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International Society of Cryptozoology

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NEW EXPEDITION IDENTIFIES RI AS DUGONG

Underwater photograph of a Ri — an unmistakable dugong. Taken by Capt. Kerry Piesch on February 11, 1985, in Nokon Bay, southern New Ireland, after surface observations of the animal known locally as Ilkai.

In February, 1985, a new expedition headed for New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, to conduct further investigations into the identity of a marine mammal known by local natives as the Ri or Ilkai, to which they attribute semi-human qualities similar to the mermaid of Western art and folklore.

The expedition, headed by Otter and Morning Glory Zell, Tom Williams, and Bill Morris, was sponsored by the Ecosophical Research Association (ERA) of California, and consisted of 13 persons in total, plus the four-person crew of the motor vessel TSVM Reef Explorer, considered the best dive boat in Australia. This 65-foot vessel has side-scan sonar, satellite navigation, automatic pilot, ship-to-shore radio-telephone, and air conditioned cabins.

The expedition was prompted by the inconclusive results of a 1983 expedition headed by Roy Wagner, a University of Virginia anthropologist, which observed an animal in the bay of Nokon village identified by Susurunga natives as an Ilkai (it is known as the Ri by Barok natives further north).

The Wagner expedition, which included Richard Greenwell, Gale Raymond and Kurt Von Nieda, observed an animal rolling rapidly at the surface about every 10 minutes, and exhibiting pronounced vertical flexure (see Newsletter, Summer, 1983, and Field Report by Wagner et al., in Cryptozoology, Vol. 2, and Comments and Responses in Vols. 2 and 3). Because of these peculiarities, the Wagner team essentially rejected the dugong hypothesis — those animals were known to dive consistently for no more than a minute, and their bulky bodies were not thought capable of the vertical flexure observed.

The new expedition included a two-man video crew, Scott Munro and Keith Wood, a divemaster, Rich Bergero, and a paramedic, Diane Darling. All expedition

members were certified divers. ERA has provided the Society with an exclusive report of their findings, which is summarized below for Newsletter readers.

The Reef Explorer set out from Port Moresby and steamed by way of the Trobriand Islands to New Ireland, an island province of Papua New Guinea. On February 10, they arrived off Cape St. George, on the southern tip of New Ireland. Observing was conducted at Louisa Bay, without results. They next visited Muliama, where natives knew the animal being sought, and called it pismeri in New Guinea Pidgin (pis for fish and meri for woman — from the Australian female term "mary").

The expedition arrived at Nokon, the location of the Wagner team sightings, at 1:45 p.m. on February 11. Almost immediately, at 2:00 p.m., Morning Glory Zell and Rich Bergero observed the flukes of an animal breaking surface in Nokon Bay. The observers thought they looked like the flukes of a small cetacean. Observations of the flukes and a rolling back were made during the whole afternoon. The animal appeared to surface every eight to 11 minutes, consistent with the surfacing behavior reported by the Wagner team. The observed rolls were very fast, and no dorsal fin was visible. Another individual, distinctly smaller, was also sighted.

The display of the flukes was described as the most spectacular. They would appear above the water in a graceful, sweeping motion until the tail was completely vertical. The distal ends of the flukes would flop over slightly as the tail would slide once more beneath the water.

During the observations, a Nokon villager named Tom Omar approached the Reef Explorer in a rowboat. When asked about the Ilkai, he pointed to the tail breaking surface and stated "em i stap" ("there it is"). He went on to describe the female as having a woman's face, hair, hands and breasts. He also stated that there was a family of them in the bay, a male, a female and a child.

A much more revealing observation was made by the Captain of the Reef Explorer, Kerry Piesch. At about 3:30 p.m. Capt. Piesch went underwater with fins, snorkel, and a small underwater camera, accompanied by Mr Bergero. Shortly thereafter, Capt. Piesch signaled that he had observed and photographed the animal below the surface. His description is summarized below:

> Length approximately 5-5.5ft. Color greenish-gray. Distinct head with no discernable neck. Forelimbs short and paddle-shaped. Face could not be seen clearly. Tail the same as described at surface. Animal resembled a dugong.

Capt. Piesch also noted that, when the animal saw him, it moved away, but did not seem unduly alarmed. He was able to take three photographs before coming up for air, one of which is reproduced on the front page of this Newsletter. It was unmistakably that of a dugong.

That evening, expedition members visited the village, and observations continued the next morning, February 12. Expedition members Munro, Hill, Wood, and Bergero set out in the dinghy with video gear, and were able to record several surfacings from the beach. Bergero also went into the water with fins snorkel, and camera, and he obtained more photos. He stated that the animal was a dugong. It was observed to nuzzle the sandy bottom with its snout, making a furrow as it went. It would furrow a little ahead, then back off a bit and dig into the furrow, then continue forward.

Further surface observations were made in the afternoon, and an attempt was made to film the animal underwater with a video camera. The attempt was not successful due to the bulky nature of the equipment, the small dinghy, and bad wind conditions. The next day, it was decided to pursue other activities in order not to unduly harass the animal. February 13 was consequently spent diving around Lipek Island, which had been visited previosuly by Wagner team members Greenwell and Von Nieda, and filming the marine life on and about the island's reef.

