

# EXOTIC ZOOLOGY

The Bimonthly Magazine of Cryptozoology

Vol. 3., #2 March/April 1996 Matthew A. Bille, Editor

## MYSTERY ANIMALS: AUSTRALIA'S SHADOW PREDATORS

As everyone knows, Australia houses perhaps the most unique fauna on Earth. In recent years, some intriguing questions have emerged on this continent. Do reports of a "cougar" arise from mistakes and hoaxes, or does Australia host introduced American felines? Did the introduced dingo truly drive the marsupial thylacine to extinction? And is there, or was there, a cat-like predator in Australia's forests?

In 1994, the *North Central News* in St. Arnaud, Victoria, ran a grisly photograph of an eviscerated sheep which a farmer believed had been killed by a "puma." Even many of the bones were missing. Sightings and footprint casts added to the evidence. In the same region, in 1985, a Forest Commission officer had cast tracks of a cat which leaped a creek over five meters wide, impossible for any known Australian predator. In their book *Out of the Shadows: Mystery Animals of Australia*, Tony Healy and Paul Cropper presented a detailed story of a female puma with four cubs brought over as mascots by an American fighter unit and dumped in the wilderness in 1943. The resulting situation is strikingly similar to that involving the supposedly extinct Eastern puma of the United States: there are plenty of believers and plenty of evidence, but the definitive proof - the animal itself, living or dead - has yet to be obtained. Also, some sightings, including one by a police officer who saw a cat jump right over the hood of his car, describe the controversial "black puma."

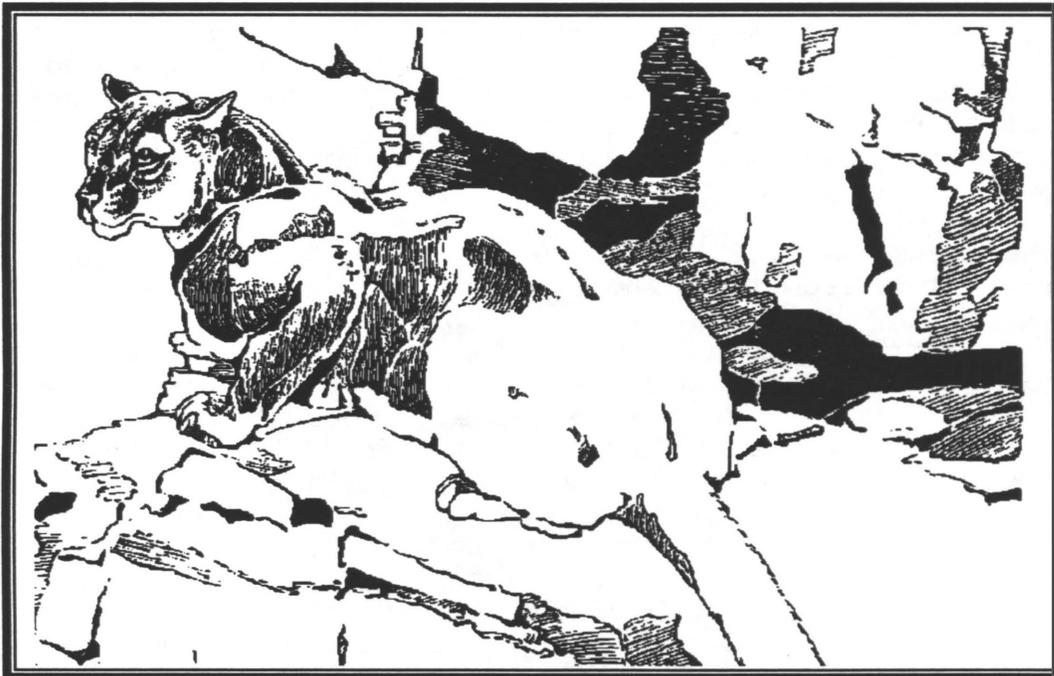
In Queensland, a debate continues about whether Australia has a marsupial "tiger," known to Aborigines as the *yarri*. Some identify it with *Thylacoleo carnifex*, a leopard-sized animal known from fossils ca. 10,000 years old. From the 1860s on, white settlers and explorers

**AUSTRALIAN PREDATORS (Continued):**

also saw it. Naturalist George Sharp examined a skin 1.5 meters long from a cat killed near Atherton. An authoritative 1926 book, *Wild Animals of Australasia*, described the "North Queensland striped marsupial cat" as fawn or gray with black stripes on its flanks. In recent decades, reports have declined, but not ceased.

