and-forth comes in. To use religion as an example, the status quo is that there is no religion. The religion is the prosecution, they are the ones that have to present evidence to support their claim. The prosecution then gets to examine the evidence and challenge it. Of course, that challenge isn't accepted, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

This is where Standard of Proof comes in. In law, there are 3 basic kinds. In criminal defense, the standard of proof is beyond reasonable doubt, which is the closest to iron-clad as one can get. In civil cases there are 2 types of standards of proof: clear and convincing evidence and preponderance. You see this type of evidence on TV court shows, the basic idea that 'its more likely than not.' The reason the standard of proof in a criminal case

is so high is because once someone is convicted, it's there forever. Nobody has to disclose a civil case on a job application, for example. There are no criminal charges in a civil case (although there can be two cases, in each court, for the same issue).

The philosophical burden of proof is very much in line with the US legal burden. In philosophical debate, it is argued that both sides have a burden of proof, but most of the time it will be unbalanced. One side will have more to prove than the other. This too falls in line with US legal burden of proof, in that when evidence is presented, both sides have to either support or refute it.

So how does this apply to, again, our religion debate? Simple. We can accept the lowest standard, the 'more likely than not' standard. However, that standard is negated when strong, solid evidence is brought into the discussion. Basically, it's a weak debate best left to people arguing over cell phone bills on daytime TV.

In science, the burden of proof is empirical and open to falsification. The field understands that it's 'proof' in any claim can, will and needs to be examined by the other parties and challenged if any progress is to be made. Whether this be to search for the truth or to solidify theory and evidence already in place, it needs to be examined. In science, the standard for proof is very strong, and there are set methodologies to examine data. Science looks for connections and avoids the fallacy that there can be a single cause to anything. Science looks for relationships. Those

Skeptics are wrongly assigned the burden of proof. It's time to set the record straight.

relationships help to strengthen claims and evidence. I would argue that, since science is a method used to explain the natural world, science is the defendant. The burden of proof lies in those who question the natural world. Everything from God to evolution to miracles, the paranormal and back again.

In his book 'The God Delusion', professor Richard Dawkins discusses a 2006 case in which the US Supreme Court upheld a ruling that a church in New Mexico would be allowed to break the law and use hallucinogenic drugs in its services and rituals. Furthermore, the church did not have to provide any other proof that this drug worked, rather the US Supreme Court took the line 'we believe it works' as sufficient cause to allow them to break the law.

So, if there is a high standard of the burden of proof in US law, then why would 'we believe it works' serve as irrefutable evidence? This is obviously a failure of our legal system to uphold its own values. Why is this? Our society has allowed this type of evidence to be 'good enough'. The notion

that religion is untouchable has permeated our society and framed any sort of debate, including legal debates. Suddenly the standard of proof is lower.

Linguist George Lakoff discusses framing in his book 'Don't Think of An Elephant.' While he talks about debate in terms of politics, the same notion applies to skeptical debates. One of Lakoff's arguments during a debate is that we not think of an elephant. What does this mean? He means that, in a debate, we can't argue with a frame, especially a frame set by those who are posing the challenge. If we get caught in that loop, we are no longer examining the evidence. This is when the standards of evidence are lowered and those lower standards are accepted. Soon, we accept belief as evidence enough to change our laws. The very laws that protect us and hold us accountable mean nothing if we believe in something. It's sad, really.

So what does any of this mean? I argue that since science is the study of nature, which is the defendant, anything that comes to question it has the burden of proof. Be it religion, a psychic, a ghost hunter with an EVP, they have the burden of proof in any argument or debate. Basically, if you don't have anything to back up what you bring to the table, then don't bring it. So the next time a skeptic is brought a ridiculous claim, they should be brought the evidence to support it. Hand them a law book, or even a dictionary, and let them get back to you.

IN THE NEWS



IS BIGFOOT LIVING IN THE WOODS OF CHATHAM, IL?

In the State Journal Register there was a story that caught my attention. On June 15, 2011, Michael Patrick's mother was getting the liner to her pool changed, when a workman noticed an abnormally large footprint. The suspect – Bigfoot.

Patrick and his mother claim that they are not surprised by this, being that they have heard bizarre sounds outside, but always figured it to be some type of common forest animal. However Patrick claims that the night before the footprint was found, the neighbor complained of weird noises being heard outside. Patrick said "my neighbor has a German shepherd, and it heard something that night that spooked him. The dog went outside to investigate, but came back cowering; now it won't leave its owner's side."

Unsure of what was discovered, Patrick called the local authorities; the officer that responded to the call said that the print was 18 inches long and 8 inches wide.

That's a big foot.

Patrick got in contact with a Bigfoot hunter named Stan Courtney. Courtney explained to Patrick that the Bigfoot may have thought that the apple tree was a gift of food, sort of like a fruit basket I guess.

Courtney also explained that usually Bigfoot will leave a present a gift of its own to show appreciation, usually in the form of flowers or a dead animal.

And wouldn't you know it, a day after Courtney and Patrick spoke, Patrick found a decapitated rabbit in his yard. "Its head pulled off, not bitten or cut, but just simply pulled off," Patrick said.

Neighboring people are a little more skeptical of this find. One possible explanation could be that about a ½ mile down the road there used to be the Grindstone Valley Zoo that used to house exotic animals. Although the zoo is now closed, it is well known the Mr. Reynolds (the zoo keeper) still houses some of these exotic animals. The Reynolds had kept large animals such as buffalo, antelope, elk, deer, tigers, leopards, monkeys, and zebras while the zoo was open.

Patrick is doubtful. "I definitely don't think it was a hoax, and it was more than just a coincidence. I think that people should just be a bit more vigilant and careful, because you never know what you're going to find out there," Patrick said.



The footprint measured approximately 18 inches long and eight inches wide according to the Chatham Police Department report.

-BOBBY NELSON



IS BIGFOOT
LIVING IN THE
WOODS OF
CHATHAM, IL?



COUPLE
DISCOVERS
POSSIBLE
BODY
OF A SEA
MONSTER

Not a Sea Monster This Time Folks

Nick and Margaret Flippence made a gruesome discovery while taking their dog out for a walk. They found what is described as the carcass of a sea monster, something that looks pre-historic. A 30ft-long body of some unidentified animal with head, tail and teeth all visible, was lying on the shore of the beach.

I must admit, it does resemble that of some scary looking sea monster, but don't get excited yet, cryptid enthusiasts.

A spokesman for the Natural History Museum said "we have spoken to one of our mammals curators, and they

have confirmed the animal is probably a long-finned pilot whale – *Globicephala melas*." Another zoologist said it could also be the body of a killer whale.

A whale expert was also quoted as saying "it died a long time ago and tides caused the body to wash ashore."

-Bobby Nelson

The carcass in question



NEW AGE ENERGY WHEAT
SS JUICE BIGFOOT THE PHI
ELPHIA EXPERIMENT ORGAN
IC FOODS LIVING STONES P
ND MAGNETS PAGANISM RE
EXOLOGY CHEMTRAILS ORBE
RAW FOOD HOMEOPATHY TH
DENIX LIGHTS CHIROPRACT
REMOTE VIEWING BIBLE COO
GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS E
FLOURIDATION RAEILIANS VA
DINES IRRADIATION CROPCI
REATIONISM ELECTROMAGN
YPERSENSITIVITY AURAS MI
ORANG PENDEK ROSWELL N
DETOXIFICATION MAGIC JEW
MONAVIE SUPER FRUIT JUIC
2012 APOCALYPSE UFO AB
THE SECRET THE FACE ON
CRYSTAL SKULLS KING TUT
NUMBERS STATIONS MIRACU
FATIMA CELL PHONE RADIAT
THE BELL WITCH THERAPUT
QUCH HAARP CONTRAILS BI
BIG PHARMA TESLA QUANTU
YSIOS ASPERTAME BOHEMA
MIN MIN LIGHT KANGEN WA
DORAL CASTLE MEL'S HOLE
HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYR
ROSIDRUDIANS RAINING FRE
SCIENTOLOGY ASTROLOGY
ADDW PEOPLE THE BLOOP
SAIGONS PIPES ANTIKYTHE
MARTIAL ARTS DENVER AIR

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
POP PHENOMENA

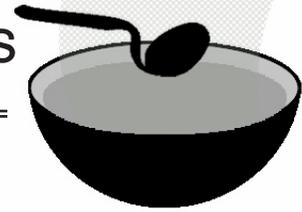
SKEPTOID



WITH
BRIAN DUNNING

SOUPERNATURAL

BY JASON KORBUS



Cryptozoology, much like every other paranormal pursuit, is rife with bad science, bloviating blowhards, and fallacies of logic. In this month's Soupernatural, I'd like to take a brief look at one of the most common fallacies used by paranormal investigators; one which has been gaining a head of steam in the cryptozoological world as of late. It's called, "Moving the Goalpost."

"Moving the Goalpost" is not meant literally. Though it can conjure up funny imagery, it is not something that happens in the National Football League and, clever though it may have been, it wasn't a new trick devised by Lucy to thwart Charlie Brown. No, to "move the goalpost" simply means to change the target of a process, or to alter what the parameters for success are in order to buy time or gain an advantage. We'll take a look at a few examples in the cryptozoological world that illustrate this very type of behavior.

Let's start with Bigfoot. Surely, most anyone the least bit familiar with the world of the paranormal is familiar with the idea that a large undiscovered

primate lurks in the woods of the Pacific Northwest, and in other areas throughout the country. Despite exactly zero concrete evidence for its existence, Bigfoot has truly become a pop culture sensation, serving as the basis of movies, television shows, and countless books and magazine articles. Tales of Bigfoot, or its related cousins such as Sasquatch and Yeti have been around for years. So why can't anyone seem to find proof that it exists?

The answer very well may be that cryptozoologists can't even seem to agree on what they are looking for. Many monster hunters hold the belief that Bigfoot is a flesh and blood creature; a physical animal that dwells in the forests of North America. But if that is true, we should have found a type specimen, an actual body that could be photographed, dissected, and catalogued for future study by zoologists the world around. Of course, many cryptozoologists do not think it is that simple. Despite being unable to prove Bigfoot exists, they posit that Bigfoot buries its dead, or that scavengers eat the remaining flesh and then bones are scat-

tered into the wilderness where they disintegrate. As proof, they say that other animals, such as deer or baboons, are notoriously difficult to find deceased in the wild.

And while that may be true, the fact is that dead deer and baboons are found in the wild regularly. Deer and baboons also are known creatures whose existence only a fool would doubt. So, the argument holds no weight. It simply isn't analogous to compare known animals who have been found deceased in the wild with unknown animals whose remains are uncannily elusive. The former has factual basis to it, while the latter is based on folklore and stuff people simply made up.

