



EXOTIC ZOOLOGY

The Bimonthly Magazine of Cryptozoology
(formerly titled Cryptozoology Newsletter)

Vol. 2., #4

July/August 1995

Matthew A. Bille, Editor

RECENT DISCOVERIES: RETURN TO VU QUANG

Vietnam's Vu Quang region, along the Laotian border, has produced the most stunning collection of large mammals found in the 20th century. After the appearance of the unique Vu Quang ox and its three contemporaries - the giant muntjac, the slow-running deer, and the black deer (described in Vol.1, #5) - no one expected the discoveries to continue. But they have.

In a market stall in Ho Chi Minh city (formerly Saigon), biologist Wolfgang Peter spotted a pair of spiral horns unlike any he'd ever seen. About 45cm long, they bent outward about halfway up and looked something like high-rise motorcycle handlebars. He and Dr. Alfred Feiler collected a total of eight horns, representing six individuals. Unable to match the find to the horns of any known mammals, by the end of 1994 they had decided to create a new genus, *Pseudonovibos*, and so the animal was described as *P. spiralis*.

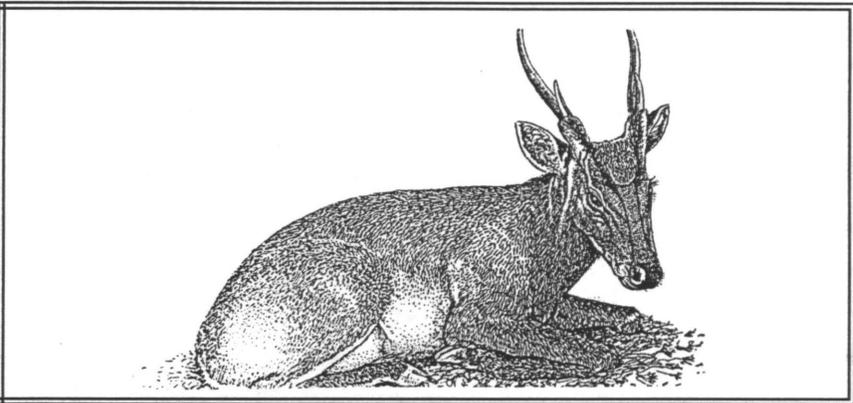
Cross-sections of the horns may be round or oval, possibly indicating a difference between the sexes. There's no certainty because the creature has not been seen, alive or dead, by Western or Vietnamese scientists. Reports from hunters referred to the animal as *linh duong* (variously translated as "forest goat" or, more colorfully, "holy goat") and pegged its range as the provinces of Ben Me Thuot, Dac Lac, and Kon Tum. There are also reports of this animal from northwestern Cambodia, where it's called the "jungle sheep."

This represents the third new genus of large mammal from Southeast Asia in the last three years. The first was created for the Vu Quang ox, *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*, when this bizarre-looking animal couldn't be fitted into either the cattle or the antelopes. It has been linked with their common ancestors, the hemibovids, which supposedly passed from the Earth some four million years ago. A total of three specimens have now been captured, but all have died, the third on April 1 of this year.

Then came the giant muntjac, *Megamuntiacus vuquangensis*, described from a skull by Dr. John MacKinnon and later found alive in Laos by Tom Evans and Robert Timmons, two ornithologists who were inspecting a private zoo owned by a local military commander. (Some authorities place this animal with the rest of the muntjacs, or barking deer, in the genus *Muntiacus*.)



AREA OF RECENT DISCOVERIES



GIANT MUNTJAC. Drawing by Craig Gosling from photos loaned by Wildlife Conservation Society.

Meanwhile, zoologist George B. Schaller, also in Laos, heard reports of a small, dark-colored muntjac in the primary evergreen rain forests of the Annamite region. His team revisited the menagerie holding the giant muntjac, and there stood the latest addition: a muntjac smaller and blacker than any known species. It awaits final classification and a formal description.

Schaller also brought back from Laos the skull of what appears to be *Sus bucculentis*, the Vietnamese warty pig. This animal was described by a missionary in 1892, and no specimen has ever reached the scientific world. Local hunters depict it as a long-snouted animal with yellow and reddish fur.

