



EXOTIC ZOOLOGY

The Bimonthly Magazine of Cryptozoology

Vol. 4, #6 November/December 1997

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MYSTERY ANIMALS: BRINGING BACK THE DEAD

Much of cryptozoology involves searching for surviving members of species presumed extinct. Inevitably, that raises the question, "What if a species really is extinct?" Have we lost it for good?

The answer to this fascinating riddle is: maybe yes, maybe no.

Take the quagga. This close relative of the zebra was immediately distinguishable by its brownish body, set off by brown striping on a white head and neck. (Except in the case of one freak animal, which was - believe it or not - hairless and *blue*.) In any event, the quagga became extinct in 1883, when the last one died in the Amsterdam Zoo.

Over a century later, efforts are underway to bring back the quagga, or at least a reasonable facsimile. Through capture and selective breeding of zebras which show signs of carrying quagga genes, a group of enthusiasts led by South African Museum taxidermist Reinhold Rau is trying to resurrect the animal.

When samples from a stuffed quagga Rau was remounting were sent to American geneticist Russell Higuchi, it was established that the quagga (originally classified as a species, *Equus quagga*) and Burchell's zebra (*E. burchelli*) were cospecific, with their distinct appearances representing only subspecific or, more likely, varietal differences. This discovery gave Rau the inspiration to start looking for brownish or partially striped Burchell's zebras and collecting them for crossbreeding designed to bring out the quagga characteristics.

BRINGING BACK THE DEAD (Continued):

If Rau does produce something that looks like a quagga, will it be a quagga? The question is difficult to answer. The problem is that, based on the mitochondrial DNA Higuchi has been able to retrieve, there is no definite way to tell a quagga from a zebra. It's like deciding whether a Siamese cat with tabby ancestry is really a Siamese: they belong to the same species, so it's a matter of definitions.

Similar back-breeding experiments have been undertaken in the past, most notably by the Heck brothers, two German zookeepers. Lutz and Heinz Heck spent decades re-creating, in some form, the long-extinct wild cattle called aurochs (*Bos primigenius*) and the tarpan, the prehistoric wild horse of Europe. As with the quagga project, the premise was that the genes of these extinct animals still existed in dilute form as a result of interbreeding with related animals, and that these genes could be recovered.

Again, it is a matter of dispute whether the Hecks' "aurochs" and "tarpan" are "real" or just living Xerox copies of the originals. It's worth noting that the animals eventually produced by the Hecks do breed true to type. Today's tarpan appears identical to its ancestor, including the bristly mane, hard hooves, and gray coat. The tarpan died out in the 1800s, though, and the available literature does not indicate whether any preserved specimens exist and whether, if so, there has been any effort to recover DNA and compare the living to the extinct. The same is true of the aurochs, which became extinct in 1627. Perhaps the only definite thing to say is that no one can prove these animals are *not* the real thing.

A Japanese-led effort to do something far more spectacular has so far come to naught. Geneticist Kazufumi Goto and his colleagues completed a fruitless expedition to Siberia in search of frozen mammoth sperm. If the complete DNA of a mammoth can be recovered, their thinking goes, it can be used in a surrogate elephant mother to produce a baby which is 50% mammoth and 50% elephant. Further breeding could eventually produce a nearly pure mammoth.

Re-creating a mammoth from ancient DNA would require major advances beyond the work done so far in using frozen genetic material. There is no guarantee - and, some scientists believe, almost no chance - of success, but Goto is taking the quest one step at a time. He's returning to Siberia next year to search for new mammoth remains.

Sources: Anonymous. 1997. "Mammoth Sperm Search Fails," Associated Press, September 19 // Bille, Matthew. 1995. *Rumors of Existence*. Blaine, WA: Hancock House // Burton, John, and Bruce Pearson. 1988. *The Collins Guide to the Rare Mammals of the World*. Lexington, MA: Stephen Greene Press // Gadd, Laurence. 1981. *The World Almanac Book of the Strange #2*. New York: Signet // McNeil, Donald. 1997. "Brave Quest of Africa Hunt: Bringing Back Extinct Quagga," *New York Times*, September 16 // Shuker, Karl. 1997. *From Flying Toads to Snakes With Wings*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, Chapter 6.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Two announcements: First, the book on cryptocetology planned by Darren Naish and myself has been postponed. Darren has opted to finish his Ph.D. first. We *do* still intend to write the book, but the hoped-for completion date has slipped from 1998 to 1999 at the earliest.

