



# EXOTIC ZOOLOGY

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Matthew A. Bille, Editor

## MYSTERY ANIMALS: PRIMATES IN THE SHADOWS

Since we humans are primates ourselves, we have a natural fascination with learning more about our cousins, the monkeys and apes. There have been at least ten species of monkeys and other small primates discovered in the last decade (covered in past issues of *EZ*.) The question asked in this article is, "What other species do we have evidence for?" We're NOT talking here about such controversial subjects as sasquatch and the yeti. Instead, this article is a survey of discoveries, reports, and mysteries concerning more "normal" primates.

Let's begin with South America, where new marmosets and other small primates have seemingly been falling out of the trees for the last several years. There have been seven from Brazil alone, most recently a tiny black-headed marmoset whose description has not yet been published. The president of Conservation International, primatologist Dr. Russell Mittermeier, predicts another 20 primates will be found worldwide within his lifetime.

There are scattered but persistent reports of larger primates in several areas of the continent. The most famous of these claims is almost certainly a hoax. This is Swiss geologist Francois de Loys' 1920 photograph of an alleged Venezuelan ape (named by one French anthropologist *Ameranthropoides loysi*).

## PRIMATES (Continued):

De Loys' ape has, in general, been rejected by primatologists. It is very difficult to accept that an unknown New World ape has evolved to look almost exactly like a spider monkey. It does look like a strikingly large and robust spider monkey, raising the possibility that De Loys found a new monkey subspecies or species but couldn't resist embellishing the discovery. That said, there are reports of large primates of varying descriptions (some upright and tailless, others clearly monkeylike) from several countries in Central and South America. A recent example is a five-foot (1.5m) ape reported from Guyana in 1987 by Gary Samuels, an American mycologist. If any of these reports are accurate, they could describe a genuine New World ape (which would be as big a shock to zoologists as finding the Loch Ness Monster) or a very large monkey (almost as surprising, but perhaps not impossible given the discovery of the fossil *Protopithecus brasilensis* (see next story)). Needless to say, more evidence is required.

It was in Africa that the most recently described ape was discovered. The bonobo, or pygmy chimpanzee, was known and even held in captivity, but it took a long time for primatologists to realize it was distinct from the "standard" chimp. There are still some mysteries about chimpanzees, and the number of species may not stop at two.

The most celebrated chimp in cryptozoology is Oliver, a former show attraction now living out his days at a primate retirement center. While Oliver is a strange-looking critter, widely published claims that he had too many chromosomes for a chimpanzee have been disproved. He may be a chimpanzee/bonobo cross or just a very odd chimp.

An aura of mystery continues to envelop another strange-looking chimpanzee, the koolookamba. This ape was so named by natives in Gabon after its strange "kooloo" call. The first specimen was collected by Paul du Chaillu in 1858. Since then, several examples have lived in captivity, and two were alive in the United States in the 1980s.

Koolookambas are large for chimps, with ebony-black faces, heavy brow ridges, powerful jaws, and wide, flat noses. They are alleged to live singly or in smaller groups than other chimps. Du Chaillu thought, and some zoologists initially agreed, that they were a separate species of chimpanzee. This theory has been largely abandoned. Another idea is that the rather gorilla-like facial features of Koolookambas might indicate they are in fact chimp-gorilla hybrids. (No recorded attempts have been made to mate chimps and gorillas to determine whether this is possible.) Some alleged "kooloo" specimens have in fact turned out to be small gorillas. This raises another complication, given that such diminutive gorilla specimens have occasionally been assigned to a strongly disputed "pygmy" species, *Gorilla mayema*.

In 1964, Professor W. C. Osman-Hill classified the koolookamba as one of four subspecies of the chimpanzee, *Pan troglodytes*.

## **PRIMATES (Continued):**

Hill's identification is also controversial. While kooloos appear most often in mountain habitats, they apparently crop up in unrelated groups in a variety of locations. This indicates they may be just a variety, like "king" cheetahs. Another anthropologist, Brian Shea, reviewed the problem in a 1984 article and suggested that, while there might be a distinct animal involved, it was more likely that koolookamba specimens were all misidentifications of either large male chimps or small female gorillas.

Dr. Karl Shuker is not sure the mystery has been laid to rest. In a 1996 article, he noted that the kooloo's resemblance to the mountain gorilla and preference for high altitudes might mark it as a race or emerging race deserving special study. Some other researchers have made the same suggestion (Cousins, 1990), and there may yet be unanswered questions concerning these curious apes.