Finally, an odd item appeared in the *South China Morning Post* on January 7 of this year. Quoting the official Vietnam News agency, it stated that what appeared to be another new hoofed mammal was caught near the village of A Luoi. Unfortunately, this specimen, known locally as a *tuo*, had been eaten before proper examination could take place. The article said the specimen was not a Vu Quang ox and described it as a calf (the mother was with it but escaped) which died shortly after capture. It had a roundish head, long ears, and a stout build (measurements were not given). The coat was described as black and gray with white blotches.

The impact of these discoveries was best summed up by Dr. Karl Shuker, who wrote: "If confronted by cynics attempting to pour scorn on the cryptozoological concept of major new animals still awaiting discovery, we now have a very simple but effective answer - 'Vu Quang.'"

Sources: Torode, Greg. 1995. "Unique Species Eaten Before Proof," *South China Morning Post*, January 7, p.10 // Browne, Malcolm W. 1995. "In Indochina, Tantalizing Traces of an Elusive Pig," *New York Times*, May 30 (Provided by Patrick Huyghe) // Adler, Hans Jorg. 1995. "Antelope expose'," *BBC Wildlife*, January, p.10 // Schaller, George B. 1995. "An unfamiliar 'Bark,'" *Wildlife Conservation*, June, p.8 // Shuker, Karl. 1995. "Vietnam - Why scientists are stunned," *Wild About Animals*, March, pp.32-33.

MYSTERY ANIMALS: REQUIEM FOR THE GIANT OCTOPUS?

As mentioned in previous issues, the largest, strangest mystery animal in the cryptozoo is also one of the few whose existence is backed up by photographs and tissue samples as well as eyewitness accounts.

For those not familiar with the story, it began when a mass of whitish organic matter weighing an estimated five tons or more drifted onto the beach at St. Augustine, Florida, in 1896. The main lump was tough and rubbery in consistency and measured about 21' by 7' by 4'.

Dr. DeWitt Webb, an M.D. who headed the local natural history society, believed it was a giant octopus. He sent photographs and tissue samples to Dr. A. E. Verrill, the leading cephalopod expert of the day. Dr. Verrill at first thought it was a giant squid. He later came to agree with Webb on an octopus, which he labeled *Octopus giganteus*. Later still, he decided it was just part of a whale.

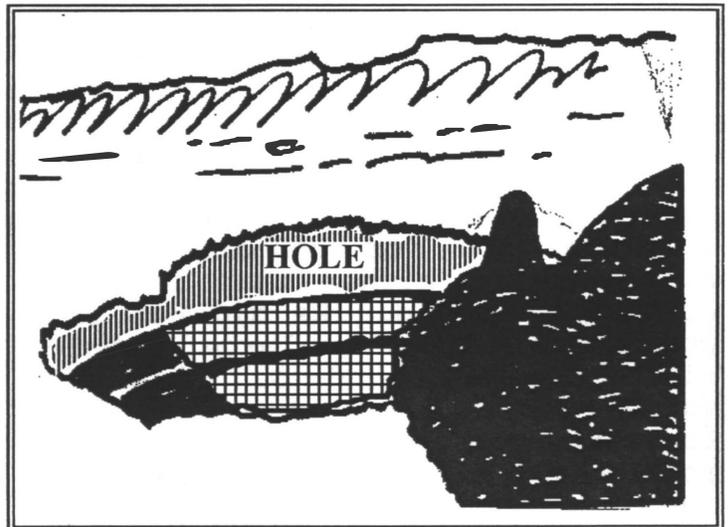
This puzzled Webb, who wrote, "It is simply a great big bag and I do not see how it could be part of any whale." Descriptions written by Webb and others mentioned tentacles, a "mantle," and a single large baglike internal organ, so it is clear the mass wasn't entirely featureless. No one reported bones.

The lump eventually washed out to sea, and that was that until two scientists, Forrest Wood and Joseph Gennaro, retrieved a tissue sample from the "mantle," sent by Webb to the Smithsonian. They wrote in 1971 that, based on microscopic examination of the tissue structure, the thing was an octopus, with a total armspan approaching 200 feet.

Dr. Roy Mackal, a biochemist and cryptozoologist, weighed in next with a 1986 analysis of the chemical composition and amino acids present in the tissue.

