

North American BioFortean Review



The most beautiful thing one can experience is the mysterious.
It is the source of all true art and science.
He to whom this reaction is a stranger - who no longer
can pause to wonder and stand wrapt in awe -
is as good as dead, his eyes are closed.

- Albert Einstein

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Foreword

Welcome to the first issue of the North American BioFortean Review. We should point out first what this publication is meant, or not meant, to accomplish. The NABR will cover biological oddities from North America for which there are unanswered questions. These may include cryptozoological subjects, extreme phenotypes, or unrecognized populations of introduced species. We will also mention the unusual, but perhaps not unexpected, occurrences such as out-of-place animals or unusual wildlife behavior. Our focus will remain on North America, although we may occasionally report on other investigations which have relevance to general cryptozoology and biofortean investigations.

We are especially interested in pointing out areas for which further research is needed, and would be happy to hear from any readers who decide to take on a challenge. Methodology and resources for investigators will also be discussed.

We do hold to the idea that most questions can be answered without leaning on paranormal explanations. Articles in this publication will reflect that, although the views of the editors and authors may not be the same.

We invite anyone interested in writing for the NABR to contact us. We also encourage you to forward articles you've come across which may be of interest to others. We will occasionally reprint older articles. Experienced investigators may be familiar with some of this material, but we will attempt to stick to books and articles which are not readily available.

Publication will be on an irregular basis, but we expect to put out 2-3 issues a year.

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Frontspiece

The "three wild men" on the cover are from Frederick Gerstäcker's *Western Lands and Western Waters* (1864). See the corresponding article inside.

North American BioFortean Review
Vol. 1, no. 1
April 1999

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Kentucky's Hairless Animal

Brad LaGrange



Although many people through the years have seen animals that are “unknown,” Bobby Hale of Ashland, Kentucky, really saw something that threw experts a curve ball back in 1989.

Hale lived near a dump, which is apparently where these creatures also resided. The creatures were described as hairless (except for tufts on their feet), and looked like a cross between a raccoon and an opossum. They also made barking sounds and ate “just about anything.”

After facing disbelief and ridicule, Hale trapped one of the creatures and delivered it to authorities. At the time, the authorities were baffled, and theories ranged from standard North American species to Australian bandicoots. At that time the state-appointed caregiver, Barbara Rosenman made the statements “I thought it was a prank. I thought someone had taken a straight razor and shaved her,” and “every theory we come up with, you can blow holes right through it.”

However, in a recent phone interview, Ms. Rosenman said that four of the critters were captured but they turned out to be unfortunate raccoons suffering from heavy metal poisoning. All but one female eventually died. This fourth raccoon is, however, the source of a separate mystery. Ms. Rosenman said that this individual specimen was doing quite well, although it never tamed. It resided in a cage behind her house.

Barbara returned home one day and went out back to feed the various wildlife charges in her care. She found that the hairless raccoon had not only escaped, but shut and locked the door behind it! Of course, it had obviously been stolen, but whoever stole it had accomplished

a good deal.

First, after gaining access to the area of the property with the animals, the thief singled out the bald raccoon as their target. Next, the very wild and hostile animal was grabbed, then the cage door was closed and locked. As a last show of talent, the cat (or rather “coon”) burglar escaped without leaving any tracks in the mud. Sanderson would be proud.

As a matter of thanks, I'd like to mention Ron Schaffner who is responsible for at least half of this investigation, and of course, Barbara Rosenman of “Kentucky Wildlife Live, Inc.” for her time and information.

Source:

Schaffner, R. Hairless mystery animal. Website.
<http://home.fuse.net/rschaffner/hairless.htm>.



Active Sasquatch in Coshocton County, Ohio

Don Keating, Newcomerstown, OH

When I first heard of the Sasquatch phenomenon in Ohio, I thought everyone was crazy! Boy, was I wrong. Coshocton County, Ohio has recorded the highest number of 'alleged' sightings of the mythical beast since records began. This is also a county that borders my home county of Tuscarawas.

Since before 1900, there have been over 79 reported sightings in this one location. The last sighting that was included in that number was in late May of 1993. Many additional sightings have been reported. Here are some of the ones that stand out the most in the decade of the 1990's.

On April 27, 1990 Art Caruso of Youngstown, Ohio spotted a light colored creature at about 11:48 p.m. He reported the creature was between 6 and 6 feet tall and he stood no more than 50 to 75 feet from it. This took place near New Moscow.

It was reported at my September 1992 Bigfoot meeting that an albino creature was seen near West Lafayette, Ohio. The creature was spotted in April of 1992 and was white and was reported to be nearly 9 feet tall.

On July 21, 1993 a sighting took place near Lake Lila campgrounds. The creature was observed to "jump out of a tree". The Sasquatch was reportedly reddish in color and about 8 feet in height.

In mid-July 1995 Danny Newell of Coshocton, Ohio reportedly was hunting for scrap iron near the community of Tunnel Hill in the western part of the county. He spooked a creature — that creature being a light or white colored Sasquatch. It walked away from him on two legs, was 7-8 feet tall and less than 35 yards from him. It would be over two years, but his father, who was just about 50 feet from him, finally admitted to having seen the same creature Danny did that day at the same time.

Two fascinating sightings took place during the early morning hours of July 31, 1996 at 1:30 near the

same location as the Tunnel Hill sighting of July 1995.

Seven young people, ranging in age from 17 to 23, spotted, on two occasions, a dark brown colored creature between 8 and 9 feet in height. The creature at first was about 75 yards away in an open field just uphill from the road the youths were on. The creature began to walk away backwards watching the youths. It then stopped and began walking TOWARDS them. At this time it had one arm in an up-right position blocking the light from its eyes. It was reported the eyes had a green reflection to them. The youths left the area hurriedly when it began coming towards them.

These are just a handful of the more fascinating reported sightings from Coshocton County, Ohio in the 90's.

Why does Bigfoot apparently inhabit the forest of the county? Lets look at the three things an animal needs to survive....

- Food
- Water
- Shelter

With these things in mind, remember that Coshocton County has the Woodbury Wildlife Refuge Area in central and west-central sections and the Columbus & Southern Coal Lands in extreme southern parts of the County. These two areas provide plenty of the three criteria needed.

Thousands of hunters, fishermen, outdoorsmen and sightseers roam these woodlands weekly. Maybe there are other parts of Ohio more suitable for Sasquatch, but this just happens to be where they're reported the most.

Canadian "Black Alligators": A Preliminary Look

Chad Arment and Brad LaGrange

In his 1997 publication, *From Flying Toads to Snakes with Wings*, Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker mentions an unusual lizard-like animal reported in a British Columbia newspaper. Eberts and Mills (1978) interviewed a man named Warren Scott who stated that he had found a "lost valley" near Pitt Lake where tropical plants grew and strange creatures swam the waters. One of these creatures was a large "horned lizard," which he was unable to identify as a known species of reptile or amphibian.

On the surface, this sounds like one of those old "explorer finds dinosaurs in isolated valley" movies. The article certainly doesn't do much to lend credence to Scott's claims. Shuker noted that specimens of this animal were supposedly given to a B.C. university, but that the university had no record of receiving such specimens. On the whole, not a particularly supportive case for cryptozoology. In fact, some might suggest that there's no case at all supporting this animal as a cryptid. We're going to suggest, however, that a little more digging may provide some interesting pieces of this zoological puzzle.

Warren Scott's Horned Lizard

First, let's take a closer look at the animal mentioned in the Province article. The authors state:

"Scott's unusual story began June 3, 1973, when he and his 28-year-old wife Sharon and their two daughters were working Scott's gold mine in the valley.

"My wife turned around and said she saw something move in the lake ... I told her she must have bush fever ... but I went over and sure as hell there they were ... lizards ... small ones and some five-feet long.

"You'd need a rifle if you went after them in the bush - they'd nip your leg off,' he said."

Scott gave further details.



"He told of approaching to within about six metres of a large lizard and noting two rows of shark-like teeth and horn-like protrusions behind its head. 'I was ready to run for a tree if it came toward me,' Scott said."

Scott captured three of the young "lizards," and kept them in his bathtub. Robert Powell, a Haney resident, saw the animals and described them.

"They had horns on them,' said Powell, 'they were lizards that looked like the sort of prehistoric monsters you see in the movies, but they were just small ones, of course.'"

As mentioned previously, the Simon Fraser University staff was unable to find a record of the specimen that Scott supposedly gave to them. One professor told the journalists that he found Scott's story unlikely, although new species are still discovered in remote areas. He mentioned that "the largest lizard-like creature native to B.C. is the mud puppy, an amphibian which grows to about half a metre in length." That particular statement is incorrect, however. The mudpuppy (*Necturus maculosus*) is found only in eastern North America and is only known from the eastern Canadian provinces (Petranka 1998). It is not found in British Columbia, nor are any other species of Proteidae. The largest salamanders in British Columbia are the Pacific giant salamanders (*Dicamptodon tenebrosus*), which range up to about 34 cm.

After all this time, you might expect a cold trail. Scott is long gone. No one knows his current whereabouts. (Brad contacted a number of Warren

Scott's in Canada and the United States without success.) We were, however, able to contact Barrie Alden, a British Columbia outdoors writer and conservationist who was one of Scott's early supporters. Alden has spent the last 20 years collecting evidence for Scott's mystery animal despite ridicule from the media and local scientists.

Alden provided a few facts on Warren Scott which may be of interest. Apparently, Scott was from the Bronx in New York State. After dropping out of medical school, Scott moved to British Columbia to become a prospector. (This was probably during the same period as the Vietnam War.) What is most interesting is that Scott dissected one of the "lizards," and drew both the external and internal anatomy. With some medical background, it isn't surprising that Alden would do this (it's common practice in undergraduate biology courses). We have not yet seen these drawings, which are in Alden's possession.

Scott's story as written in the Province article may sound a little strange. A closer examination dispels most of the problematic areas. The "sweet-smelling tropical plants like orchids and giant ferns," are not uncommonly found in British Columbia. The "mysterious cave containing symbols and pictures etched on the walls" are merely Amerindian petroglyphs, found throughout North America and not unexpected in a wilderness area known to have been inhabited by a Native American tribe. (Alden did mention that there is a tribe north of this area that has little if any contact with "civilization" even today.) Admittedly, the "legend about an ancient man said to be more than 150 years old" is assuredly just that, a legend.

Scott and Alden tried to get an expedition together with biologists so the discovery could be documented and a preserve established to protect the species. Unfortunately, interest died out and nothing ever came of it. Alden suggested one possible explanation. Apparently, during the war, the U.S. maintained 368 "exchange areas" in Canada for test purposes. Alden suggested that the close proximity of one such area to the sighting location may have pushed government officials into pressuring the expedition

into disbanding. He stated that Scott was visited by government officials who attempted to persuade him to drop his interest in the area.

We should mention that Scott's reputation is not crystal-clear. We asked John Kirk, president of the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club to look into Scott's report. Kirk mentioned Scott to two well-known bigfoot hunters who stated they did not trust his reports. One of the reasons they didn't trust Scott was his claim that he had seen 34 sasquatches marching near his Pitt Lake cabin with lit torches. They also stated that in 1973, Scott had been guiding a wealthy American around the bush, possibly during the time that he claimed to have seen the lizards.

So, we have something of a quandary. Should we dismiss Scott's claims? The problem with that is that this is not the only report of such an animal from Pitt Lake. Or from British Columbia. Or, as we will see, from Canada in general.

Kirk (1998) notes that the late Jim Clark collected reports of "animals resembling black alligators" from another prospector, Al Surette. The animals "were between six and ten feet long and were unafraid of venturing in and out of the water." The skin of the animals was smooth, rather than "the usually scaly reptilian skin associated with alligators." No mention was made of horn-like structures.

Kirk goes on to state that these animals have been reported from "Chilliwack Lake, Cultus Lake and an unnamed lake north of Manning Provincial Park." Alden had told us that he has collected reports from Chilliwack Lake, the Fraser River, and Nitinat Lake on Vancouver Island. The latter reports were most interesting. A fisherman claimed to have seen several of the animals, approximately five feet in length, coming out of the lake onto the sandbars at dusk.

A similar species may have once resided in Kootenay Lake. Kirk mentions several sightings from 1900. The reports started when a 12-year-old boy from Crawford Bay claimed to have seen an animal climb up the banks of the lake and eat from "a heap of detritus on shore." A group of local men found a trail from the refuse pile "left by something with large webbed feet." The boy claimed "it appeared to be

of a black and green color. About three feet of it was out of the water. It had four legs, each of which was ten inches long. I was awfully afraid of its jaws, as they seemed to be about that long (here the boy held his hands about a foot apart to show the scribe how long its vicious jaws were.)” A.C.D. Robertson later claimed to have seen a similar animal on the west arm of the lake when he tied some fish to a stake and left them in the lake. “Hearing a commotion, I looked around just in time to see a large scaly body emerge from the water, open its jaws and seize my fish, disappearing almost immediately. I was pretty well scared and fished no more that day. I should judge that the reptile was about fifteen feet in length.”

To round out the British Columbia reports, we turn to one of the most common books on a cryptozoology buff's bookshelf, Ivan T. Sanderson's "Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life."

The Sanderson Story

Sanderson (1961) records the account of Charles Flood, who saw similar animals in 1915.

"I, Charles Flood of New Westminster (formerly of Hope) declare the following story to be true:

"I am 75 years of age and spent most of my life prospecting in the local mountains to the south of Hope, toward the American boundary and in the Chilliwack Lake area.

"In 1915, Donald McRae and Green Hicks of Agassiz, B.C. and myself, explored an area over an unknown divide, on the way back to Hope, near the Holy Cross Mountains.

"Green Hicks, a half-breed Indian, told McRae and me a story, he claimed he had seen alligators at what he called Alligator lake, and wild humans at what he called Cougar Lake. Out of curiosity we went with him; he had been there a week previous looking for a fur trap line. Sure enough, we saw his alligators, but they were black, twice the size of lizards in a small mud lake."