So if Bigfoot was flesh and blood, it stands to reason we would have more evidence of his existence than we do. Many cryptozoologists even concede this point. But instead of saying, "Well, perhaps this animal doesn't exist after all" they suppose another solution entirely: that what we think of as Bigfoot is actually the ghost of an extinct primate known as Gigantopithecus!

Of course, this solution seems so outlandish that it seems silly to even give it the courtesy of examination. Still, it is a somewhat common presumption put forth, so we must look at the evidence. Having Bigfoot be spectral solves the problem of the lack of physical evidence quite conveniently, for if Bigfoot is not a physical being at all, it would not leave a physical trail. This is a perfect example of the goalposts being moved. When cryptozoological enthusiasts cannot meet one simple burden of proof, they can simply change the discussion. But even so, they still run into a fundamental problem: now they have to prove ghosts exist in order to prove Bigfoot is a phantasmal primate. So, while they seem to have bought themselves some time, in reality they've just made their argument doubly more difficult to prove.

Now, most reasonable people would by this point say that these delusional folks couldn't possibly take this any further. Surely, without physical evidence of Bigfoot, and without the requisite evidence to prove that ghosts exist, they should simply give up and admit that it is at least likely this creature isn't real. But, sadly, you would be wrong. Never underestimate the paranormal world's ability to move the goalpost further and further away.

The latest idea put forth by the

cryptozoologists and monster hunters of the world is that Bigfoot is actually inter-dimensional. Yes, Bigfoot has the ability to evade detection so easily for all these years because it is simply crossing between unknown dimensions. Sure, Bigfoot gets hungry. And when he does, he simply walks through a portal into our realm, eats a deer, and vanishes again. This, they say, explains why Bigfoot prints stop suddenly. Of course, a more likely example would be that these so-called "prints" are forgeries or misidentified (with multiple documented cases to show for it) but since when has something like logic or reason ever stopped a Bigfoot hunter from admitting they are wrong?

Sadly, it is not just Bigfoot which has received the moving goalpost treatment from the cryptozoological world. The Loch Ness Monster has gone from flesh and blood to plesiosaur, ghost of plesiosaur, and inter-dimensional wormhole traveler all within a relatively short period of time as well. Really, I half expect that soon these creatures will be said to be shape-shifters; that Bigfoot was there in front of us the whole time...but he had just taken on the form of a tree!

I understand the want to believe in monsters. People have claimed to see and hear strange things in the woods, and hey, it's even kind of fun to think that there is a population of undis-

covered Wild Men who have flown under the radar. But if we truly want to get closer to the truth about the questions we have all pondered, I feel it is best to stay away from flights of fancy, and stick a little closer to reality instead.

Leave the goalposts where they were.

FURTHER READING:

<http://www.fatmag.com/subjects/cryptozoology/inter-dimensional-beings-or-myths/>

<http://www.bigfootencounters.com/articles/bfat50.htm>

http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/1461856

THE GREAT NESSIE HOAX

I can remember when I was younger; my grandfather would tell me stories of otherworldly astronauts, Bigfoot and wild men that lived in the woods and one of his personal favorites, the Loch Ness Monster. He would go into a spare bedroom and bring out a book that had pictures of crop circles, Patty (the Bigfoot in the Patterson-Gimlin film of 1967) and of course Nessie (the Surgeon's photograph



taken in 1934 of the Loch Ness Monster).

I remember being in awe of these photographs, after all when you are 6 years old a photograph is more than enough proof for the existence

of these mythical creatures. However for a long time, the one photograph that stuck out to me the most was that of the Loch Ness Monster aka "the Surgeon's photograph".

This is undoubtedly the most famous picture of the Loch Ness Monster. It has been the cover of many books on the topic, shown in every single documentary on the creature, been in magazines, newspapers and so on. After 77 years, it is still making its rounds today as positive evidence that some type of creature resides in the Loch. The thing that I find so fascinating about this picture is that it is a known hoax.

In 1933, a big time game hunter by the name Marmaduke Wetherell was hired by the Daily Mail to investigate Loch Ness. Although he found no monster in the Loch, Wetherell did find a set of massive tracks leading from the shore into the water. Astounded by this, Wetherell made plaster casts of the foot-

prints and sent them off to the Museum of Natural History to confirm his find. Unfortunately for Wetherell, they were not the tracks of some unknown creature but that of a baby hippo. You might be thinking "wait a minute, a baby hippopotamus in the Loch?" Well it turns out; at that time period these types of feet were commonly used as stands for their umbrellas. With the Daily Mail angered and Wetherell beyond embarrassed, he disappeared from the public. It wasn't long before the Loch Ness Monster made headlines again. An extremely respected surgeon, Colonel Robert Wilson, came forward with a picture of the beast poking its head out of the water. Wilson explained that on the morning of April 19, 1934, he caught a glimpse of something moving in the Loch, while he was driving. Wilson immediately stopped and snapped a picture of the sea monster. After submitting the photograph to the media, Wilson did not want his name associated with

the picture, so it was dubbed “the Surgeon’s photograph”. Many skeptics have speculated what could have really been in this photograph. People saying it was possibly a log or some type of debris floating in the water. But would they ever suspect a toy? That’s right, in 1993 it was heard that Marmaduke Wetherell staged the whole thing as a hoax, to show revenge on the Daily Mail newspaper. Christian Spurling, Wetherell’s stepson, admitted that he was approached by Marmaduke to create a phony monster. Spurling explained that the monster was nothing more than plastic wood over the conning tower of the toy submarine. And that the neck only measured 8 inches.

Wetherell gave the photo to Wilson to give to the media. Wilson’s was to give the photo to the press and serve as the creditable figure who took the picture. The picture which they cropped in order to make the monster look more massive than it really was. Wetherell’s son remembered his father saying “We’ll give them their monster”. And that is just what they did.

-BOBBY NELSON



THE FAMOUS SURGEON'S PHOTO, CROPPED AS
TYPICALLY SEEN

THE FAR LESS DRAMATIC UNCROPPED PHOTOGRAPH,
ILLUSTRATING THE TRUE SIZE OF THE HOAX



A Little Closer Look at the 1967 Patterson/ Gimlin Film

When someone hears that someone is talking about the Patterson-Gimlin film, they might not know exactly what is being talked about; but I would venture to say that almost everyone would know the film when they saw it. That classic grainy and shaky footage, where a “Bigfoot” like creature can be seen briskly walking, it looks over its shoulder glancing directly at the camera and disappears into the trees.

The Film was shot October 20, 1967 northeast of Eureka, California by Roger Patterson who was accompanied by Bob Gimlin. The story goes that on the day of the event, they were both riding through the woods by horseback. Suddenly something startled their horses and they were both thrown from their animals. Quickly Roger disengaged himself and grabbed his video camera, a 16mm hand-held Kodak movie camera. The reason Roger grabbed his video camera is because just about 100 feet ahead of him was a female creature covered in dark hair that walked upright like a human.

Gimlin stayed behind, terrified at what was going on. He tightly clutched his rifle, just in case

the beast tried to attack him or his friend Roger. Gimlin had no intentions on hurting the creature and it has been said that they both made an agreement that under no circumstances, except self defense, were they to shoot a Bigfoot if one were to be spotted.

Patterson was able to obtain 24 feet of color footage of the Bigfoot and he estimated that the creature had to have been at least 7 feet and approximately 700 pounds. It also left footprints 14½ inches long by 6 inches wide.



In a Argosy Magazine Article, February 1968 First Photos of “Bigfoot” California’s Legendary “Abominable Snowman” By Ivan T. Sanderson, Sanderson recalls Roger saying this to him:

“On the other side of the creek,

back up against the trees, there was a sort of man-creature that we estimated later, by measuring some logs that appear in the film, to have been about seven feet tall. Both Bob and I estimate — and this pretty well matched what others told us from examination of the depth to which her tracks sank into hard sand — that she would weigh about three hundred and fifty pounds. She was covered with short, shiny, black hair, even her big, droopy breasts. She seemed to have a sort of peak on the back of her head, but whether this was longer hair or not I don’t know. Anyhow, hair came right down her forehead to meet her eyebrows, if she had any; and it came right up to just under her cheekbones. And — oh, get this — she had no neck! What I mean is, the bottom of her head just seemed to broaden out onto and into her wide, muscular shoulders. I don’t think you’ll see it in the film, but she walked like a big man in no hurry, and the soles of her feet were definitely light in color.”

Roger was also quoted as saying:

“She was just swinging along as the first part of my film shows but, all of a sudden, she just stopped dead and looked around at me. She wasn’t scared a bit. Fact is, I don’t think she was scared of me, and the only thing I can think of is that the clicking of my camera was new to her.”

And one more thing Roger said to Ivan (after Ivan asked “why a she?”), which sticks out to me and I will explain why later in the article is this:

“Well, Ivan, let’s run that film through again, and you tell me, as a trained zoologist, if that thing has pendant breasts or not.”

The Breasts

I have talked to many self-proclaimed cryptozoologists and monster hunters over the years, and it always seems like the authenticity of this video comes into question with every conversation. One of the things that cryptozoologists like to hold on to is the fact that Patty has breasts. I always hear “If Paterson was going to hoax something like a Bigfoot, why would he think to add breasts to it?” I have always thought this was a very weak argument, in fact it is an argument from personal incredulity - I can’t believe Patterson could have thought to make the beast female; therefore it’s a real female Bigfoot. That argument doesn’t hold any validity.

Not only that, it was Patterson who announced that the creature had breasts, it wasn’t some zoologist who noticed it. As quoted by Patterson earlier “Well, Ivan, let’s run that film through again, and you tell me, as a trained zoologist, if that thing has pendant breasts or not.” The reason this is a red flag for me is that it sounds as if this was something Patterson purposely wanted known. And the fact that Patterson is the one who started to prime the breasts that is seen on the creature, it eliminates that wow! factor, at least it does for me.

A man by the name of Bob Heiron-

One of the things that cryptozoologists like to hold on to is the fact that Patty has breasts.

imus, who has confessed to wearing the suit since the late 1960’s even recalls Patterson adding “breasts” to the costume.

Bob Heironimus

Bob Heironimus claims that it was Bob Gimlin that asked him to wear the Bigfoot costume and purposely hoax this film. Heironimus says that he was told by Patterson that he would get a thousand dollars to wear the costume and as time went on and the film gained more money, he would continue to receive a cut. Bob Heironimus never received payment for his involvement in the hoax.

Heironimus also told a newspaper a few years back, “I’ve been burdened with this for 36 years,

seeing the film clip on TV numerous times. Somebody’s making lots of money off this, except for me. But that’s not the issue – the issue is that it’s time to finally let people know the truth.”

Heironimus recalls that the Bigfoot suit was made out of fake fur and bits of leather from a horse’s hide. Football shoulder pads were also used to bulk up the shoulders and the head piece

was nothing more than a mask draped over a football helmet.