**Sources:** Cousins, Don. 1990. *The Magnificent Gorilla*. The Book Guild // Shea, Brian T. 1984. "Between the Gorilla and the Chimpanzee," *Journal of Ethnobiology*, May, pp.1-13 // Shuker, Karl P.N. 1996. *The Unexplained*. North Dighton, MA: J. G. Press // Shuker, Karl P. N. 1996. "Going Ape," *Wild About Animals*, December, p.10 // Tangle, Laura. 1997. "New Mammals in Town," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 9, p.59 // Tuttle, Russell H. 1986. *Apes of the World*. Park Ridge, New Jersey: Noyes Publications.

## **RECENT DISCOVERIES: NEWS FROM PALEONTOLOGY**

Cryptozoology does not exist in a vacuum. Like all sciences, it is dependent on knowledge gained in other fields. For cryptozoology, the related sciences include "mainstream" zoology, biology, botany, biogeography, and, last but certainly not least, paleontology. If a strange animal is reported in a given region, the case is made much more plausible, and therefore worthy of investigation, if there is evidence a similar animal lived there in the past. To illustrate this with a negative example, those who believe in the existence of sasquatch would receive a better hearing if there were any fossil evidence of large apes ever having lived in North America.

A spectacular series of new paleontological finds includes what may have been the largest carnivorous dinosaur (*Gigantosaurus caroliini*) and a small, bizarre reptile named *Coelurosaurus jaekeli* which was gliding 250 million years ago using a wing structure never seen before or since: the wing supporting bones formed directly in the skin, with no connection to the rest of the skeleton. Just added from Portugal is the world's oldest known fetal dinosaur, a theropod that died about 140 million years ago. The most significant of the many other recent discoveries are listed below.

## PALEONTOLOGY (Continued):

**Protopithecus brasiliensis.** This fossil monkey, described from remains found in a Brazilian cave, is estimated to have lived 10,000 years ago. With a body weight of 25kg, it is the largest known South American primate, living or extinct. Given the reports of unknown primates that still arise from that continent (see preceding story), it just possibly could be premature to assume the species is extinct.

**Clues to early birds.** *Unenlagia comahuensis*, a 90-million-year old bird-dinosaur link from Patagonia, shows important skeletal similarities to the far older "first bird," *Archaeopteryx*. The much larger *Unenlagia*, however, was a ground-living creature about 2.3m long, which used its winglike arms for balance as it chased down its prey. It must have looked like a cross between an ostrich and a *Velociraptor*. Canadian paleontologist Hans-Dieter Sues calls this fascinating creature "a living fossil in its own day." Paleontologists were even more startled by the discovery of *Sinosauropteryx*, a dinosaur - not bird - fossil from China dated at 121 million years and showing what appear to be feathers in a mane-like row down the back. This find was part of a treasure trove of fossils including what may be a bird predating *Archaeopteryx*. Finally, a remarkable fossil of a nestling bird, found in Spain and dated ca. 135 million years B.P., shows a surprising mix of characteristics. The wings are very modern, while the skull looks more primitive - like a dinosaur's, according to discoverer Jose Sanz. Dissenting scientists believe the skeleton shows links to pre-dinosaurian reptiles. The new fossils have not settled all arguments on whether birds arose directly from dinosaurs.

**Ancient humanity.** The earliest hominid fossils ever found in Europe (780,000 years old) indicate an ancestor with a face startlingly like that of *Homo sapiens*. The Spanish experts who described the fossils believe the newly-described species *Homo antecessor* gave rise to both Neanderthals and *H. sapiens*. Other paleoanthropologists, while impressed with the discovery, are not ready to create a separate species based on the fossils found so far. Meanwhile, on Java, new fossils of *Homo erectus* have sparked a controversy. The bones of this presumed ancestor to *Homo sapiens* are astonishingly recent, being dated to a mere 27,000 years B.P.. This dating has been challenged: if correct, it shows *H. erectus* lived on for perhaps 150,000 years longer than previously believed. Some cryptozoologists have theorized this species might still be around, giving rise to reports of primitive manlike creatures in Southeast Asia. It must be noted, however, that survival on an island does not prove survival on the mainland.

**Sources:** Anonymous. 1996. "Scientists Find Giant But Extinct Monkey in Amazon," Reuters, May 22 // Anonymous (AP). 1996. "Feathered fossil strengthens dinosaur-bird connection," *USA Today*, October 21 // Conlon, Michael. 1997. "Bird-like dinosaur found in Patagonia," Reuters, May 20 // Gibbons, Ann. 1997. "A New Face for Human Ancestors," *Science*, May 30, p. 1331 // Kluger, Jeffrey. 1996. "Not So Extinct After All," *TIME*, December 23, p.42 // Monastersky, R. 1997. "T. Rex bested by Argentinean beast," *Science News*, May 24, p.317 // Morell, Virginia. 1997. "Fossilized Hatchling Heats Up the Bird-Dinosaur Debate," *Science*, June 6, p.1501 // Spotts, Peter. 1997. "Fossil Hints at How Flight Took Wing," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 27 // Wuethrich, Bernice. 1997. "How Reptiles Took Wing," *Science*, March 7, p.1419. Thanks to Paul Cropper, Angel Morant-Fores, and Jon Fry for some of these articles.

