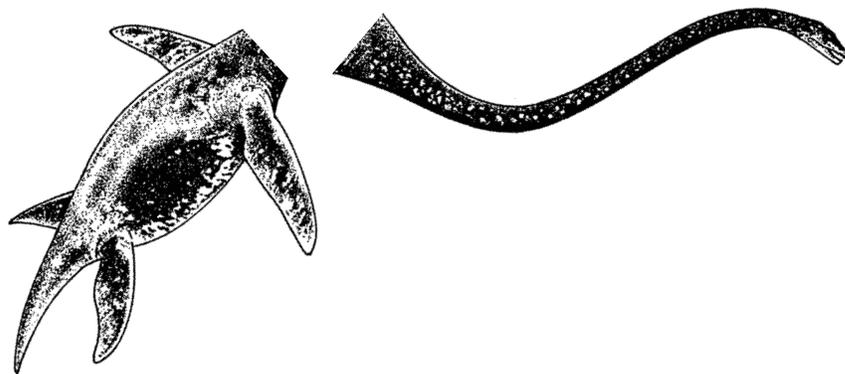


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“They are ill discoverers that think there is no land
when they see nothing but sea.”

— Francis Bacon

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BioFortean Notes: *Science News Letter*, 1932-1933

Stars in American Flag Came from Bottom of Sea

Five-Pointed Fossil Stems of English Soil Inspired Stars in Washington Shield
Which Later Entered the New Flag

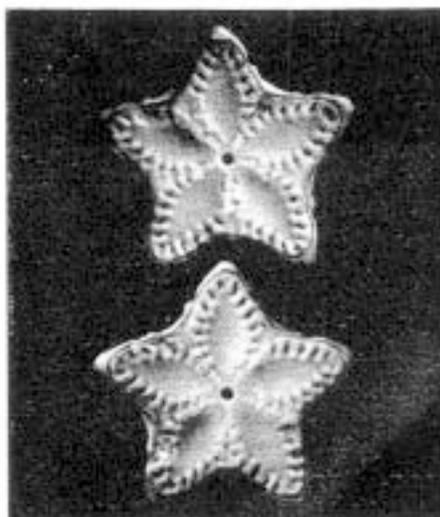
Zoology, not astronomy, provided the five-pointed stars in the American flag and coat of arms. They came not from the heavens above, but from “the waters that are under the earth”; and they lay buried in rocks for geological ages before men found them and made use of their symmetrical design.

An exhibit of the ancient zoological basis for the American flag-stars, arranged by Austin H. Clark of the U. S. National Museum, is an attraction of much interest at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science now in session at New Orleans. It shows the coat-of-arms of the Washington family, bearing the three “mulletts,” as the five-pointed star patterns were called in the language of heraldry. Beside it are shown a number of small white star-shaped bits of a limy substance. These are found on the surface of the ground in the part of England where the Washington family originated, as well as in other regions of the earth, and are known locally as “star-stones.” Regarded in ancient times with superstitious awe, they were incorporated into the armorial bearings of the noble families on whose lands they were found.

But “star-stones” are no more stones than they are stars. They are really fossilized pieces of the stems of crinoids, or sea-lilies, animals belonging to the same great animal group as starfishes but less familiar to most of us. Mr. Clark, who is the author of a massive monograph on this zoological group, explains that in remote geological times great beds of these creatures waved on their long stems on the sea-bottom where now the midland shires of England are. Their matted remains were solidified into rock, which disintegrated into soil after the British Isles were raised above the sea. The bits of stem, with their five-pointed markings, were more resistant than the rest of the mass, and remained in the soil as “star-stones” after everything else had completely crumbled; and here they were seen and wondered at of men, and finally painted upon the shield of a chief, which later furnished the pattern for a new flag beyond the seas.

Mr. Clark draws a moral from this origin of the stars, which, like the ideals of the republic they represent, is an embodiment of the exaltation of the humble

— *SNL XXI*(560): 7, January 2, 1932.



Smithsonian Institution Gets Siamese “Dinosaur”

A lizard that looks like a dinosaur, and whose eggs are considered gifts fit for a king, is among the weird “Lost World” creatures recently received from the jungles of Siam by the Smithsonian Institution. They were sent by Dr. Hugh M. Smith, former chief of the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries, now fishery expert for the Kingdom of Siam.

The big lizard, called “hia” in Siamese, is not really a relative of the dinosaurs, but it looks astonishingly like one. It has a little head at the end of a long neck, and a long, thick tail. It is not at all shy, and occasionally appears even in the outskirts of Bangkok, the national capital. It is reported to be very destructive to poultry.

