

# EXOTIC ZOOLOGY

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Matthew A. Bille, Editor

## DISCOVERY: A NEW COATI

**As *Exotic Zoology* closes its six-year run, I'm thrilled to begin the last issue by announcing the discovery of a new species never discussed before in any publication.**

This scoop comes courtesy of missionary/cryptozoologist Peter Hocking, who has found a new species of coati in the genus *Nasuella*. Hocking got the first (dead) specimen from a farmer in 1998. The animal, he learned, lived in cloud forests in the Peruvian state of Apurimac. This year, he found two more at a local zoo (one of these is shown below). Hocking is working with Victor Pacheco, a mammologist at the University of San Marcos in Lima. Pacheco confirms the discovery is a new species and is preparing the description. The only known species in the genus *Nasuella* lives only in Columbia and differs in color. The common coatis of the genus *Nasua* are more gracile and longer-legged, with longer, thinner tails.



Hocking continues to hunt for more mystery animals described by his Peruvian friends, including two large cats and several species of snakes. For him, the coati is one more validation of his search. Source: Hocking, Peter. Personal interview, October 19, 1999.

## WHAT IS CRYPTOZOOLOGY?

As *Exotic Zoology* closes for good, the other action that seemed appropriate was to back to the roots of this controversial discipline. What exactly is cryptozoology? What are the appropriate methods to be used? What is and is not legitimate science? In this brief essay, I'd like to lay out my thoughts.

Cryptozoology – the study of “hidden animals” – was essentially established as a discipline by a French-born zoologist, Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans. To Heuvelmans, cryptozoology did not encompass the collection and study of all new species. Rather, it was a relatively narrow branch of zoology focused on new or supposedly extinct animals which had some “unexpected” trait, such as appearing in a habitat in which such a creature had never been known to exist. Heuvelmans also suggested that only animals over a certain size (not specified) were “cryptids.” I will surmise that his thinking is that mice, insects, etc., are easily overlooked, and therefore it's not remarkable when new ones are found. I politely disagree: the finding of small creatures, or those whose appearance is not surprising, still helps to establish the legitimacy of the search for new animals in general. And many small creatures are startling to zoologists and important to science in general, such as the little pterobranchs that recently made a reappearance after supposedly being extinct since before the Cretaceous.

The focus on the large and spectacular has provided ammunition for skeptics, many of whom lump cryptozoology into the same “pseudoscience” category reserved for the study of clairvoyance and UFOs. Fortunately, cryptozoologists have solid arguments to use against this prejudice. The most powerful is, as Dr. Karl Shuker has suggested, the uttering of the phrase “Vu Quang.” The bewildering variety of large land mammals emerging or re-emerging from Southeast Asia in this decade has rendered the belief that no large animals remain to be discovered completely indefensible.

Some cryptozoologists have accused skeptics of requiring unreasonable levels of proof. Not so. The level of proof required for sasquatch is exactly the same as for a new salamander or ant species: a type specimen. That means a body or a large enough piece of one (such as a head) to prove the animal is a new species.

Cryptozoologists have been criticized for relying too heavily on eyewitness accounts, often from cultures which the cryptozoologist in question does not understand well. There's some truth to this, but “mainstream” zoology always has and always will follow the same source of information. Accounts by indigenous people, usually hunters, led to most of the spectacular mammal finds in Southeast Asia in the 1990s. Sometimes animals are found totally by chance, as with the first coelacanth. Other times, traps are set for animals (like mist nets for birds) and new species identified out of what is caught. Regardless, following up “native” accounts will always be a key technique, and a perfectly legitimate one.

Cryptozoologists can get in trouble with other zoologists for proposing things that seem highly implausible. For example, some cryptozoologists have seriously proposed the existence of alligator-sized animals in tiny Irish ponds. That's not going to get one much of a hearing at a professional symposium. Neither will suggesting – despite apparently sincere witness claims – that there is a breeding population of birds the size of small aircraft in the Ohio Valley of the United States. It's not impossible, and it's hard to completely disprove, but it's an exceedingly long shot that such

birds exist and no one has ever gotten a clear picture, or even a report of a sighting by a group of experienced birders.

As mentioned, the Vu Quang discoveries have vindicated the basic cryptozoological premise that animals – including large and spectacular ones – can still be hidden. Conservationists overlooked the mainland population of the Javan rhinoceros for some 30 years. It is exceedingly difficult to argue with a straight face that just because science has missed herds of thousand-kilogram rhinos does not mean we could have missed a 50-kilogram ape.