## NEWS AND COMMENT

**A clarification is in order** concerning last issue's report of the rediscovery of a "river shark" in Borneo. With only a brief dispatch to go on, I surmised this was probably a rare species, *Carcharhinus borneensis*. What actually happened was the rediscovery of the **Borneo River Shark, known from a single specimen** taken a century ago. This shark was never even properly described: its scientific name is the incomplete *Glyphis species B*. According to the Sarah Fowler of the IUCN's Shark Specialist Group, *Glyphis* isn't the only surprise found in an 18-month study of Borneo's rivers, fishing nets, and fish markets. **"Discoveries include some sharks which are completely new to science, as well as new species records for the region."** Several other specimens of this shark, a small, blunt-nosed type with outsized pectoral fins, were netted, photographed, and released. Fowler adds that the local Department of Fisheries told the IUCN scientists they were wasting their time: the river shark was just a fishermen's tale. (For photos, see the new issues of *Audubon* and *BBC Wildlife*.) **Source:** Anonymous. 1997. "IUCN: A Shark Once Feared Extinct is Rediscovered," M2 PressWIRE, April 10. **Thanks to Ben Roesch and Paul Cropper.**

Is it possible that **thousands of mammals remain to be discovered?** Yes, according to biologist Lawrence Heaney and other experts. Heaney, of Chicago's Field Museum, has described 15 new species himself since 1991. He predicts that **the current catalogue of 4,600 mammal species may expand as high as 8,000.** Seem ridiculous? Not when we've described 459 species between 1983 and 1993 alone. Most are rodents or insectivores, but, as *EZ* readers know, they also include such spectacular finds as beaked whales, muntjac deer, a startling collection of primates (see lead story) and the bizarre Vu Quang ox, or sao la. (Note: there is an increasing trend among zoological writers to use this animal's Vietnamese name, which is sometimes written as one word.) **One of Heaney's own discoveries is a "flying fox" bat** from the Philippines, with a 1-meter wingspan. The division of new mammal species is interesting: one-third are actually being identified for the first time from the wild, while the rest come from taxonomic study and reclassification of existing types or from identification of previously overlooked museum specimens. It is increasingly clear that we have a lot to learn about the wildlife of this planet - just as cryptozoologists have always insisted. **Source:** Tangley, Laura. 1997. "New Mammals in Town," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 9, p.59.

Scientists studying the **elusive forest elephant** of central Africa have raised the question of **whether it's a separate species** from the savanna elephant. Mitochondrial DNA tests point in that direction. Kenyan specialist Nicholas Georgiadis believes the tall, long-limbed desert elephants of Namibia may constitute yet another species. **Source:** Tangley, Laura. 1997. "In Search of Africa's Forgotten Forest Elephant," *Science*, March 7, p.1417. **Comment:** There seems to be surprisingly little interest in examining the evidence for the most problematic species (or subspecies), the true "pygmy elephant" (which is not even mentioned in Tangley's otherwise excellent article).

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS.

Kerr, Philip. 1997. *Esau*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 372pp. This novel combines a tale of the discovery of the yeti with a spy story about the search for a crashed satellite. Kerr has done considerable yeti research (he includes a bibliography), and the book is absorbing until the last 50 pages, when it brings its two story lines together in a series of truly absurd events, completely destroying any believability in either theme. Kerr's yetis are somewhat more evolved and a little larger than reports of the (alleged) real animal would support, but otherwise they're pretty good until a local holy man reveals he can talk to them and have the yetis follow his orders.

Shuker, Karl P. N. 1996. *The Unexplained*. North Dighton, MA: J.G. Press. 219pp. This is an interesting book, but I almost wish Dr. Shuker hadn't written it. I say this because, by discussing cryptozoology in the same book with many other alleged phenomena (some intriguing, some extremely weak and far-fetched), Shuker will probably encourage the skeptics who like to lump cryptozoology with the study of ghosts, disappearances, etc. and dismiss all as "paranormal nonsense." As one would expect from Shuker, the cryptozoology sections of this geographically arranged collection are good. He publishes a photograph of what may be a dead yarri, or Queensland marsupial tiger, and provides brief synopses of many other cryptids. I would disagree with Shuker on one case: he gives too much credence to "Trunko," a fantastic marine animal allegedly washed up in 1922. Charles Fort (writing much closer to the year of the alleged occurrence) tried to establish the truth behind this event, but failed to locate any supporting evidence and ended up dismissing the episode. (Dr. Shuker does note that nothing in the fossil record resembles this furred, long-trunked chimera.)