On the morning of the 14th, divers with scuba gear surveyed the bottom of Nokon bay, and furrowed markings were seen and photographed, together with a small plant, samples of which were collected for later identification. The association of this plant with the furrowed marks indicates that it was the primary food source of the animal, which is consistent with the eating behavior of dugongs. A new attempt to film the animal underwater with video was also unsuccessful.

The morning of February 15 brought an abrupt end to activities at Nokon. Early in the morning, some villagers were observed pulling a large animal out of the water onto the beach. Several expedition members rowed to the beach, and found that it was a dead female dugong. She had apparently been killed by a single wound in the right dorsal part of her body. Subsequent dissection revealed that she had been shot by a high-powered rifle. The bullet was not recovered, but the chest cavity showed massive damage. Several villagers said that the animal had been killed by somebody from a neighboring village. Also, a powered commercial fishing boat, the Cuddles, was observed in the bay the previous evening. Exactly who killed the dugong, and how and when, could not be determined.

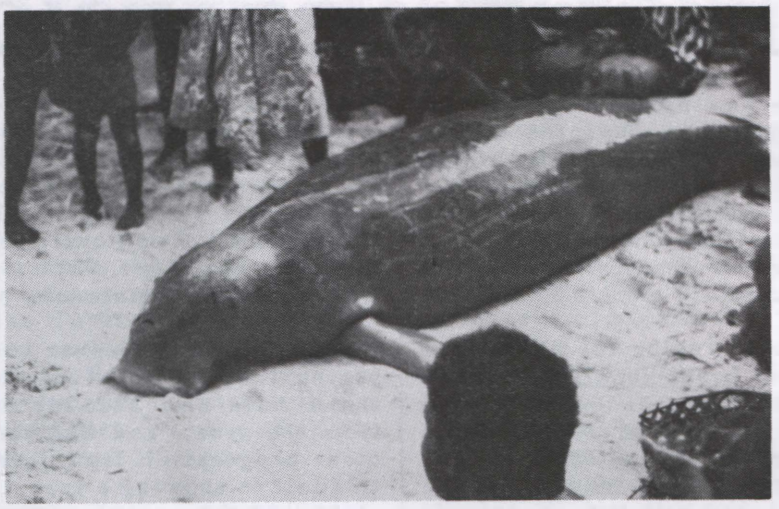
The Nokon villagers themselves had never molested the animals in the past, and they did not even eat its meat. Expedition members later towed the body out to sea.

There can now be little doubt that the animal known as the Ri or Ilkai is no other than the Indo-Pacific dugong (Dugong dugon). The combination of visual sightings, both above and below the water surface, along with photographic evidence and the unfortunate death of one of the animals themselves, makes this conclusion inescapable. It is the consensus of the expedition members that the same conclusion would have been reached even if a dead animal had not been inspected.

Tom Williams, who submitted the report to the Society, states that, since the Ilkai has been identified as a dugong, any hunting or dealing with the meat of these animals, or other supposed mermaid-like creatures, is in reality dealing with dugongs and should be prevented, since the dugong is an endangered species and is also protected by Papua New Guinea law.

He concluded: "One of the lingering questions which remain is how myths of merefolk can arise and persist in the face of the obvious reality of the dugong. There is apparently a kind of belief system at work whose nature transcends the strict discipline of zoology and spills over into the realm of anthropology and psychology."

When informed of the expedition's findings, Roy Wagner expressed surprise that the animal was, after all, a dugong, but he congratulated the team members and was pleased that they had succeded in closing the book on the case. Dr. Wagner is now interested in how such animals become mythicized, and he points out that such mermaid myths — and even sighting reports -- come from more temperate parts of the world where dugongs are not found.



Dead female dugong found on beach of Nokon Bay on February 15, 1985, established conclusively that the Ri/Ilkai is not an unknown animal. Responsibility for the death was not determined.

Contacted in Tucson, Richard Greenwell also expressed surprise that the animal turned out to be a dugong. Although the dugong hypothesis made more sense in terms of what the natives reported, he stated, the actual observations of the animal in Nokon bay had indicated a more cetacean nature. "I was completely wrong in stating that a dugong would not consistently flex its body that sharply at the surface, or would move that fast. It goes to show that we should not think of the dugong in terms of the manatee, which we know better. It is a different animal behaviorally as well as morphologically."

Greenwell did express satisfaction that Wagner team diving times of about 10 minutes were confirmed by the new expedition. "This was one of the reasons we rejected the dugong hypothesis," he stated. "The scientific literature on Australian observations gives only one minute diving times. So, although we have not found a new species, we have uncovered new data on dugong behavior in deeper water. This information will be provided to Paul Anderson and others working with Australian dugongs."

Mr. Williams is currently preparing a Field Report for the 1985 issue of the Society's journal, which will contain full details. "The bottom line," he stated, "is that there was a mystery to be solved, like so many others in cryptozoology. We went with the right equipment and solved it. We cryptozoologists solved it ourselves, which is as it should be. It was not solved by the debunkers or skeptics or armchair speculators."

So, the meteoric but short career of the Ri in the annals of cryptozoology comes to an end. It should serve as a valuable lesson to all. □

"In science one must search for ideas. If there are no ideas then there is no science. A knowledge of facts is only valuable in so far as facts conceal ideas: facts without ideas clutter up the mind and the memory."