Sanderson argued that because they are cold-blooded, an aquatic reptile probably could not survive in southern British Columbia, but that the animals could be salamanders, as there are giant salamanders known from Asian coldwater streams. He did point out, however, that alligators, Chinese and North American, probably emigrated one way or the other across the Bering Straits.

Native American Folklore

In order to propose that this animal may have some basis in physical reality, it is necessary to look at the tales, folklore, and legends of the native peoples in this region. If it exists, you'd expect that the native peoples would be aware of it, and would mention it. Unfortunately, a study of such beliefs in this region is complicated by several factors. First, it appears that there is a mixing of characteristics or traits between what may be (or should be) separate mythological animals. Second, practically every body of water in the region has its own "water mysteries," or spirits. To attempt to distinguish any physical reality is difficult at best. The Native American belief systems in this region do not necessarily distinguish between the spiritual and physical planes. This makes it difficult to determine whether a particular legend is based on actual sightings or is part of a cultural-religious belief.

For example, in his work on the Upper Stalo Indians, Duff (1952) states that "supernatural creatures living in the natural world were generally called 'slalakums,' and the same word was used as an adjective to describe anything strange and unnatural." And, "Certain bodies of water were called slalakum places, being the homes of slalakums or having slalakum properties of their own." Showing the difficulty of mixed characteristics, Duff also mentions the two-headed snake, *si'xqi*. Several reports suggest an animal with a large round body with two "long necks" at each end. Generally, we'd categorize reports like this as a "plesiosaur-like" animal, as we'd suggest that the second "neck" was the long tail. But, Duff notes "the Lummi views on it as a 'spirit who can adopt varied forms such as that

of a serpent, a mallard duck, a short log, or a two-headed lizard.”

There are a few reports which may be of interest, however, from Wells (1987). We are not stating that these reports are completely accurate, or that they prove the existence of an undescribed species, but they are acceptable supportive evidence.

From an interview with Bob Joe concerning the native names for various species of fish, Wells transcribes:

“Wells: O.K. And the word for sturgeon.

“Joe: That’s *skwó:wech*. You know, there’s another fish - you know these lizards, water lizards, well, they turn into trout. Their fins, the arms of this water lizard —.

“Wells: It wouldn’t be an eel, like eh?

“Joe: No, it’s not the eel. At times the fish forms in by the tail first, and the head is still animal or however you call it. Well, when you can see the head and the mouth of that little trout hasn’t turned into a fish yet, it’s not fit to eat. So we were told. (Laughs.)

From a later interview:

“Wells: A double-headed creature that you and Dan Milo both talk about down in the swamps down here near Chilliwack, you gave us the name of that...

“Joe: Oh, that *sílhqey*, yeah.

“Wells: Yeah, well, now, look, this young fellow over here, he’s doing a pretty good carving, young Currie - at least he comes from Mount Currie. His father did; his mother was Tzeachten, I think. Do you know the man I mean, young fellow? Anyway, he was over to my place once or twice, and he’s doing some pretty good carving of things, and he’s trying to find something to carve. And I asked him if he’d come and talk to you about this seelkee. And maybe he could carve one with your help. And I think that if we could get one carved, maybe make it about as big as

this thing, and make one that would be the model of what it was like, you know, then I think it would be altogether Chilliwack, you see. Just like the Okanagan, they talk about their Ogopogo, this would be a Chilliwack seelkee.”

From an interview with Albert Louie:

“Louie: “And he [grandfather] told me another little pond, ‘Don’t go there - there’s a big snake there, a snake there with two head on.’ He says, ‘Don’t go there. If you ever see it,’ he says, ‘you just twist around like that and you die from it.’

“Wells: Yeah, I think Dan Milo told me about this one.

“Louie: They call it *sí:lhqey*. It’s got a head on him like that; long mouth; and it got - I see’d a picture. It’s got long ears like a horse, like a horse’s ears. It’s got a nose, and it’s got teeth in it like an alligator, you know.

Wells: Do you know the story?

“Louie: Well, I seen it once, but it was not so big, about that size. I was hunting, and I seen the thing way in the deep water. My god, his eyes just like fire. My god, I see that thing. I was shooting ducks, you know, and I passed by. About two hours after, I came back in the same way, and the thing was going about as far as where you are. I could see it went so fast. I seen it. I seen it with my own eyes. It didn’t bother me. I didn’t get crazy from it. I wasn’t looking for the thing, you know. I guess he knows I wasn’t.”

Later:

“Wells: You told me about the seelkee that looked like a big snake. Well, then, the word *slalakum*, that’s another form of - that’s like a spirit in the lake?

“Louie: Yeah, a spirit in the lake, a kind of different kind of animal, or fish, or whatever

it is.

“Wells: Well, what’s the difference between this and the seelkee?

“Louie: Well, it’s the same thing, you know. Same thing, yeah.

“Wells: Same thing. But do you ever see these slalakum?

“Louie: Not really; but my father, early days, used to see a lot of them in the Lake. That’s why they give it the name Ts’ewáli [Soowahlie]. And when the White folk come they give it Cultus Lake, means ‘a bad lake.’ My dad said he’s seen them big - even like you have big black fish in the salt water. That Lake must have a bottom somewhere. That Lake is deep, Cultus Lake. They say 200 feet of rope, 300 feet of rope, couldn’t reach there. That’s what they say.”

Wells had one individual, Wallace, draw a “seelkee” for him. Unfortunately, the drawing was not published. However, a snippet of conversation is recorded:

“Wallace: Oh, it was big. It’d be about four or five feet high. From his head to his tail it would be about twelve feet, I guess.”

Other Reports

There are reports outside of British Columbia which may indicate the presence of similar animals. We do need to keep in mind one point, however - without knowing exactly what this animal is, we are unable to conclude with any certainty that a particular sighting report relates to this particular cryptid. Even if this animal truly exists, it certainly can not be related to every lake monster sighting from Canada. There are, at a minimum, two distinct freshwater lake monster “types” - the “alligator,” and the “longneck.” There may also be a more serpent-like animal, however it is remotely possible that these, and other supposedly distinctive types, are related to the longneck animals. Without knowing the biology of these animals, it is hard to know what

role, if any, sexual dimorphism or age differences may play in their morphology. There is also the problem of witness accounts being skewed by excitement or fright - a “serpentine” report may, for example, be the shadowy form of a “longneck.” Fins or flippers may not be readily apparent or may be overlooked or forgotten.

Another problem is that while we can lump reports of a lizard/crocodilian/salamander-like quadruped together, there is no way to determine, as of yet, whether this is the common “blind men with an elephant” problem where witnesses see only certain parts of the overall picture, or whether there is more than one species involved.

Again, without knowing the exact nature of the beast, here are some reports which may relate to it.

Lake Saint-Francois, Quebec: Meurger and Gagnon (1988) spend some time on the monster supposedly seen in this lake. They discuss giant sturgeon, but mention reports of two distinctly different lake monsters. One is very large with dorsal fins, while the other is relatively smaller, has a “smooth back,” and closely resembles a tree trunk floating in the water. The latter reports may be relevant. One witness claimed to see “a log floating on the water. It was about 12 feet (4 m) long... *suddenly the dead tree was transformed into a fish.* It seemed like a straight log of a very dark colour.”

Another, Pierre Bédard, stated he saw the “smooth-back” when he was 15 years old. “I had a light and I heard a sound in the bay, like waves lapping. I raised my light and I could see its back; it had 6-inch waves behind it. The smooth-back was blue-black, or very dark green. It was enormous. With the smooth-back, you can see neither head nor tail. There are no scales. The skin is slick, smooth, blackest black. It doesn’t shine. Some people have seen bigger ones than I have; beasts of at least 20 feet (6 m).” He continues, “The smooth-back stays in the waters near the cottages, closer to the River Sauvage. There, in 40 feet (12 m) of water, there’s a sandbank, a kind of plateau; it’s a very good spot for doré. That’s where it is.”

A gamekeeper, Toussaint Dostie, claimed to have seen it near two islands in the lake. "It had a flat head and large round eyes. *The head is elongated.* It's a little like a *crocodile* when it goes into the water. It's an animal about 15-20 feet (4.5-6.0 m) long, all jagged on the top. It's a brown colour, like the colour of a pike."

Moffat Lake, Quebec: Harvey MacRae gave an account of a "tree trunk" like animal to Meurger and Gagnon (1988). He stated that his father saw it while fishing on the lake. "It was lying low in the water and it looked like a tree trunk: big, round, and very black. It was about 15-20 feet long, but he saw only part of it. The head and the tail were under the water." He also mentioned a sighting by one of his friends. "One of my good friends was in the habit of taking long walks along the banks to find a nice spot for fishing. He went barefoot. There was something *like a big burnt log* across the path. At the moment he was about to step on it, the 'trunk' started up and scuttled into the lake. It was like a big sawmill-log, all black."

Lake Memphrémagog, Quebec: While there are several reports of "long-necks" and serpent like animals from this lake, Meurger and Gagnon (1988) mention that there were a number of alligator-like sightings in the 1930's. A Dr. Curtis Classen saw an alligator-like animal crawl out of the water onto the bank near Kove Kamp in 1935. He estimated the animal to be about 10 foot long. A similar report was made in 1937 by John Webster, who saw an alligator-like animal about 11 feet long on the same beach. While the authors do not note any recent sightings specifically alligator-like, they do record a 1979 sighting from Fitch Bay. Six individuals saw the back of an animal which was "ornamented with a row of objects; it was not any irregular indentation, but more like a row of small pipes."

Peter Pond Lake, Saskatchewan: Kirk (1998) noted reports of an aquatic animal from 1979 and 1981. In both cases the animal was seen entering

or leaving the water. Nothing is mentioned about the appearance of the animals.

Lake Huron, Ontario: Kirk (1998) reported a sighting given to him from near Goderich. In 1989, the witness saw "two long log-like animals" which raised their heads up before swimming off.

Muskrat Lake, Ontario: While most sightings of a "lake monster" at Muskrat Lake indicate a mammalian species (see Kirk(1998) for details), there is one report which may be related to our subject. While canoing in the Snake River in 1968, Don Humphries saw a gray animal, "part alligator and part fish," leave the water and begin feeding on the bank. Humphries noted a "single tooth which hung downwards from the mouth." At a later interview, he stated that the animal was probably between 14-16 feet in length.

Lake Folsom, California: Kirk (1998) mentions strange animals have been seen here. No description of the animals are given, but Kirk notes that Loren Coleman has suggested "some form of erratic crocodile," while he himself suggests "the creature living therein could well be the same as the supposed giant salamanders said to inhabit the small lakes of the Trinity Alps in northwestern California as well as Pitt Lake, British Columbia."

Lakes of the Trinity Alps, California: The "giant salamanders" of these lakes are well-known in cryptozoology, and their background is given by Coleman (1989). These animals may or may not be related to the Canadian animals, but most of the described characteristics indicate that these are probably amphibians.

What is it?

It is really too early to theorize exactly what this animal may be. Besides the fact that there may be more than one species involved in these sightings, we are not able to specifically determine whether we are dealing with an amphibian or a reptile (or

both). Descriptions vary with different witnesses: some see reptilian (lizard or crocodilian) features, while others see it as salamander-like. One problem with herpetological cryptids is that witnesses are unfamiliar with basic terminology. It is not uncommon for an individual to look at a salamander and mistake it for a lizard, or a lizard for a crocodilian. Any such terms should be considered unreliable when examining reports. They can provoke a certain image in the investigator's mind and create a bias that is difficult to remove.

Overall, we appear to be considering an elongated quadruped with a longish snout, dark in coloration, and primarily aquatic although it is capable of leaving the water for short periods of time. It has relatively smooth skin (i.e. no large reptile-like scales) but may have rough indentations on the back. There may be relatively prominent "horns" behind the head (which may be confused for upright ears by some witnesses). Of course, we don't know whether sexual dimorphism plays any part in the appearance of the animal.

The animal appears to have a maximum length between 15 and 20 feet, with numerous smaller animals being reported. One point to keep in mind is that if the animal is seen in the water, the head and tail are not always going to be noticeable, and length could be overestimated. It may be possible that aquatic sightings account for the "two-headed snake" stories. If seen in low light situations, it may be difficult to distinguish head from tail. There are several reptiles worldwide which have been thought to be "two-headed" by native peoples because of the physical similarity between the two ends.

We have noticed some authors suggest that this animal could not be a reptile. Sanderson (1961) stated that "reptiles, however, are cold blooded and the existence of one in even southern British Columbia would be unlikely, to say the least." Kirk (1998) agrees, stating that "cold blooded reptiles would not last long in frigid montane Canadian lakes which are rather chilly even in the height of summer." This reasoning overlooks two basic points: amphibians are also ectothermic, and there is one reptile which inhabits the waters of southern British Columbia.

Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) survive cold temperatures due to biochemical elements which act as a natural "antifreeze." Freeze tolerance is also found in several amphibians. Physiological reasons may remove a reptilian candidate, but this needs further examination. Brooks (1998) noted that the northern limits of reptiles have as much to do with low incubation temperatures in the summer as they do with severe cold during the winter. But what if the reptile is live-bearing? Whether reptile or amphibian, this animal has adapted to a harsh environment. For now, there just is not enough evidence to remove any particular candidate.

So, can we guess at the identity? Is it just a legend? Crocodilian? Cryptobranchid salamander? Aetosaurian? Leopold Planke's "sea-iguana"? It looks like only comprehensive field work in southern British Columbia will lead to any real answers. Right now, there are just too many questions.

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Primates in Harrison County, Indiana?