Some Bigfoot researchers claim that Bob Heironimus is a dishonest man trying to involve himself into the legend. However, scientist and journalist Greg Long says different. Greg Long gives quite a bit of reasons as to why he holds Bob Heironimus’s testimony as authentic. In an interview on Rense.com, Greg Long says:

“1. He has never changed his story.

2. He has never embellished the story or suddenly remembered details that would enrich the story. He has admitted to me that he just can’t remember certain details. The details, although they would be useful for the story, are NOT CRITICAL DETAILS. The lack of the details doesn’t undermine the CONSISTENCY AND TRUTHFULNESS of the story.

3. In interviews, Bob was always spontaneous and unplanned in his answers; no hesitations; no stumbling over words; no body language suggesting deceit; etc.

4. No criminal record.

5. Steady employment - not fired from a job ever, to my knowledge.

6. Married nearly thirty-five years; two children; homeowner. Stable with financial responsibilities and mouths to

feed.

7. Open and frank, simple and direct.

8. His friends say he's honest; none has a reason to disbelieve his story.

9. His former employers say he's honest.

10. He was an amateur actor in Patterson's Bigfoot film being shot near Tampico, WA – we have photographic evidence of this fact. Therefore, Patterson knew Bob H. and was in a position to ask him to wear a gorilla suit.

11. He lives in Ahantum, WA, within fifteen miles of Patterson's house – thus, a CONVENIENT resource for Patterson.

12. He owned a horse that Patterson borrowed.

13. Opal Heironimus (Bob H's mother) is on record that she loaned Bob H her car to drive to Bluff Creek. Also, she saw the Bigfoot/gorilla suit in her car right after the hoax.

14. John Miller, Bob H's nephew, saw the suit.

15. Bob Hammermeister saw the suit in Bob H's car.

16. Most of the witnesses I have interviewed said that Bob H. wore the suit.

17. No one in the Ahtanum Valley or Yakima has ever mentioned ANYONE ELSE BUT Bob H. as the man in the suit.

18. Bob H. retained an attorney to advise him. Clearly, Bob H. knew what he was doing when he confessed to me, allowing his story to be put into print. Bob H. has stated that he is taking a risk,

but "I am telling the truth," he states over and over.

19. I have NOT ONE SHRED OF EVIDENCE to doubt Bob H.'s word."

In number 13, there is mention of Opal Heironimus knowing that the suit was in her car. When filming was finished Bob Heironimus said he placed the costume in the trunk of his mother, Opal's car, a 1967 Buick. The next day Opal opened her trunk and discovered what she thought to be a dead animal. Opal recalls "After I saw it, I looked around to see if anyone was around 'cause I thought maybe I might have to have help.... Then I discovered it was just a suit. But that head layin' there, you know, staring at me! I went in the house, and my sister-in-law, Willa Smith, lived right up the street, and she came down--she was always down at my house



two or three times a day- and so, when she got down, I said, 'I want to show you something.' I opened up the trunk and let her look."

But where did the suit come from? Enthusiasts say it was to life like to be faked. Enter Philip Morris.

Philip Morris

Philip Morris is the man who made the Bigfoot suit. In 1967 Roger Patterson phoned up Philip Morris looking for a lifelike gorilla costume. Morris said in an interview with Long "In the fifties and sixties, I made my gorilla suits only in brown. Patterson asked me if I had a realistic-looking gorilla suit. I immediately asked him if he was a carny. He said, 'No, I'm a rodeo cowboy. We're just going to have some fun.'"

After Morris sold the suit to Patterson, Patterson phoned up Morris and asked some questions about some things he found wrong with the suit. Things like: How to hide the zipper and how to make the arms longer. Patterson also wanted to know how to make the shoulders more bulky, and if it would be possible for Morris to sell Patterson extra fur for the costume.

Morris kindly answered Patterson on how to make these adjustments, by combing the fur over the zipper and to extend the arms, just find a shovel handle or a stick and slip it in the sleeves and attach the gloves to the stick. For extra fur Morris sent Patterson some excess Dynel, a nylon

fiber, a popular material back then. To bulk up the shoulders Morris suggested using football shoulder pads.

Something that is important to note here: Philip Morris and Bob Heironimus have never met nor have they ever spoken a word to each other. So how would Bob Heironimus recall football shoulder pads?

And in regards to many bigfoot enthusiasts who say no one can walk the way Patty did, Morris

says different. "The Bigfoot researchers say that no human can walk that way in the film. Oh, yes they can! When you're wearing long clown's feet, you can't place the ball of your foot down first. You have to put your foot down flat. Otherwise, you'll stumble.

Another thing, when you put on the gorilla head, you can only turn your head maybe a quarter of the way. And to look behind you, you've got to turn your head and your shoulders and your hips. Plus, the shoulder pads in the suit are in the way of the jaw. That's why the Bigfoot turns and looks the way he does in the film. He has to twist his entire upper body."

Again in the same interview on Rense.com, Greg Long gives reasons as to why he believes Philip Morris's testimony.

**"1. He made the suit.
2. He has studied the suit in the film and compared it to his suits that he designed and made in 1967. The features, except for the mask match. (One difference: the**

fur on the suit in the film was brushed down.)

3. He ran ads advertising his suit in the time frame when Patterson would need the suit. The ads were in Amusement Business which could have been found in a local rodeo office. Patterson was a rodeo rider.

4. Patterson called up Morris and IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS ROGER PATTERSON.

5. It wasn't long after Morris sold Patterson the suit that the suit appeared in Patterson's film on

TV. Immediately, Morris recognized his suit. He used the suits in his own show and sold them to carnival owners and carnival showmen. He knew his suit. He was an expert in gorilla suits since

he was the ONLY ONE IN THE U.S. who was making gorilla suits FOR THE PUBLIC in 1967.

6. He knew whom he had sold his suits to at that time and the areas of the country where they lived. He knew he had just sold a suit to Patterson.

7. Bob H. felt what seemed to be football player pads in his shoulders. Morris told Patterson to use football player shoulders in the suit when Patterson asked how to give the shoulders in Morris's suit bulk.

8. Weight of suit matches Bob H's memory of weight of suit. Etc.

9. Morris was well-known in costume business. He has a reputation. Why lie? He's also 68 years old (just turned 68) and in early stages of old age. Why ask for a lawsuit at his age? Also, why risk his company—his kids work in the company.

10. Like Bob H, he kept the story to himself for decades. He saw

recent TV documentaries. He felt the time was now right to tell the story – he wants the truth to be told. He had been telling people in his immediate profession his story, and no one doubted him; I have come along at the RIGHT MOMENT to hear his story and see that the public knew the TRUTH.



11. Good character references.

12. Sells costumes to Hollywood and TV shows. Again, he is known in the industry. He isn't a shady character, an opportunist.

13. He fits the right "role" in the story – he had a gorilla suit at the right time and the right price for Roger Patterson."

Harvey Anderson

Harvey Anderson owned a gun and camera store in Yakima, Washington. Anderson recalls a time when Patterson came into his shop looking for a camera to film a Bigfoot. Anderson claims Patterson told a story about how a Bigfoot came out of the woods and lifted up his car. Patterson showed Anderson the Bigfoot casts he made at the scene and asked for an opinion on them.

"I said to him, 'It looks like it's too narrow on the front part because it couldn't stand erect. Based

on the description you've given me of this tall man or tall animal, you have to have it broader at the ball of the foot. 'Oh, no,' he said, 'he stands right up.' I said, 'Well, it doesn't appear to be

correct. It looks to me like it should be wider on the front where the ball of the foot is. For the length of the foot, it won't work.' Patterson said, 'Well, I can solve that problem. I'll take some more casts.'"

A few days later Anderson claims Patterson came back to his shop with another set of casts. This time Anderson told Patterson that looked to be proportionally correct.

One of the last things Anderson remembered about his conversation with Patterson was that Patterson said, "I have to ask you never to say anything about this because I've done this for my wife because I'm dying of cancer. I want to leave something for my wife."

These are just some of the many interesting details that suggest that the Patterson-Gimlin Film was a hoax. Not to mention that Roger Patterson himself was a known con man looking for a get rich overnight scheme. He was diagnosed with cancer at a young age and was fighting it his entire adult life. He was moti-

vated by making money to leave to his family. He was a very clever individual. Patterson was an artist with an imagination and a lot of time on his hands (being that he didn't have a job, as a matter of fact Patterson is quoted as saying "I will never work again,"). For more of an in-depth analysis of this amazing hoax, I suggest purchasing Greg Long's book "The Making of Bigfoot: The Inside Story". And Remember in order for this story to be true, Roger Patterson (a liar and con man) has to be the one telling the truth and everyone else who claim to be involved have to be lying.

-Bobby Nelson

REVIEWS

ANATOMY OF A BIGFOOT HOAX

Shortly after conducting an interview with Bigfoot hunter Tom Biscardi I received an email from one of Tom's "people" offering to send me a review copy of the "Anatomy of a Bigfoot Hoax" DVD. The interview can be heard by going to www.para-help.com/sfrbobby/sfr_show136_hour2.mp3.

Let me just start off by saying Tom Biscardi is very full of himself and this DVD shows this. For the first 15 minutes all we see is Tom blabbing about irrelevant nonsense which will quickly lose the attention of anyone watching, I literally had to force myself to pay attention. Finally after a multitude of terrible transitions we see Tom Biscardi and/or JavaBob sitting in front of a black backdrop telling the same story, almost word for word, that Tom shared on Strange Frequencies.

Now in the interview I conducted with Tom, I was told that everything he was saying was videotaped and was in the DVD. I must say that this is an absolute lie, there is about a total of 10 minutes of actual footage and none of it was part of this grand story Tom told on SFR. No shots of him being blind

folded, no shots of this "scary" car ride, no shots of the men with Uzi's, no shots of the private helicopter, no shots of any of the scientists or people who tested the material that labeled it half man half primate, basically everything that Tom said was "all in the movie" wasn't in the movie.