Vissarion Grigorievich Belinskii
Sobranie sochinenii
OGIZ, Moscow, 1948.

NEW NEPAL BEAR NOW IN DOUBT

The Spring, 1984, issue of the Newsletter reported on the findings of a team from the Woodlands Institute in West Virginia concerning their field work in Nepal which indicated that a new species of bear had been found.

Daniel Taylor-Ide had named the bear Ursus nepalensis, based on native reports and the acquisition of several skulls which seemed to be sufficiently different from the skulls of the Himalayan black bear, Ursus thibetanus.

Taylor-Ide and his associates (in a special report to the Society, which is summarized here) now doubt their earlier new bear hypothesis. Another expedition to Nepal was conducted in October/November, 1984, in the Barun Valley, near Mount Everest. This valley, and four others in eastern Nepal, is where the native people report the "tree bear" rukh bhalu (U. nepalensis), which they differentiate from the "ground bear" bhui bhalu (U. thibetanus).

John Crawford examining skulls of the supposed new tree bear during the new 1984 expedition to Nepal. [Photo by David Taylor-Ide.]

Besides Tylor-Ide, the leader, the expedition included zoologist John Craighead, botanist Tirtha Shrestha, and ornithologists Robert Fleming and Hari Sharan Nepali. Two Royal Hunters from His Majesty's Palace and five guides were included.

The Woodlands report to ISC states that a total of eleven skulls have now been obtained from the area, "and they show a clear progression from juvenile to adult — showing a transition among the same species from one form into the other with age." The report concludes that "the Nepali tree bear is a juvenile form of the ground bear," or, in other words, they now think U. nepalensis does not exist as a distinct species, but is simply the juvenile form of U. thibetanus.

"However," the report continues, "village assertions persist concerning behavioral, size, and feeding differences between the two bears...if there is a significant difference between these two bears, then it is of ecotype and not of speciation. The Barun jungles are exceedingly dense, and, before recent poaching so drastically reduced the population, an unusually heavy concentration of bears may have developed, and they could have adjusted to this by having the juveniles live primarily in the trees...If such an ecotype hypothesis is true, then it is most unusual among large mammals."

The report further states: "One hundred and thirty-one birds were identified in four weeks of fieldwork. Two birds new to Nepal were discovered and one bird last seen in 1846 was rediscovered. Over one hundred rare and interesting plants were collected. It appears that five are new to Nepal, and two are completely new species. In all our fieldwork, in keeping with cryptozoology, extensive use was made of native knowledge of the jungles. By and large, most local information was exceedingly accurate -- only requiring reinterpretation in scientific terms, villagers not having a scientific method of data organization."

In a telephone conversation with the Editor, Dr. Taylor-Ide stated that, as the number of skulls available gradually increased (most came from local villagers), the transition from the smaller form to the larger form became apparent. This happened by the ninth or tenth skull. Three skulls are now considered "transitional." Dr. Taylor-Ide also stated that he does not completely rule out the separate tree bear species, in view of native insistence that there are two distinct "kinds," but for now he is taking the conservative approach by assuming that only one species is involved. He added that new information he had received from Nepal since the last expedition tended to support the native claim, but that it was not sufficient in itself.

The Woodlands Institute team is to be complimented for uncovering the new evidence -- in some of the most difficult terrain in the world — even when it does not support their earlier hypothesis of a new species. Like the case of the Ri, discussed elsewhere in this issue, the Nepalese tree bear may be only an imaginary animal, and not the cryptozoological find many had hoped for. The Woodlands Institute will keep the Society updated on any future developments. □

"Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; everything else is opinion."

Democritos of Abdera
ca460-ca370 B.C.

SECOND MEGAMOUTH SHARK FOUND

The first megamouth shark was accidentally caught off Hawaii in a parachute anchor lowered by a U.S. Navy research vessel in November of 1976. The only specimen known, it was recently formally described, and assigned to a new genus and family (see "News and Notes," Newsletter, Winter, 1983).

In November of 1984, exactly eight years after the first find, a second specimen was acquired, this time off of Santa Catalina Island, near Los Angeles, California, when it was accidentally netted by the commercial fishing vessel Helga in a gill net set at a depth of 125 feet (the first megamouth was caught at a 500 foot depth).

Fortunately, a California Department of Fish and Game observer was on board the Helga at the time, and he recognized the 15-foot fish as a rarity. Dennis Bedford, a Department biologist, came aboard and had it transferred to the Department's own vessel, the Westwind, which headed for San Pedro. Bedford then made an initial identification, and he contacted ichthyologists at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, who met the boat when it docked.

The fish was immediately transported to the Museum, were tissue samples were collected while it was still fresh, and stomach contents were removed. It was not possible to weigh the fish, but weight was estimated at nearly a ton. About 700 kilos of ice was delivered to the Museum parking lot to keep it fresh, and four days later a temporary case was built for it.

By February 1, the preservation process had been completed, and a heavy duty cargo net was used to move megamouth from the parking lot to the Museum's main floor display area, where it was placed in a specially constructed fiberglass display case, resting in 500 gallons of 70 percent ethanol.