He wrote that, "...to the extent the preserved tissue is representative of the carcass washed ashore...it was essentially a huge mass of collagenous protein. Certainly, the tissue was not blubber." He agreed with the octopus identification.

Richard Ellis, a leading writer on marine life and a skeptic of most sea-monster claims, stated the same conclusion in his well-researched 1994 book *Monsters of the Sea*, which included a photograph showing what appear to be tentacles (see sketch). Ellis opined that, "If one examined the pictures with no information as to the size of the animal, there would be no question...It was an octopus."



Shape in photo from pg.312 of Ellis' book. Clearly shows two armlike projections partially exposed (cross-hatched parts are still sand-covered). Third "arm" stretched out at right has ropes attached and might also be a wooden beam used to haul body up the beach. The most commonly reproduced photo shows Dr. Webb standing next to the rope-secured object: this looks like the same scene from a different angle.

GIANT OCTOPUS (Cont.):

A quartet of marine scientists led by Dr. Sidney Pierce and including Dr. Eugenie Clark (who, as an ISC board member, cannot be called closed-minded) tested the tissue again in 1994. They also examined a mass that washed ashore in Bermuda in 1988. They reported that neither tissue structure nor chemical composition indicated an octopus. The Saint Augustine carcass was probably whale skin, while the "Bermuda Blob" came from a fish. Pierce and company suggest the whale's fatty tissue had decomposed, leaving only the collagen "network" that runs through whale blubber.

All the pro- and anti-octopus researchers agree on three points: 1) the mass as beached showed no evidence of any type of skeleton, 2) the samples were almost pure collagen (connective tissue) and 3) the carcass was not a giant squid.

Mackal, in his analysis of amino acids, considered proline and glycine levels to be most likely unaffected by age and preservatives. Levels of both were much higher in *O. giganteus* (molecular weight 16.8 and 34.6, respectively) than in the dolphins used for comparison, but also somewhat higher than in known octopus and squid. He did not do a comparison to a large whale. Pierce's team found *O. giganteus*' values closer to that of a whale than an octopus, but while Mackal reduced all his samples himself at the same time, the 1994 analysis used comparison values for a whale of unknown species analyzed by another researcher in 1955.

Mackal also presented an analysis of copper and iron content. (The oxygenating pigment in cephalopods is Cu-based hemocyanin, not hemoglobin.) Higher Cu and lower Fe levels were found in the St. Augustine remains as compared to dolphin tissue. The Pierce study considers this "inconclusive," perhaps because there was no comparison with a known octopus.

The 1994 analysis did not explain all the physical characteristics of the St. Augustine mass, and Richard Ellis is not the only one who has asked how the skin of a whale became detached from the owner. Whalers peeled blubber off in long strips: orcas may rip off chunks, but nothing like the mass involved here. Blubber (fat) is not a "rubber-like" substance extremely difficult to cut, as Webb reported this stuff was. If this was a whale's skin somehow detached, and was old enough that all the fat had rotted away, would the collagen have still appeared as such a huge, solid mass, or stayed together at all?

Accordingly, Ellis believes the authors have forced "a cryptozoological creature into a recognizable category, even if the fit is a very poor one...it is difficult, if not impossible, to explain how the skin of a whale could become a five-ton blob of collagen."

In short, the scientific plaintiffs and defendants in the matter of *Octopus giganteus* have now presented their cases to the jury. The verdict, however, is still out.

Sources: Ellis, Richard. 1994. *Monsters of the Sea*. New York: A. A. Knopf // Ellis. 1995. Personal communication, May 22 // Holden, Constance (ed.). 1995. "One Sea Monster Down," *Science*, April 14, pp. 207-8. // Mackal, Roy. 1986 "Biochemical Analysis of Preserved Octopus Giganteus Tissue," *Cryptozoology*, pp.55-62 // Mackal. 1980. *Searching for Hidden Animals*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday // Pierce, Sidney, with Gerald N. Smith, Jr., Timothy Maugel, and Eugenie Clark. 1995. "On the Giant Octopus (*Octopus giganteus*) and the Bermuda Blob: Homage to A. E. Verrill," *Biological Bulletin*, April, (#188), pp.219-30. Verrill, A.E. 1897. *American Journal of Science*, pp.355-6.

Special Thanks to Richard Ellis.