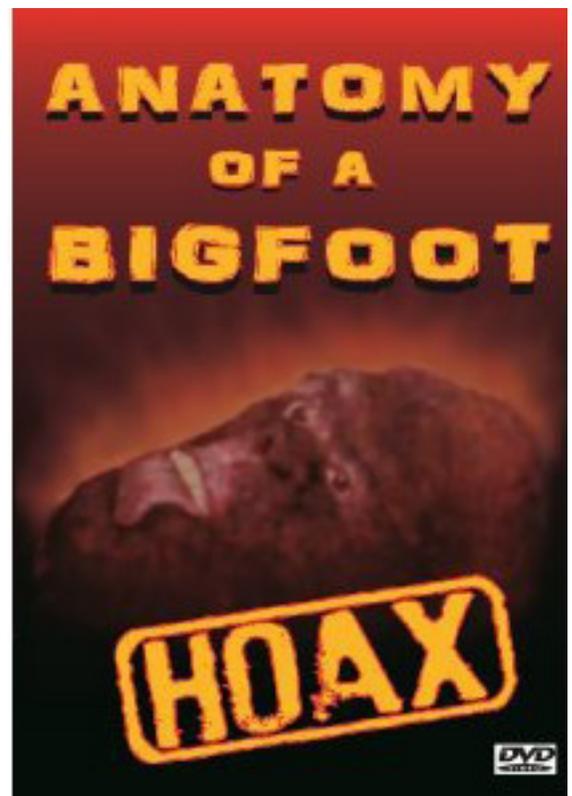
We do however see a phone call that was supposed to have been videotaped in 2008. This is video of JavaBob breaking the news to Tom that the Bigfoot was just a costume. Though I can't be 100% sure, I believe that this was faked for the film. I say this because JavaBob looks exactly the same as he does during the interview portions which were shot in present time. It was easy to compare, being that there was footage of JavaBob from 2008 and they simply do not match side by side. Also the footage from this "phone call in 08" was shot with the same camera the documentary was shot with and not the camera that the footage from 2008 was shot with. It literally looks like JavaBob changed his shirt and staged the phone call. But the one thing that hung out in my mind was after the phone call was over JavaBob looks at the camera and says "We didn't hoax anything."

There are also a few sketchy portions of the

film where other phone calls were made, supposedly to Matt Whitton and Rick Dyer, none of which can be confirmed that either was on the phone at that time. Again this footage was shot with the same quality of film that this documentary was shot with and not the camera all the other 2008 footage was shot with.

In all I thought this was a lame attempt at Tom Biscardi to try and reconcile his credibility as a Bigfoot hunter. This video is nothing what Tom makes it out to be, it is just his words, his story and from what I can gather it is not truthful at all. It looks rehearsed and some footage looks staged, typical of Tom Biscardi, I wouldn't expect anything more.

0 spoons bent out of 5



DECONSTRUCTING A HOAX

Second hand stories and blurry photographs are a dime a dozen in the cryptozoology field. As far as evidence goes, these are the bottom of the barrel. The largest problem in such cases is a major lack of confirmable information. Take, for example, the recent photograph of the “Louisiana swamp monster”, reportedly captured on film by a motion activated trail camera.



At first glance, what can be discerned from this picture? Not much. If we wish to remain objective, we have to throw out our instinctual first impressions like “this just looks fake”. Luckily, in this case, there are ways to glean more useful information out of a picture of this nature. First is research, try to find the source of the picture or more importantly, find the original file. With that, you can examine the EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format) data to determine whether or not the image has been tampered with. In my research, I traced the photo back to an archery hunting forum, archerytalk.com

The poster claimed to be providing the original, unaltered files, straight from the device. One of the creature and another photo of a deer for reference. Unfortunately, this was not true as we can see from the EXIF data. (Nex page)

The pixel size of these pictures do not correspond with each other, suggesting manipulation.

The next step is searching for more traces of it. One odd thing I noted is that every leaf and twig seem to be in the exact position in the two photos, as can be seen in this superimposition:



What's odd about that is that, according to the time stamps, these pictures were taken nine days apart. You would expect to see some change. While this is not a damning fact, it lends to the growing suspicion of this being a hoax. At this point in the investigation, I felt pretty confident that the photo was a fake. The evidence against it pretty well outweighed any that supported it. That was when I saw the photo



had made the news (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvlgMpW-IvU&feature=player_embedded#at=16). If you look closely, you'll spot another slip-up made by the creator. The time stamp on the photo in the news broadcast was different than the poster submitted on the forum. (Below)

At this point, it is safe to call this case closed. Though, all the while, this case had apparently stirred up a lot of discussion, misinterpretations, and wild speculation, including some groups claiming that it was released as a form

of viral marketing for two separate properties. One was for the then upcoming film Super 8 and another for the video game Resistance 3, based on a tweet from the games production company, jokingly referring to the image:

"Whoops... looks like one got out. If you see a Grim on the loose... please return to Insomniac Games, Burbank, CA"

A screenshot of the original posting of the alleged creature

The discrepancy in dates on the time stamp featured on the news



Fortunately, in the case of the Louisiana swamp monster, there were a handful of clues just below the surface, waiting to be discovered. More often than not, though, there is far less to go on. In such situations, the best approach is to just take a step back and really look at the situation captured on film or video. Ask yourself what's happening. In the case of the swamp monster, we see a snarling monster, caught on a motion sensitive camera, looking directly at us. In other words, the creature is posing. If this were truly an animal caught on a trail cam, it would be in motion like the shot of the deer. This creature is positioned well within the frame, looking fiercely at the camera. Very often in the case of hoax photography, the context is overlooked.



-NICHOLAS CALLIS

PICT0134 - JPEGsnoop

File Edit View Tools Options Help

DQT, Row #6: 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #7: 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
 Approx quality factor = 74.74 (scaling=50.52 variance=0.19)

*** Marker: SOF0 (Baseline DCT) (xFFC0) ***
 OFFSET: 0x000000DB
 Frame header length = 17
 Precision = 8
 Number of Lines = 1348
 Samples per Line = 1797
 Image Size = 1797 x 1348
 Raw Image Orientation = Landscape
 Number of Img components = 3
 Component[1]: ID=0x01, Samp Fac=0x22 (Subsamp 1 x 1), Quant Tbl Sel=0x00 (Lum: Y)
 Component[2]: ID=0x02, Samp Fac=0x11 (Subsamp 2 x 2), Quant Tbl Sel=0x01 (Chrom: Cb)
 Component[3]: ID=0x03, Samp Fac=0x11 (Subsamp 2 x 2), Quant Tbl Sel=0x01 (Chrom: Cr)

*** Marker: DHT (Define Huffman Table) (xFFC4) ***
 OFFSET: 0x000000EE
 Huffman table length = 28

 Destination ID = 0
 Class = 0 (DC / Lossless Table)

Image (RGB, DC) @ 12.5% (1/8)

Here we can see the discrepancies in the two files. Most noticeably, the dimensions differ between shots.

This indicates that at least one of the images

PICT0139 - JPEGsnoop

File Edit View Tools Options Help

DQT, Row #0: 9 9 12 24 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #1: 9 11 13 33 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #2: 12 13 28 50 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #3: 24 33 50 50 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #4: 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #5: 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #6: 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
 DQT, Row #7: 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
 Approx quality factor = 74.74 (scaling=50.52 variance=0.19)

*** Marker: SOF0 (Baseline DCT) (xFFC0) ***
 OFFSET: 0x000000DB
 Frame header length = 17
 Precision = 8
 Number of Lines = 1279
 Samples per Line = 1705
 Image Size = 1705 x 1279
 Raw Image Orientation = Landscape
 Number of Img components = 3
 Component[1]: ID=0x01, Samp Fac=0x22 (Subsamp 1 x 1), Quant Tbl Sel=0x00 (Lum: Y)
 Component[2]: ID=0x02, Samp Fac=0x11 (Subsamp 2 x 2), Quant Tbl Sel=0x01 (Chrom: Cb)
 Component[3]: ID=0x03, Samp Fac=0x11 (Subsamp 2 x 2), Quant Tbl Sel=0x01 (Chrom: Cr)

Image (RGB, DC) @ 12.5% (1/8)

the CHOIR

ALREADY KNOWS THE MESSAGE

I, along with Jason Korbus, host a radio show called “Strange Frequencies Radio.” The object of the program is much like The Bent Spoon in that we try to promote healthy skepticism and logical thinking.

However it seems that it is almost impossible these days for me or Jason to book skeptics on our program. I get this comment a lot “Looking at your website, I’m not sure that your target audience would be particularly receptive to my perspective on the paranormal.” Most of the time after a few conversations back and forth and explaining our view on things we can land the interview, however we have had some people be just downright rude. Our correspondence with Dr. Harriet Hall comes to mind. It’s all because they read this on our website:

“We aim to cover not only paranormal topics, but also anything that may be considered fringe, or otherwise unique and interesting. This may include, but is certainly not limited to: ghosts and monsters, UFOs, conspiracy theories, unusual hobbies or professions, flat earth proponents, psychic phenomena, urban legends, therianthropes, Young Earth creationism, science, skepticism, and much much more.”

Out of those 11 things named, Jason and I only promote two of them – science and skepticism. When we have someone on the show who is an advocate of the paranormal we never nod in agreement. We get involved in a deep conversation and always show skepticism. A perfect example

is when we spoke with John Davis, a member of the flat earth society. We spent the whole segment respectfully asking him how he can support an idea that isn’t backed up by any scientific data. In fact how could he support a “theory” that goes against everything science says about it.

One thing that has become obvious between the skeptics and the true believers is the evident divide between the two groups. When we started Strange Frequencies Radio, we always wanted it to be a platform for believ-



ers and skeptics to come on and get dialogue going. But we would find out that skeptics only go on skeptical themed radio shows and believers only go on believer themed radio shows. The dialogue between the two camps is minimal at best, how come? I would think that the skeptics would be trying harder to promote critical thinking to people outside of the movement; however that doesn’t seem to be the case. However there are a few brave souls that do help promote skepticism this very way and they are people like: James Randi, Dr. Karen

Stollznow, Matthew Baxter, Michael Shermer, Ben Radford and Joe Nickell – just to name a few.

I remember in an interview with James Randi, he was telling a story about how someone read his book Flim Flam and sent him a correspondence on how though this individual wasn’t ready to shed all belief, the book made him think. James Randi said “That’s all I can ask for.” That is exactly how I feel. You see, I am highly active within the paranormal community, but I am involved as a person who is trying

to promote skepticism and critical thinking. When I do radio interviews, write articles, give lectures, etc. about skepticism I have no preconceived notions or delusions that I am going to make a believer a skeptic, but I can’t express the joy I feel when I can get someone to start questioning things. Making people think or helping people understand that there are more than 4 rational explanations that exist.

It would do no good for me to constantly talk to like minded people; the choir already knows the message. We have to venture out, find a way to speak with believers and get dialogue going without confrontation. Try to be understanding as to why this person holds this particular belief. Opinions do not need to be expressed aggressively, once you start attacking, you have lost the intellectual battle. I think Phil Plait said it best when talking about this same problem, “Don’t be a dick.”

-Bobby Nelson

SLAYING THE VAMPIRE



SOLVING THE CHUPACABRA MYSTERY
BY BENJAMIN RADFORD

El chupacabra is the world's second (or third) best-known monster after Big-foot and the Loch Ness monster, and the world's second best-known vampire after Dracula. It is known around the world, and earlier this year I solved the 15-year-old mystery of the origin the Hispanic vampire goat-sucker.