The collection sent by Dr. Smith includes also a number of interesting snakes. One, known as “ngu kon kob” or “tail biting snake,” is believed by the Siamese to bite with its mouth in the light of the moon and with its tail when the moon is dark. These mythical tailbites are reputed to be absolutely deadly. Another snake is the “ngu seng atit,” or “sun-ray snake,” so called because of its gem-like, glittering scales. Still another snake is almost pure white, with a few black markings—possibly an albino form of a common species. Then there is the rat snake, which climbs bamboos to catch birds, the peacock snake, brightly marked and with a flame-red tail, and the fish-snake, which can be caught by baiting a hook with a whole small fish.

— *SNL XXI*(570): 164, March 12, 1932

Animal Thought Extinct Has Been Rediscovered

The Australian rat-kangaroo, lost to science since 1843, has been rediscovered, hale and frisky, in the sandhill country enclosed by the Diamantina and Cooper’s rivers at the junction of South Australia and Queensland.

The scientific periodical *Nature* has published a letter from H. H. Finlayson, Adelaide University, saying that since 1843, when Sir George Grey presented three specimens to the British Museum, no one had been able to trace this peculiar animal to its lair, and it was feared that it had become as dead as the dodo. But indications are that the rat-kangaroo has had a long and probably uninterrupted tenure of the semi-desert area where it has been re-discovered. The passing of the drought conditions has probably helped to increase its numbers.

The Australian rat-kangaroo is one of the marsupials, animals possessing a pouch in which they carry the young for a considerable time after birth.

— *SNL XXI*(585): 404, June 25, 1932

Indian Banshees Were Ikkareyavs and Kitaxihars

The ikkareyavs’ll git you ef you don’t watch out! And it will go especially hard with you if they happen to be kitaxihars. A snark is bad enough, you know; but if he is also a boojum—

All of which goes to show how a touch of superstition makes the whole world kin. For the ikkareyavs, which are sometimes malevolent kitaxihars, are the hobgoblins, the banshees, the “little people” of the Karuk Indian mythology. The Karuks are a California tribe, whose customs and beliefs are the subject of a newly issued publication of the Smithsonian Institution, written by John P. Harrington.

The ikkareyavs, these Indians told Mr. Harrington, “were the old-time people who were in America before the Indians came and who turned into animals. plants, rocks, mountains, plots of ground, parts

of houses, dances and abstractions when the Karuks came, remaining with them only long enough to state and start all customs." They disappeared, the Karuks believe, only a few generations ago.

The wicked kitaxrihars, who sometimes cause strangers to be hurt and must be exorcised by a special "medicine," were petrified into particular rocks. There is a group of such evil-doing rocks in the Karuk territory.

Ikkxareyavs are of especial importance at the time of the Karuk New Year, which comes late in August.

— *SNL XXII(596)*: 164, September 10, 1932.

Field Museum Gets Horned Gopher Skull

The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago has just received a fossil skull more highly prized than the skull of many a species of giant dinosaur or mammoth would be, although it is only a few inches long. The fossil is extremely rare, only four or five such skulls being known.

It is the skull of a horned gopher, a stout little animal about the size of a woodchuck, which burrowed in the prairies of the West about 7,000,000 years ago, in the late miocene age. The animal had a pair of sharp-pointed conical horns on its nose, which presumably were useful to it in its tunnellings.

— *SNL XXII(607)*: 342, November 26, 1932.



Rare Butterfly Specimen is Half Male, Half Female

In the butterflies the two sexes are ordinarily in different individuals which are either wholly male or wholly female. But as in all other animals in which the sexes are in separate individuals it occasionally happens that nature makes a mistake and combines both sexes in the same individual.

Two-sexed individuals among the butterflies are very rare, but a considerable number have been recorded. In most of these one side is male and the other side is female. Sometimes the sexes are combined in other ways, for instance parts of the wings sometimes show the male color pattern and other parts the female. But such combinations are inconspicuous in life so that they are seldom recognized and caught.

The picture below represents one of the common butterflies belonging to the group known as the skippers, in which the wings of the right side are male and in color mostly bright yellow, and those of the left side are female and are of a dull olive green. The two sexes are separated by a line down the middle of the body.

This individual, enlarged in picture, was captured at Cabin John, Maryland, and is now in the National Museum.

— *SNL XXIV(638)*: 3, July 1, 1933.