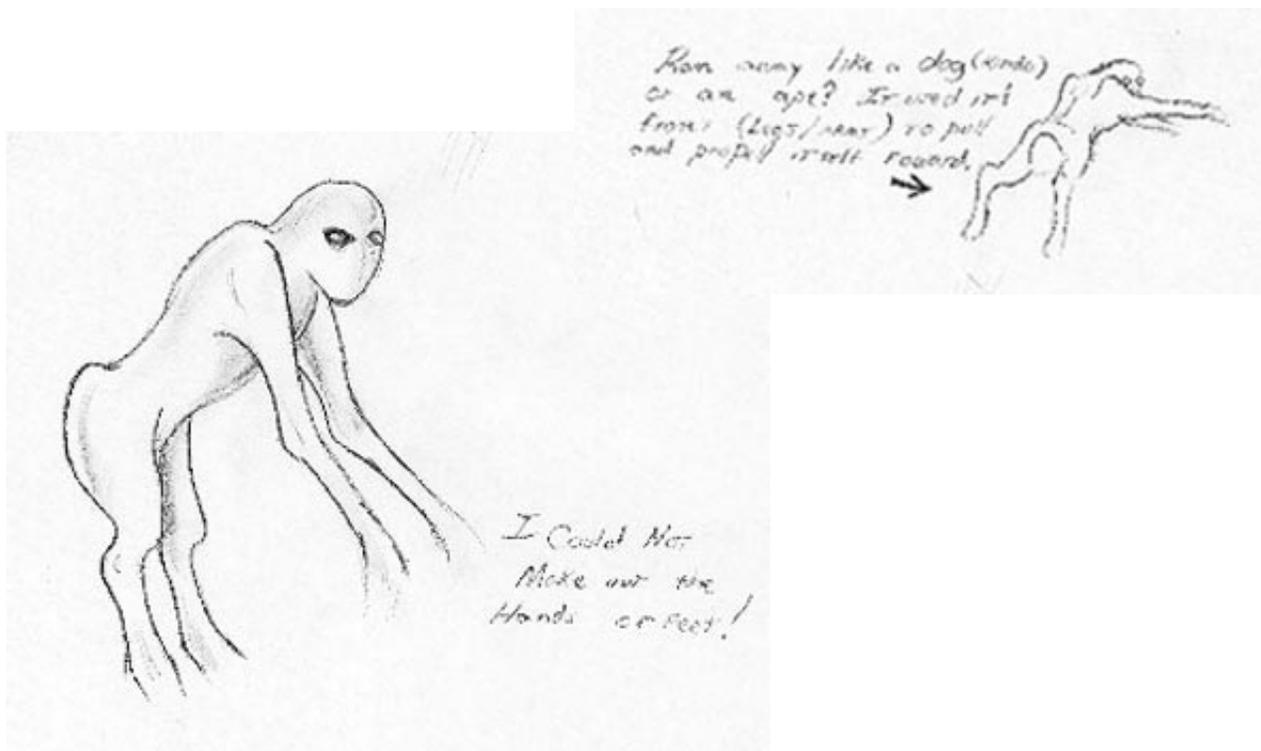
Brad LaGrange

I was contacted by a Don P. recently via e-mail. He reported to me an encounter he had in the early 90's in the southern part of the county. While rounding a corner in his vehicle, his headlights came to rest on an odd animal eating a dead opossum. When the creature saw him, it stood up on its back legs to a height of "around four feet tall," and was "light tan/cream color." In a phone interview, he said that the legs "didn't look right," so I asked him to elaborate. He said that they were "bent," so I asked how so, and he said "at the knees, like a dog's."

After the creature stood up, it dropped to all fours and ran off, with Don in chase attempting to run it down. Its locomotion was described as "between a dog and an ape," and that "it used its front arms/legs to propel itself." Don said he didn't get a good look at its face, but it didn't have much of a snout. The creature then ran for a driveway and out of visual range.

Don has a  that allows him to talk to many people (he is a barber), and he has gathered other reports (coming in NABR #2). He did say that most people who described the animal to him stated that the creature was the cream color he saw, although one night-time report without much light had the animal gray and in a tree. Also noted was a hatred of dogs by the animal, although Don did not mention what kind of response dogs made towards the creature. Readers can also expect a field investigation of this by Don and myself.

The sketches were drawn by Don. One shows the animal as it was running away, while the other shows what Don believes the animal may have looked like in profile.



The Case of the Mysterious, Unexplained Nocturnal Sound Near Vincennes, Indiana

By Richard L. King

My car's tires crunched driveway gravel that cold, crisp early February midnight in 1990 as I returned home from my job as a reference librarian. It had been a typical, busy evening in the community college library and I was looking forward to relaxing in my easy chair with a book and cold drink beside the wood stove that heats our home five miles south-east of Vincennes, Indiana, near Ind. 61. I was not to enjoy my planned repose for at least an hour, however, as I experienced a bizarre and as yet unexplained event. The story I am relating here is true.

As I left the warmth of my car I noticed that our dog (a medium-sized English shepherd type) did not bound up to greet me, as was his custom. Instead he pranced nervously at the edge of the small (about six acres) woods that begins about 50 feet from the front door of the south-western Indiana home we had lived in for five years. Suddenly the serene winter night was shattered as the oddest, most remarkable noise I have ever heard resounded from some hard-to-define area of the woods. My dog began to bark and lunge crazily at different areas of the edge of the woods, as if he wasn't sure where the noise came from, but had been aggressively responding to the noise for some time before I arrived.

I can describe the sound phonetically as follows: "bsszzzhhtt bsszzzhhtt clack-clack-clack" (with an emphasis on the "bsszz")! The noise, which lasted about five seconds, was stunningly loud, bright and alarming and sounded almost as if it was electronically amplified. I first thought that an electric transformer high on a power-line pole had exploded perhaps a quarter-mile away and the sound echoed in a strange, amplified manner. However, it became obvious the sound came from within the woods, which slopes perhaps 30 feet downward like a ravine to a muddy, swampy ditch. There are no

nearby houses on that side of the woods that could have been responsible for the noise, but there are power lines and  house about one-quarter of a mile in a different direction. The sound kept repeating at approximately two- to five-minute intervals for 30-45 minutes, I would estimate.

The dog continued to lunge and bark, but refused to enter the woods, his normal playground. I went indoors and alerted my wife, who was still awake, fearing all would be silent by the time my witness appeared. We both stood in front of our house in the cold, silent air (she was curious about my excitement) and waited and listened (in vain, I thought). Suddenly the noise resounded once again: "bsszzzhhtt bsszzzhhtt clack-clack-clack!" We looked at each other in wonder. The noise continued for some time and seemed to become irritated and angry at the dog's barking. There were no other sounds like thrashing among leaves or limbs, there were no lights or voices or heavy breathing or wings flapping, there was nothing but the amplified sound. We found a flashlight but could see nothing from the edge of the tree-line, and we were just a little too fearful to enter the woods.

After ruling out a blown transformer, we speculated about several possibilities for the existence of the noise. Could it be some unusual stork-like bird that normally is not found in southern Indiana in the winter, perhaps that had become lost and frightened and was snapping its beak as a defense mechanism? Perhaps the noise could have been made by the clashing antlers of mating or fighting deer (there are many in the area). Perhaps some animal like an opossum or raccoon makes the noise at times, such as when it is angry or sick. The idea of meeting up with a sick or angry or otherwise dangerous animal, as well as our dog's refusal to enter the woods, all led to our hesitation to take a closer look with the flashlight. We speculated about whether the noise

could be some type of hunter's call (I once knew some teenage boys who unsuccessfully tried to hunt coyotes at night in this manner, using an artificial dying rabbit call to lure coyotes within shooting range). More fanciful explanations, such as extra-terrestrial, paranormal, or cryptozoological, also were considered that evening. Could this have been our own Close Encounter? Exactly what is Bigfoot supposed to sound like? Certainly there are well-known areas of our county that have earned reputations as paranormal and UFO hotspots (see note below concerning my World Wide Web folklore pages related to these occurrences), but to my knowledge there have not been any recent reports of such things near our property.

The next morning, in the clarifying and friendly light of day, I explored the area of the woods the sound seemed to come from, and found no evidence of anything unusual. I found no tracks on the leaf-strewn ground or near the muddy ditch, no strange birds sitting on limbs of trees, no sign of an unusual animal or disturbance. There were no damaged power transformers in the area, and my nearest neighbor (who lives about 500 yards in front of my house) told me he did not hear any strange noises that night nor any other time. The dog went into the woods with me as if nothing unusual had ever happened.

We have asked many people about this noise, including syndicated newspaper columnist Harold Allison (an Indiana resident), who often writes about mysteries of nature, Bigfoot and other strange animal sightings, and assorted southern Indiana oddities. No one has ever given me a clue as to what our own strange nocturnal sound might have been. We have never heard the sound again, though I long to hear it so I can have a chance to determine the answer to our mystery.

Note: For information about paranormal hotspots in Knox County, Indiana (and some nearby areas), please access my World Wide Web pages titled Folklore, Legends, Tall Tales: An Interactive Casebook for Knox County, Indiana. The URL for my website is <http://rking.vinu.edu/folklore.htm>

Especially interesting are the headings concerning Lucky Point, Stangle's Bridge, ghost stories, Loup-Garou legends, UFOs, and strange beasts and sea-serpents. Also fascinating are the folk legends found under the heading "Read the Folktales of Area Interest Submitted by World Wide Web Readers." My email address is rking@indian.vinu.edu if anyone wishes to contact me.

Unusual color morph of the American longtailed salamander

Brad LaGrange

During a herp-hunting expedition in  Spring, 1997, to an abandoned quarry near my home in Perry County, Indiana, I came across what appeared to be a unique specimen, a green longtailed salamander.

A longtailed salamander (*Eurycea longicauda*) is a "lungless" salamander that is related to cave, two-lined, and several blind cave salamanders. Longtails are typically orange or yellowish. They are less aquatic than most of their close kin, yet still do stay near water even if it is just an inch of water in a wooded gully.

However, the salamander I laid hands on was a dark "army jeep green." It still had the peppering of black spots of a normal longtailed salamander. This specimen did not seem abnormal in any other way.

In fact, the only thing I noticed odd beyond its coloration was that the animal appeared "chunky" or "chubby" to me. This may have been due to its having eaten a large meal or even my imagination.

I have yet to catch another of that color in the quarry to this day. I have seen longtailed salamanders of normal color in the area, and the longtailed larvae I caught there metamorphosized into normal colored adults as well.

Has anyone out there encountered something similar?

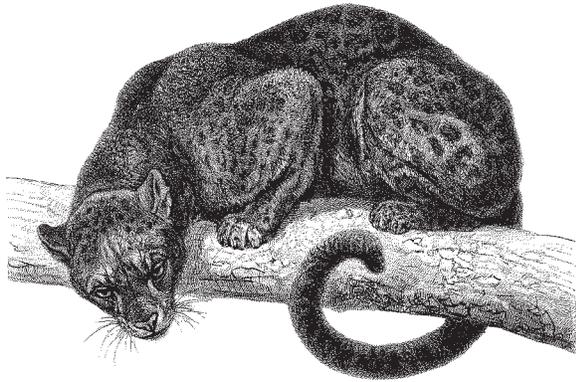
Eyewitness Account: A Mystery Cat in Missouri

Chad Arment

This sighting report was sent to me in November, 1998. The individual's name is being kept confidential, but it is on file.

"My sighting took place around mid-June of 1976. It was on a farm about 2 miles north of a town called Wellsville, Missouri. It was around mid-day and I was armed with a .22 single shot rifle with the intention of taking frogs from a small pond I knew of. I did not have permission to be there.

"The pond was heavily overgrown with brush and trees. I was being as quiet as possible so as not to scare the frogs away from the bank when I approached. Upon reaching the top of the dirt dam, I saw to the left of me something black. I stared at it for a moment before I realized it was a large black cat drinking from the pond. It was about fifteen yards away.



"It was perhaps four feet long with a long black tail. I would guess it's weight at around 100 to 110 pounds. It was solid black, though I could not see the underbelly due to it's position.

"It saw me and raised its head. We stared at each other for what seemed like ten minutes but in fact it could not have been more than four or five seconds. I turned and ran back the way I had come until I got worried it might give chase and stopped. I could not see or hear the cat though I stood there for several minutes.

"The entire time I viewed the cat could not have lasted more  ten or fifteen seconds. I have seen panthers and cougars, (in zoos), and bobcats in the wild and I can say that this was without question a panther.

"I returned there the next morning, much better armed, in hopes of shooting the cat and getting my picture in all the papers in the state. I did find two prints near the water's edge where the panther was drinking but was unable to find any other tracks. After a couple of hours of searching I gave it up.

"Others in the area claimed to have heard the panther but they may in fact have heard bobcats. I have heard bobcats on several occasions and they can freeze your blood if you don't know what it is.

"In the next year or two, while I was still living in the area, there were stories about people seeing a panther but it was always "somebody's brother said his sister's boyfriend's dad, etc., etc." I did not notify the fish and game department. I was taking frogs out of season and was on someone else's land without permission to boot."

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<http://www.herper.com/Crypto.html>

Abstracts in Review

Chad Arment

This is a brief look at some papers which may have bioforensic implications or which illustrate the oddities and puzzles awaiting anyone who pursues the study of natural history.

Radtke, R.L. 1995. Forensic biological pursuits of exotic fish origins: piranha in Hawaii. *Environmental Biology of Fishes* 43: 393-399.

This article discusses a red-bellied piranha, *Pygocentrus nattereri*, caught in a reservoir on the island of Oahu. By examining the sagittal otoliths under a scanning electron microscope, the researchers were able to estimate when the animal had been introduced into the reservoir. This technique allowed them to determine that the fish was, in fact, an introduction and not part of a breeding population.

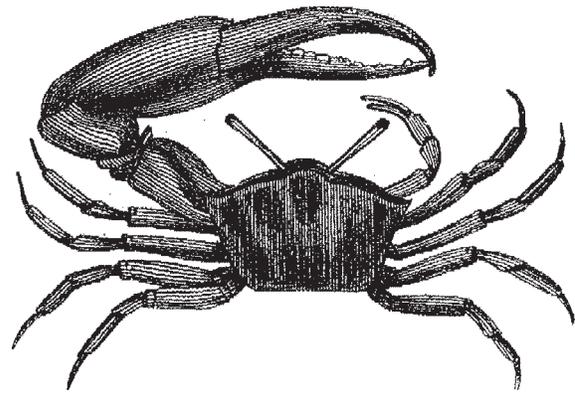
McLane, W.M., and G.E. Nelson. 1949. Notes on an apparent "rain" of organic matter in Florida. *Quart. J. of the Florida Academy of Sciences* 12(3): 203-206.