I recognize that this is a bold claim, and I would not expect anyone to accept it on my say-so. The full details of my five-year investigation into the chupacabra can be found in my book *Tracking the Chupacabra: The Vampire Beast in Fact, Fiction, and Folklore*, published earlier this year by the University of New Mexico, a scholarly and academic publisher. This is a short article discussing how I approached, and solved, the mystery.

As many people know, the creature first gained international notoriety in 1995 after an eyewitness in Puerto Rico, Madelyne Tolentino, provided a detailed description of what would become the world-famous chupacabra. Tolentino said the chupacabra she saw had dark eyes that went up the temples and spread around the sides; it was about four feet high, walked like a human on two legs, and had thin arms and legs, with three fingers and toes at the end of each limb. It had no ears or nose, but instead two small airholes, and long spikes down the creature's back.

Though the chupacabra is well known, it has been the subject of remarkably little serious, empirical research. In the world of chupacabra, proven facts and wild speculation mix freely and indistinguishably. Karl Shuker lamented the "immense confusion and contradiction" surrounding the chupacabra, making it "almost impossible to distinguish fact from fiction, and reality from hearsay and local lore."

The first step was finding out what, exactly, people believed the chupacabra to be. Tolentino said the beast she saw had dark eyes that went up the temples and spread around the sides; it was about four feet high, bipedal, and had thin arms and legs, with three fingers and toes at the end of each limb. It had no ears or nose, but instead two small airholes, and long spikes down the creature's back (see Figure 1). When the beast was later reported in other countries, it took on a very different form (see Figure 2). A few were found dead (for example in Nicaragua and Texas), and the carcasses turned out to be small, four-legged animals from the Canidae family (such as dogs and coyotes).

By paying close attention to news stories about the monster I was able to track down each new sighting and report immediately after it occurred. In the case of the most famous beast, the "Cuero chupacabra," I flew to San Antonio, Texas, for the television show *MonsterQuest* to examine the beast.



Figure 1. The original and best-known chupacabra image, based on eyewitness Madelyne Tolentino's 1995 account. Drawing by the author, from a sketch by Jorge Martin.

I spent about a week interviewing the chupacabra's owner, Phylis Canion, and examining the carcass (see Figure 3).

I spent five years investigating chupacabra sightings and alleged carcasses, and in 2008 I conducted an extensive field expedition in search of the chupacabra in the jungles of Nicaragua, near the San Juan River (see Figure 4). Two colleagues and I searched the

rainforest for several days and hired an expert tracker to seek evidence of the beast (an account of this was recently published in *Fortean Times* magazine).

By 2009 my research had answered nearly all of the central questions



Figure 2. A second type of chupacabra in canid form, reported mostly in Texas since the mid-1990s. This animal was found in Blanco, Texas. Photo by Jerry Ayer.

about the chupacabra. But one key mystery remained: why did the goatsucker appear more or less out of the blue in 1995? There are no other animals in the world that are claimed to have spontaneously appeared (and certainly not in so specific a place and time). Real, living creatures simply do not appear out of thin air, and even if the chupacabra is a product of folklore, it still must have come from somewhere. (Note that there are various claims of earlier versions of the chupacabra, such as Scott Corrales and Loren Coleman's research on an early mention of the goatsucker on the TV show *Bonanza*, and stories of the "Moca vampire." These are discussed in the book.)

To figure out where the monster came from I'd have to return to its original sighting. Madelyne Tolentino Puerto Rico

gave the most important chupacabra description on record, not only because of its remarkable detail but also because it is the "original" eyewitness description upon which almost all images of the creature are based. Tolentino claims that she saw the creature near the street from her mother's house during the second week of August, 1995 (see Figure 5). Her "eyewitness account" appears in Scott Corrales's 1997 book *Chupacabras and Other Mysteries*, and a close read reveals it is riddled with implausible observations, contradictions, and inconsistencies.

To give just one example among many, after Tolentino claims she saw the monster with alien eyes and spikes down its back, she didn't panic, but instead joked to her mother about the chupacabra's apparent lack of an anus. That she could

possibly have noticed such a detail from a distance defies credulity, but in any event she later screamed, and her mother then ran into the street to catch the monster. She failed, but Tolentino says a local boy chased it into a nearby wooded area where he grabbed the menacing chupacabra and pried its mouth open before releasing it into the wild.

There was not a shred of evidence to support Tolentino's incredible story, yet her "eyewitness report" was treated as valid and truthful by the media, and her description became the "standard" chupacabra image known worldwide.

This revelation spelled real trouble for the chupacabra; the entire goatsucker phenomenon arguably began with Tolentino and her sighting; if this most important eyewitness account is not credible, her description—and much of the information that followed it—is irrefutably tainted. If large parts of her story were almost certainly not true, what other parts weren't true? Was any of it real? Was Madelyne Tolentino lying, telling tall tales, or did she actually see something unknown? If it was a hoax or hallucination or misperception, where did she come up with such a detailed description?

I researched the history of Puerto Rico, especially in the months leading up to Tolentino's sighting. Just before Tolentino's sighting, a new element was added to the island's social

and cultural mix—something that had not existed there before and could have spawned chupacabra sightings. The creature Tolentino described bears no resemblance to any known animal. It does, however, look almost exactly like a fictional creature seen by hundreds of thousands of people in 1995: Sil.

Sil is the name of the alien creature played by Natasha Henstridge in the science-fiction horror film *Species*. *Species* was released in Puerto Rico on July 7, 1995—less than a month before Tolentino reported her chupacabra sighting. The creatures looked very similar; could the original chupacabra eyewitness have simply described a monster she saw in a movie? It's certainly possible; other monster witnesses have described “real-life” monsters that they actually saw in films (see, for example, Daniel Loxton's research into the Thetis Lake monster in *Junior Skeptic* magazine).

This lead seemed promising, but I needed more information. I reviewed the movie's press kit and production notes, and interviewed the film's production coordinator for insight into the development of the Sil alien design. I also bought a book on the making of the film called *Species Design*, which contained excellent reference material, including dozens of photographs of artist H.R. Giger's designs for the Sil creature. The art could have been used as a blueprint for creating a chupacabra. Sketches of

the chupacabra's long, thin fingers and claws appear on page 24; the goat-sucker's distinctive spine spikes can be seen on the *Species* creature on pages 25 through 29 and throughout the book; and so on.

I carefully reviewed Tolentino's description and compared it to the *Species* alien, identifying over a dozen morphological similarities, including the large, oblong head; large, wraparound eye shape; black or red eyes; a small or nonexistent nose; the absence of ears, the bipedal stance; long, thin arms; long thin legs; thin, clawed fingers; a small, lipless mouth, large spikes down the spine; lack of a tail, and so on. The resemblance of Sil to the Puerto Rican chupacabra is unmistakable.

The more I researched the alien monster in *Species*, the more similarities to the chupacabra emerged—they even have identical origin stories. The two main explanations for the chupacabra are that it is either an extraterrestrial alien life form, or the result of top secret U.S. government genetics experiments gone wrong. These happen to be exactly the two origin explanations of the *Species* creature: Sil is both an extraterrestrial alien and the result of top secret U.S. government genetics experiments gone wrong. The parallels could not be clearer, and this seemed to be a strange case of life imitating art.

I had more or less proved a direct connection between the film *Species* and the Puerto

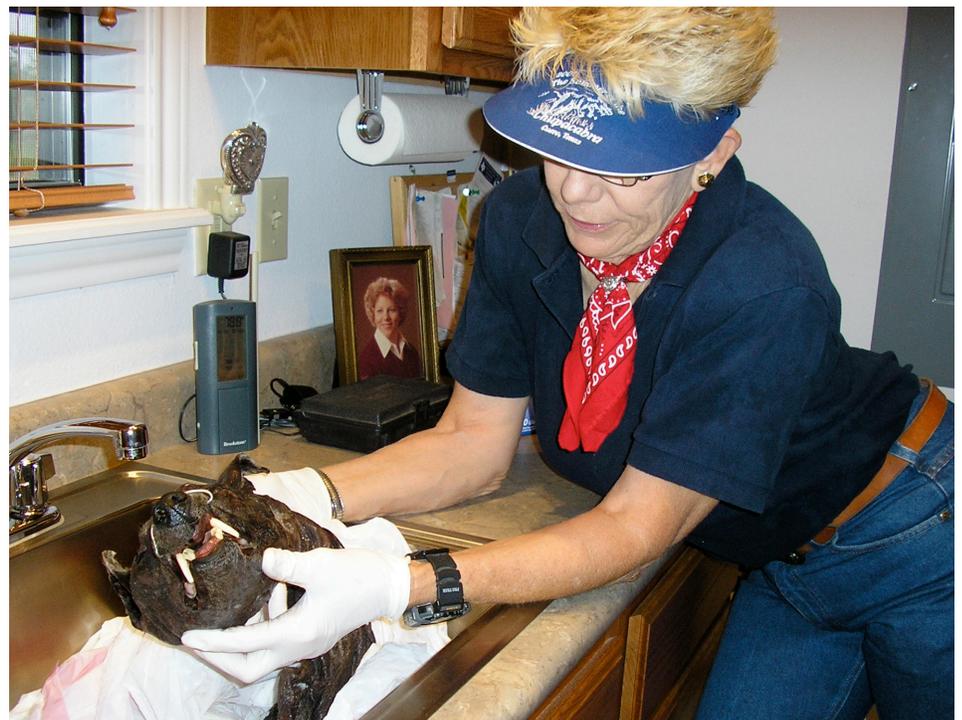


Figure 3. Texas rancher Phylis Canion displays the famous “Cuero Chupacabra” she found near her ranch in 2007. Photo by the author.



Figure 4. The author with expert tracker Fernando Casanova searching for evidence of the chupacabra in Nicaragua's Indio Maiz Wildlife refuge. Photo by Chris Ayles.

Rican chupacabra, but just because the film was seen in Puerto Rico right before the chupacabra was first reported does not conclusively prove that Tolentino's eyewitness description of her chupacabra sighting was influenced by the film. As luck (and good research) would have it, I was able to prove that Madelyne Tolentino saw *Species* before her chupacabra sighting. She stated it very clearly during a 1996 interview with two researchers, reprinted in *Chupacabras and Other Mysteries*. Tolentino said that she saw "a movie called *Species*... The movie begins here in Puerto Rico, at the Arecibo observatory." In fact, Tolentino herself described Sil and the chupacabra she saw as looking nearly identical: "[The monster] was a creature that looked like the chupacabra, with spines on its back and all....

The resemblance to the chupacabra was really impressive." (See Figure 6).

What are we to make of this statement? At first it may seem like Tolentino was saying

nothing more significant than that certain aspects of what she had seen in the film reminded her of what was happening in real life in Puerto Rico at that time. But a closer reading suggests instead that Tolentino believed that what she saw in the film was actually happening in real life. She is then asked a follow-up question about the film *Species*: "In other words, does [the film] make you think there might have been an experiment in which a being escaped and is now at large? [in Puerto Rico]."