NEWS AND COMMENT :

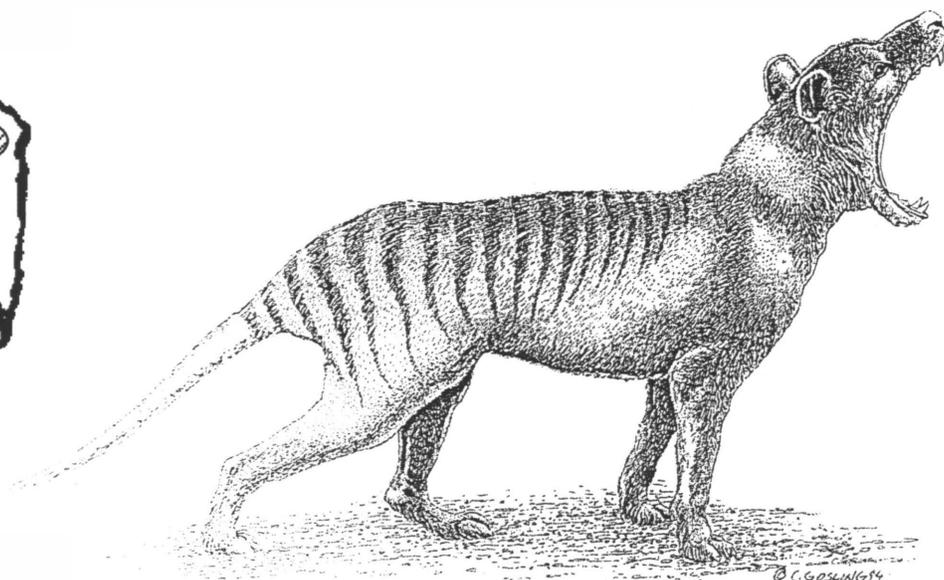
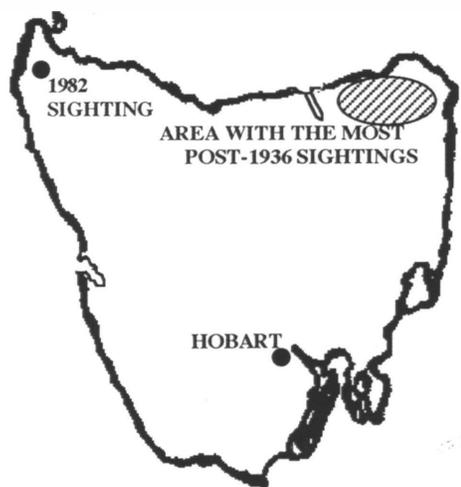
The British Natural History Museum and the University of Lancaster have declared the **fish supply in Loch Ness inadequate** for large predators. A new study says the loch could support only one 30kg fish-eater. **Source:** "Loch Ness Shrimp," Access Excellence Biotech database, dated April 24, 1985.

Maine wildlife officials have confirmed the **sighting of a puma**, the first definite record in that state since 1938. The report from the Cape Elizabeth area, added to the confirmed case in Vermont earlier this year, makes for a strong case that the Eastern puma (*Felis concolor cougar*) is not extinct. **Source:** *USA Today*, Maine news, June 1995.

An Australian newspaper has reported a new **sighting of a thylacine**, or Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*). The world's largest predatory marsupial, long thought extinct, was spotted in northeastern Tasmania by park ranger Charlie Beasley. He had a **clear view for two minutes** and described the animal as sandy-colored and about half the size of a German Shepherd. Professor Struan Sutherland quoted the story in a magazine article in which he also described a **1945 expedition led by zoologist David Fleay**. This team collected hair, droppings, and footprints of thylacines which had survived the species' presumed demise in the 1930s. (Fleay had another distinction: while photographing the last captive specimen in 1936, Fleay became the last human to be bitten on the rear end by a thylacine.)

Hans Naarding, a veteran ranger, also saw a thylacine close-up, spotlighting the animal at night from a distance of 6-7 meters in 1982. Nick Mooney, the game official who led a subsequent search, collected enough "excellent" reports to conclude the area "was used by thylacines." This locale was near the headwaters of the Salmon River in northwest Tasmania.