“Demon Frog” Brought To National Museum

Rock-dwelling frogs of Puerto Rico, dreaded as demons by the natives who, however, have never seen them, have been brought to the U. S. National Museum here by Gerritt S. Miller, Jr., recently returned from a West Indian collecting trip.

The “guajone,” as the frog is called, won his fearsome repute among the Puerto Ricans by his resounding voice, which echoes and re-echoes from the wild mountain gullies where he lives. Some of them say he is not a living creature at all, only a voice; others pictured him in fearsome terms as over a foot long and armed with terrible teeth, when they tried to dissuade Mr. Miller from his quest.

But the museum scientist persisted, and finally found his guajones in boulder-filled mountain caves where the going was hard and somewhat dangerous. He located them with the aid of a flashlight, and dislodged them from their crevice habitats with a twig.

Once he had them safely bottled they appeared ordinary enough frogs, the biggest of them less than two inches long. The most distinctive feature about them was their eyes, which he says stuck out like “mouse-ears.”

Oddly enough, these frogs dislike the water, and if they fall into it get out as quickly as they can.

— *SNL XXIV(638)*: 7, July 1, 1933.

Fish That Can't Float Found in Virginia Stream

A fish that can't float and doesn't want to float lives in the headwaters of the James River in Virginia.

Specimens of this strange fish, believed to exist only in this one corner of the earth, have been secured by E. D. Reid, Smithsonian Institution biologist. Previous to Mr. Reid's collection, this fish has been taken only three times since its discovery in 1896.

The little fish, which belongs to the sucker family, has no air bladder and consequently cannot float like most fishes. It can only sink to the bottom or keep swimming. But this is no crippling handicap for the little sucker. It had to rid itself of the air bladder, in the course of evolution, or it would have gone the way of extinct fishes. The mountain streams that pour into the James River are so swift that the little suckers had to stay at the bottom or be washed away. They rid themselves of their "water-wings" and survived.

— *SNL XXIV*(641): 56, July 22, 1933

From the Past: A "Wild Cat" in Allentown

The cottage home of the Hon. Robert E. Wright, on Fourth street, beautified with flowers and ornamented and shaded with the rich foliage of the maple [sic] and horse chestnut and the willows by the water coarces, was the scene of considerable excitement and even terror yesterday morning. It seems that his youthful son Marshall discovered a "wild cat" in the stable and immediately reported the fact to the members of the household with all that enthusiasm and ardor peculiar to one of his young and tender age. A prospect for securing this bold intruder presented itself to the mind of this youth, and the same was at once carried into effect. A goodly number of his companions were summoned for active service; they reported promptly, fully armed with shot guns and old U. S. muskets of the flint-lock pattern. An inspection revealed the fact that each one of the recruits had taken the necessary precaution and provided himself with "forty shots" for the occasion. Steadily and cautiously this youthful band marched by twos to the stable, which was not only a source of interest but even terror to these braves. As they approached the scene, the musket portion of the company were quickly thrown to the front, whilst those armed with shot-guns were kept as a reserve. The animal was soon seen all coiled up in a corner of the stable and showing its fiery eyes. The command "fire" was given but unfortunately the flint-locks missed fire. The reserve was brought forward and fired, felling the animal to the ground. Upon inspection the animal proved to be a tame unoffending coon, belong to an elderly neighbor lady which had wandered from its home on a pleasure tour, little thinking that it would cost it its life. The elderly lay, we learn, was excited to wrath over the loss of her pet, and anathematized the boys and consigned them to that place occupied by the rich man, in the parable, after death.

— Lehigh, PA, Register, Sept. 27, 1871, p. 3

Book Review

The Field Guide to Lake Monsters, Sea Serpents, and Other Mystery Denizens of the Deep

Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe

Illustrations by Harry Trumbore and Mark Lee Rollins

Release Date: October 2003

Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin

368 pp.

ISBN 1-58542-252-5

\$16.95

Reviewed by Chad Arment

Coleman and Huyghe have compiled a second cryptozoological classificatory collection, following the same format as *The Field Guide to Bigfoot...* The authors start with a good introduction to the potential for discovery in aquatic species and review some of the more interesting marine and freshwater discoveries in recent years. The discussion then turns to Loch Ness, reviewing its history and acknowledging its importance in cultural recognition of lake monsters worldwide. The authors detail a number of potential opportunities for witness error or misidentification, and then review various classification systems which have been created to try and pin down differing global aquatic cryptid accounts into an intelligible scheme.