### PERIODICALS.

In a similar vein, I've always been reluctant to cite publications that mix cryptozoology with unrelated subjects like psychic phenomena, often in a most unscientific fashion. However, the July 1997 issue of *Fortean Times* offers four articles on cryptozoology, all of them scientific and well-written. First is "Hell's Teeth," by biologist Jeremy Wade, about a bizarre animal photographed in the Amazon. It appears to be a river dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*) with a weird saw-toothed ridge down its back rather than the small dorsal fin these animals usually sport. Dr. Karl Shuker's column, "Lost Ark," tells the story of the rediscovery of Borneo's bay cat (*Felis badia*), known from only a handful of specimens and not seen in over 60 years. Loren Coleman has a good article on claims of giant anacondas, and there's an update on the strange chimp "Oliver." It's enough to make you overlook the article on "Tesla energy weapons" and the ads for space alien T-shirts. The July issue follows up with Karl Shuker's Top 20 animal discoveries and rediscoveries of recent years, a recommended

## PERIODICALS (Continued):

Top 10 cryptozoological books (I regret to report that *Rumors of Existence* did not make the cut), and a photograph of an alleged chimp-gorilla cross (see lead story in this issue) that does appear to display a curious mix of features.

Eliot, Jon. 1997. "In the Dwindling Philippine Forest, There's Still Room for Discovery," *National Geographic*, July. Short article with photographs of two new species: the Panay cloudrunner, a squirrel-sized mammal (*EZ* 3:2), and Lina's sunbird, a colorful creature just identified from specimens taken in 1965.

Newman, Cathy. 1997. "Nature's Masterwork: Cats," *National Geographic*, June, p.54. Includes a graphic on "Cats of the World" which regroups the cats into 10 "lineages" based on DNA analysis. Newman takes a stand on taxonomic disputes by agreeing the puma belongs in its own genus (*Puma*), as does the cryptozoologist's favorite feline, the Iriomote cat (*Mayailurus iriomotensis*), discovered only 30 years ago.

Schaller, George B., and Elisabeth S. Vrba. 1996. "Description of the Giant Muntjac (*Megamuntiacus vuquangensis*) in Laos," *Journal of Mammology*, 77(3), p.675. Formal description of one of the new land mammals from SE Asia. Thanks to Jim Heffelfinger for a copy.

Sayers, Kenneth. 1997. "Is It Over Yeti?" *Skeptical Inquirer*, March/April, p.51. Thorough, balanced review of Daniel Taylor-Ide's 1995 book *Something Hidden Behind the Ranges*. (Discussed in *EZ* 3:6.)

## INTERNET.

The Cable News Network's Website has a story and an 18-second downloadable QuickTime video of the "monster" of Lake Van, Turkey. Address: <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9706/12/fringe/turkey.monster>.

**Comment:** The object on the tape certainly looks like a living animal, but I can't identify it. My only guess is that it *might* be a very large sturgeon, although it appears unusually dark in color.

The British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club has a new Website at [http://www.ultranet/ca.bcsc](http://www.ultranet.ca.bcsc). The site has about 20 pages of information on cryptids, mainly the large and famous ones, plus information on the BCSCC, links to other cryptozoology sites, and a list of BCSCC publications. The BCSCC has also revised and expanded its newsletter, *Cryptonews*. The rate for four issues per year is \$10 (U.S. or Canadian). Write to: John Kirk, BCSCC, c/o Suite 89 - 6141 Willingdon Avenue, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada V5H 2T9.

The World Conservation Monitoring Centre has opened a prototype site for a CITES information service. This is available at <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/CITES>. It offers a database of CITES-listed species, including many rarities of interest to the cryptozoologist.

## EDITOR'S PAGE

**PURPOSE:** Cryptozoology is the zoological subspecialty of finding new or supposedly extinct species of all types and sizes. The term has, unfortunately, become associated largely with sensationalized "monsters" in the public mind. Some writers even use it to refer to "ghost" animals. *Exotic Zoology* is intended to help restore the word's proper usage: the name of a hard science devoted to collecting and studying evidence.

**IN CLOSING:** Serious researchers should join the revived International Society of Cryptozoology (P.O. Box 43070, Tucson, AZ 85733). The ISC has resumed publication of its *Newsletter*.

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**Logo illustration:** *Delphinus rhinoceros*, described by naturalists Quoy and Gaimard in 1819. Drawing by Craig Gosling copyright 1994.

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