This article details the finding of jelly-like masses covering the front of an apartment following a thunderstorm in Putnam County, Florida. The masses were about 5x10mm in size, and blue-green in coloration. They were found on a number of walls, but were not found on the lawns, roads, or sidewalks. Experimentation found that the masses were deposited by midges (Chironomidae).

Holman, J.A., and W.H. Hill. 1961. A mass unidirectional movement of *Natrix sipedon pictiventris*. *Copeia* 1961(4): 498-499.

The authors describe the movement of over 100 Florida water snakes (now *Nerodia fasciata pictiventris*) moving on a single night from one marsh to another, crossing Wacahoota Road, in Alachua

County, Florida. A marked decrease in movement was noted on successive nights. The authors suggest that drought and dehydration of *Nerodia* habitat triggered the migration, and note that "the means by which the animals orient toward suitable habitat remain to be discovered."



Parker, A.R., D.R. Mckencie, and S.T. Ahyong. 1998. A unique form of light reflector and the evolution of signalling in *Ovalipes* (Crustacea: Decapoda: Portunidae). *Proc. of the Royal Society of London B* 265: 861-867.

Iridescence is known in quite a few organisms, but is not always recognized as having usefulness. Functional iridescence is known from some ostracods, copepods, and fish, and is very interesting in the crabs described in this article. Interspecific communication in this genus involves both stridulation and iridescent "flashing." Species which are shallow-water dwellers tend to be non-iridescent and primarily use stridulation. Species which are known to frequent deeper depths are often iridescent to one degree or another. Iridescent species are known from eastern North America, the Gulf of Mexico, Australia, South Africa, Indonesia, and Japan. The article details the physics of iridescence and why it functions best in deeper waters.

The California "Snow-Worm"

Douglas E. Trapp, Dallas, TX

I have discussed this with several biologists with whom I have worked, and none could come up with any definition of the animal I am about to describe. Personally I believe it may be a known species, but I have dug through lots of books trying to find it, to no avail.

During the Spring of 1978, Corey Rudolph and I were camping out in the mountains dividing the Mojave Desert and Los Angeles, and following up on Sasquatch reports nearby. One morning, as we were walking around in the high desert which was still slightly snow covered, we came upon something wiggling in the snow near a little creek. Upon closer examination we saw that it was a worm of some sort, and we began to dig it out of the snow. Once in hand, it immediately coiled up into a tight ball, and now appeared more like some sort of wire.

As we felt it we noticed that the skin was smooth, but it was very stiff, and could not be forced to re-coil. Its body was maybe 5 mm in diameter and about 9 inches long when fully outstretched. It was brown in color, and its head was an abrupt stump with what looked like the ball from a ball pen at the end. It had no eyes or anything, just a wire-like body with a ball-pen mouth. In fact, we weren't even sure it was a mouth at all. It also had no apparent anus. I took it home and kept it in a small tupper-ware bowl of water for about 3 months, and fed it nothing. It remained alive, and would stretch-out in the bowl, but coil again if touched. After three months we decided to take it back to the same area, and release it. We searched the libraries and called several "worm" experts, none of which had ever heard of this species. All books on worms were without this one.

Reflecting on my observations of it, it would at times lift part of its body out of the water bowl, but never tried to escape. It may have been a parasite of some sort. I believe it probably ate micro-organisms

in the water, but the water I kept it in for three months was tap water, so probably nothing there to consume. Whatever it was, it never died in captivity, without food of any sort. It was released in a small creek and simply drifted away in the current. To this day, I have no idea what it was, but we decided to name it the "Rudolph-Trapp Snow Worm." I don't expect any of you to have heard of such a thing, but if you have, I'd like to know about it.

Lake Monster Captured?

Chad Arment

There's an interesting tale mentioned in a folklore publication by Frederick Stonehouse (1997). Stonehouse cites an October 1985 article, "Sea Serpent Sightings on the Great Lakes," from the Historical Society of Michigan Chronicles, concerning a sea serpent which was apparently harpooned on August 6, 1897 at Belle Isle. The animal was measured at 17 feet in length and two feet wide. Unfortunately, no other details are given. The animal was supposed to be sent to the Detroit Scientific Research Association. I have been able to find reference to the DSRA on the Internet, but have been unable to determine its present status and location. Other museums in Detroit were unable to give me any information on the group. Might there be a stuffed carcass or preserved skin laying around in a cabinet somewhere in Detroit?

Citation:

Stonehouse, F. 1997. Haunted Lakes. Duluth, MN: Lake Superior Port Cities.

Giant Amerindians

Chad Arment

Most archaeologists who specialize in North American studies give little credence to reports of an extinct race of giant Amerindians. It is true that most reports of giant skeletons have been shown to be hoaxes or have lead to dead-ends when an investigator attempts to track down the bones. Circumstantial evidence abounds in the form of snippets of reports in various semi-Fortean publications. These can lead to the false impression that there is ample evidence available to determine if such a people existed.

The question of giant prehistoric Amerindians has intrigued some scientists, however. Iscan and Kessel (1997) reported on an osteologic analysis of prehistoric southeastern U.S. Indians. Their study was based on the skeletal material of over 100 subjects, reporting a maximum average height of 169.8 cm for males, 164.0 cm for females. These figures could be considered “tall,” but not extraordinarily so. The authors suggest a few reasons why so many of the early explorers claimed to see “giants” among the tribes they met.

Most Fortean stories about giant skeletons unearthed in North America lack any real details. Most are being passed along second-hand (or third-, or fourth-,...). There is, however, one intriguing tale from a Kentucky folklore book written by Michael Paul Henson (1984). Henson relates how he actually examined a body dug out from under a large rock ledge along Holly Creek in east-central Kentucky. In 1965, a landowner, Kenneth White, was building cattle stalls under the ledge when he found a “perfectly preserved skeleton” which measured 8 feet, 9 inches in length when reassembled. He states “the arms were extremely long and the hands were large. By comparison, the feet were very small.” The skull was “30 inches in circumference. The eye and nose sockets were slits rather than cavities, and the area where the jaw bone hinges to the skull was

solid bone. It would seem that the person could not have opened  mouth.” A powdery white substance covered the skeleton, but no tools, weapons, or other human implements were found with the bones. The body was buried approximately five feet underground. Henson and the farmer assumed the skeleton to be a large, deformed Indian.

Unfortunately, White reburied the bones rather than taking them to a university for examination. Henson died in 1995, and any further notes he may have made on this fascinating story are unavailable (Henson 1996). I would suggest that further investigation of this tale could produce interesting results. We do not have an exact locality for this report, but Holly Creek appears to be run through both Wolfe and Breathitt Counties in Kentucky.

Certainly, the evidence for a true race of giant Amerindians is lacking, but there are certainly other possible explanations for a large bipedal human-like skeleton being found in North America.

Henson, M.P. 1984. *Tragedy at Devil's Hollow and other Haunting Tales from Kentucky*. Bowling Green, KY: Cockrel Corp.

Henson, M.P. 1996. *More Kentucky Ghost Stories*. Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press.

Iscan, M.Y., and M.H. Kessel. 1997. Giant Amerindians: Fact or Fantasy? *Southeastern Archaeology* 16(1): 73-78.

A Mounted Cat Mystery

Bill Rebsamen



Let me begin this by stating that, as an average armchair cryptozoological enthusiast, I never dreamed that I would cross paths with a mystery animal, even a deceased one! However, don't let "dead" fool you. These wily creatures seem to prove themselves elusive even after death. This is especially true when dealing with possible errors in record keeping or poor preservation methods of taxidermied specimens and the difficulties and time involved in verification of all the existing pieces of evidence in question, not to mention tracking down the people with information you need.

I found this specimen while vacationing with my family last summer. We were in Branson, Missouri, and drove on to Springfield to visit the Bass Pro Shop where they have the Wildlife World Museum. This fascinating museum is filled with tons of trophy mounts donated from all over the world along with impressive wood carvings replicating world record trophies of various freshwater and saltwater fish.

While touring through the labyrinth of bio dramas,

from across a large room I noticed this strange reddish-brown spotted big cat! My first impression was that this was a red color phase of a melanistic leopard (mentioned in Shuker's (1989) *Mystery Cats of the World*). I've seen brownish looking "black leopards" but NEVER anything like this! The rosettes are clearly visible (almost black), darker than the rusty, reddish-brown colored background fur.

Intrigued? OK, it gets better (or worse). This was on a Sunday so none of the main museum workers were there. After I returned home I contacted the Director of Operations, Rick Collins, who was very patient with me and after much difficulty (they have at least three black leopard mounts which they rotate from time to time), finally tracked down the source of the donated mount in question.

From there I contacted an nice gentleman named Mr. Bernard Meinerz (a former big game hunter) from Lakewood, Colorado. He said he had indeed donated some of the trophy mounts. One of them being the largest jaguar I've ever seen... it's skull was

18 5/8" around and, according to Meinerz, at one time a world record. But he then stated that all of the mounts, including this apparently melanistic cat, were jaguars!

"Now wait a minute!," I thought. I'm no zoologist but I've studied big cats since I was a kid and as a very observant wildlife artist, I was convinced this mount was a leopard. I called Rick Collins back and asked him to double check the records and give me his opinion of the mount in question. He returned my call later saying that according to his records this was the mount donated by Meinerz but he and his entire staff agreed that, physiologically, everything about this specimen (aside from the strange coloration) said "leopard" - longer thinner tail, smaller rosettes, overall at first glance, a leopard.



Also, Mr. Meinerz (who I believe had a little difficulty understanding exactly what I meant) did not really ever confirm to me that his cat was of an unusually reddish coloration which leads me to believe that perhaps the museum records are in error. This museum has so many specimens it would certainly be possible to have a few "mystery mounts"!

To make matters even more complex, I recently came across a photo of an extremely faded and poorly mounted spotted leopard in the December issue of the magazine **Africa**.

The only factor that does not add up is the reddish cat's rosettes being so clearly visible and the uniform coloration, even its underside. If a melanistic mount were to fade would it not fade equally in both the background and rosettes and wouldn't there be "hot spots" where it was more faded with some areas being unaffected?

So far as I have learned, I have one of the following scenarios:

(A) - The museum records are in error.

(B) - This mount has not been properly preserved or has been displayed in direct sunlight. (I'm convinced not since it is entirely uniform in coloration)

(C) - A reddish melanistic jaguar with leopard like features.

(D) - Here's a good one! An escaped exotic (really exotic!) pet leopard in Belize where Meinerz states this cat was taken from.

(E) - I can't tell leopards from jaguars and have made a big deal out of nothing. Well, except for the unusual reddish-brown color.

Over the last two months I got hit with my seasonal Christmas rush for pet portraits and had not followed up on this any further until Chad Arment asked me to submit my findings for an article in this newsletter.

I left Mr. Meinerz with telling him I would send



him a photo of the mount for him to confirm whether or not it was indeed his donation. I also had Dr. Karl Shuker interested. In fact Karl recently wrote an article for a British magazine about several Mystery Cats. He told me that he had included my photo and a mention of the ongoing research. According to Karl, there are reports of red leopards but, as far as he knows, no verified specimens (dead or alive).

Bernard Meinerz and Rick Collins were interested in my mentions of cryptozoology and have been very pleasant and interesting people to speak with.

I hope we can get all of these questions straightened out in the near future. Dr. Shuker may at last have his elusive red leopard... or perhaps a red jaguar that has changed its spots!

Frederick Gerstäcker's "Wild Men of the Woods"

Chad Arment

Frederick Gerstäcker was an early traveler/author who explored the frontier towns in the New World, sending fascinating stories to an eager audience back in Europe. Born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1816, he eagerly embarked for the United States in 1837 and spent six years living on the road and experiencing everything he could find. He tried various trades and spent time with people of various cultures. After returning to Germany, he began writing and publishing books on his travels. A second trip was made in 1849, beginning in South America, travelling from there to California, Hawaii, and Australia.

The particular tale that I would like to examine is one from his book which has been translated as "Western Lands and Western Waters." In it, Gerstäcker describes the arrival of a small traveling menagerie to an Arkansas town. The townsfolk are first intrigued by the idea of seeing strange animals, but are surprised and upset when they realize that the owner of the menagerie, Monsieur Bertrand, expects to be paid an admission fee for the privilege.

Realizing that they are unwilling to pay to see something without knowing exactly what they were going to see, M. Bertrand allows two men to look at the animals and report what they see to the other villagers. The men are shown into the tent, which contains several primates, a cougar, a leopard, and a llama. Marveling at the animals, the two men promptly report that the exhibit is indeed worth a "quarter-dollar," and M. Bertrand does a steady business.

Gerstäcker continues his tale, following up with a grisly fight between the cougar and a "chimpanzee," forced by a drunken mob against the will of M. Bertrand. But, our interest lies with the response to the primates by the townspeople.

One of the primates is described by Gerstäcker as a chimpanzee, though M. Bertrand stated that it

was "a  - an ape... comes from India, lives in a very hot country, very warm, and has much *resemblance* with men." Upon seeing this creature, one of the hunters becomes enthused.

"By this and by that, if it isn't a wild man!" Wilson interposed. "He was caught down there in the Cash swamps. Prince was after him twice, but couldn't come up with him."

Several times, hunters argue about where the Frenchman must have captured the animal.

"Stewart and Wilson had a bet of a deer-skin as to the place where the Frenchman caught the 'wild boy;' Stewart asserting that he had been brought from Leckie's Elbow - a curve in the Mississippi, far down in Tennessee, where one was said to be living in the swamp - while Wilson insisted he was nailed, in some way or other, in the Cash Swamps; and he should himself have captured him on one occasion, had not his foot slipped and plumped him headforemost into one of the numerous bayous there."