The basis for this book, then, is the author's creation of a classificatory arrangement for aquatic unknowns in both marine and freshwater environments. Fourteen categories are assigned: Classic Sea Serpent, Waterhorse, Mystery Cetacean, Giant Shark, Mystery Manta, Great Sea Centipede, Mystery Saurian, Cryptid Chelonian, Mystery Sirenian, Giant Beaver, Mystery Monitor, Dinosauria, Mystery Salamander, and Giant Octopus. For each of these categories, the authors note the general characteristics reported by witnesses, the range of sightings, and biological candidates which have been proposed to account for the sightings. Each category includes one or more specific reports for illustration.

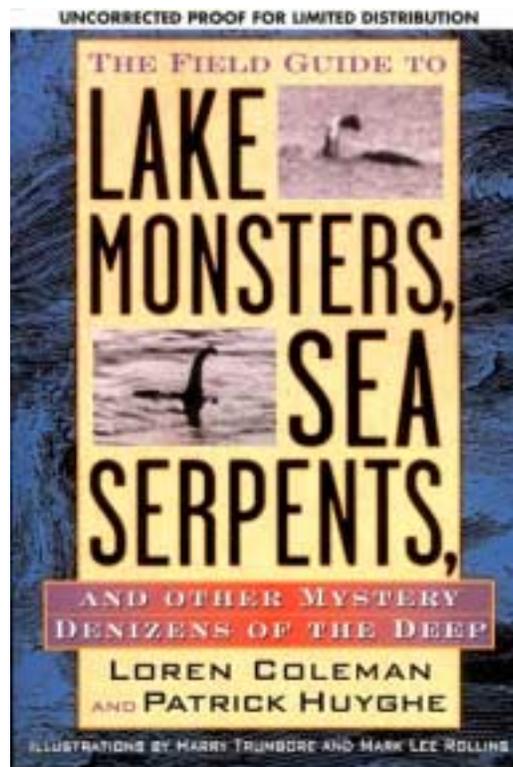
The book ends by discussing various points of interest such as biogeography (a survey of lakes with purported monsters; the concentration of similar reports by latitude), potential carcasses, and suggested regions for monster-watching. A "Geographic List of Lake and River Monsters Worldwide" is given as an appendix, and is followed by a bibliography.

The authors were selective in choosing classificatory groupings — so you won't find the stranger sightings like "marine elephants" listed. This is probably a good thing, given the controversial nature of most such reports. The only category I was surprised not to see included was one for giant jellyfish reports. A few of the classes may elicit debate, but in most cases the authors mentioned the alternative viewpoints. For example, the Buru is listed under Mystery Monitor, while the authors note that alternative proposals have included a crocodile and giant lungfish. From a personal perspective, I would disagree with the placement of Chessie, especially in regards to the Frew tape, as a Classic Sea Serpent, given that the authors automatically disqualify the possibility of an actual snake. (A hazard of lumping together disparate reports.) Their only proposed candidates in that category include fossil and extant whales. As Mark Chorvinsky has noted, Chessie is more of a catch-all term for varied known and possibly unknown species in the Chesapeake Bay, but there are several interesting reports of a distinctly snake-like animal which would certainly merit its own category among aquatic unknowns.

Overall, the book is well-written and contains both famous and little-known reports. I don't know that it would be as useful so much as a reference text, given that classifications of any sort are going to be heavily debated in cryptozoology, but rather as a good introduction to the topic for cryptozoology enthusiasts who are entering the field of aquatic cryptid research. I doubt that this book will create as much controversy as *The Field Guide to Bigfoot...*, if only because most lake monster researchers aren't the hot-headed firebrands we see in ABSM research today. [Though, placing the Lake Iliamna cryptid under Giant Shark might cause a few sparks.]

My only real caution involves not the book itself, but the practice of classificatory schemes in cryptozoology. Obviously, it is necessary to create some system of orderly arrangement so that we can determine patterns of similarities, be they morphological, biogeographical, or whatever. I have a concern, however, that amateur enthusiasts may not understand that cryptozoological classification schemes are structured around the appearance, and not the essence, of purported cryptids. Unconscious bias may result in systems which are too inclusive [such as the “Chessie” scenario above], or are too exclusive. I would hate to see someone automatically toss out a sighting report merely because it doesn’t match the characteristics within a given classification scheme. For example, I am aware of at least two primate cryptid types from North America with multiple sightings which, while either could be very generally placed within the classification scheme of *The Field Guide to Bigfoot...*, are very different in specific morphological aspects from the general characteristics given there. Certainly, the authors do not intend to discount reports like this, and experienced investigators will understand the need for flexibility and continual change within classifications, but those who are just getting involved in cryptozoology should be aware that classification schemes are artificial structures rather than concrete systems of categorical essence.