Second, *Exotic Zoology* will be changing. I've found I can't continue *EZ* in its current form while working on other projects and having time for my "real job" and my family. Beginning with Volume 6, No.1, *EZ* will be a shorter, four-page newsletter. Readers can choose mail or Email delivery. I hope to supplement the newsletter next year with a Web page for other material. The new newsletter subscription rate will be \$10 a year for U.S. mail and all Email subscribers, \$12 for airmail to other countries.

Cost for those who only want to renew through 5:6 (current format):

# of issues	U.S.	U.S. Student	Other Countries	Foreign Student
6	\$18	15	20	18
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3	\$9	8	12	10
2	\$6	4	8	7
1	\$3	2	4	3

Please write or Email me if you have questions or concerns.

NEWS AND COMMENT

A recent "lake monster" case from Japan displays a most unusual feature. The creature itself, reported since 1973 from Lake Kussharo, is said to be elongated, dark, and "eel-like." The unusual thing is that the lakeside town of Teshikaga is in no hurry to have the reports investigated scientifically. A local spokesman explained that the inhabitants like the monster the way it is: as a mystery, which adds to the allure of the lake and "boosts tourism." **Source:** "Japan's Own Sea Serpent," *Newsweek*, August 11, 1997, p.8.

Peter Chapple has begun the latest effort to document the continued **existence of the thylacine** on the mainland of Australia. Chapple's organization, the Australian Rare Fauna Research Association, has begun a project called "Tiger 2000" to collect evidence for the animal. Chapple has records of well over a thousand sightings, but the supporting evidence so far is disappointing: one pawprint cast and a photograph he admits is too blurry to be definitive. **Source:** Ashley-Griffiths, Katy. 1997. "A New Hunt for 'Extinct' Tiger," *Herald and Weekly Times*, October 26. **Sent in** by Paul Cropper.

NEWS AND COMMENT (Continued):

The latest "blob" of unidentified organic matter from the oceans has washed up in New Zealand. Thanks to CNN, the image of this huge, irregularly shaped mass has been broadcast around the world. Its identity is under study. The thing is described in a news report as having whitish flesh and "paddle-like tentacles." Unlike many of the earlier reports of amorphous masses of tissue, this one will apparently have samples properly saved and tested. **Source:** CNN, "Mysterious sea creature washes up on New Zealand beach," <http://www.cnn.com/EARTH/9710/14/new.zealand.creature>, October 14, 1997.

A new species of ray from Brazil has been identified after two years of study. The scientific name has not been released yet. The fish is described as "bluish-gold" marked with black spots. It has a narrow body and large eyes. Interestingly, the ichthyologists describing the new species found there was already a specimen in the Museum of Natural History in New York, but that example had been misidentified. **Source:** Associated Press, 1997, October 31.

A British expedition claims to have established the existence of Sumatra's orang-pendek, a possible new ape species. Two photographs have been taken. One was blurred: the other was clearer, but is subject to differing interpretations. One anthropologist, Dr. Colin Groves, believes the animal shown is "undoubtedly a gibbon." Dr. David Chivers, an anatomist, is convinced the animal involved is a new species related to the gibbon or the orangutan. The photograph shows the orangeish, 1.3-meter (4-foot) animal from the back, walking almost upright. It does not show the feet, which would indicate whether the animal was normally ground-dwelling or arboreal. Other evidence includes footprint casts, hair, and sighting reports, including one by anthropologist Yanuar Achmad. **Source:** Ewing, Tania. 1997. "Science Goes Ape Over a Snapshot That May Change the Way We See Evolution," *Age* (Melbourne, Australia), October 18. **Thanks again** to Paul Cropper.