Megamouth is a large filter-feeder whose range has now been extended to at least from Hawaii to the California coast. The second specimen, like the first, is a male. Presumably, there are a few females out there in the vast waters of the Pacific Ocean.

A New York ichthyologist, meanwhile, has proposed that megamouth does not represent a new taxonomic family after all. John G. Maisey, of the American Museum of Natural History, writing in an article in Copeia (Vol. 1985 1 228-231, "Relationships of the Megamouth Shark Megachasma"), states that, contrary to earlier thinking, megamouth's teeth "closely resemble those of some lamnids..." and that "it is possible to interpret Megachasma teeth as derived from this lamniform condition just as readily as to postulate their primitiveness." Dr. Maisey also disagrees with the previous identication by the describers (Taylor et al., 1983 — see Newsletter, Winter, 1983) of an orbital process.

The conclusion by Dr. Maisey is that megamouth is not a primitive sister group of other living lamniforms, and thus should not be the sole known member of its own new family, Megachasmidae. Instead, Dr. Maisey, pointing out that both Megachasma and Cetorhinus seem to form a monophyletic group of specialized filter-feeding lamniforms, proposes that both genera be included in the already existing family Cetorhinidae. The reaction to this re-classification by the original describers (Taylor et al.) is not known at this time. □

The second megamouth shark, caught off the California coast in November, 1984, being measured in the parking lot of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. [Photo courtesy of the Museum.]

PRANK OF MAMMOTH PROPORTIONS

An article by Diana ben-Aaron in the April, 1984, issue of Technology Review revealed the news that Soviet scientists had succeeded in producing — or "retrobreeding" -- the wooly mammoth, a large elephant from the Pleistocene which supposedly became extinct about 10,000 years ago

Sverbighooze Nikhiphorovich Yasmilov, so the story went, obtained some egg cells from a frozen female mammoth found in Siberia. Yasmilov, reported to be the head of veterinary research at the University of Irkutsk, extracted the healthy nuclei from the degenerate egg cells, introduced them in healthy mammoth cytoplasm, and sent some of these to James Creak, a biochemist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Creak, in turn, was supposedly able to heat "the DNA from the mammoth ova until it dissociated into short lengths of code. After a number of false starts, he tried mixing it with a similarly prepared solution of the DNA of elephant sperm. The sections of elephant and mammoth code that matched 'zipped themselves together,' according to Creak, 'as DNA is wont to do.'" This "paired DNA" was then reportedly centrifuged off, and Creak wondered about the possibility of creating an elephant-mammoth hybrid.

Creak communicated his "good news" to Yasmilov, who then began trying to inseminate mammoth ova with sperm from an Asian elephant. It took more than 60 attempts to achieve success, and cell clusters were then implanted into female Asian elephants in the hope of live births. "Most of the elephant cows spontaneously miscarried," wrote ben-Aaron, "but two of the surrogate mothers carried to term, giving birth to the first known elephant-mammoth hybrids." The calves were "classified" as actual wooly mammoths, because of their jaw structure, and because their yellow-brown hair did not fall off after birth.

The two calves, reported to be males (and probably sterile), "will not reach adult size for another 25 years, but have already exhibited extraordinary toughness by surviving the bitter cold of Irkutsk," the article continued. "They are being kept in an outdoor enclosure, and their reaction to the local weather conditions is being carefully monitored." Yasmilov was said to be planning to put the animals to use in adulthood, such as "helping pull immobilized convoy trucks out of the snowdrifts on the trans-Siberian highway...There may even be a job on the trans-Siberian pipeline."

The wooly mammoth is one of the late Pleistocene animals about which speculation concerning its survival at least up to the early part of this century has been popular, and Bernard Heuvelmans dedicated an entire chapter to the subject in his classic On the Track of Unknown Animals.

If real woolly mammoths could actually be produced — and bred -- from frozen material, the question of their possible survival would, of course, become almost academic. However, the episode published by Technology Review simply did not occur. Furthermore, the editors of the journal, which is published by MIT, were embarrassingly unaware of its falsity until after publication. Several clues within the text, however, could have tipped them off, such as Creak proposing a scientific name for the animals (Elephas pseudotherias), which is never done in the case of hybrids. And the name "James Creak," a suspicious-sounding name in itself, was, of course, a cross between James Watson and Francis Crick, the co-winners of the 1962 Nobel Prize for Medicine or Physiology, for their discovery of the double-spiral structure of DNA.

But the real giveaway should have been the date following ben-Aaron's name at the end of the article, which went right into print: April 1, 1984, better known as April Fool's Day, when one can perform tricks and pranks with impunity. The Soviet-American scenario breathlessly written up by ben-Aaron, actually a biochemistry student at MIT, and just as breathlessly published by Technology Review, was nothing more than a clever and good-natured prank (it should not be considered a hoax, as the latter usually involves an attempt as permanent deception), but one which was then innocently picked-up and carried elsewhere. The Chicago Tribune (and probably other U.S. newspapers as well) carried a modest feature on it on April 22, curiously with little fanfare. The story was picked-up in Europe, however, and aroused considerable interest in the media.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the prank was the fictitious Dr. Creak's thoughts on modern experimental science: "Some scientists like to proceed in small, carefully thought-out steps. They are like accountants, and might as well be," he said. "I see science as a high adventure with enormous risks. Of course, the rewards are commensurately high if the gamble comes off."