After seeing the animal, one man was especially stunned.

"If I only knew where he caught that little specimen of a man!" the old squatter said, to whom this was the most remarkable thing in the whole business. "Confound his traps; they have no fall or cover, yet they shut quite tight."

"Well, didn't you ask him, Smithly?" one of the bystanders said.

"Asked? Yes, but it was no use. Bless my soul, what stuff that fellow talks - you can

make nothing of it. And the wild men he calls monkehs - what he means by it I don't know; for we call them simple forest men, or wild men - chattered and shrieked, and the spotted panther howled, and an old vagabond of a catamount he has there - devil take the beast, why don't he kill it? - whined and yelled enough to drive one mad.'

"And has he really wild men?" one man, rushing forward, turned back to ask.

"Wild men?" the squatter repeated, gazing on him in surprise; 'You ask if he has wild men - why, he has a whole nest of them! We only saw one and a heap of young ones, and they look - the Lord knows what strangers we have not got in our forests!'"

Another man, half-drunken, claimed:

"Gentlemen, that is a real wild man; for I met one once at White River exactly like this. You have no idea what strength such a harmless-looking creature possesses."

There was one thing that surprised the townspeople, however.

"The thing that puzzled them most was the monkey's tails; for they insisted, in spite of the Frenchman's protestations, on their being wild men. The stranger was so stupid that he did not know what he had caught; and they, the backwoodsmen of Arkansas, must surely be allowed to know what a wild man of the woods looked like."

So, we are given the impression that these Arkansas backwoodsmen are familiar with a primate they call a "wild man."

Gerstäcker provides his own explanation, however.

"It is certainly, a peculiar circumstance, that the rumour of 'wild men' - that is, of men who have turned wild, who then rush into the

forests, and cannot be removed from them - should exist in the Western Forests, in spite of the fact that seldom, or never, such a thing comes to light. Frequently, after being quiet for months, the rumour breaks out afresh, and one hunter or the other declares he has found the trail of a wild man, and traced him to his home in some cave or hollow tree on the mountains. The most terrible stories are told of former captives - how they defended themselves, used their teeth; and how Bill's father, or Jem's grandfather, in the settlement, nearly lost his life in struggling with the apparently weak mannikin, whom they were always compelled, in the end, to shoot, and could never catch alive.

"And this little thin fellow of a Frenchman had caught a whole nest full - who would have expected that of the little withered stranger?"

"Well, as I said, they could not agree about the tail, and Stewart at last asserted (and confirmed it not only with a curse, but by an offer to bet three bottles of whisky), that the wild men were descended from the Hasscolds (neighboring squatters), for they had all such precious long backs, that they might easily grow into a tail. This explanation seemed far too probable for any of the other men to venture the wager.

"A report may appear as incredible and absurd as you will, but there is always some foundation of truth for it; and there have, in reality, been wild men, not only in Arkansas, but in many other countries. It is a remarkable fact that men, if lost for any length of time in the forest, are entirely deprived of their reason by fear and excitement; and finally, when found by others, instead of rejoicing at their salvation, leap into the nearest thicket, and try to escape man as their most dangerous foe. As proof of this I will here tell a story of an old backwoodsman, who spent all his life in the forest.

"I have forgotten his name, which, however,

is not necessary for the story, but he lived in the western part of Tennessee, not far from the spot where the town of Randolph is now built, and had a small farm at the foot of the hills which run down into the Mississippi Valley. He lost his way, one cloudy day, while hunting in the enormous swamps of that district, and, instead of lying down and going to sleep quietly, as is the hunter's rule, in order to choose the direction in cool blood and

Arkansas swamps. At first, they did not know what he was about; but when he heard them coming, he leaped into the reeds, and they were obliged to drag him home by force. On reaching his log hut he did not recognize it, and looked wildly around, as if meditating a fresh flight; but by degrees his senses returned to him, and the recollection of all that occurred to him.

“Such men, who now and then grow quite

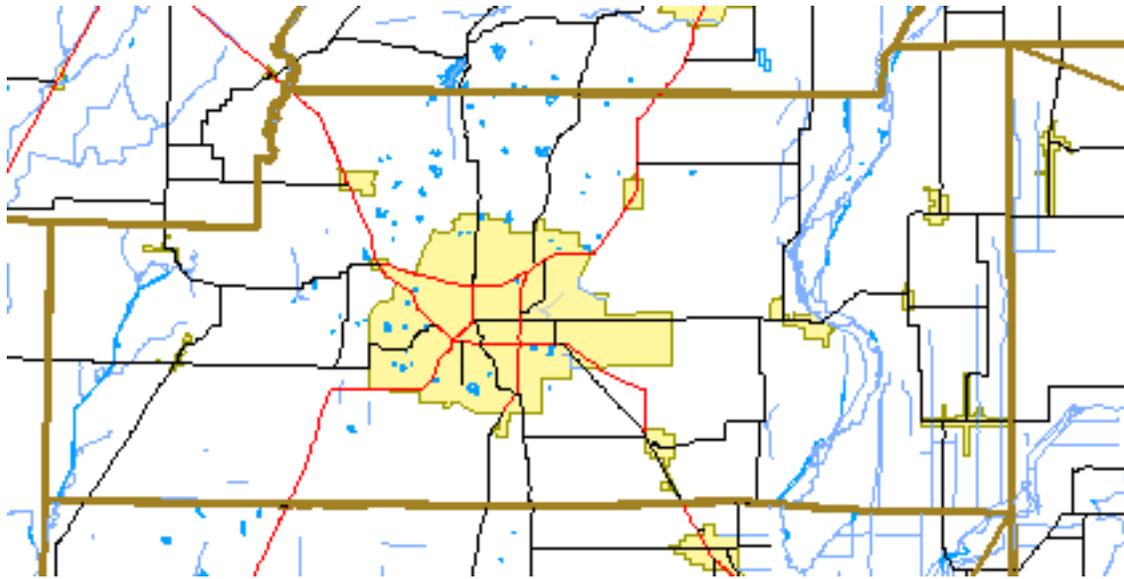


Figure 1. Craighead County, Arkansas

perfect collectedness, he allowed himself to give way to his first impulses of fear, and began to run backwards and forwards. Hence, growing more and more excited, he at length lost consciousness. He ran day and night over the morass, and at last he formed the mad, but fixed idea, that he had somehow crossed the Mississippi, which was at least a mile wide, and must return to the other bank in order to reach his home. He had been missed, however, and his friends set out to look for him. They found him at last, though almost driven to desperation by his zig-zag trail, on the bank of the Mississippi, busily engaged in making a raft, on which to cross the pathless wilderness of the opposite

savage, are pursued by the hunters, and even killed in self-defence; and, though it may happen so rarely, it seemed as if the truth of that story were confirmed by the presence of such creatures, just as they were thought to be in these extraordinary beasts.”

Investigators who are familiar with primate reports from North America will recognize the possible connection to theorized North American apes. Coleman (1983) noted that reports of a “free-ranging, swimming nocturnal ape” were known dating back to at least 1869. Coleman points out that “the American apes *appear* to be chimpanzees. Ape-like, hairy and tailless, they range in height from four to six feet, though now and then some very scared

person reports a seven footer.”

Gerstäcker’s story provides some support for the idea that an unrecognized species of primate was known in historical times. (As opposed to Shoemaker’s (1990) assertion that no good historical reports exist.) It is certainly not positive proof as such, but the story does suggest that a moderate-sized tailless primate was known from certain swamps and bottomlands in Arkansas and along the Mississippi. Is Gerstäcker’s theory, foreshadowing

species of ape.

As with any report, further investigation is necessary. If the swamps around Cash (Craighead County), Arkansas, were a known haunt of “wild men,” there may be related tales in the local historical society archives. I have not been able to determine where exactly Leckie’s Elbow is on the Mississippi along the Tennessee border, but one could probably visit towns along the river wherever swampland may have once existed. Similarly, areas

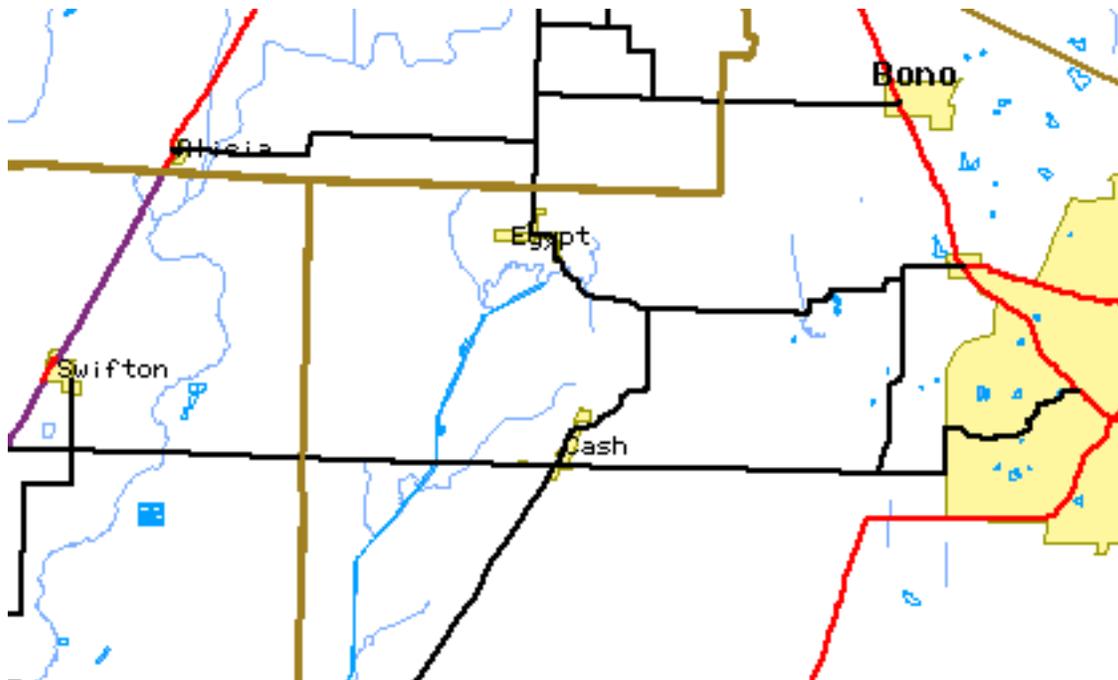


Figure 2. Cash, Craighead County, Arkansas

the ideas in Shoemaker’s article, a better alternative? I suspect not. While the hunters never provided a good description of the “wild man of the woods,” certain characteristics are not particularly tenable with the “feral human” theory. Would a human really be disposed to live in the swamps when other habitats were available? Is there any evidence that several such individuals became residents of the southern bottomlands during that time period? The remark that an encountered “wild man” was stronger than one would imagine corresponds well with known ape species. Chimps and orangutans are extremely strong for their size, and a similar strength would not be unexpected in any as yet unknown

of former (or still existing) swampland along the White River in Arkansas are probably a good place to start when looking for historical reports of this interesting cryptid.

Citations:

- Coleman, L. 1983. *Mysterious America*. Boston: Faber and Faber.
- Gerstäcker, F. 1864. *Western Lands and Western Waters*. London: S.O. Beeton.
- Shoemaker, M.T. 1990. Searching for the historical bigfoot. *Strange Magazine* (5): 18+.

Maps created at <http://tiger.census.gov>

A Tennessee Mystery Cat

Chad Arment

In his regular column “Menagerie of Mystery,” Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker (1998a) noted an unusual cat that was killed in Tennessee in 1997. The description given by Shuker and from information forwarded to me by John Moore and Ben Roesch is intriguing.

The cat was slim and cheetah-like, having a “long” neck and a small head. It was golden brown with spots except on the face where it turned reddish around the nose, eyes, and ears. The long tail had black rings around it and may have had a white tip. A reddish dorsal stripe started at the head and merged into the tail. The long legs had sharp claws. The cat had been treed by dogs before being shot.

A few investigators looked into this report, but have not located the feline, which was apparently skinned. In a recent article, Shuker (1998b) noted that a photo of the cat existed, but it had been sold to an unidentified university student. It is obvious that this is a unique beast among North American cryptids. I would argue that this was an aberrant individual and not an unrecognized species, although it was reported that some local farmers claimed to have seen similar cats in the past. As Shuker’s source (Bryan Long) pointed out, though, these older sightings could have been cougar sightings, which were only recently extirpated from the area.

But, if it was not a new species, what was it? It is possible that this feline was a hybrid from the exotic pet trade which was released into the wild. More specifically, this may have been a cross between a mountain lion and a jaguar.

Shuker (1989) recorded that hunter Sacha Siemel had once shot an unusual cat in the Mato Grosso. The cat was heavily built, brownish (fawn) with dark spots and a dark stripe along the spine. Shuker noted that the most plausible explanation was a cougar/jaguar hybrid. Physically, the Tennessee animal and Siemel’s feline share similar traits. There is a

difference in  build of these two cats, but the Mato Grosso cat may have taken after the jaguar, while the Tennessee animal took after the cougar.

Shuker (1989) noted that a hybrid cougar-leopard has been bred in captivity, resembling a small gray puma with brown rosettes. Dubost and Royère (1993) reported the birth of three ocelot-cougars which showed a mix of juvenile ocelot and cougar patterning.

How feasible is the idea of a hybrid cat here in North America? Honestly, it’s quite possible. The exotic mammal trade is widespread and felines are a large portion of it. Mountain lions are common. Jaguars are less common but not that difficult to acquire. (Even in states which have strict exotic pet laws, individuals are often unaware that they are breaking the law and will purchase animals from out-of-state sources.) Hybrid felines are popular with small cat fanciers, as Shuker (1998b) mentions, and it is not difficult to imagine someone allowing their larger “pets” to interbreed.