Finally, the doglike thylacine presumably died out in Australia perhaps as long as 3,000 years ago. Some evidence, including modern sightings, indicates that it may survive. In Western Australia, east of Derby, the humerus bone of a thylacine was found in 1970. A zoologist, Dr. Michael Archer, believed this to be less than 80 years old. Further south, a dead thylacine was discovered in a cave in 1966. This carcass, still covered with fur, was dated at 4,600 years. This estimate is disputed by naturalist Athol Douglas, who believes the animal had been dead less than a year. Douglas visited the cave and found a dingo carcass, less than 20 years old, which had decayed much more than the supposedly far older thylacine. The most recent sightings, though, come from Queensland, where the animal is called "The Beast of Buderim" or "The Tassie Tiger," depending on location.

Witness descriptions disagree in many of these cases, as do the footprints. What is clear is that there is enough evidence to justify continued inquiry, which just may lead to sensational discoveries.



The American cougar, *Felis concolor*. Have these animals been introduced to Australia?  
Illustration by BCM Graphics.

**Sources:** Douglas, Athol. 1990. "The Thylacine: A Case for Current Existence on Mainland Australia," *Cryptozoology*, Vol. 9 // Healy, Tony, and Paul Cropper. 1994. *Out of the Shadows*. Ironbark Press. // Australian news reports collected and provided by Paul Cropper.

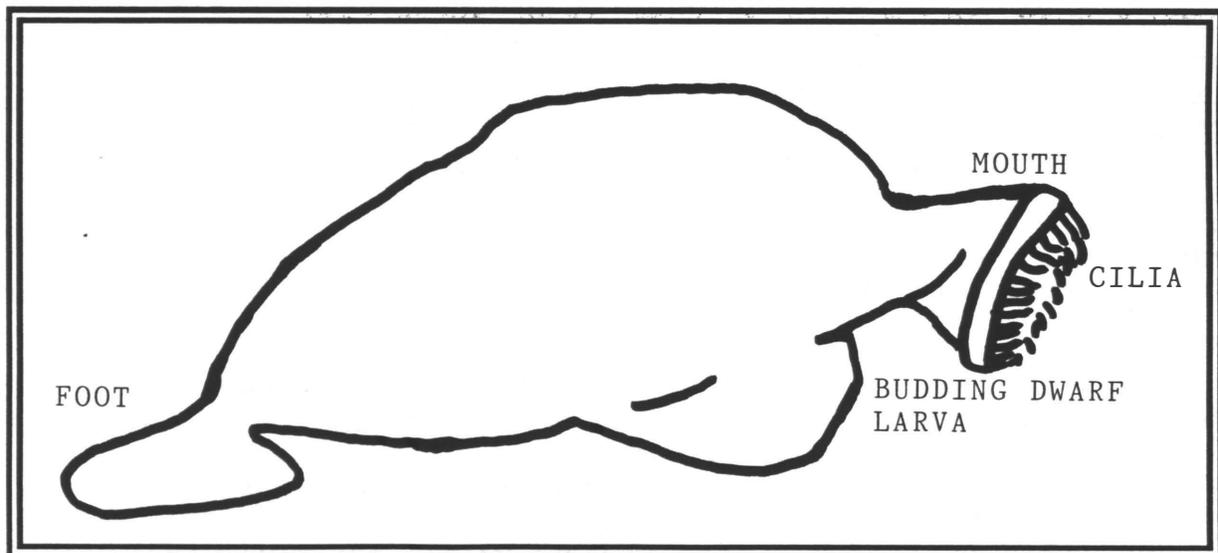
**CORRECTION:** There was a typographical error in the lead story of Vol. 3, Issue #1. The story said the Nangchen horse was discovered in 1933. It should have read "1993." We regret the error.