Tolentino responded: "Yes, but they managed to kill her in the movie..." I believe Tolentino is clearly stating that she believed that the creatures and events she saw in *Species* were actually happening in reality in Puerto Rico at the time. Remember, *Species* was seen by the Puerto Rican public while the chupacabra hysteria was occurring. This confusion between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy, is the final nail in the coffin for her credibility.

Did Tolentino make the story up? Did she dream the whole experience, and convince herself and others that it was real? Did she actually see something unrecognizable, and unconsciously fill in the details with memories of the monster from the *Species* film? Or did she actually see a chupacabra that, by some astronomically unlikely coincidence, just happened to look exactly like a monster in a film she'd recently seen? Short of a confession of hoaxing, there's no way to know for certain what happened, but logic suggests that the chupacabra legend was started by a young woman who confused reality with a monster movie.

Of course, Tolentino's sighting did not influence every single chupacabra report, but by all accounts her description was the most influential of them all. The idea that something mysterious had been killing Puerto Rico's animals had existed for some time, but before Tolentino's report no one had put a form to the phantom menace. If Tolentino had seen a different alien or monster film at the same time, the world would have a different image of the chupacabra. Of course, there is far more to the chupacabra story, but I believe I have put forth a very strong explanation for its origin.

Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction, and sometimes fiction influences reality. I discovered that the popular image of the chupacabra—the one appear-

ing on thousands of books, magazines, and Web sites as a credible eyewitness description—is in fact based on a science fiction film. The chupacabra’s origin had finally been revealed.

I had solved one of the highest-profile “unexplained” mysteries of the past two decades. One thing in my favor was the limited scope of evidence; because the entire mystery was only about fifteen years old, the number of claims, eyewitness reports, and news accounts to consider was manageable.

The next step was completing the research and writing a book on it: *Tracking the Chupacabra: The Vampire Beast in Fact, Fiction, and Folklore*. Of

course, just because a mystery is solved doesn’t mean that everyone knows about it, or that many people won’t think the mystery continues. The Bermuda Triangle, for example, was essentially solved decades ago by researcher Larry Kusche, yet remains known in the public’s consciousness as mysterious and unexplained.

Still, my investigation shows that, with enough time, effort, scholarship, and critical thinking, even a mystery as large and fearsome as the chupacabra can be solved. Other investigators (and the general public) may agree or disagree with my conclusions, but future writers on the chupacabra ignore my work at their peril.

If they do not at least address my explanations, they will be revealed as either sloppy researchers or intentionally misleading their readers. Of course, some people will continue to report chupacabras whether they exist or not; non-existence of a phenomenon has never stopped people from seeing or reporting that phenomenon. The chupacabra is dead; long live the chupacabra.

Further Reading

“Chupacabras Rides Again.” 2002. *Fortean Times* magazine, 156.

Corrales, Scott. 1997. *Chupacabras and Other Mysteries*. Greenleaf Publications.

Cunliffe, Dr. Clare. 2009. Interview by the author, October 27.

Figure 5. The street in Canovanas, Puerto Rico, where Madelyne Tolentino had the first and most detailed chupacabra sighting in history. Photo by the author.



Geberth, Vernon. 1996. *Practical Homicide Investigation: Tactics, Procedures, and Forensic Techniques*, 3rd edition. New York, New York: CRC Press. Pp. 216-222.

Loxton, Daniel. 2009. The shocking secret of Thetis Lake. *Junior Skeptic*, Number 35.

Radford, Benjamin, and Joe Nickell. 2007. *Lake Monster Mysteries: Investigating the World’s Most Elusive Creatures*. University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.

Radford, Benjamin. 2010. Tracking the goat sucker. *Fortean Times* magazine (No. 257, January), 48-53.

Shuker, Karl P.N. 2009. *The Unexplained*. New York, NY: Metro Books.

Stewart, James. 1977. Cattle mutilations: An episode of collective delusion. *The Zetetic*, Spring/Summer 1(2):55-66.



Figure 6. The monster from the 1995 science fiction/horror film *Species*, which is virtually identical to the Puerto Rican chupacabra.

Benjamin Radford is managing editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* science magazine and a Research Fellow with the non-profit educational organization the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. He has written hundreds of articles on a wide variety of topics, including urban legends, the paranormal, critical thinking, science literacy, logic, investigation, and media literacy.

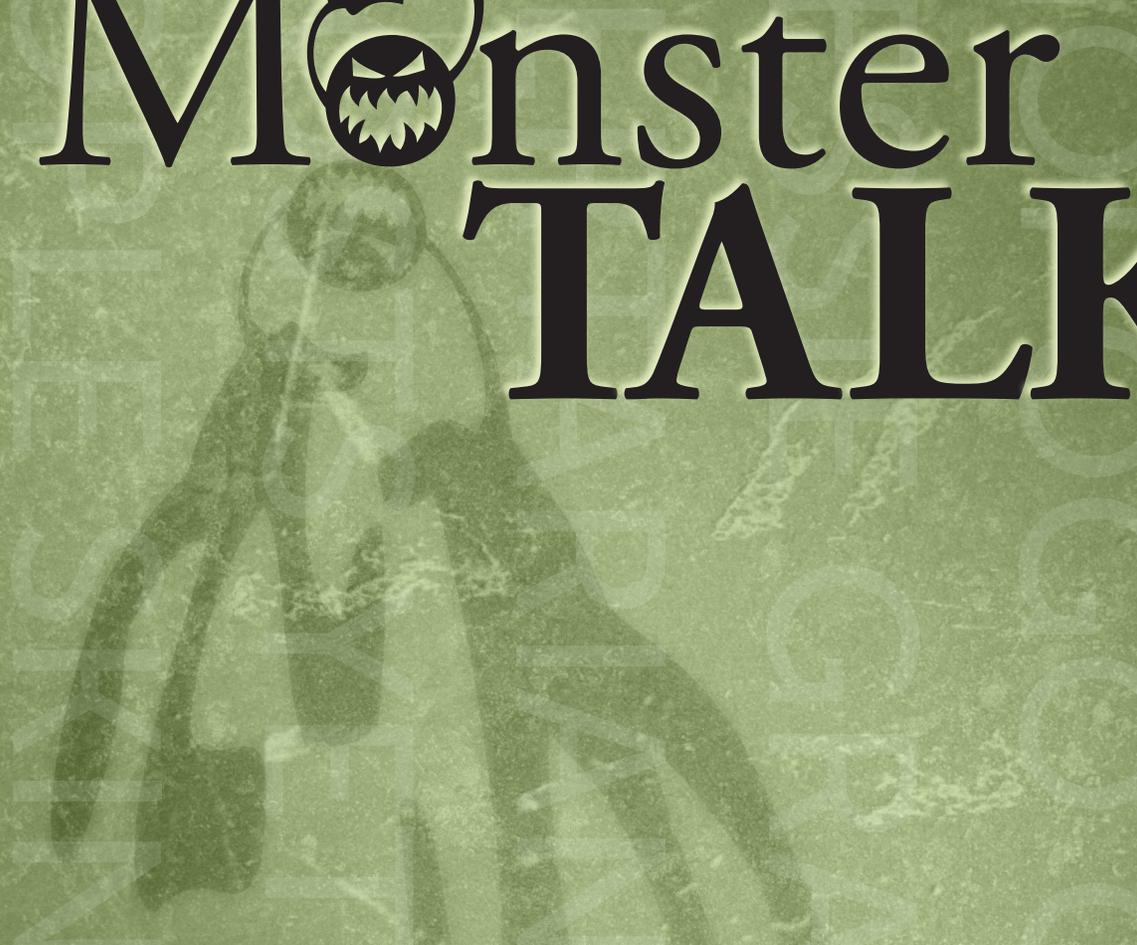
Radford is one of the world's few science-based paranormal investigators, and has spent a decade doing first-hand research into dozens of mysterious phenomena including psychics, ghosts and haunted houses; exorcisms, miracles, Bigfoot, stigmata, lake monsters, UFO sightings, reincarnation, near-death experience, dowsing, crop circles, and many other topics.

He holds a degree in psychology (*magna cum laude*) from the University of New Mexico, is enrolled in a master's degree program, and is perhaps best known for solving the mysteries of the Santa Fe Courthouse Ghost in 2007, the Hispanic vampire *el chupacabra* in 2010, and several UFO videos in 2010.