Cryptozoologists often complain that animals which sound outlandish remain undiscovered because funding to search for them is not available. That's sometimes true. But it's also true that backers with deep pockets, often media companies, have financed expeditions to look in Loch Ness and the Himalayas. And it must be said it's not all that easy to get funding to go study elephants or anything else. There are not huge pots of grant money waiting for either zoologists or cryptozoologists.

The finding of one of the truly spectacular cryptids – sasquatch, the yeti, mokele-mbembe, etc. – would undoubtedly open up more funding, as cable television networks especially could be expected to finance the search for more stunning animal footage. Until then, the seeker after Nessie faces the same challenges as the primatologist who thinks there may be a new ape subspecies in Malaysia or the herpetologist who wants to find a new lizard in Australia. There's not much money out there. It may be better to downplay the word cryptozoology, organize a party with a respected organization backing it to survey the fauna of a little-known region, and hope to find the cryptids along the way.

Skeptics often complain that anyone can call himself or herself a cryptozoologist. That's true. If you think about it, though, it's also true for zoologists. I can print a business card and letterhead calling myself a zoologist, represent myself that way, and no one can do anything. There's no enforcement body that goes around jailing people who call themselves zoologists but who lack a degree. Unless one claims false credentials to solicit money, which might be fraud, there's not a legal bar to entry into any field of science. There is, of course, a professional bar. This editor could not apply to a society made up of degreed zoologists, explain that he's an interested amateur, and get admitted.

The point I'm leading up to here is that cryptozoology is a legitimate branch of zoology. Its methods are – or should be – the same as used in other zoological disciplines. Cryptozoology is a hard science, devoted to collecting and studying physical evidence. This alone sets it apart from the pseudosciences. In my opinion, cryptozoologists should stop complaining about the unfair treatment by "mainstream" zoology and the media – even when those complaints are legitimate – and get on with the search. There are many unclassified animals out there, and some of them will prove to be large and unexpected. Even if it turns out there are no bizarre unknown animals in Loch Ness, there will be some – somewhere. Science is enriched by the knowledge gained in all such quests, even those which fail to find the cryptid they seek. Let's keep looking.

## DISCOVERIES: HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE

As all good cryptozoologists know, we're a long way from finding every species on the planet, or even every vertebrate. Some examples of what has turned up in the past few years:

From the Andes of Ecuador and Columbia comes the **cloud forest pygmy owl**. *Glaucidium nubicola* was described in 1999 by Mark Robbins of the University of Kansas Natural History Museum and Gary Stiles of the National University of Columbia in Bogota. The new species inhabits only the forests above 1,500 meters on the Pacific slopes of the Andes. This marks the fourth bird species Robbins has described in the last ten years. The owl is a small, shy bird, and was only identified when careful study of museum specimens and recorded calls led Robbins and Stiles to the discovery that type specimens of two new species (the other being the Costa Rican pygmy owl, *Glaucidium costaricanum*) had been misclassified as specimens of the known Andean pygmy owl. **Source:** University of Kansas, 1999. "KU Museum Researcher Discovered New Pygmy-Owl Species," Press release, May 15. **Forwarded by** Loren Coleman.

**A baby marmoset** born in captivity in Brazil is either an anomalous dwarf marmoset or a new species. Primatologist Marc van Roosmalen, says, "The monkey has hands with claws like the dwarf marmoset (*also discovered by van Roosmalen - Ed.*), but its size and weight are distinctive." A final determination awaits DNA analysis. **Source:** Anonymous. 1999. "For 2<sup>nd</sup> Time, Scientist Discovers Amazonian monkey species," Nando Media and Agence France-Press, May 19. **Thanks to** Dave Walsh for this item. (See related article in the "Resources" section.)

As a reminder that non-specialists are still important contributors to science, Akos Lumnitzer, an underwater photographer, spotted a **strange-looking little fish** off Sydney, Australia. It took him a year to find another specimen, which he caught and took to the Australian Museum. The fish was a new species, a dwarf pipehorse in the genus *Acentronura*. **Source:** Australian Museum Online, <http://www.austmus.gov/au/fish/fisheng/acentron.htm>, accessed June 3, 1999.

A December 1997 expedition to the depths off Cuba, supported and filmed by the Discovery Channel, scooped up a number of **new fish species**. Among them are the "orangeblotch gulper" (*Chaunux suttkusi*), the philomenus goby, a flathead-type fish believed to be belong to the family Chronemata, a cusk eel relative, and a spiny ray fish, genus *Verilus*. View pictures of all these at <http://www.discovery.com/area/science/cubs/deeper/found.html>.