Commentary: It's nice to see cryptozoology getting its due on television, but it could be better done. In America, most of the programs involved have been on The Discovery Channel. *The Lost Mammoths*, a documentary on the strange elephants of Nepal, was excellent. The half-hour series *Into the Unknown*, produced by Yorkshire Television, is of uneven quality. The makers of the series have done their research, but the shows I've seen so far (on unknown bears and Australia's giant monitor) don't have much evidence to display, so the time is filled out with animation and discussions of peripheral subjects. A&E's recent one-hour documentary on the "abominable snowman" was obviously well-financed and lavishly produced. That makes it all the more surprising that the script included so many minor errors. The show includes the controversial "snow-walker film." In my opinion, this footage is a hoax. When the animal steps into the snow, it flounders the way a human in a suit would. To me, the figure just does not move like a creature at home in its environment.

RESOURCES: A BASIC LIBRARY OF CRYPTOZOOLOGY

There is far more to cryptozoology than books, but books are a very useful starting point. I'm often asked to recommend books on cryptozoological subjects, and so here I offer my basic reading list.

Any list of crypto books has to start with Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans' *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. It simply can't be overlooked. Heuvelmans' collection of cryptozoological reports from every inhabited continent is invaluable, even if not all the animals surveyed turn out to be real. (I personally believe Heuvelmans makes a major error with his endorsement of the DeLoys "ape" photograph - see *EZ* issue 4:5.) Look for the slightly revised and updated version published in 1995 by Kegan Paul International.

Almost as fundamental is *Willy Ley's Exotic Zoology*. This book, which lent its title to the present newsletter, collected most of the cryptozoological material from Ley's books of scientific oddities. While some of the information has been rendered obsolete, the book remains a fascinating and highly readable collection of zoological discoveries and mysteries.

Three other books help survey the field of cryptozoology and assemble the facts needed for a thorough understanding. Dr. Karl Shuker's *The Lost Ark: New and Rediscovered Animals of the Twentieth Century* (HarperCollins, 1993) describes the entire variety of animal finds made in the last 90-odd years. Dr. Roy Mackal's *Searching for Hidden Animals* (Doubleday, 1980) brings some of the major mystery-animal cases up to the date of its publication. And, while it may seem very egotistical for a writer to nominate his own book, I honestly feel that my *Rumors of Existence* (Hancock House, 1995) belongs here. *Rumors* surveys the most recent discoveries, the possible-extinction cases, and the better-documented mystery animals in one compact package.

There are several good books concerning large animals reported from the oceans. A collection of the best starts with Rupert T. Gould's *The Case for the Sea Serpent* (Phillip Allan, 1930). Writing when many witnesses to the "classic" cases were still alive, Gould assembled a formidable brief in favor of the existence of one or more "monsters." He made only one serious error, which was to accept a certain hoax from Australia concerning a zoologically impossible chimera called the mohamoha. Four decades later, Bernard Heuvelmans assembled all the known information on the subject in his massive *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents* (Hill and Wang, 1968). Sifting over 300 "good" cases, Heuvelmans once again provided a great service, although his belief that up to seven large unknowns inhabit the oceans is difficult to credit. Richard Ellis brought the subject up to date with his *Monsters of the Sea* (Alfred Knopf, 1994), a skeptical but open-minded and thorough treatment of the subject throughout history.

CRYPTOZOOLOGY LIBRARY (Continued):

Two books, both entitled *Bigfoot*, deserve to be read by all serious students of reported apelike creatures. The first, by eminent primatologist John Napier (Berkley, 1972), is the best single volume ever written on the subject, and includes Asian as well as North American cases. Napier concluded that the yeti was a myth but sasquatch was probably real. Anthropologist Kenneth Wylie's book of the same name (Viking Press, 1980) provides a well-written skeptical counterpoint concerning sasquatch. Robert Pyle's *Where Bigfoot Walks* (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) rounds out the essential sasquatch books by putting the subject in cultural and geographical context. (While there are several worthwhile books on the yeti, I couldn't think of a true standout to recommend here.)