Perhaps one day we will be able to "retrobreed" wooly mammoths from frozen DNA — but not this time. □

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

We apologize once more for the tardiness of the present issue, particularly to new members who joined early in the year and have had to wait many months for their first newsletter.

The delay was caused partly by the arrangements which had to be made for the Board and Membership Meetings in San Diego in late May and the Cryptozoology Symposium in Brighton in early July. Also, a new computerized system is being initiated with this issue, but the "bugs" had to be gotten out of it first (translation: we had to learn how to use it!). We thank Benefactor Kurt Von Nieda for his generous help to the Society in making the improved system possible.

Members may notice the quiet demise of the Cryptoquote in this issue. The back page was getting crowded, and there was insufficient space to adequately present the Wood's Animal Facts column, which has now been expanded. Cryptoquotes may be published again in the future, but they will appear elsewhere, and not on a scheduled basis.

Readers may also notice the introduction of a number of shorter quotations in the Newsletter, beginning actually with the last (Autumn, 1984) issue. In preparing the layout and paste-up of the Newsletter text, there are usually space problems. Some items are either a little too long, and have to be cut at the last minute, or a little too short to fill the space available, and they have to be expanded or the space has to be filled-up with something else. Such quotations can be good "space fillers," and should also be of interest to ISC members. They have nothing to do with cryptozoology, and most have little bearing on zoology, but they all generally address the world of science and humanity. Members are urged to send such quotations in for possible future use (with full references please).

The Society survived 1984 thanks to the generosity of its Sustaining Members, who were listed in the Winter, 1984, issue, and its Benefactors, who are listed on the back page of every issue. Benefactors make a one-time contribution of $1,000 or more to the Society, which automatically makes them life members.

We are again struggling to survive in 1985. The problem began with the first year, 1982, when income was minimum, and 1982 publishing expenses had to be paid for out of 1983 funds, 1983 expenses out of 1984 funds, etc. Most of the 1985 renewal income has likewise had to be used to help liquidate the 1984 publishing costs.

Membership currently stands at about 800, still 200 short of the estimated 1,000 needed to make the Society financially self-supporting. Although members may be tiring of ISC appeals for money, we once again request that, those who can afford an extra contribution above the $25 membership fee, assist the Society in liquidating its 1984 publishing expenses -- about $3,000 is still outstanding — and in meeting the 1985 expenses. Such donations, which are tax deductible to U.S. contributors (the IRS Tax Identification No. is 95-2915129), result in Sustaining Memberships.

U.S. members are also reminded that, besides cash, the IRS permits "bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts" to the Society, which "are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes."

J. Richard Greenwell
Editor

NORTH IDAHO CRYPTOZOOLOGY CLUB

A group of persons interested in cryptozoology at North Idaho College, in Coeur d'Alene, have formed the North Idaho College Cryptozoology Club.

The Club investigates local sightings of "everything from Sasquatch to elk deer," and publishes its results in Crypto-News, its quarterly newsletter. The idea for the student club was spearheaded by Duke Snyder, in the Department of Anthropology, and Jim McLeod, in the Department of English, both of whom now serve as advisors. John Witherow serves as President, Mary Craig, Vice President, and Nancy Henry, Secretary. President Witherow states that Club members "do not draw conclusions or make judgments until we have carefully examined the data. But most of all, the Club was formed to have fun and explore the exciting (and mysterious) field of cryptozoology." Although not officially affiliated with ISC, many of the Club members are ISC members, and the Club generally follows the principles of ISC.

One of the subjects which has received the Club's attention is the Lake Pend Oreille Paddler, another North American "lake monster." The Club has documented 14 sightings or "events" in the lake between 1944 and 1984, and has even gone out on the lake to investigate the possible nature of the phenomenon. "I don't think we have something like Loch Ness here," says McLeod, "but its possible that an extraordinarily large species of sturgeon or something is in there."

ISC members in north Idaho are encouraged to contact Club members at North Idaho College to coordinate efforts. □

NEW APPOINTMENTS TO EDITOTIAL BOARD

John T. Robinson, a member of the Editorial Board of the Society's journal Cryptozoology, has stepped down because of ill health. At the same time, Christine Janis, Frank Poirier and Justin Wilkinson have joined the Editorial Board.

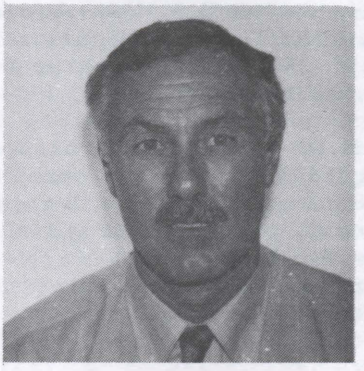
Dr. Robinson is known as one of the early pioneers in uncovering the Australopithecine fossils of South Africa. He was a colleague of the late Robert Broom at the Transvaal Museum, and the author of almost 100 publications on paleoanthropology.He moved to the U.S. in the 1960's, and has been on the faculty of the Zoology Department at the University of Wisconsin since that time. One of his side interests in South Africa was the investigation of local reports of wild "hairy men," a topic which will be addressed in a future article. The Board of Directors extends its appreciation to Dr. Robinson for his support of the Society and his past service on the Editorial Board.