**CONTINUED:**

Discoveries from the oceans: According to the August 1999 issue of *Popular Science*, **four new fish species** were found in the Antarctic, which continues to surprise experts with the biodiversity found in near-freezing waters... Colonies of a **new species of sea squirt** were found on a rope running to a buoy in Kachemak Bay in Alaska. The animals were described in the *Anchorage Daily News* (August 10, 1999) as looking like "orange-tinted clusters of cauliflower heads"... A news item forwarded by Loren Coleman reports that scientists backed by the WWF surveyed Philippine waters near Dumaguete City and collected **25 different specimens of sharks** they couldn't immediately identify. Presumably, some will turn out to belong to known species, but some will almost certainly be new... A **still-unclassified octopod** from the Indo-Pacific region shows astonishing powers of mimicry. Photographs published in *Smithsonian* and *BBC Wildlife* show the animal can uncannily imitate both the shape and the movement of a jellyfish, sea snake, flounder, or any of several other species... Mobil Oil company workers on a platform off the Shetland Islands caught an **unknown type of pink cirrate octopus** on one of their underwater cameras. The images of the 60-cm mollusk were passed to marine biologist Dr. Gordon Williamson, who said, "It was different from anything I'd ever seen before." (*Electronic Telegraph*, London, June 23, 1999)

It seems everyone - and everything - shows up on the Internet these days. Two enthusiasts in Texas, watching a **Webcam positioned at Loch Ness**, believe they spotted the elusive "monster" of the loch on June 5, 1999. The video still republished on the Loch Ness Live site at <http://www.lochness.scotland.net/sightings/index.htm> shows a large dark object in the water.

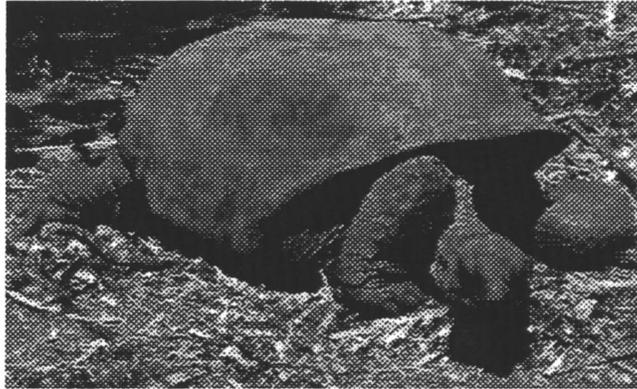
A still-timely 1997 article in the London Observer reported that the **rate of mammalian species discoveries today is the highest it's ever been**. Over 450 have been described in the last decade. There are 4,600 species recognized today and some mammalogists now think there may be over 3,000 left to find. The newspaper notes that "Until recently it was held that most mammals were already known." (COMMENT: That view wasn't held by cryptozoologists, who look more prescient with each passing year.) Dr. George Schaller of the Wildlife Conservation Society gets the last word: "I'm surprised to see people get so wildly excited about a possible bacterium on Mars when our own planet is crawling with undiscovered species." (COMMENT: Actually, both subjects are - or should be - of great scientific interest. Some day, we may have to open another new branch of science - exocryptozoology.)

In another dated but still unexplained item, M. K. Ranjitsinh of India reported that he twice saw an **unknown cat** in that country's Mishmi hills. It was slightly larger than a domestic cat, with a long tail, and was a "darkish rusty brown" with chocolate brown body spots and tail rings." He saw two specimens of the animal about two km apart near the same road.

**CONTINUED:**

What makes this sighting more authoritative than most is that Ranjitsinh is the senior wildlife conservation official for India and published his encounter in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*. (SOURCE: IUCN Cat News, Spring 1989, available at <http://linx.uio.no/lynx/catfolk/cnissues/cn09-18.htm>).

Two species of giant tortoise, both presumed extinct, have been rediscovered in the Seychelles in recent years. The Seychelles giant tortoise (*Dipsochelys hololissa*) was presumed to be extinct around 1840, but was identified in captivity in 1997. The same is true for Arnold's giant tortoise, *Dipsochelys arnoldi*. Twelve individuals of the former species and 18 of the latter are now known to be alive. SOURCE: The Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles, <http://www.bogo.co.uk/gerlach/tortoise.html>: Dr. Justin Gerlach, personal communication.



The "extinct" Arnold's Giant Tortoise. Reproduced by permission of J. Gerlach, Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles.