**RECENT DISCOVERIES:  
MORE ON SYMBION PANDORA**

As reported in the last issue, two zoologists at the University of Copenhagen have proposed a new phylum to house *Symbion pandora*, the tiny, bizarre animal found living on the mouthparts of lobsters. The phylum name, Cyclophora, is Greek for "carrying a small wheel" and refers to the animal's round, cilia-fringed mouth. Most of the press and public fascination has centered around the animal's strange reproductive habits. At different stages of its life, Symbion reproduces sexually by "budding off" male and female offspring, or asexually, in which case its digestive tract metamorphoses into a larva. Even humorist Dave Barry has gotten into the act, noting that, "Zoologists, who don't get out much, are excited over an animal that basically reproduces by pooping."

In creating Cyclophora, researchers Peter Funch and Reinhardt Moberg Kristensen have proposed the first new phylum since Vestimentifera was erected to house the giant tube worm, *Riftia pachyptila*, in 1985. The naming of another phylum is a good indication of how much we still have to learn about the animal kingdom.

**Sources:** Angier, Natalie. 1995. "Flyspeck on Lobster Lips Turns Biology on its Ear," *New York Times*, December 14 // Anonymous. 1996. "Life on Lobster Lips," *Discover*, March.



One of the world's newest and strangest animals, *Symbion pandora*.

## NEWS AND COMMENT

**More new species** have turned up in Vietnam, home to the long-overlooked Vu Quang region and its startling population of large mammals. It's only logical that, in a land where 100-kg. bovines graze undiscovered, there will be plenty of smaller animals to discover, and so there are. A team from Canada's Royal Ontario Museum has discovered a treasure trove of reptiles, insects, arachnids, and other creatures. "Not only are we discovering new species," one scientist said, "but the species we thought we did know and did understand are doing completely unexpected things - living in areas where they shouldn't be found, exhibiting strange physical characteristics or habits." The story is available in more detail, with photographs, at the Museum's Internet site (<http://www.rom.on.ca>). Thanks to Ben Roesch for bringing this item to our attention.

There is renewed interest in the giant squid, *Architeuthis dux*. Scientists led by Dr. Clyde Roper are making a serious effort to observe the world's largest known mollusk in its habitat. Sparking the current fascination is a series of new specimens from New Zealand, the longest of which measures over 8 meters. (A squid stranded in New Zealand in 1857 was some 18 meters long, among the largest on record.) Cryptozoologists love the giant squid as an example of a huge, very strange creature, long reported by sailors but dismissed by science until the mid-19th century as a myth. (The sailors, of course, did not help matters by telling stories of squid the size of islands, but they also provided some very sober accounts which their learned "betters" dismissed.) Even today, we know almost nothing of this animal, which is so strange it could easily be pictured lurking in the seas of some alien planet.

The Smithsonian and the National Geographic Society are funding the new effort to observe the creature from the Johnson Sea-Link submersible. *USA Today* quoted writer Richard Ellis as saying that filming a live giant squid under water would be "one of the greatest accomplishments of 20th-century biology." The searchers hope to find the squid partly by following sperm whales, which have honed squid hunting to an art.

**Sources:** Broad, William J. 1996. "Scientists Close in on Elusive Giant Squid," *New York Times*, February 13 // Puente, Maria. 1996. Testing waters to learn more about giant squid," *USA Today*, February 1, pg. 1D.

Dr. James Halfpenny is the owner of **A Naturalist's World**, an ecological education company in Gardiner, Montana. Dr. Halfpenney is a mammalogist with special expertise in animal tracking and in the study of bears. ANW publishes a newsletter, **Odysseys**, and conducts expeditions and classes in wildlife biology, tracking, etc. Dr. Halfpenny is a helpful and open-minded expert on subjects of interest to cryptozoologists, such as MacFarlane's bear, and his column on mystery species will be published in an upcoming issue of *Bears* magazine. Write to P.O. Box 989, Gardiner, Montana, 59030, USA.