I would recommend this book as a good primer for aquatic cryptids, and the bibliography will point to further books which the beginning enthusiast can pursue. Experienced researchers will find new reports, along with material for discussion and debate. We are slowly seeing a change in cryptozoological approaches to aquatic unknowns as more investigators look to modern science rather than clinging to archaic research [see Naish’s commentary in this issue]. Debate and intelligent discussion are absolutely necessary to propel cryptozoology forward.



CZ Conversations: Darren Naish on Plesiosaurs, Basilosaurs, and Problems with Reconstructions

[Editor's Note: The following comes from a series of notes posted on a cryptozoology email list. The initial post is Darren's review of the BBC's recent documentary on Loch Ness. What follows are edited versions of questions and comments by other listmembers, and Darren's responses. Much of the information may be new to cryptozoological enthusiasts, and should provoke serious critical thought when discussing the possibility of survival for certain fossil species. Disagreements may certainly occur on some points, but I believe it is important to understand why specific arguments are made, and what evidences are used to support them.]

Review: BBC on Loch Ness

There used to be a time when the BBC's ability to produce good science documentaries was highly respected: they generally portrayed a balanced view of the subject, had their facts straight, and were careful not to cast ideas, or scientists themselves, in an inappropriate light. Alas, those days are long gone, as viewing of any Horizon documentary made within the last five years will show. Formulaic and predictable, they invariably focus on 'straw man' ideas (not believed in by any of the people who work in the respective field) before introducing a 'maverick' who comes along and allegedly overturns everything. Remember this formula next time you watch a BBC documentary. Of course, things in science generally don't work that way but it makes good TV. Many documentaries also come across as fake 'docu-dramas' consisting of self-indulgent TV theatre, much of which is completely irrelevant. Then again, it might also make fun TV for the masses and I suppose this is what they are aiming for.

The BBC's Loch Ness documentary shown last Sunday was no exception, though let me say that I like Steve Leonard and enjoy watching his stuff. Overall the programme's conclusion - that there is no Loch Ness monster (viz, an unknown living species of large animal) is defensible and they should be commended for avoiding the usual caveat at the end that, despite all their work, there might still be something lurking out there. But the following things are what really bothered me...

What plesiosaurs don't look like

Firstly, the programme featured copious CG footage of an animal alleged to be a plesiosaur. Sorry, but it was completely unrealistic, thoroughly ugly and unlike any plesiosaur known from fossils. It had stiff diamond-shaped paddles, large plate-like scutes covering its body, and an overall skeletal look, even with the neural spines of its vertebrae projecting along its back. No plesiosaur looked like this. Fossil evidence indicates that they were sleek, streamlined animals with skin that probably looked smooth from a short distance away. Their paddles were wing-shaped with a somewhat flexible trailing edge: they were not diamond shaped. I think the CG plesiosaur was given these flippers to match the images in the Rines-Egerton photo.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, right from the outset the programme made the assumption that, if there is a Loch Ness monster, then it's a plesiosaur. They did not suggest or even imply that other identities have been suggested, and by going for the plesiosaur identity they mischaracterised the ideas of many people who have investigated the Loch Ness phenomenon.

The irrelevance of crocodiles

Leonard asked what kind of modern animal might resemble (in ecological terms) a plesiosaur. Though there is no exact extant analogue, the correct answer would be a marine mammal of some sort (plesiosaurs can be imagined as combining uniqueness with features of otariid pinnipeds, turtles and crocodylians). But no, Leonard chose... Indo-Pacific crocodiles.

Basically this was a 15 minute excuse for Leonard, Adam Britton (an extremely respected crocodile biologist who I think very highly of) and a team of helpers to play around with a big crocodile. Steve

Salisbury (another extremely respected crocodile worker — his recent Ph.D. is a frighteningly impressive work on the self-carrying system of fossil and living crocodylians) started things off by pointing to superficial similarities seen in plesiosaur and crocodile skulls.