Christine Janis

Christine Janis is a paleomammalogist specializing in the evolution of ungulates, although she has also done research on early fish, labyrinthodont amphibians, and hadrosaurian dinosaurs. Her work has involved both laboratory studies in many museums around the world and field studies in such places as central North America and East and South Africa. Dr. Janis has taught at Harvard University (where she obtained her Ph.D. in vertebrate paleontology), Oregon State University, and the University of Cambridge. She is currently on the faculty of the Divison of Biology and Medicine at Brown University.

Dr. Janis is currently at work on an edited volume entitled The Evolution of North American Tertiary Mammals, to be published by Cambridge University Press. Her thoughts on the reported Mokele-Mbembe may be found as a Comment in Vol. 3 of the journal.

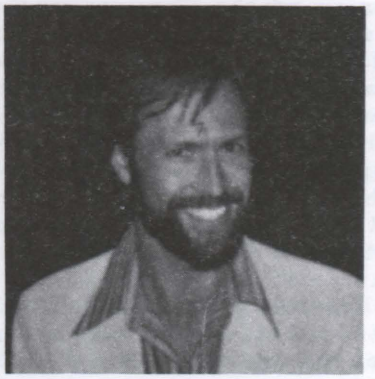
Frank E. Poirier obtained a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Oregon, and has been on the faculty at The Ohio State University since 1968. His research has involved both the biological and social components of primatology, and he has done fieldwork in Japan, Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, India, Puerto Rico, East Africa, and Micronesia. Dr. Poirier is the author of many publications, including several books.



Frank Poirier

A recognized authority on the synthesis and interpretation of the entire hominid fossil record, he is the author of the popular textbook Fossil Man: The Evolutionary Journey. He is a charter member of the Society, with a principal interest in reports of the Chinese Wildman (see his co-authored article in Vol. 2 of the journal) and the American Sasquatch. Dr. Poirier does not find any such evidence convincing, but he supports efforts to investigate all possibilities objectively.

M. Justin Wilkinson is a geomorphologist and ecologist with particular interest in the evolution of desert landforms. He has done extensive fieldwork in the American Southwest, Chile, South Africa, Namibia, and the People's Republic of the Congo. He has been affiliated with the University of Cape Town, the University of Minnesota, the University of Arizona, and the University of Chicago, where he also completed his doctoral work. He is currently on the faculty of the Department of Geography at the University of the Witwatersrand.



Justin Wilkinson

Dr. Wilkinson has also had strong interests in cave geomorphology, and has been active in studying the evolution of Sterkfontein Cave, the well known hominid fossil site in South Africa. □

BRIGHTON SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

Final plans have been made for the cryptozoology symposium being held in Brighton, England on July 7, 1985, as part of the III International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology (ICSEB III).

The Congress, held every five years in a different country, is being sponsored this year by several prestigious British groups, including the Royal Society. It runs from July 4 to July 10 at the University of Sussex. The symposium, one of many others forming part of ICSEB III, is entitled "Cryptozoology: The Search for Unknown or Supposedly Extinct Animals."

The final program of the symposium, which will run from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., is as follows:

(Morning program)
-Chairman's Introductory Remarks, David Heppell;

-"Splitting versus Lumping in Systematic Zoology and Cryptozoology," Bernard Heuvelmans;

-"A Classificatory System for Cryptozoology," J. Richard Greenwell;

-"Linguistics as a Tool in Cryptozoological Research," Piotr Klafkowski;

(Afternoon program)
-"Histological and Amino Acid Analyses of Octopus Giganteus Tissue," Joseph F. Gennaro and Roy P. Mackal;

-"Fossil Ungulates in the Archaeological Record," Christine Janis;

-"The Onza as a Paleo-Cheetah: An Example of Possible Pleistocene Persistence," Helmut Hemmer;

-"A Species Named from Footprints," Grover S. Krantz.

It is expected that a panel debate, including questions from the floor, will be held at the end of the formal presentations. All ISC members in Europe are urged to attend, but registrations are not being handled by the Society. Those interested should communicate directly with the ICSEB III Congress Office, 130 Queens Rd., Brighton, Sussex BN1 3WE. Hotel reservations and meals may be ordered through the Congress Office, or participants can make their own arrangements. Full details on registrations appeared in the Autumn, 1984, Newsletter.

Because of the expected tardiness of the current Newsletter, a special mailing of the final program will be made to all European ISC members in June. A report on the outcome of the symposium will appear in a future newsletter. □

1984 JOURNAL PUBLISHED

The 1984 (Vol. 3) issue of Cryptozoology, the Society's annual journal, was published in early 1984. The new issue, which runs 160 pages, contains a lengthy article by ISC President Bernard Heuvelmans on the early history of cryptozoology, an article by wildlife biologist Robert Downing on the problem of the supposed eastern U.S. cougar, and the definitive analysis of the supposed Wildman hands and feet found in China, which author Zhou Guoxing has determined came from a large, undocumented species of macaque monkey.