Benjamin Radford
bradford@centerforinquiry.net
505.891-3661 / 505.227-9155

Monster TALK

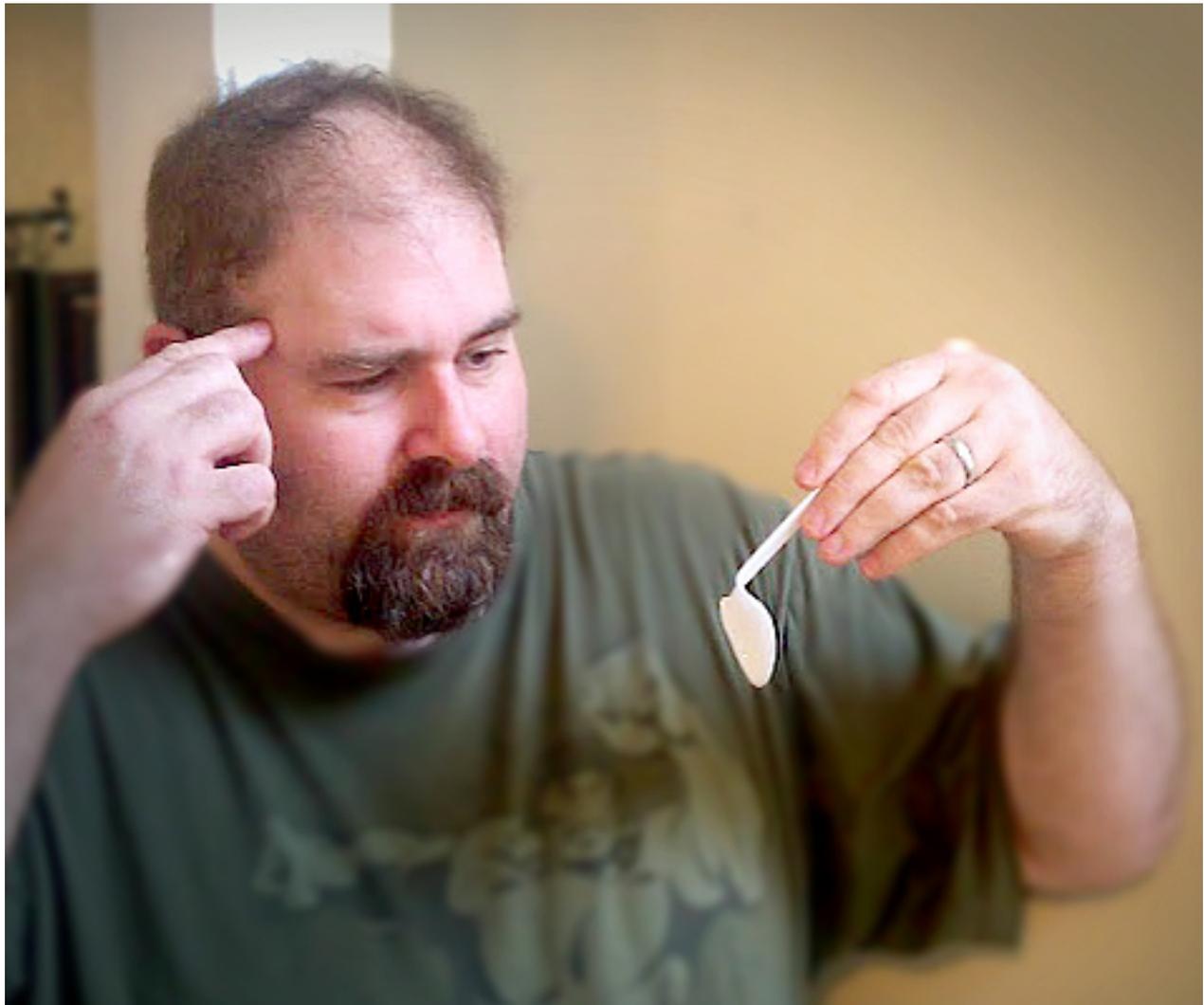


THE SCIENCE SHOW ABOUT MONSTERS

Join Blake Smith, Benjamin Radford & Dr. Karen Stollznow as they look into the facts behind the *mysterious creatures* said to inhabit the world.

PRESENTED BY SKEPTIC MAGAZINE

Available through iTunes or your
favorite podcast aggregator



Blake you are a co-host to the ever so popular podcast (sponsored by Skeptic Magazine) Monster Talk. Tell me what made you want to start a podcast dealing with the topic of monsters?

After listening to the podcast Skepticity, I realized that I probably had the skill-set to do a podcast and certainly had the inclination. But what to talk about? I was thinking

about that question when watching yet another bigfoot show and suddenly though - what would it be like if these scientists they have on for 2 minutes could actually talk freely for a half-hour or more? I wonder what they'd have to say? So around the same time I went to Dragon*Con in Atlanta, a big sci-fi Fan Convention, and met Ben Radford and Karen Stollznow. I knew Ben from TV, but we hit it off

quickly. And Karen I met at a dinner with a bunch of skeptics there at the con. The three of us had a fun conversation where Karen kept asking me what I'd been drinking because of the wacky stuff I kept saying. (Answer: Diet Coke) So when I decided to put the show together they seemed like natural choices for co-hosts. Ben has more direct monster experience but Karen is a seriously well-

seasoned skeptical researcher and paranormal investigator. It just felt very natural the first time we tried recording and I think that showed. And once we fixed our nasty audio problems (everybody ended up buying new recording equipment) things have been pretty smooth. Learning curves, eh?

Most of the time when I talk to skeptics, they seem to have held a belief of some sort in paranormal phenomena at one point in their life. Did you ever think cryptids were real and if so what made you a skeptic?

I grew up reading all kinds of monster books. In fact, one of the first I got I still own - held together with duct tape! It was by a guy named Daniel Cohen who, it turns out, was not only a prolific children's author, but also a member of CSICOP. I didn't realize it at the time, but his book was chock full of skepticism while celebrating the mystery and allure of the unknown. That's where I like to be. I love the idea of monsters - but have become very skeptical. I don't think I was ever what you might call a "true-believer" but I was a very, very, very curious person who wanted to go out into the woods and look for Bigfoot. All my evidence (books, tv, movies) suggested Bigfoot was a Northwest Pacific creature, but I still went out and looked in Georgia. Sometime in the 1990's I finally came to the conclusion that the evidence for Bigfoot was insufficient to support my continued yearning to go look for him. As I have said on MonsterTalk and a few other places, I certitude can be unbecoming in a Skeptic. Yet, provisionally, I've publicly stated

that I don't think Bigfoot is a real animal. Of course I'm ready to drop that in support of embracing his existence - as soon as there is a body which has been scientifically examined and revealed to be genuine.

There is no scientific evidence that a creature like Bigfoot exists. However cryptozoologist still hold the controversial Patterson-Gimlin Film of 1967 as positive evidence that Bigfoot exists. What are your thoughts on this film?

The PG film has become the Rorschach test of cryptozoology. Here is my precise opinion: The film is too grainy/blurry to be definitively proof of anything. People look at it and see muscles moving, unreproducible anatomic details, a unique form of locomotion - yet others (let's call them "most scientists") look at it and see a man in a suit walking in wooded autumn clearing. In the end, nothing short of a body (or distinct parts of a body) will suffice for science. A film - in this day and age - will not be enough.

How do you feel about monster hunters and cryptozoologists that seem to always move the goal post? For example, they may say something like "the reason bigfoot hasn't been captured or the reason a dead body hasn't been found is because the creature is interdimensional."

Well, it used to bug me. But now I have a lot more patience since I've learned so much about how belief works. There are a lot of people who are genuinely curious about cryptids - and many who believe in

them and are looking for evidence only to shore up that belief. That search for support, I think, is one reason why online cryptozoology communities can form such insular groups. People with common beliefs like to clump together and encourage each other. As far as paranormal explanations for the paucity of evidence, even in the cryptozoology world those folks tend to get pushed into the corner. But there are places where such theories are more welcome. New agers tend to be more welcoming for such ideas, and the conflict between new age enthusiasts and "serious" cryptozoology enthusiasts is quite apparent in their interaction both online and at conferences.

One of the most famous cryptids that is said to exist is Nessie or the Loch Ness Monster. Some people claim that Nessie is some type of prehistoric dinosaur such as a plesiosaur that somehow escaped extinction. However I have also heard some monster hunters say that what people might be seeing is a giant eel, do you think that is a plausible explanation? Or do you feel it might be something more simple like a piece of drift wood or a water ripple effect?

I suspect Nessie is a result of many people wanting there to be a creature in the loch and finding a variety of phenomena which support such a view. Logs, animals, waves, hoaxes and other misidentifications converge to build a rich body of lore supporting the idea - yet the lack of physical evidence bears mute testament to the underlying weakness of the claim that there is anything unusual living in the loch.

Do you feel in order to call yourself a cryptozoologist, one should have a background in zoology?

No. Cryptozoology is an amateur field. Professionals in the field seem to favor “ethnobiology” for the same kind of work being conducted by a trained researcher. I like the idea that amateur biology enthusiasts can contribute - but most are not professionally trained. I imagine that Universities could make a cool bit of cash offering a basic field-research course for enthusiasts by calling it a “bigfoot hunter” class. Heck, I’d probably take that class!

A lot of monster hunters seem to have a misunderstanding on what would be considered positive evidence. They present casts of big human looking feet, audio recordings of howls in the woods, etc...could you explain what extraordinary evidence needs to be found in order to support the existence of these creatures?

It’s not that extraordinary. We just need a bigfoot body. Or enough DNA to confirm that an unknown primate is living in the woods of North America. I think there is a weird misconception that the reason we don’t have a body is because Bigfoot lives in remote wilderness. Yet the creature is sighted all over the place. Well it can’t be both - it can’t be rare and remote yet seen in populated areas. The more likely conclusion is that people are seeing something else. For those who say, “that many people can’t be wrong!” I’d say look at how many people think they’re seeing alien space craft and

ghosts. We are capable of spotting astonishing things - many of which are not real. It says more about how faulty human perception is than how likely it is that cryptids live in our forests.

Are there any cryptozoologists out there doing solid research?

There are ethnobiologists out there doing solid research. And a few scientists with cryptid interests are sort of straddling the gap between science and speculation. I’m hoping to see more from the UK on their alleged feral large cat population. And some serious scientists are hoping that Orang Pendak may turn out to be real - but I’m not holding my breath. (I’ll be excited if it is real, of course!)

Some people might argue that being part of the skeptical community there might be more serious problems that skeptics need to be addressing. The monsters and cryptids seem like a silly thing to focus on. How would you respond to that?

There are many serious issues skeptics need to address. As far as I know the number of serious skeptical activists who spend time working on cryptozoology is small. I don’t think it is a waste of my time because I think monsters are a great way to teach science. That’s the premise of MonsterTalk. And, as some of our guests have pointed out, it is a small risk to examine monster stories. If it turns out someone has really found a cryptid, that’s big news for science and it doesn’t take a lot of effort to test such claims.

And what is your favorite cryptid and why?

My favorite changes but the Kraken was always one I loved as a kid, and now the giant and colossal squids have been found alive in my lifetime. That’s nice. And I’m fond of The Jersey Devil and of course Gef the talking mongoose.

Blake Smith is a writer and researcher of matters cryptozoological and paranormal. He has been interested in the mysterious for decades and has been a “formal” skeptic of such claims since 1997. His conversion from believer to casual doubter to formal doubter was a lengthy process, the first steps of which were reading the works of Jan Harold Brunvand and his highly entertaining works on urban legends. You can find Smith’s articles on MonsterScience.org, DoctorAtlantis.com, and on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.



Contact Blake at blake@monstertalk.org.

THE BENT SPOON

Here at The Bent Spoon we always appreciate feedback, whether it be criticisms, compliments or suggestions. The Bent Spoon also accepts article submissions but they do not necessarily have to be from a skeptical viewpoint. If you are a true believer and love to write, The Bent Spoon's new section titled "The Open Forum" may just be the place for you. With the intentions of keeping the dialogue open between true believers and skeptics, we feel "The Open Forum" might be the perfect opportunity to do so. It will show the believers viewpoint with at least one skeptical rebuttal.

Please send all inquiries and submissions to
TheBentSpoon@live.com

Thank you.

THE
BENT SPOON



A CONVERSATION WITH A CRYPTOZOOLOGIST **KEN GERHARD**

Paranormal investigator Benjamin Radford says he has solved the mystery of the Chupacabra. Have you had the chance to read his book, “Tracking the Chupacabra”? If so, what are your thoughts on the solution he posed? Do you have a better solution?

I have not had a chance to read his book yet, but I know that Ben is a real smart guy, as well as a thorough investigator and I am aware of his basic conclusions. Admittedly, I have not spent much time on the Puerto Rican Chupacabras. My focus has been on the Texas cases, which have revolved around abnormal canids. We know that these animals are coyotes and other dog hybrids that have a skin condition, which causes them to look and behave strangely. But there are still questions

that remain about other characteristics that they displayed. Like most cryptids, this is a complex mystery with many facets and layers and I’m just not convinced that one person can conclusively debunk all of the reports that have surfaced all over the Americas. Even a lifetime of research probably wouldn’t be sufficient.