Sources: Healy and Cropper. 1994. *Out of the Shadows*. Chippendale, Australia: Ironbark // Sutherland, Struan. 1995. "Sighting put bite in tiger tale," *Australian Doctor*, March 31. **Thanks to Sean Henahan.**



Tasmania and its thylacine. Drawing by Craig Gosling.

NEWS AND COMMENT (Cont.):

At least five of the 36 **black-footed ferrets** (*Mustela nigripes*) released in 1994 in South Dakota's Badlands National Park have survived the winter. The captive breeding of this mustelid, believed extinct until 1981, has produced over 400 animals. A subsequent release of 14 older ferrets has not gone as well: larger predators have apparently wiped them out. **Sources:** *USA Today*, April 10, 1995, and *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*.

The **woolly flying squirrel** (*Eupetaurus cinereus*), thought to be extinct, has been **rediscovered in northern Pakistan**. The largest squirrel in the world, its rediscovery startled Dr. Charles Woods, an expert on Pakistani mammals, who noted, "We've really scoured the area and never seen it." The story of this find is a fascinating one and will be told in more depth in a future issue. **Source:** Yoon, Carol Kaesuk. 1995. "Woolly Flying Squirrel, Long Thought Extinct, Shows up in Pakistan," *New York Times*, March 14.

The **Peruvian, or pygmy, beaked whale** (*Mesoplodon peruvians*) has a larger distribution than originally thought. This latest whale described by science (1991) was first known from the Peruvian coast only, but has since been stranded in Mexico near Baja California and on the island of Espiritu Santo in the eastern tropical Pacific. An article in *Marine Mammal Science* also notes there are 24 "positive sightings" of an **unclassified species of beaked whale**, over 5m long, in the same region. The adult male of this mystery species sports a distinctive white striping pattern down the sides of its otherwise dark body, with the stripes coming together at the head in a chevron. **Source:** Urban-Ramirez, Jose. 1992. "First Record of the Pygmy Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon Peruvians* in the North Pacific," *Marine Mammal Science*, October, pp.420-5. **Thanks to** reader Michel Raynal for the article.

RESOURCES

BOOKS.

Keel, John. 1994. ***The Complete Guide to Mysterious Beings***. New York: Doubleday Books. 340pp. Collection of "monster" stories: the kind of nonsense that makes it hard for cryptozoologists to be taken seriously.

Cone, Joseph. 1991. ***Fire Under the Sea***. New York: William Morrow. 285pp. Exciting account of the discovery of seafloor volcanic vents and the new and strange life forms they support. Well illustrated and referenced.

Humphreys, Charles R. 1994. ***Panthers of the Coastal Plain***. Wilmington, NC: The Fig Leaf Press. Reports of supposedly-extinct Eastern cougars in North Carolina. Humphreys may be too quick to accept all the witnesses' statements, but he has assembled a valuable database of 160-plus accounts, many included verbatim. **Thanks to** Charles Humphreys.

Springer, Victor, and Joy P. Gold. 1989. ***Sharks in Question***. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. Superbly written Q&A on sharks, with discussions of maximum sizes, some of the recent discoveries, and the number of species known.

Arment, Chad. 1995. **The Search for Enigmatic Animals.** Tipp City, OK; Self-published. 65pp. Pamphlet on investigating reports of strange animals, with some good research tips. **Thanks** to Chad Arment for review copy.

PERIODICALS.

Hain, James H. W., and Stephen Leatherwood. 1982. **"Two Sightings of White Pilot Whales, *Globicephala melaena*, and Summarized Records of Anomalously White Cetaceans,"** *Journal of Mammology*, May, p.338. Fascinating article on albino and partial albino whales and dolphins. **Thanks** to reader Chad Arment for finding this reference.

Magsalay, Perla, et. al. 1995. **"Extinction and Conservation on Cebu,"** *Nature*, January 26, p.294. Status of rediscovered but apparently extinction-bound birds on the island of Cebu.

Popular Science, special issue, **"Our Ocean Planet,"** May 1995. Includes articles on fauna of the seafloor vents and on the elusive giant squid.

Underwood, Anne. 1995. **"Where Have All the Malas Gone?"** *International Wildlife*, March/April, pp.14-21. Australia's endangered marsupials, including the bridled nailtail wallaby, thought extinct until 1973.