The journal also contains five Field Reports, eight Book Reviews, and a record 27 Comments and Responses dealing further with material published in earlier journal issues.

New (1985) members may purchase this volume, as well as the 1982 and 1983 issues. The cost of each is $15, postpaid.

CRYPTOLETTERS

To the Editor:

I was sad to learn about Professor Simpson's demise -- and of his critical paper on cryptozoology. He was a good friend of many members of my family, as my great-grandfather happened to be Charles Darwin -- enough said.

Quent in Keynes
Pound Ridge, New York, U.S.A

To the Editor:

It is sad to lose a friend, especially one whom one has seen little of in many years. I refer to the late George Gaylord Simpson (Newsletter, Winter, 1984). George's towering reputation in the world of science and letters needs no praise from me.

Still, around 20 years ago I was his publishing editor, and I coaxed him into assembling the essays and thoughts which make up the volume The Geography of Evolution. At the same time, I was also doing Tim Dinsdale's Loch Ness Monster (U.S. edition), and Ivan T. Sanderson's Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life.

I note the above because George and I often talked together on the subject of what is now known as cryptozoology, and I think I can clarify a little of his (at least then) thinking on the matter.

Whenever the subject of unknown animals came up, he had a twinkle in his eye. I'd call

him a "scientific Missourian," to coin a clumsy phrase. It could be summed up, not as disbeleief, but a demand for facts and specimens. "It/they may be there, but you gotta show me" was the gist of his thought, buttressed by scientific knowledge and unanswered queries.

I do recall his saying Central Africa was hopeful for prehistoric survivals due to a lack of geological and climatic changes. He felt that the seas could, and probably did, hold anything still, but said that the oceans were not his "area." He had no interest in minute things, such as insects, Neopilina, etc. It was primarily vertebrates that he felt competent to muse about, starting with the smallest type of bat or shrew, and working up to the existence of living sauropods, mammoths, and unknown (to date) primates.

He saw the latter as a good possibility, but thought "they" were hominids, if extant at all, and both rare and super-shy. He also felt they were probably small, no larger than living Congo pygmies, but probably hirsute and fireless.

From what I've gathered of his views of recent years, I'd say he hadn't changed much, if at all. He didn't despise folklore nor "sightings," etc., but nothing but provable facts were acceptabale, and that meant at least one specimen that could be handled, dead or alive.

One could — and many will — call it dull, staid, and the classic attitude of "hide-bound science" and hopelessly orthodox. I call it the attitude of a brilliant man with a good sense of humor, who simply wanted proof and not vague rumors and endless reports, particularly when the veracity and the skill of the observers were impossible to assess.

Sterling E. Lanier
Frederick, Maryland, U.S.A.

To the Editor:

I too was acquainted with George Gaylord Simpson, but not so intimately. My first personal contact with him was in 1977, when Jim King and I surveyed scientists on their attitudes toward Sasquatch and Nessie.

George received a questionnaire, and returned it with a lengthy letter pointing out the impossibility of Sasquatch. He also expressed astonishment, even doubt, that British primatologist John Napier accepted its existence, and had even written a book on it. "This would be totally out of character for him," George commented. Of course, we took great delight in acquiring the book and mailing it to him! He then wrote back with his doubts about the book's conclusions.

Shortly before the 1981 Mackal Expedition to the Congo in search of Mokele-Mbembe (in which I took part), Jim and I visited him at his home to give him the results of our survey, and to discuss cryptozoology in general. I too noticed the twinkle in his eye, and he took great pride in producing, from his enormous library, a review he had written for Natural history over 20 years before of Bernard Heuvelmans' first book (On the Track).

In discussing the Congo, he expressed the opinion that there were no places left on the planet that were unexplored and could serve as refuges for large, unknown animals, such as possible surviving dinosaurs. I, of course, had come prepared, and I spread out my maps of the 50,000 square mile Likouala swamps. He followed the details carefully, and, in his usual soft voice, admitted that there are, in fact, a few still-unexplored areas. "We shall follow your adventures with interest," he added.

In recent years, George's physical condition deteriorated (but I believe his mind was as sharp as ever). He spent little time at the University, except to have lunch with students and give or hear an occasional seminar.

The last time I saw him, a few months before his death, was right after one of those seminars. We crossed paths in the hall, and I thought of stopping to chat with him, but seeing that he was being physically assisted by a student, I just greeted him and continued on my way. There was a twinkle in his eye even then, and shortly afterwards I realized why, when his article critiquing cryptozoology appeared in the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society.

J. Richard Greenwell
Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A.

To the Editor:

I would like to discuss the systematic position of the okapi in view of George Gaylord Simpson's erroneous assumption that it is not a survivor of a fossil taxon (Newsletter, Winter, 1984).

The okapi (Okapia johnstoni) is placed in the ruminant artiodactyl Giraffidae on the basis of cranial and dental features. The most important of these are the presence of a bilobed lower canine (the defining features of the Girraffoidea), and the presence of post-orbital, skin-covered ossicones that are formed from a dermal ossification that fuses with the skull during development -- as in the giraffe, Giraffa camelopardalis (Hamilton 1978).