Which cryptozoological monster do you think has the best evidence for its existence? Why?

Definitely the relict hominoids like Bigfoot, the Yeti, Yeren and Orang Pendek. We have physical evidence of their existence, including biologically accurate track castings, unidentified hair samples and even some droppings that contained new kinds of parasites. Combine that with thousands

of consistent eyewitness reports from credible people around the world and I think you have a pretty compelling case.

We seem to be nowhere close to proving that creatures like Bigfoot, Mothman, and Werewolves exist, but belief in these beasts continues to persist. Why, in your opinion, do people seem to hang on to these beliefs so strongly?

Well, one could certainly make an argument that people like to keep a little mystery in their lives. But, ultimately these beliefs have been an integral part of many, diverse cultures around the world for centuries. They have become a part of who we are.

You must be familiar with the skept-

tical criticisms of the cryptozoological community. Are there certain criticisms you think are unfounded? Why?

Not really. These are after all extraordinary claims that we are trying to prove. In addition, many so-called cryptozoologists come off as being a bit overzealous at times. On the other hand, there are/were some very brilliant minds in the field – Heuvelmans, Sanderson, Krantz, Mackal, Shuker... these men are/were not intellectually challenged by any means.

Many of our favorite monsters were once thought to be flesh and blood creatures. But lately, it seems more and more of them are being described as possibly ghosts of prehistoric animals or even some type of interdimensional beings. Do you think it helps or hurts for cryptozoologists to “move the goalposts” of success by pushing these creatures more and more to the outer fringe?

There is definitely a movement going on in the field of cryptozoology, which makes some of the old guard uncomfortable. After all, the doctrine was initially based on the science of zoology and the implication is that some of these cryptids are not wholly physical creatures. But, one cannot easily explain why physical evidence has been so hard to come by. In my opinion it is unscientific to not consider all possible explanations. With so many new discoveries ongoing, whose to say what is and isn't possible?

If we still only have eyewitness reports and unconvincing physical evidence of cryptids 50 years from now, will there still be a good reason to believe they exist at all?

I think one major fallacy with the skeptical argument is the blatant disregard for eyewitness testimony. In our society, this type of evidence frequently sends criminals to their death by the

way. The skeptical assumption is that people are either dishonest or mistaken. But, I have personally interviewed scores of credible eyewitnesses, including police officers, soldiers, doctors and teachers, who have described face-to-face encounters with creatures that supposedly do not exist. Many of these people were avid outdoorsman and wildlife professionals with heightened senses of natural observation. I have personally looked people straight in the eye and have seen the trauma that these encounters instilled. Think about this. There are literally thousands of documented Bigfoot reports on record. If just one, single person is correct about what they saw then Bigfoot must be real.

One thing that a lot of cryptozoolo-



gists hang onto as positive evidence for Bigfoot is the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film. Many arguments are made as to why this film shows an authentic creature, such as it having breasts, the way it turns to look at the camera and the way that it walks. What many people do not know is that there is just as much convincing evidence to support this whole thing was indeed a hoax, what is your opinion?

Personally, I'm not a fan of photographic evidence, particularly in this day and age of Photoshop, CGI and YouTube. But, I'm not sure what you mean by convincing evidence of the

film being a hoax, other than a few incredulous people who claimed that they were involved. The bottom line is that costume technology in 1967 sucked and no one has ever been able to re-create the film adequately, even with the aid of modern Hollywood special effects experts. In addition the film has, been studied at length by physical anthropologists and biolocomotion experts who insist that a human could not possibly have duplicated the subject's gait.

When it comes to the word cryptozoologist, do you think one should have a background in zoology if the term is going to be adopted?

Ideally yes. In fact, I wish that I had pursued a zoology degree myself. But as long as a person is willing to follow the objective methodologies and principles, which are employed by scientists then I feel that is acceptable. Most scientists are obviously not going to risk their reputations by becoming involved in such a fringe doctrine, so it really is up to laymen like myself to put the time and effort into these pursuits.

It is basically put forth as fact on cryptozoological themed shows and some cryptozoologists that Bigfoot is nocturnal, makes nests, or likes to throw rocks, etc. But if we cannot say beyond a shadow of a doubt that Bigfoot exists at all, do you think it hurts the field to speculate in such a manner?

Perhaps... and I get your point. There really can be no such thing as a Bigfoot expert, since we have not yet proven that it exists. On the other hand, there are literally hundreds of researchers around the world that share information and findings on a regular basis and there are consistent patterns that keep turning up. So, until we have definitive physical proof, we must work with what we have.



DR KAREN STOLLZNOW

author and skeptical investigator with a doctorate in linguistics and a background in history and anthropology.

She is an associate researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, and a director of the San Francisco Bay Area Skeptics. A prolific skeptical writer for many sites and publications, she is the “Naked Skeptic” Web columnist for the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, the “Bad Language” columnist for Skeptic magazine, a frequent contributor to Skeptical Inquirer, and managing editor of CSI’s Scientific Review of Mental Health Practice. Dr. Stollznow is a host of the Monster Talk podcast and writer for the Skepbitch and Skepchick blogs, as well as for the James Randi Educational Foundation’s Swift.

First, I would like to know what skepticism means to you.

Skepticism has many meanings to me – it’s about common sense, discovery, solving mysteries, understanding the world better, and seeking truth.

When it comes to women “in” skepticism”, are there any particular issues that they face? Do you have any personal experiences where your gender may have been a factor in your perceived credibility or how you were treated?

I don’t think there are any particular issues that “women in skepticism” face. There are always

issues that individuals face, as in any organization or group, and for women, these may involve sexism or stereotypes.

I don’t want to polarize the movement, or marginalize any members. Skeptics are skeptics. I’m not one to bemoan the lack of any “type” of skeptic in our movement; I want more skeptics and more skepticism, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or background, or whether new skeptics even “join” the movement.

I’m interested in knowing what you would pinpoint as a particular problem in the skeptic community. What do you feel that “the community” needs to be working on?

I’d say our biggest problem is also our biggest goal: outreach. The community needs to work on taking skepticism beyond the community.

I’ve been talking about skeptics as a community. Do you think this is an accurate description?

Some object to the notion of skepticism as a community or a movement; I don’t. There are many skeptical organizations and groups and events, but overall, we’re a group (or a community or a movement) of people with common interests and goals.

There is a prevailing sense by others that the term “skeptic” have become a bit of a marketing scheme. Is this accurate? Is this a good thing or a bad thing for skepticism?

Some think of “skeptic” as a negative label, but the alternatives like “critical thinker” or “bright” don’t mean the same thing, and have their own negative connotations and ambiguity. “Skeptic” can also be a positive label that enhances credibility and perceived scientific legitimacy.

The fact is there are several different senses of the word. I think we need to define the term every time we use it, to distinguish ourselves from “Global Warming skeptics” or those who appeal to the term for credibility.

I don’t want to abandon the word. I see the ubiquity of “skeptic” as a strength; it’s up to us to explain our usage of the word.

Paranormal researchers and investigators tend to attach scientific terms to their work when it is not scientific, or claim to be skeptical thinkers when that may not be the case. Why do you think that is?

I think there are several things happening here. It seems that sometimes the people who use these terms (e.g. “quantum”) simply don’t understand the words and concepts. Unfortunately, by

using these words so prolifically, they are also creating new, pseudoscientific, senses of the words. Also, they may use these words deceptively to enhance the reputation, credibility and legitimacy of their claims, devices, beliefs and theories. This last point also accounts for those who claim to be skeptical thinkers when they are not.

Something I haven't mentioned in this interview yet is that you have a PhD. In linguistics. How, if at all, does this help you in your work as a skeptic?

The doctorate itself has led me to become a better researcher. I may not have the answer, but I know where to look for the answer.

As for the degree being in linguistics specifically, this has taught me to think critically about language, to recognize bias and subjectivity in thinking about language. There are many applications for language in skepticism too – graphology, automatic writing, Bigfoot languages and psychic readings, to name just a few topics.

In a recent issue of Skeptic Magazine I read an article you wrote about foreign accent syndrome. For the benefit of the readers could you touch on this subject a little? What it is, the science behind it and what really is going on?

This phenomenon is when a person appears to develop a new accent suddenly. This really happens, albeit rarely, but it's a linguistic illusion; the patient merely sounds like they have adopted a new accent. This is a type of brain trauma caused by accidents, tumors or strokes, that affects speech production. Foreign Accent Syndrome is not an established name for this condition, which is more generally known as aphasia. Xenoglossia is a pseudoscientific slant on this phenomenon; the belief that a person can instantaneously speak a different, unknown or alien language, or develop a new accent.

I am wondering if you have ever investigated claims of glossolalia (aka speaking in tongues). If so, have you ever found a case that didn't appear to have an explanation?

I have investigated claims of glossolalia, and I've been a subject. I once underwent a ceremony conducted by members of a charismatic church in Sydney. When people "speak in tongues" they are not speaking at all (...nor is the Holy Spirit). It's not the language centers of the brain but the emotion parts that are activated during glossolalia.

One last question, what advice do you have for people who are interested in becoming active in skepticism but have no idea how to start?

Read Daniel Loxton's (Ed.) *What Do I Do Next?* Leading skeptics discuss 105 practical ways to promote science and advance skepticism which can be downloaded from the Skeptics Society's website - <http://www.skeptic.com/downloads/WhatDoIDoNext.pdf>

My simple advice is: become a part of the community, both face-to-face and online. Listen to skeptical podcasts, read skeptical magazines, books, blogs and forums; but don't just observe, participate. Create podcasts, write articles and blog posts, and attend conferences, lectures and social events. You'll end up finding more things to do than you have time for!

Due to a design error, the original printing of Dr. Stollznow's interview was cut short. The Bent spoon would like to sincerely apologize to Dr. Stollznow for the mistake.

PAREIDOLIA OF THE MONTH

Pareidolia of the month goes to Jacob Simmons and his fiancée, Gentry Lee Sutherland.

The couple had just come home from church when Jacob Simmons noticed the receipt on the floor of Sutherland's apartment.

"I was leaving the kitchen and I just looked on the floor, and it was like it was looking at me," Jacob said.

"Then the more you look at it, the more it looked like Jesus, and it was just shocking, breathtaking."

Apparently the couple said the image seemed to be an answer to a question that they had just been asked at church.

That question came from the couples pastor "If you know God, would you recognize him if you saw him?"

Well, I don't know if I would recognize God if I saw him, but I do know a Wal-mart receipt when I see one.



NEXT ISSUE:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: THE UFOLOGY ISSUE

THE NEW OPEN FORUM, FEATURING READER SUBMITTED
ARTICLES AND OUR FEEDBACK!

OUT SEPTEMBER 2011

THE
BENT SPOON



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

COMING SEPTEMBER