## NEWS AND COMMENT (Continued):

The Eastern Puma Research Network has published its data on **1995 sightings of *Felis concolor cougar***. The supposedly extinct big cats were reported 510 times from 26 states. The problematical reports of black animals, which EPRN believes may belong to an unidentified subspecies, continued: people reported sighting such cats on 94 occasions. No black puma sighting has never been confirmed by carcass or photograph in North America. **Source:** Lutz, John and Linda. 1996. "1995 *Felis concolor* Statistical Review," EPRN.

**Three birds, all from the Indonesian region, were rediscovered in 1995.** All had been feared extinct after years or decades without a sighting. The species involved are the Invisible Rail (*Habroptila wallacii*, from the island of Halmahera), the Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher, (*Eutrichomyias rowleyi*, discovered in 1873 on the island of Sangihe, not seen again until 1978) and the Lompobattang Flycatcher (*Ficedula bonthania*, from Sulawesi). The British group BirdLife International, which reported the news, warned that these sightings "do not mean the birds have been saved." **Sources:** Anonymous. 1996. "Rare bird species winging way back," *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, February 23, p.E1 // Mountfort, Guy. 1988. *Rare Birds of the World*. London: William Collins & Sons.

## GUEST BOOK REVIEW

**RUMORS OF EXISTENCE** by Matthew A. Bille  
Reviewed by Richard Ellis

There's no point in assuming that the publication of this book will come as a surprise to anyone who reads this review; readers of *EZ* have been kept informed of its imminent arrival on a regular basis. Still, it's not a little unusual to have a book reviewed in the author's own newsletter; it's rather like taking out an ad. Of course, when Matt asked me to review his book for *Exotic Zoology*, he probably assumed that I would have a positive reaction -- he did, after all, devote an entire issue of the newsletter to a complementary review of my *Monsters of the Sea*. He was right: I did have a positive reaction.

In any event, it's a lovely little book, jam-packed with fascinating material. Indeed, there is more than enough stuff in *Rumors* to keep cryptozoologists arguing well into the next century. I am grateful to report that very little of the book is devoted to the true creatures of cryptozoology; the sasquatch, snowmen, Loch Ness monster, sea serpents, etc., but rather, it concerns variations on themes that we all know well. Discussed in the book are "Recent Discoveries;" that is, those animals whose existence was unsuspected until one or more of them showed up. For me, whose area of study is the ocean, the quintessential "recent discoveries" are the megamouth shark and the coelacanth, but I was intrigued to read about previously unknown

**REVIEW (Continued):**

parrots, ants, frogs, and of course, the completely unsuspected Vu Quang oryx and muntjac of Vietnam.

Section II is entitled "Presumed Extinct," and concerns those creatures, like Steller's sea cow, the Tasmanian tiger, the ivory-billed woodpecker, and the Eskimo curlew, which are generally believed to be extinct, but are occasionally "sighted" in their previous or sometimes even a new habitat. (One creature that does not really belong in this section is Fraser's dolphin, which was never presumed extinct, but rather known only from a single specimen in the British Museum. Only during the intensely destructive tuna fishery of the 1970s, when millions of these and other species of dolphins were being killed in the Eastern tropical Pacific, did Fraser's dolphin get recognized as a valid -- and numerous-- species.)

Probably the most fun of all the sections is the third and last, "The Mystery Animals." Here we encounter -- as very few others have done in the wild, but often in literature -- Steller's sea monkey, the dolphin with two dorsal fins (a subject I have been debating with Matt Bille for some time; I think there is no such thing), a jaguar-spotted African lion, giant yellow bears, and something the author calls "Mr. Benchley's Monsters," which is a discussion of the giant shark in *Jaws* and the giant squids in *Beast*, which certainly exist, but not necessarily at the size that Benchley assigns to them. The inclusion of these oversize predators seems forced, since Benchley's books are supposed to be fiction, and he ought to be allowed to make his "monsters" any size he wants to.