As big cats require a lot of room, not to mention food, it also isn’t difficult to see some irresponsible pet owners releasing their charges into the wild. For now, I suspect that this is the best explanation for this mystery cat. Hopefully, someone will be able to track down the animal’s skin and confirm or reject this theory.

Citations:

- Dubost, G., and J. Royère. 1993. Hybridization between ocelot (*Felis pardalis*) and puma (*Felis concolor*). *Zoo Biology* 12: 277-283.
- Shuker, K.P.N. 1989. *Mystery cats of the world*. London: Robert Hale.
- Shuker, K.P.N. 1998a. Menagerie of Mystery. *Strange Magazine* (19): 20+.
- Shuker, K.P.N. 1998b. Menagerie of Mystery. *Strange Magazine* (20): 36+.

Cryptoherps of Indiana

Brad LaGrange

Indiana is not famous for its cryptozoological content. Barring “Oscar,” our resident giant snapping turtle, we haven’t had much to offer. One notable exception is the sasquatch flap that occurred in and around Knox county in the early 80’s. But as anybody who has ever done some digging into local newspaper files, or started talking to local hunters knows, just because it hasn’t been reported in the past doesn’t mean they aren’t there.

Quite possibly the most exciting Hoosier cryptid is “Big Jim.” Jim was a purported giant timber rattler. Unlike most giant snake stories which involve a snake sighting, Jim was local folklore for many years and has a very detailed story behind him.

Jim lived in the appropriately named Knox County locale of “Rattlesnake Ridge,” and it was there that his legend was born in 1881 after he was supposed to have killed a logger. The ten-foot snake from then on was blamed for the death of any livestock. Finally, in 1908 after much media attention, the snake was supposed to have been put down in the hog pen of W.H. Thompson. His skin, when stretched and mounted, was twelve feet long and had twenty-nine rattles. Its current whereabouts is unknown.

To be fair, a snake’s skin can stretch quite a bit in the mounting process. But then, some say this wasn’t Jim at all, just one of many possible offspring.

Errant alligators, like “giant” snakes, have occupied a unique place outside of American cryptozoology. They usually fall in either a Fortean event or wildlife phenomenon, with the rest falling squarely in the laps of careless pet owners. However, a few unusual cases have graced the state of Indiana’s soil.

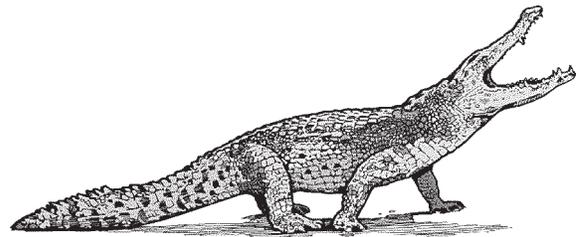
The December 31, 1946, edition of the Indianapolis Star carried an account of a Knox County gator that was killed by Ben Melvin and James Audaer. The

gator’s origin was supposedly Petersburg, which made the claim that a crocodilian released in a lake there from 1900 until 1913 surely must be the culprit. I myself am skeptical. An alligator living wild in Indiana for thirteen years on its own is enough, but to say that it remained wild for nearly fifty years is beyond even my scope.

The second account I have involves another western Indiana alligator from Decker Chapel, where Henry Decker’s swamp was home to the wild reptile. A neighbor, Mathias Pickle, commented by saying the creature lent a deep bass to the chorus of bullfrogs. The alligator was also seen by passengers on the Big Four railroad as they crossed the Wabash at Francisville. A makeshift group of gator hunters failed to bring him in.

Do both incidents involve the same gator?

For those of you who feel slighted by the fact that



the flagship of Hoosier cryptids, the Beast of ‘Busco, “Oscar,” was left out, don’t worry. He’ll have his own story between these pages before long.

This is to be only one in a series of many articles of happenings from Indiana. I would like to thank Richard King for putting many of these stories on the Internet (see his URL in the “Mystery Noise” article) and Paul A. Roales.

Citations:

- Valley Advance, Vol. 18, No. 6, 1981
- Valley Advance, Vol. 18, No. 6, 1983
- Indianapolis Star, Dec. 31, 1846, p. 9

Literature from the Past

Chad Arment

Scherman, Katharine. 1956. *Spring on an Arctic Island*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.

This book was written after a six week scientific expedition to Bylot Island, “four hundred and fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle in the Canadian East Arctic.” It examines the native people, the wildlife, and the geography of the area. A few legends are mentioned by the author, and may prove of interest to folklorists, cryptozoologists and biofortean. For an overview of the “giants,” see Hall (1995).

Little People

“Not only did the animals have souls, but the world was full of spirits. The commonest were the **inoogaggoligakjuk**, land spirits. They were dwarfs, and they were not bad, though they sometimes took revenge if they were insulted. In fact they were just like people, only magic.” (p. 142)

“Scattered over the arid land were small uneven rings of stones. We guessed that these were caused by frost action, but asked Idlouk. He frowned at them, the frown that meant this was going to be difficult for him to explain in his combination language. Then his face cleared. Little people, he said with his hands. Littler than children. People who ate only rabbits. Down at Canada Point, the western corner of Bylot Island, there was a whole camp of little tent rings with rabbit bones in them. But there were no little people any more. Did he really believe this? Perhaps he said it only to entertain us. Sometimes Idlouk was inscrutable.

“But Captain Luke Foxe, looking for a north-west passage in 1635, reported that he came across an island in the Canadian Arctic - never since found by anyone else - covered with the graves of little people. The skeletons, surrounded by bows and

arrows and ivory lances, were none of them over four feet high... Maybe Idlouk was right.” (p. 228)

Toonijuk, the giants

“After several hours we stopped and went ashore. There were the remains of an ancient camp here, Pete told us, perhaps even dating back to the **Toonijuk**, the prehistoric people who, the natives say, were living in this land from the Bering Strait to Greenland when the Eskimos came.

“The **Toonijuk** were not Eskimos and no one is sure of who they were or what was their final fate. They were said by the Eskimos to have been very large, and possessed of some queer and disgusting habits. They liked to eat rotten meat, and the women would tuck the meat into their clothing, to be made fetid by the warmth of their bodies. Not knowing how to cure skins, they would wet the hide of the caribou and wrap it around their bare bodies in order to dry it. Their beds were made of skins that had neither been cleaned nor stretched. When a man had a severe headache a hole would be drilled through his skull, from which blood and matter oozed. This operation cured the headache. Greenland Eskimos (according to Knud Rasmussen) describe the **Toonijuk** as people who wore no clothes, but had feathers on their bodies, or bearskins. Sometimes the lower part of the woman looked like a dog. They lived in underground houses with no sleeping platforms, and they did not know how to hang up their cooking pots. In order to make them thin, fleet runners, men would be put into bags made of the skin of the bearded seal and filled with worms. The worms sucked their blood and made them slender. At Eta, in Greenland, was found a generation ago the skin of a little auk, filled with worms. Eskimos said this was left behind by a family of the big strangers who had fled into the interior. The

Toonijuk were said to have been good hunters: a hunter had only to beckon to his prey with his forefinger, and he was so strong that he could carry a bearded seal on his back and break rocks with his lance.

“But the **Toonijuk** were not dangerous; on the contrary, they were timid and terribly afraid of dogs; they were also stupid and slow-going. The Pond Inlet Eskimos say that these big people never attacked Eskimos but fought among themselves until they killed each other off (but other Eskimo tribes claim to have stalked the stupid giants and killed them off one by one, like game). They disappeared from the Canadian Arctic long before the memory of the oldest Eskimo, and only dim, distorted shreds of tales remain. When Idlouk was asked when the **Toonijuk** were here he could only answer, “Long ago, before my grandfather was born.” That means, to an Eskimo, beyond memory.

“What should the Eskimos know of the **Toonijuk**? From grandmother to grandchild have come out of the dark past a few derelict tales of despised, repugnant subhumans. The **Toonijuk** are shadowy figures in the half memory of another primitive race which has no writing and no history.

“But the **Toonijuk** existed - or people who may have been the **Toonijuk**. Relics of pre-Eskimo peoples (known as Sarquaq, Dorset and Thule) have been found in the Eastern Arctic. On the Bering Sea coast are relics of a culture dating back to 5000 B.C., with tools linking it definitely to neolithic man in Asia.” (pp. 157-159)

Ka-jait, the small wolf

“Northern Baffin Island used to have two species of wolves, the **amagoot**, or solitary arctic wolf, and the **ka-jait**, a much smaller wolf which traveled in packs and was extremely ferocious and much feared by the natives.” (p. 291)

Citations:

Hall, M.A. 1995. The Gardar Skull and the taller-hominid. *Wonders* 4(1): 3-10.

Book Review

Chad Arment

Roth, John E. 1997. *American elves: an encyclopedia of little people from the lore of 380 ethnic groups of the Western Hemisphere*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

This is one of the best compilations on this subject that I've seen. This 329-page book thoroughly examines legends and folklore of “little people” from North, Central, and South America. Making use of literally hundreds of references, the author provides the physical description, behavior, and attributes of these mythical humans as reported by the Native Americans and early colonists. Detailed maps and a guide to ethnic/linguistic groups are very helpful. The bibliography, approximately 120 pages long, is superb.

This book should be one of the first consulted when this subject arises. While there is very little evidence for a true biological basis to these legends, there are occasional reports of small bipedal animals in North American forests. And, while perusing older literature, one sometimes comes across reports of graveyards holding the bones of small humans, as is given in Scherman's (1956) publication mentioned elsewhere.

I suggest that until a thorough investigation is made into any possible truth to these legends, we can at least continue to enjoy reading the folklore. This book will show you where to start.

Mythical Animals of the Cherokee

Chad Arment

Fradkin, A. 1990. Cherokee Folk Zoology: The animal world of a Native American people, 1700-1838. New York: Garland Pub.

This is a brief survey of both potential cryptids and purely mythical creatures mentioned by Fradkin in this publication.

nyuhnuwi: this is a term used for both the red ant and for the mythical “stone man.” The word is translated as “clothed in stone,” and with the ant refers to its hard body case.

dagwa: the mythical monster fish is the “father of all fish,” or the whale. It is not part of the Cherokee’s environment, and Fradkin notes that it was probably introduced through Bible stories.

dagahnda: this red with black spotted salamander (*Pseudotriton* species) was believed to have a cry that created rain. Translated as the “rainmaker.”

uktena: the “mythical horned snake” apparently had a “blazing transparent diamond-like crest on the forehead.” Fradkin notes that this was supposed to be a very large serpent with antlers on its head and rings or spots of color along its body.

uw!jyda: the “mythical bouncer snake” that moved by jerks, like an inch-worm.

usdadli: a similar species, this is the “mythical foot snake,” also known as **agina ahyelisgi**, the “fawn imitator.” It supposedly had odd feet, or “suckers,” and moved by jerking along like an inch-worm. It was supposed to be able to bleat like a fawn, which allowed it to lure deer into striking distance.

sanuwa: the “mythical hawk,” which was able to carry off young children as food.

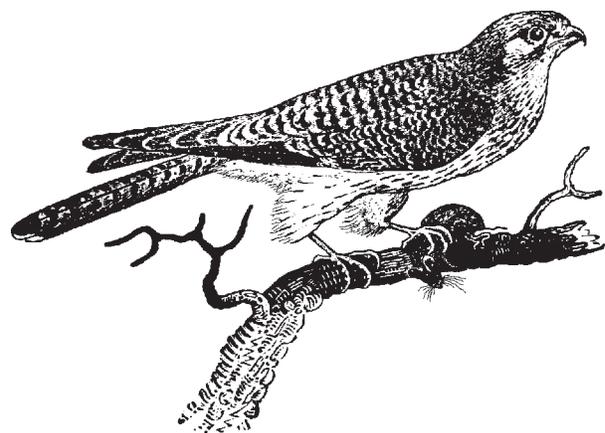
galos-ganhida: the “mythical bear,” a large thin black bear which had long legs and small feet.

Investigation Technique

Chad Arment

Jescavage-Bernard, K., and A. Crofoot. 1993. The Amateur Scientist: Mapping to preserve a watershed. *Scientific American* (May): 134-136.

This article details a method to create a map showing specific information by combining different kinds of maps. The composite map serves to focus on the information needed, in this case the extent of a particular watershed. The article also gives some information on GIS mapping. The authors note other reasons to create maps: recording sightings of migratory birds to make a case for preserving critical habitat or identifying sites for new wells using hydrogeological maps. Perhaps we can suggest another reason - creating a map showing the distribution of cryptid sightings to point out critical areas and suggest why a cryptid is seen more often in one area than another.



Fish Finder Cryptozoology

Brad LaGrange

Recently, Matt Bille wrote in his newsletter, Exotic Zoology, on the five cryptids he would chase down if he had the time and money to do so, kind of a Tom Slick situation (Bille 1998). I call them “Fish Finder” cryptids because I feel they could be found with the right amount of technology. This article is of a similar scope, although I’m dealing with cryptids I’m certain could be found with time, money, and scientific backing. Some of the creatures I will mention overlap with Matt’s.

The first critters I would take off after are those big fish in Lake Iliamna, Alaska. These being fish, and not true “monsters,” I suspect that enough sonar soundings and flyover sightings (by scientists) would convince enough ichthyologists that *something* is in the lake. I’ll hedge my money on the land-locked sturgeon bet.

Much like the above, this next animal could probably be found with an actual Fish Finder. The giant fish from China mentioned in Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker’s book “From Flying Toads to Snakes with Wings” would be my next target. The capture of a thirty-foot freshwater fish would no doubt lend some credibility to cryptozoology and its more bizarre subjects. After all, how many thirty-foot fish does one encounter in a lifetime?

Various mystery cats in South America. Wild cats are something the average American and European can relate to. It would stick in their heads and thus be “marketable.” It is important that is marketable because that means a Nova or Nature episode and articles in nature magazines. Once people know there *are* large animals out there hiding in jungles, forests or lakes, what we do isn’t so silly. I feel that this particular discovery, or one similar, could especially lend credence to those who are after the elusive Tasmanian Tiger.