Vames, Steven. 1995. **"Sponging Off Shrimp,"** *Scientific American*, May, p. 18 // Anonymous. 1995. **"The Killer Sponge,"** *Discover*, July, p.22 // Adler, T. **"Deep-sea sponge reaches out, devours,"** *Science News*, February 4, p.69. More on the carnivorous sponge (see *EZ*, V.2,#2.)

Anonymous. 1995. **"Smoking Worms,"** *Discover*, July, p.24. Update on the tube worms which apparently build the "black smokers" on the seafloor.

Anonymous. 1995. **"New Roo,"** *Discover*, January, p.60. Photo of the tree kangaroo species discovered in 1994 in Irin Jaya by biologist Tim Flannery.

Morland, Hilary. 1994. **"Eagle photo a First,"** *Wildlife Conservation*, November/December, p.16. First photograph of a Madagascar serpent eagle, recently rediscovered after a long period of presumed extinction.

Karesh, William. 1994. **"Update from Vietnam,"** *Wildlife Conservation*, November/December, p.16 Status of another rediscovery, the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey (*Pygathrix avunculus*), estimating the surviving population at 100+.

Rafaele, Paul. 1995. **"Fiery Ghost of the Deep,"** *Reader's Digest*, February, pp.70-74. Story of *Chironex fleckeri*, the deadly Australian box jellyfish discovered in 1955. **Thanks** to George Kantner for article.

ON-LINE RESOURCES: There is a "Cryptozoology" roundtable on Genie in the "Space & Science" roundtable and a board called "Monsters" under **OMNI On-Line** (reached through America On Line). Internet zoology newsgroups include "alt.animals.lions," "alt.animals.bears," "alt.animals.dolphins," and "rec.animals.wildlife." Are there any bulletin boards devoted to news of species newly described or rediscovered? If any readers know of one, please advise. Many items do appear on **"Access Excellence Biotech"** on AOL.

EDITOR'S PAGE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Cryptozoology is the subspecialty of zoology devoted to the search for new or supposedly extinct species. The term has unfortunately been applied by some writers to a range of alleged phenomena including "ghost" animals and sensationalized "monsters." My hope is that, in a small way, *Exotic Zoology* can help restore the word to its proper usage: the name of a science devoted to the collection of evidence. There is certainly a place for well-reasoned hypothesizing and speculation, but not for wild claims based on shaky evidence and the desire to sell books.

READER RESPONSE:

From Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans, the "father" of cryptozoology: "This is a very valuable publication." Dr. Heuvelmans added that his entire series of books collecting reports of unknown animals (10 in all!) will be republished in English by Kegan Paul starting later this year.

IN CLOSING:

Interested readers should join the International Society of Cryptozoology, which labors to make searching for unknown or presumed-extinct animals a respectable scientific specialty. Contact Richard Greenwell, Secretary, ISC, P.O. Box 43070, Tucson, AZ 85733. The ISC puts out a quarterly newsletter and a journal, *Cryptozoology*. Their publications were suspended for financial reasons, but should resume this year. While this editor is an ISC member, *EZ* is not an official ISC publication.

Please send any comments or clippings to 3405 Windjammer Dr., Colorado Springs, CO, 80920, USA. Email: MattWriter@AOL.com. The new subscription rate is \$18 a year for U.S. addresses, \$20 a year for all other countries. This slight increase covers the costs of printing in a better format with more illustrations. Subscriptions include First Class delivery in the U.S. and airmail overseas. Please make checks payable to Matthew A. Bille. Guest articles are welcome: payment is in copies.

Copyright 1995 by Matthew A. Bille. Permission is granted to duplicate articles for educational use: however, reuse of original illustrations by Craig Gosling is prohibited without express permission of the illustrator.

REMINDER: The wait is almost over: the editor's book on new, rediscovered, and unconfirmed animals, *Rumors of Existence*, will be out in late September. The book, to be published in hardcover by Hancock House, lists at \$24.95. The ISBN is 0-88839-335-0. If your bookstore or library fails to obtain it, you can order direct from the publisher by calling 1(800)938-1114.

Logo illustration: the mysterious cetacean *Delphinus rhinoceros*, described by French naturalists Quoy and Gaimard in 1819 and not reported since. Reconstruction by Craig Gosling copyright 1994.