*Rumors of Existence* is not only fun to read, it is a necessary adjunct to the cryptozoological literature. Bille has adopted just the right tone -- so often lacking in discussions of things cryptozoological -- where he is open-minded about the possibilities of new discoveries, or re-discoveries, but not dogmatic in his assertions that every undocumented sighting "proves" the existence of some mystery creature or heretofore extinct animal. To point up the exciting and ever-changing nature of this cryptozoology (or exotic zoology) business, as I was writing this review, I read an announcement that a completely new, unexpected two-pound squirrel-like mammal had been discovered in the forests of the Philippines. It was given the delightful name of "Panay cloudbunner," and unlike many of the more exotic new discoveries, which often appear only in the form of bones, skins or descriptions, three of these creatures are now on exhibit at the Cincinnati Zoo.

**Editor's Note:** The Panay cloudbunner, *Crateromys heaneyi*, is the fourth member of a family formerly known as the cloud rats. Two of the other species in this group were discovered in the 1980s. See Line, Les. 1996. "A New Mammal Found in the Phillipine Treetops," *New York Times*, Feb. 20. **Very Special Thanks** to Richard Ellis for taking the time to review *Rumors of Existence* for this publication.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS .

Van Dover, Cindy Lee. 1996. *The Octopus's Garden: Hydrothermal Vents and Other Mysteries of the Deep Sea*. New York: Helix Books. 183pp. In this fascinating account of probes into the ocean depths, Van Dover, who is both a professor of oceanography and a submersible pilot, takes the reader to the variety of bizarre environments recently discovered on the sea floor. She offers an illustrated guide to the even more bizarre animals discovered around these hydrothermal flows: the famous tube worms, "spaghetti worms," and even a shrimp named *Chorocaris vandoverae* after the author.

Crowe, Philip Kingsland. 1967. *The Empty Ark*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 281pp. This now-dated but fascinating work recounts Crowe's travels around the world as an ambassador for the World Wildlife Fund. Everywhere Crowe went, he asked local experts about rare and strange creatures. As a result, there are tidbits in this book on cryptozoological subjects including giant anacondas, an unknown South American "bear," the survival of Przewalski's horse in the wild, the yeti, the almas, new species of bats, the Fiji petrel, the moa, the takahe, the thylacine, and the Iriomote cat. The author is open-minded without being overly credulous, and he produced a first-rate book which is still valuable today.

### PERIODICALS .

Acord, Deb. 1996. "Beyond Bigfoot," *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, February 20. Balanced article discussing cryptozoology, *Rumors of Existence*, and this editor's interest in the subject.

Bolgiano, Chris. 1991. "Concepts of cougar," *Wilderness*, Summer. The lore of cougars, including information on the Eastern cougar.

Downes, Jonathan (Editor). *Animals & Men*. This quarterly 44-page publication, the journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology, offers a great deal of valuable information. The latest issue includes zoological and cryptozoological news items plus an article on British "cougar" reports, Grover Krantz's thoughts on looking for cryptic animals, and a superb article, the first of a series, on mystery whales. Consultants include Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans and Dr. Karl Shuker (plus, unfortunately, a "magician" named Shiels, who has published "monster" photographs I call third-rate fakes). This magazine edges into areas like parapsychology which I feel zoologists should keep far away from, but it's very worthwhile nonetheless. Address: 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter, Devon, U.K. EX4 2NA.

Peterson, David. 1993. "Ghost Grizzlies," *Wilderness*, Fall, pp.23-27. Possible survival in Colorado of grizzly bears (*U. a. horribilis*).

## EDITOR'S PAGE

**PURPOSE:** Cryptozoology is the zoological subspecialty of finding new or supposedly extinct species. The term has been misapplied by some to sensationalized "monsters" and even "ghost" animals. I hope that *Exotic Zoology* can help restore the word's proper usage: the name of a science devoted to collecting evidence.

### IN CLOSING:

Interested readers should join the International Society of Cryptozoology, which labors to make searching for new animals a respectable scientific specialty. Contact Richard Greenwell, Secretary, ISC, P.O. Box 43070, Tucson, AZ 85733.

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**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.**