The giant monitor in Papua New Guinea would

be my next s  There has to be something to these accounts, even if they are just slightly larger versions of the known local monitor species. Although monitors aren’t as marketable as large cats, they are quite popular in the herpetoculture hobby. Of course, a monitor the size of or larger than a Komodo dragon would be another story.

My last crypto excursion would be looking for new apes in the continent of Africa. The arboreal chimp/orang creature advocated by Sanderson are of interest to me here. I have heard that the skull from one of these purported creatures was dismissed as that of a deformed chimp. Yet, the man who brought it in claimed he saw groups of these creatures together. I’d still like to try to at least find native accounts of these. Added on to that is the fact that no new apes have been described recently, nor do I think are expected to be.

Runners up in this article go to the Tasmanian Tiger and a possible relative in PNG. Giant sloths in South America are borderline to me. Seems like more would be coming out of there if they were there. Of course, the study of sasquatch has slow years and look how many individual researchers are involved. As far as animals I would spend money to search for, true lake monsters (not just big fish or gator stories) would be on the list, but near the bottom. The sheer scale of equipment you need just for sonar contacts and blurry underwater photos would bankrupt a person right from the start. There seems to me that many lakes worldwide do have undescribed critters within, but the effort involved in getting good evidence requires more patience than I could give.

Citations:

Bille, M. 1998. Mystery Animals: The Top Five. Exotic Zoology 5(5): 1-3.

Biological Modeling in Cryptozoology

Chad Arment

One of the first things an investigator does when facing the problem of a cryptozoological animal is to compare the reports with the known species to which it seems most similar. For example, lake monsters are often considered in terms of a plesiosaur, a zeuglodon, a giant snake, a seal, an amphibian, or a fish. When considering characteristics reported about a cryptid or about the environment in which the animal has been seen, the investigator may be able to rule out certain possibilities, and may end up with a favored identity.

While this process is fairly widespread among cryptozoological investigators, I haven't seen anything written about it. I think it is important that we understand why we are doing it, what purpose it serves, and how not to misuse it.

First, let me explain what I mean by a biological model. It is a considered possibility. We use the model as a base of hypothetical reference. This allows us to speculate on the possible behavior, morphology, habitat preference or anything else in terms of a known species or group, whether they be extant or extinct. Our goal is to gather information which will give us better opportunity to collect evidence of the animal's existence or non-existence.

A biological model should not be considered an absolute. Further evidence may show that one model is unfeasible, or that there are obvious differences between the model and the actual creature. It's always possible that new reports will contradict old sightings. This is part of the process. Investigators should never presume to know the answer to the question of identity before they even begin.

When starting an investigation into a cryptid, collect as many potential models as possible. Some may not be as obvious as others, so it is a good idea to toss the idea around with other researchers. By

recognizing that several potential models exist, it may become clear that reports of one cryptid could actually be a group of unrelated sightings of different animals.

To show how a model might work, let's take one example. When we look at reports of Chessie, the "sea serpent" reported occasionally from the Chesapeake Bay area, we see a number of sightings describing an aquatic eel- or snake-like animal. A few such sightings are mentioned in my article on giant snake folklore in Maryland (Arment 1995). For some reports, I could suggest that a true snake is one possible biological model. Using that model, I could further postulate that the snakes are a displaced population of South American anacondas, a relict population of the giant North American aquatic "pythons," or even a localized phenotype of really, really big Northern watersnakes.

Common sense and biological parameters curb the appeal of the last suggestion. While introductions of snakes have occurred in different parts of the world (*Elaphe*, *Boiga*, *Rhamphotyphlops*, etc.) those are mostly small species in fairly warm environments. The possibility of a large tropical species like anacondas surviving year-round in the Chesapeake Bay is highly dubious. What about the remaining suggestion?

Several species of large aquatic snakes (Palaeophidae) have been found in fossil formations in the eastern United States. Gilmore (1938) notes four species of *Palaeophis* and a single species of *Pterosphenus* found in North America.

Gilmore records the largest of the *Palaeophis* specimens as *P. grandis*, noting that extrapolation from the vertebra suggested a length up to 30 feet. (He does not give a suggested length for the *P. virginianus* specimen, however, and I would be very interested in any information on that species.)

Specimens of *Palaeophis* have been found in New Jersey and Virginia Eocene deposits. I have not found any good recent discussions of this genus from a paleobiological perspective. Gilmore points out, however, that *Palaeophis* has been found in conjunction with brackish-water species (“crocodiles, sting-rays, and saw-fishes.”) Holman (1977) noted that one fossil *Palaeophis* was found along with *Pterospheenus*, a pelobatid frog, two terrestrial boas, and some fossil land mammals along what was apparently a tropical coastline. Holman states “The boas and the very large sea snakes would indicate semitropical or tropical conditions, and the admixture of marine and terrestrial forms would indicate an estuarine situation or a river mouth.”

Pterospheenus schucherti has been noted in Alabama, New Jersey, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Georgia Eocene formations (Hutchison 1985). While initial studies suggested that this snake inhabited estuarine or low salinity habitats (Westgate and Ward 1981), Hutchison (1985) noted that the Florida fossils indicate a fully marine adaptation. There may certainly have been a preference for estuaries, however. The species itself was thought to reach up to 25 feet in length (Gilmore 1938). *Pterospheenus* is believed to have been incapable of terrestrial movement (Hutchison 1985), and the “relatively narrow centrum and long neural spines would have limited motion in the vertical plane.”

So, if Chessie were a member of the Palaeophidae, what characteristics would I reasonably expect to see? The snake might be primarily estuarine, but could withstand a fully marine environment. The snake would be fully aquatic, and would probably be incapable of any real terrestrial locomotion. Sightings of the snake on land, therefore, would be highly unlikely. The biggest difficulty is that the fossils are from a tropical or semi-tropical environment. The Chesapeake Bay is certainly not tropical, and climatic adaptations would have been necessary if Chessie was indeed related to these giant snakes.

How well does this information match what we know? At present, I'm unwilling to take this too far.

Yes, there are reports of large snake-like animals in the Chesapeake Bay. One interesting sighting is of Chessie wound snake-like around a dock piling (Pers. comm., Michael Frizzell). But, as Chorvinsky (1992) noted, “there are numerous creatures that live in or make their way into the Chesapeake Bay, and may be responsible for some Chessie sightings.”

There has not yet been a concise examination of Chessie sightings to separate the known species from any potential unknown animals. Until then, this model is limited. I could suggest that potential expeditions search in the late spring or early summer, specifically to look for juvenile specimens. A close look at temperature in the Bay and how it affects prey populations might be useful.

Of course, investigation of this cryptid might show the snake model to be untenable. Other models include an eel or other fish, or perhaps an elongated invertebrate. A closer look may show that more than one species is involved in these sightings, or that the reports involve known species. Once a model has been reasonably refuted, it should be discarded so that you can focus on other avenues. Cryptozoology is not about proving the existence of a particular species. It is determining whether there is a zoological basis to a reported cryptid, and whether that basis involves a recognized extant species.

Literature:

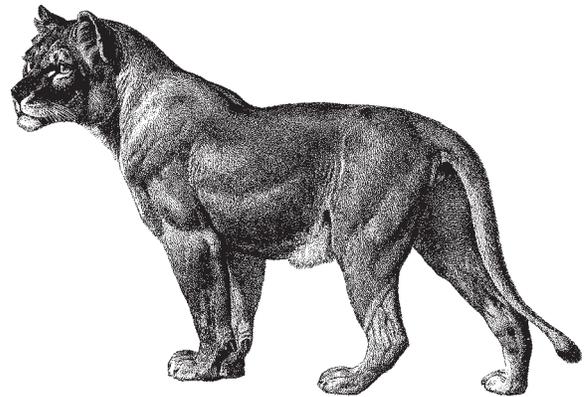
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Literature Survey: Field Techniques

Chad Arment

This is a brief compilation of articles I've come across which may be of interest to field researchers, especially those hunting eastern cougar or other mammalian cryptids. While these articles were written with known species in mind, transference of techniques between different fields of study is standard practice in science.

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Research Opportunity

Recently, I was told that bigfoot sightings were not uncommon in South Dakota near the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. We would be interested in hearing from anyone who has investigated reports from this area, or who might wish to start an investigation in that region.

-Chad Arment

SOUTH BAY BESSIE

A Continuing Investigation into an alleged Great Lakes Serpent

by Ron Schaffner

When dealing with topics such as cryptozoology, we rely heavily on reports from the media and eyewitness encounters. This testimony can lead to various problems when evaluating a report and the investigator has to make a determination if the story told is not a misinterpretation or a fallacy. The old cliché that all legends have a basis in fact is not always true. Many legends may be nothing more than a campsite story passed down through the generations.

I was introduced to an interesting story while publishing my newsletter, **Creature Chronicles**, back in 1991. A correspondent sent me various newspaper clippings from the **Ottawa County (Ohio) Beacon**. The editor had been collecting reports of some sort of serpent reported in the western basin of Lake Erie. From the reports I received, a story was developing about a strange creature similar to that of the Loch Ness and the Ogopogo creature.

This animal had been dubbed the name "South Bay Bessie" by some of the locals from a contest that was held promoting lakeside tourist attractions. The basic description was that of a 30-50 foot long snake-like animal about as round as a bowling ball. The reported creature seems to appear when the water is calm. Reports of this water creature date back some thirty years.

For simplicity of this article, allow me to cite a few reports from the past, so that the reader may become familiar with this alleged creature:

1960 - Ken Golic was fishing off a pier in Sandusky when he heard two rats. He decided to throw a couple of rocks at them when he saw the creature. He stated that it was cigar-shaped and came out of the water about 1-1 1/2 feet. It was about 11:00PM on a clear, calm night.

1969 - Jim Schindler stated that a serpent came within 6 feet of him near South Bass Island. Although he did not see the length, the width was about 2 feet. The animal appeared to be about 1 foot under the water.

9/1981 - Theresa Kovach of Akron saw a snake-like reptile that "was so large that it could easily capsize a boat. It seemed to be playing." She watched it from a house on the Cedar Point Cause-way.

1983 (app.) - Mary M. Landoll told reporters about her encounter with Bessie off Rye Beach in Huron. Mary went out to the front porch just before dawn when the lake was quite placid. From the left end, she heard a rowing sound and saw what looked like a capsized boat. It was a greenish-brown color about 40-50 feet in length. Landoll realized that it wasn't a boat, but an animal of some sort. It had a long neck and an eye was visible on the side of the head with a grin going up one side. The creature appeared to be playing in the water, but still put a scare into the witness.

Summer, 1985 - Tony Schill of Avon, Ohio was boating with friends north of Vermilion when they reported the serpent. It was dark brown and had a flat tail. Tony stated that "5 humps came out of the water. No way it was a sturgeon."

Dale Munro, of Lorain was also boating when he came face-to-face with it. He stated that it had 3 humps and was black. He also reported that it was twice the size of his 16-foot boat. The location was in calm waters just off the Lorain Coast Guard Station and his sighting lasted 3-4 minutes.

May or June, 1989 - Gail Kasner obtains a graph from

a boat owned by Ken Smith, of Streetsboro. The fish finder appears to show a sonar reading of a cigar-shape apparition about 35 feet in length at a depth of about 30 feet.

July 8, 1990 - Susan Seeson, of Salem witnessed the creature 2 miles from Cedar Point. Her description basically matched other reports.

September 3, 1990 - Bob Soracco was jet skiing off Port Clinton when he thought he spotted a porpoise. He told reporters that he saw humps with gray spots. "It was very long as I moved closer and it was going down."

September 4, 1990 - Harold Bricker and his family were fishing north of Cedar Point Amusement Park when a serpent type creature swam by their boat about 1000 feet away. Their description - 35 feet long with a snake-like head. It moved as fast as their boat. Later, the Bricker's reported their sighting to the ODNR rangers at East Harbor State Park.

September 11, 1990 - Fire inspectors Jim Johnson and Steve Dircks of Huron saw the creature from a third story window facing Lake Erie. They described it as dark blue or black at about 30-45 feet long. He further stated that he saw three parts of the creature above water. "It laid there motionless for three to six minutes and was flat on top."

Week of September 16, 1991 - Dennis Szececiniski, of Toledo saw Bessie near Toledo's water intake structure three miles offshore in Maumee Bay. He was fishing in the bay when something long and black slithered in front of him.

- - -

During the years of 1992-1994, I took a leave of absence from my research, as I returned to college. I put "Bessie" on the back burner until I could return to the world of cryptozoology. In 1997, I added my original story to my web page.

To my surprise, I was receiving a large amount of email regarding this subject. Some of these posts

appeared to have some merit, but I still wasn't convinced that there was a serpent in Lake Erie. Nonetheless, I put the reports up on my web site in hopes that I could get a better understanding of the phenomenon.

In 1991, George Repicz took some video that he believes may have been some sort of creature.

His report is as follows:

"In July 1991 my family and I spent a week at a family camp on Kelley's Island. I took my camcorder to film family events and local scenery. On one of the days during that week and after filming all over the camp, I decided to get a good sunset on film. The picture through the lens did not look that great because the camera I was using did not amplify the light like some newer ones do these days. So I decided to scan the bay for something interesting when by chance I came across this (I believe was a swimming creature) moving object in the bay. The bay at the point where I shot the film is about 1 plus miles across. Around the bay is about 3 to 5 miles. The people who were fishing or boating in the scene were close to the state campgrounds across the bay. I'm not aware if any of those people saw what I saw. The people next to me could barely see the object in the water with their eyes. The camcorder was zoomed out to max and the object appears closer than it is. When our week ended we went home. That was the last time that we went to that camp.

"In 1993 my mother passed away so I tried to gather all possible film clips of her to share with my brothers and sister. It so happened that the scene of the creature was also part of the overall family film that I took. By chance I saw this clip again but soon forgot about it again.