Henry Bauer's *The Enigma of Loch Ness* (the latest edition is from Johnston and Bacon Books, 1991) is probably the most balanced, readable book on that alleged animal. Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker's well-researched *Mystery Cats of the World* (Robert Hale, 1989) is the basic reference for those interested in felids and felid-like animals.

Well, those are my selections for the books making up the fundamental crypto-library. Two volumes which just barely missed the cut are Tony Healy and Paul Cropper's *Out of the Shadows* and Karl Shuker's *In Search of Prehistoric Survivors*. Some readers will undoubtedly suggest I've overlooked valuable works by John Green, Grover Krantz, Ivan Sanderson, Loren Coleman, Maurice Burton, Daniel Taylor-Ide, Daniel Cohen, and others. Perhaps I have, but one must start somewhere. Readers, please feel free to write me with your own nominations.

RESOURCES

BOOKS.

Shuker, Karl. 1997. *From Flying Toads to Snakes With Wings*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications. 222pp. This is a reedited collection of cryptozoology articles Dr. Shuker has published in *FATE* magazine from 1988 to 1997. (As always, I am reluctant to mention *FATE*, but cryptozoologists must take their opportunities to publish wherever they can find them - I've written for *FATE* myself.) In any event, there is a great deal of material here worth reading. Dr. Shuker's thorough research has turned up everything from minor oddities (jackals who sprout tiny horns on their skulls) to unproven but intriguing rumors (such as a type of vampire bat reported in Africa) to disproven stories (like the discovery of "giant skunks" - it turned out to be a misprint for "skinks.") The most fascinating item in the book is a fairly thorough account of a titanic jellyfish (with estimated 200-foot (60m)

BOOKS (Continued):

tentacles) impaled on the bow of a steamship in 1973. According to Shuker, samples of this monster were analyzed and confirmed as jellyfish. The problem is that neither Shuker nor anyone else has printed the actual analysis, or even the names of the experts who reportedly performed it. Dr. Shuker throws in some items I wish he wouldn't, such as "ghost dogs," that have nothing to do with the subject of real undiscovered animals. Still, this collection is so full of intriguing information that the reader should be willing to forgive Shuker a few such flights of fancy.

Sunlin, Mark. 1997. *Water Dragons: A Guide to Lake Serpent Legends Around the World*. Dragon's Head Press (P.O. Box 369, London, SW6 5JN, U.K.). 20pp. Well-written booklet summarizing the major lake-monster claims. Sunlin does not believe any of these are real animals: he's interested in what these reports say about folklore, culture, and the human psyche. A few typos and misspellings detract from the overall positive impression.

PERIODICALS.

Shuker, Karl. 1997. "A Surfeit of Civets?" *Fortean Times*, September, p.17. Dr. Shuker reports on evidence for possible new species of civets from northwest Vietnam and the Indonesian island of Seram. (Interestingly, there is already a strange civet on record from northern Vietnam, a single specimen which may be a species, *Cynogale lowei*.) In the same issue, Mike Dash has a superb article surveying "lake monsters" from around the world, covering everything from possible explanations to Internet sites.

Mittermeir, Russell. 1997. "Homegrown Varieties," *Newsweek*, August 11, p. 20. In this opinion piece, Dr. Mittermeir notes that, in our excitement over possible extraterrestrial life, we still need to catalogue many species living on Earth. In Brazil, he notes, "We may have located two or three other monkeys and a tree porcupine previously unknown to science."

Daley, Suzanne. 1997. "Fishermen don't see lure of living fossil," *Denver Post*, November 2 (reprinted from the *New York Times*). Update on the precarious status of the coelacanth.

INTERNET.

Cryptozoologist Michel Raynal has created a new home page. Address: <http://perso.ranadoo.fr/cryptozoo>. It includes several subjects (text in French) and a list of groups and publications.

Those interested in the reported giant salamander of California's Trinity Alps will find a chronicle of a recent expedition at <http://www.hooked.net/~kylemi/tagse/97expedition.html>. It's hard to tell how serious the expedition members were, but this sometimes-lighthearted record makes entertaining reading.

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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RUMORS OF EXISTENCE

by Matthew A. Bille

"A lovely little book, jam-packed with fascinating material."

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