Bohlin (1926) originally suggested that the okapi should be placed in the subfamily Okapini, and considered it to be closely related to the giraffe. However, Colbert (1938) grouped the okapi

with the fossil Paleotragus, suggesting that it was more primitive than other fossil giraffes. Hamilton (1978) revised Colbert's diagnosis, and decided that the okapi was indeed more primitive than any other fossil giraffe species, with the exception of some hornless Miocene genera classified with the Giraffoidea on the basis of the presence of a bilobed lower canine.

Hamilton lists the primitive characters of the okapi as follows (all of these features are of a more derived or specialized condition in other fossil giraffes): the relatively anterior positioning of the orbit; the relatively long back of the head with a flat angle of the face on the braincase (high basicranial angle); and limb proportions primitive with relatively short cannon bones.

He concludes that the okapi represents the sister group of all other horned giraffids. This implies a time of evolutionary separation of the okapi from the main giraffe lineage by at least the middle Miocene, or approximately 18 million years ago.

The question remains as to the lack of a fossil record, if it truly represents such an ancient lineage of giraffids. The genus Okapia stillei is known from the early Pleistocene of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania (Dietrich 1941), but Harris (1976) considers this animal to in fact be a small species of giraffe, Giraffa pygmea.

Fragmentary remains of an unknown species of okapi have been reported from the late Pliocene of Uganda (Cooke and Coryndon 1970). However, if the okapi has always been a forrest-dwelling browser, as the primitive nature of its skull and limb features would suggest, then there would have been little opportunity for its chance preservation in the fossil record.

In conclusion, if Hamilton's analysis of the systematic position of the okapi is correct, then it represents a truly primitive offshot of the giraffe family, with a long and independent evolutionary history from the giraffe, but with only fragmentary evidence in the fossil record for its 18 million years or more of existence.

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(Dr. Janis is an active researcher in the field of ruminant artiodactyl phylogeny.)

To the Editor:

I wish to clarify and correct some statements appearing in a previous article (see "Ness Teams Crowd Loch," Newsletter, Winter, 1983).

First, to compensate the video dealer for the loan of the camera, we got extensive publicity, and this was resented by the local researchers at Loch Ness, and by some British journalists, who wrote distortions. For example, the video firm was located in Newcastle-on-Tyne, the VTR, not the camera, did the recording; our filming was not "predictable" (we wish that it could have been!) — we did not even see what was being recorded in each case, being busy with our gear, which only proved the concept all the more.

And in the case of the problem with a London film/video lab, we refused to pay about $500 that was being charged us for making a grossly unacceptable video-to-film copy, and we did not accept the film they wanted to charge us for. The police agreed with us, and our videotape was returned.

The charge most often leveled at us by the press, and quoted in the Newsletter, was to question how we brash Americans could just barge right into Loch Ness and manage to obtain film results so quickly, when others had been waiting around the Loch for a dozen years or more, and had obtained virtually nothing. Our answer is that, had a British team used this equipment, they could have had equal success.

Jon-Erik Beckjord
Malibu, California, U.S.A.

"It is a mathematical fact that the casting of this pebble from my hand alters the centre of gravity of the universe."

Albert Camus
Sartor Resartus III

WOOD'S ANIMAL FACTS

The largest living lizard is the Komodo monitor or Ora (Varanus komodo), a dragon-like reptile found on the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rintja, Padar, and Flores. Adult males average 8ft 6in (2.59m) in total length and weigh 175-2001b (79-81kg).

As with crocodiles, the size attained by this giant lizard has been greatly over-estimated. Major P.A. Ouwens, the Curator of the Botanical Gardens at Buitenzorg, Java, who first described this animal in 1912, was informed by J.K. van Steyn van Hensbrock, Governor of Flores, that two Dutchmen working for a pearl-fishing company on Komodo had told him that they had killed several specimens measuring between 19ft 8in and 23ft (6m and 7m).

Another ferocious monster seen by a Swedish zoologist on the shores of Komodo in 1937 was estimated to have "measured seven meters," and the following year an American journalist reported that he had seen one measuring 14ft 6in (4.42m).

All of these statements, however, were based on visual estimates — the great girths of older specimens create an impression of enormous size — or referred to estuarine crocodiles, which are also found in the area.

According to Ouwens, the type specimen, now mounted in the Museum at Buitenzorg, measured 9ft 6in (2.9m) between pegs. Another one collected by Nelly de Rooij on the west coast of Flores in 1915 was almost 8ft 9in (2.66m) long, and the largest of the four monitors collected by the Duke of Mecklenburg in 1923 was just under 9ft 10in (3m).

Of 54 specimens collected by the Douglas Burden Expedition to Komodo in 1926, the largest measured 9ft 1/2in (2.76m), and the biggest male taken by the Dutch zoologist De Jong (1932) on his second visit to the islands was exactly 9ft (2.7m).

The largest accurately measured Komodo monitor on record was probably a male which was exhibited in the St. Louis Zoological Park, Missouri, U.S.A. for a short period c1937. This specimen measured 10ft 2in (3.10m) in length, and tipped the scales at a staggering 3651b (165kg).

Abstracted from:
The Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats, by Gerald L. Wood, Guinness Superlatives, Enfield, U.K.(3rd. ed.) 1982.

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