"I think in either 1994 or 1995 I saw a program on TV about some a creature in Lake Erie. I remember seeing the wake or wave that people took pictures of that was suppose to be the creature. I remembered that at the end of the clip I took of the swimming creature was the same wake.

"At the end of 1997 I happened to be on the net and decided to search for sea creatures when I came



across the Cryptozoology Zone web site and then discovered your site.”

George’s video is intriguing. At this time, it still appears to be driftwood, but the object clearly shows movement against the current. The film is still currently being analyzed.

Last year, I received the most recent report. It occurred in Bay Village, Ohio, and was told to me by Leslee Rasgaitis:

“On July 28th at about 7:00 p.m. , we were returning to our home in Bay Village from an outing with my nephews. We stopped at Huntington Beach to show them the Great Lake Erie. They are from Charleston, South Carolina. The youngest one wanted to go down to the beach and touch the fresh water, and see if he could see Canada. Meanwhile, my husband and son stayed at the top of the cliffs that overlook the lake and viewed from there a very

long, rippling effect in the water. While watching the effect, it took on a more physical appearance, and soon they were able to see three distinct black humps rising from the water. The sun was in the west and silhouetted the thing. When I arrived from the beach they were standing watching the last of the “thing.” I personally only caught a brief glimpse of something moving. But it was definitely not just a fish or a seagull.

“It was just about 500 feet from the shore at the end of the stone piers. It was pretty close considering it was a warm summer evening and there were still people and boats about. The actual sighting was preceded by a lot of rolling of the water; lots of bubbles and a general disturbance of pretty soft waves which drew their attention. The sun really illuminated it. Then there was a surfacing of something very long and sort of roundish like a tree trunk. At first they thought it might be a tree and then it moved. They watched it for about 5-6 minutes. Rick

told a friend who is an active fisherman what he had seen and was told it was probably 'Bessie.' I decided to look it up on the Internet and found your site. I have confirmed what I have sent you with both Rick and Victor."

I have attempted to paint a picture for the reader that clearly shows that Lake Erie is home to some sort of aquatic creature. The reports are impressive, but we must remember the problems with witness interpretation. It is also imperative that we attempt a research endeavor going back to earlier accounts. We need to account a time line to demonstrate the "Birth of Bessie" up until the present.

A time line is beneficial because it presents several variables to the phenomenon. For instance, sociological and economical situations change over the years. The media's coverage of events become more sensational or downplayed depending on the mood of the populous.

The nickname of "Bessie" is relatively recent. However, reports of a serpent in Lake Erie date back to the early 1900's. The following account supposedly occurred near Sandusky on July 21, 1931. Through this one account, the reader can see that legends of strange creatures in Lake Erie have been around for a long time.

Two Cincinnati fisherman, Clifford Wilson and Francis Cogenstose described a "serpent" that rose out of the water along side their boat. They said the beast measured about twenty feet and was about twelve inches long at the broadest part. Even though they were frightened by it, they jabbed it with an oar, fastened it to a line and brought it to shore. They used a packing box to store the body in.

The carcass was seen by several important people from Sandusky, including Police Captain Leo Schively and three newspaper men: E.L. Ways, C.J. Irwin and Mel Harman. According to the Associated Press, the creature was described as huge, snake-like and colored black, dark green and white. The hide appeared similar to an alligator.

The article mentions other reports of a "sea-serpent."

Unfortunately, the story doesn't mention what happened to the creature. Some researchers have dismissed the account as a hoax. It could be possible that they did capture some sort of species of fish and wasn't recognizable to them.

Recently, I received an email from Dave Monk of Windsor, Ontario. He explains that he had an encounter in September of 1986 while fishing the Detroit River near Peace Fountain. Dave was trolling with a pickerel jig. As he bent down to adjust his fishing line, he noticed a long, black neck appear out of the water for about 30 seconds. He further stated that this "neck" rose about seven feet above the water.

The creature submerged only to reappear a second time. At this point, Mark reeled his line and watched the creature disappear into the current heading for Lake St. Clair.

Mark goes on to report that he was entranced by the eyes. He felt as if the object had some sort of intelligence.

In 1990 he contacted the Great Lakes Institute and gave an account of his experience in hopes that someone could give him a logical explanation. Marks doesn't mention who he talked with, but told me that someone from the institute told him that some bottom areas of the Great Lakes have never been explored.

The July 29, 1993, edition of the Wall Street Journal wrote a skeptical piece about the "Bessie" phenomenon. They theorized that the reports were a marketing tool for bring tourists into the town of Huron. This northern Ohio city would become the "National Live Capture and Control Center for Bessie, the Lake Erie Monster."

The reward for the capture (which I mentioned at the beginning of this article) was offered by Tom Solberg of the Huron Lagoons Marina. He was willing to pay \$100,000 for the safe capture of the beast.

In January, 1999, several messages were posted to a cryptozoology list (cryptolist@onelist.com) on the Internet in regards to an incident on Lake Erie. Allegedly, Bessie was reported to have attacked a sailboat killing three people. The creature was said

to have a horse-shaped head. No source was given for the incident, so I emailed several newspapers in an attempt to track down this story.

I received an informative reply from the Sandusky Register. Their research department informed me that this story had appeared in the tabloid newspaper The Weekly World News dated August 24, 1993. The cover contained a “photo” of a “dinosaur-like” creature wrapped around a sailboat and was allegedly taken from an airplane. However, the Register has no mention of any deaths.

Reporters from the Register had talked to the pilot, but he wished confidentiality, so I wasn’t able to get a name. However, I was told that the staff didn’t take the report too seriously and they felt it was a hoax. The newspaper does have a file on “Bessie,” but at this time I am not able to make a trip to Sandusky, nor do I have available funds to pay for a search of articles.

I am also told that reporter Don Lee covered a “flap” of Bessie reports in 1990 and 1992. He wrote about Gary Coutts of White Landing who operated a “Special Lake Investigations” out of his home. Coutts is said to be interested in “Bigfoot, 100-foot Octopi and other interesting creatures.”

Some Cryptozoologists believe the entire Bessie scenario is nothing more than a hoax, based on old newspaper embellishments and promotion ploys. Supermarket tabloids raise more suspicions when writing feature articles on “monster accounts.” One can clearly see that South Bay Bessie is on the minds of many residents along the Lake Erie Coast. It would be safe to say that anyone living around Lake Erie would claim a sighting of this creature when they observe something in the water they cannot identify.

But, what if credible fisherman, boaters and lakeside observers are witnessing something unidentifiable to them. Are they seeing a lake serpent, or something else that can be explained in conventional terms. It should be noted that eye-witness observations can be fallible and not everyone interprets their observations in the same manner. They may add descriptive details in a later interview and their subconscious may have recorded a detail from a

story they may have heard years ago.

Lets take a look at the basic descriptions of this creature and see if we can attribute this to any known species inhabiting the Great Lakes:

1. 30-50 foot snake-like or cigar-shaped
2. Reported in water is calm
3. Width of two feet
4. Eye visible on one side of the head
5. Reported 30 feet underwater with a fish finder
6. Color described as black, brown, blue or green
7. Some witnesses describe “humps”

If we allow for some natural exaggerations on the part of some witnesses, it is plausible that they have misinterpreted a serpent for the endangered lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*). Certainly, the sturgeon is prehistoric in appearance. Since this fish is rarely seen these days, the casual observer may have difficulty in identification. After all, their size can sometimes reach up to 200 pounds.

The largest lake sturgeon as recorded in Becker’s Fishes of Wisconsin was caught from Batchawana Bay of Lake Superior in Wisconsin in 1921 or 1922. It was 90 inches and weighed 310 pounds. A similar catch occurred in southern Lake Michigan in 1943. This fish was 95 inches and was similar in weight.

According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resource’s fact sheet, (see composite) the sturgeon’s habitat requires waters with sand, gravel and rocky bottoms. This habitat is indicative of Lake Erie’s bottom, especially close to shore where many sightings have taken place. The boney plates could be misconstrued as humps under certain conditions. Likewise the color descriptions could be a result of sunlight reflections against the clear water of Lake Erie. The fish will spawn in shallow water in the late spring.

The observance of this species of fish would be a rare occurrence for any knowledgeable fisherman or photographer. If you factor in the sighting by someone not familiar with this species, you could have a report of a lake serpent. Remember the problems associated with eye-witness testimony.

Perhaps this endangered species does not apply to some of the reported accounts. It is equally plausible that misinterpretations of driftwood and other debris could be mistaken for a creature. I, for one can accept that possibility. We cannot totally except this explanation until there is a “catch” of “Bessie” and the determination is made that it is a lake sturgeon. Even then, more reports will continue to “surface.”

As for the possibility of a man-made object, consider the following article from CNN:

'Monster' in Lake Michigan is manmade,
but just as mysterious

January 26, 1999

CHICAGO (CNN) -- OK, so it's definitely not the Loch Ness Monster. It's not even alive. But Lake Michigan is indeed harboring a mysterious object.

Right where the Chicago River enters the Great Lake sits an oak construction the size of a bus and shaped like a zeppelin.

Nobody can say what exactly it is, and it's in the way -- slated to be demolished by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources when it revamps the basin that is currently the object's home.

But not if Sam Frank of the Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago has anything to say about it. Frank is trying to organize a moving party to get the big wooden thing out of the way, and hopefully leave it available to divers in a safer location.

And Frank would be delighted if someone could step forward and explain just what the object is and how it came to rest at the bottom of Lake Michigan.

For now, however, the evidence seems to indicate that the “Birth of South Bay Bessie” probably resulted from some fabricated newspaper reports of the past. These stories soon began a legend that could be used to heighten tourists attractions. Furthermore,

with these reports circulating the shores of Lake Erie, its no surprise that lake shore residents and vacationers have heard the reports and seen for themselves an unusual aquatic creature swimming the lake.

As always, this writer keeps an open mind. The hoax and misinterpretation factors may not always be an easy solution. I am open to any suggestions along with reports and documentation on this phenomenon. I can be reached by through the editors, Chad Arment and Brad LaGrange, or email at rschaffner@fuse.net. Look for future updates on this investigation in future issues of this publication or visit my web site, Creature Chronicles, for some additional information on Bessie:

<http://home.fuse.net/rschaffner/invest.htm>

Thanks to Loren Coleman, James Moore, William Gibbons, Craig Heinselman, Eilene Guy, Todd Frank, Cliff Kraft, John Schaffner and others who have provided me with sources.

Upcoming Articles in the North American BioFortean Review

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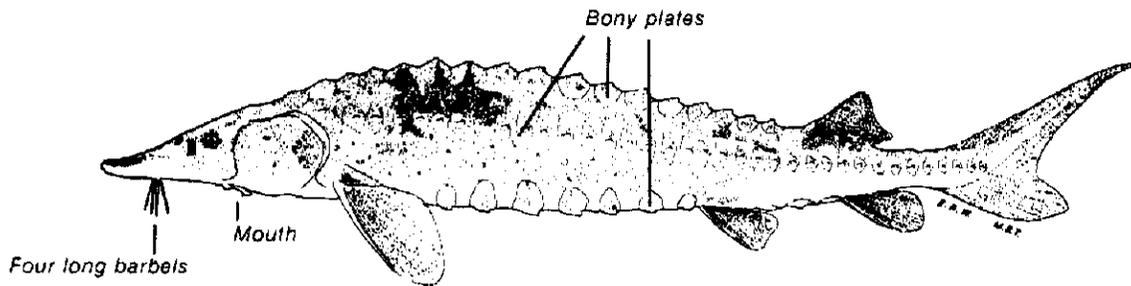
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If you'd like to have an article considered for publication, contact:

Chad Arment (caa1snake@aol.com) or

Brad LaGrange (ringneck2@aol.com)

Lake Sturgeon in Ohio



Scientific name: *Acipenser fulvescens*

LIFE HISTORY NOTES

DISTRIBUTION: Until the 1850s the lake sturgeon was abundant in Lake Erie and the large tributary streams such as the Cuyahoga, Maumee, and Sandusky Rivers. This fish was also present in the Ohio, Muskingum, and Scioto Rivers and occasionally in smaller tributary streams, including Big Darby and Big Walnut Creeks. Construction of dams prevented the sturgeons from their spawning runs and led to their extirpation in most of these Ohio habitats.

IDENTIFICATION: The lake sturgeon is so different looking from other Ohio fishes (except the closely related shovelnose sturgeon), that it can hardly be misidentified. The upper part of the body is olivaceous to gray, graduating into a yellow or milky color on the belly. The lake sturgeon has no scales, but rather has numerous bony plates on its back, sides, and belly. This fish also has four long barbels in front of the mouth, which is located far behind the snout.

ADULT SIZE: From 25 to 200 pounds (11-91 kg) or more.

HABITAT: The lake sturgeon requires waters that have a clean sand, gravel, or rocky bottom with large numbers of snails, crayfish, clams, and larvae on which to feed. Today it is rare or uncommon in all streams.

SPAWNING: Apparently, spawns over riffles in rather shallow water in May. This fish does not spawn until it is approximately four feet (1.2 meters) long and 20 years old.

REMARKS: Destruction of its habitat, construction of dams (preventing migration into spawning streams), pollution of its favored waters, and its delayed spawning age have all contributed to this species' decrease in population. In the mid 1800s, when sturgeons were plentiful, they were not highly regarded as a food fish. More recently, however, connoisseurs of fine foods have recognized the quality of smoked sturgeon and, of course, caviar, which is made from sturgeon roe. Possession of lake sturgeon, an endangered species in Ohio, is illegal.

The lake sturgeon is one of 39 fish species and subspecies that are endangered in Ohio. Ohio citizens can help the Division of Wildlife to protect and manage endangered wild animals by donating part of their state income tax refund to Nongame and Endangered Wildlife—instructions are given on the state of Ohio income tax return.

The fish illustration is reprinted from *The Fishes of Ohio*, by Milton B. Trautman, Copyright©1957 by The Ohio State University Press.