The latest in the continuing saga of "alien big cats" in Britain is more substantial than the usual report from a startled eyewitness. A surveillance camera at a factory in Telford, Shropshire, caught a puma (*Puma concolor*), 1.8 m long, prowling outside at night. While reports of pumas and other exotic cats living wild in the British Isles are almost innumerable, this represents the first unmistakable photographic evidence. SOURCE: Guardian Unlimited Archive, September 3, 1999.

The parade of new mammals from Southeast Asia (see last issue of EZ) is so stunning that new finds are almost commonplace. The latest: a new rabbit of striking appearance has just been described. The longitudinally striped **Annamite rabbit** was collected by Robert Timmons in a food market in Ban Lak, Laos. It has yellowish fur with black stripes, short ears, and a red posterior. It has never been seen alive by scientists, although one was photographed in 1998. SOURCE: Svensson, Peter. "New Rabbit Discovered in Asia, Associated Press, August 19, 1999.

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS.

Coleman, Loren, and Jerome Clark. *Cryptozoology A to Z*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 267pp. For a book whose subtitle bills it as an "Encyclopedia," this is shorter than one might expect, but there's plenty of good material in here. The authors cover the major animals, publications, and personalities in cryptozoology, making this a first-rate introduction for the newcomer or a handy sourcebook for the experienced researcher. Two quibbles: I would have liked to see the references broken down by topic or listed for each entry rather than being all compiled together, and the wording in the entry on *C. megalodon* gives the impression I believe this shark survives, when that isn't the case (Coleman has apologized for not being clearer.) The authors necessarily had to leave a lot of mysteries out, but the important ones are all here, and the writing is clear and balanced. The bottom line is this book is a "must-have" addition to the cryptozoologist's library.

### PERIODICALS.

Vol. 13 of the oft-delayed but always worthwhile journal *Cryptozoology* is out from the International Society of Cryptozoology. The chief articles and reports concern new reptiles and amphibians, big cats, and unknown primates. The herpetology articles, recapping discoveries so far in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and probing some possible misidentified or unconfirmed species, are especially good. Equally noteworthy is an article by J. Richard Greenwell on the field investigation of a black felid seen and photographed in Mexico. It turned out to be a case of observer error, but the point is that leading cryptozoologists were willing to go out in the field with an open mind, do the work, find the truth, and print it, even when it was disappointing. The same can't be said for some skeptics of cryptozoology.

Holloway, Marguerite. "Beasts in the Mist," *Discover*, September 1999, p.58. Story of David Oren's search for Amazonia's mysterious mapinguari. The huge, shaggy animal may be a living giant ground sloth, as Oren suspects, or a collection of local folktales and misinterpretations. Holloway points out it's also a symbol of the need to learn about this region, and its discovery would be a boon to those dedicated to protecting the area.

Goering, Laurie. "Amazon Primatologist Shakes Family Tree for New Monkeys," *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 1999. In an extensive article, Goering covers primatologist Marc van Roosmalen's discoveries, exertions, and speculations about new primates in the Amazon. Van Roosmalen believes he has found 14 new monkeys, only one of which he's had time to describe. The scientist is still looking for "several new birds, a new tapir, and a black jaguar" he believes are separate species. He has never seen David Oren's quarry, the mapinguari, but says, "I'm not going to say it's not possible."

## EDITOR'S PAGE

**PURPOSE:** Cryptozoology is the zoological subspecialty of finding new or supposedly extinct species of all types and sizes. *Exotic Zoology* has, I hope, done some good in restoring the word's proper usage: the name of a hard science devoted to collecting and studying evidence.

**REMINDERS:** Serious researchers should inquire about joining the International Society of Cryptozoology (P.O. Box 43070, Tucson, AZ 85733 or Email: [iscz@azstarnet.com](mailto:iscz@azstarnet.com)). The ISC has resumed publication of its journal *Cryptozoology* and *The ISC Newsletter*, although publications have been delayed. Dues are \$42.

All back issues of *EZ* will continue to be available. Our address is 3405 Windjammer Dr., Colorado Springs, CO, 80920, USA. Email: [MattWriter@AOL.com](mailto:MattWriter@AOL.com). Back issues are \$3: a list of back issues is enclosed with this issue.

**CLOSING COMMENT:** Publishing *Exotic Zoology* has been a wonderful experience. I reluctantly close it to focus my limited time on books. I hope readers will continue to correspond with me and send items of interest. I'm always willing to return the favor by providing anything from my files which is of interest to you.

To my readers, I say: Never give up the search. May God bless you all.

Sincerely,



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News: 1995 Thylacine sighting, Confirmed Eastern cougar from Maine, Giant flying squirrel rediscovered, New study on Loch Ness, Black-footed ferret releases  
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