Ok... Leonard went from there and, stating that a plesiosaur bite would have resembled that of an Indo-Pacific crocodile, proceeded to measure a crocodile's bite force with a pressure hose. Very interesting, yes crocodiles have an awesome bite force. Relevance to plesiosaurs? Very little. After the playing around with the crocodile bit, they briefly went back to Salisbury: though it wasn't explained at length, if you listened carefully he quickly stated profound differences seen between crocodile and plesiosaur skulls. Though pliosaurs (short-necked plesiosaurs with superficially crocodile-like skulls) may well have some functional similarities with crocodiles, things are clearly different if you're thinking of long-necked plesiosaurs like *Plesiosaurus*, cryptoclidids and elasmosaurids. These animals fundamentally lack the features associated with the power biting of big crocodylians. Their skulls indicate instead relatively weak snapping bites — i.e., ideal for catching fish, crustaceans etc., but not for grabbing people, water buffalo or antelopes as Leonard implied. So, while all of this was nice TV theatre of the sort we now expect from the BBC, it was a waste of time and nothing to do with Loch Ness.

Turtles, gigantothermy and ice bergs

When wondering if a hypothetical plesiosaur could survive in waters as cold of those of Loch Ness, Leonard pointed both to leatherbacks and to Australian fossil sites yielding (apparently) cold water plesiosaurs. Leatherbacks really can swim in cold boreal seas, but despite initial results from Paladino et al. (1990) they are no longer thought to have a resting metabolic rate elevated compared to that of other similar-sized reptiles. In other words they are bradymetabolic.

However, they are endotherms and have a bunch of features that allow them to be cold tolerant including an insulative carapace, a thick, oil-saturated skin, fibrous fatty tissue and countercurrent heat exchange mechanisms in the flippers. The presence or absence of all of these things can be determined from fossils and there are enough good plesiosaur fossils (including at least one good specimen with skin impressions — my info on it is from Arthur Cruickshank, an expert on plesiosaur anatomy) for us to be confident that these things were absent in plesiosaurs. The bone microtexture and histology of plesiosaurs is not consistent with endothermy — they appear to have been 'traditional' reptiles. So the only getout for having them as cold tolerant is to argue that they were gigantotherms.

Problem: the entire theory of gigantothermy is based on Paladino et al's erroneous data on leatherbacks, and it has since been retracted by these authors. Given that other studies do not show leatherbacks to have an elevated metabolic rate (Lutcavage et al. 1990), the theory of gigantothermy has died a death and there is no evidence that giant bradymetabolic vertebrates converge in physiology with giant tachymetabolic ones. Even if gigantothermy were a viable theory, in marine reptiles it is only theoretically possible with the suite of features cited above. Indeed Orenstein (2001) writes 'Gigantothermy ... would not be enough to keep a leatherback warm in cold northern waters' (p. 134). At the moment the idea that plesiosaurs may have been cold tolerant is not based on any good evidence.

As for the evidence showing that some Cretaceous plesiosaurs inhabited cold waters with icebergs etc., this is controversial: the Cretaceous poles were nowhere near as cold as the modern ones and the evidence that the Australian sites they referred to were frequented by icebergs rests on the presence of drop stones - rocks alien to the local sedimentary geology and which appear to have been carried to their new home by ice. The problem is that ice bergs are not the only way in which drop stones get dropped. Stones and rocks can also be carried for miles and miles in the roots of floating trees and as seaweed holdfasts.

Believing is seeing

The programme ended with another TV theatre section on human perception. Basically, people are poor observers and what we perceive is not necessarily the same as what we see. Fair enough, as discussed here before there are many studies which support this view. To demonstrate it, Leonard set up a fence post in the loch which could be raised and lowered by the pull of a rope. A group of tourists

were looking out over the loch when — shpling — up popped the fence post, and — shplop — down it went. They were then asked to sketch what they'd drawn. The results? incredibly unimpressive. No one had enough imagination to draw a drooling toothy elasmosaur with flippers, shining eyes and steam coming from its mouth and nostrils, everyone had instead drawn... a fence post. One person did however give the top of the fence post a sort of flipper shape to it, and another imagined that she'd seen humps beneath the water surface. But overall it did not demonstrate the point.

An improbable conclusion

Leonard's final point was that people 'see' a Loch Ness monster because they have been led to think that any unexplained object seen in the loch is a Nessie. But that's where it ended — he concluded that people weren't seeing anything: it was all imagination. No mention of the far more likely (IMHO) scenario that people are in fact seeing a whole wealth of different things, but misinterpreting them as monsters because of their preconceptions/poor observational skills/naiveté. Things like water birds, swimming deer, seals, wave and wake effects etc. These things for me are 'Loch Ness monsters': people *do* see the Loch Ness monster, but they are not seeing a giant unknown survivor from prehistory.

Some months ago I spent the better day of a day with one of the BBC researchers responsible for this documentary. He wasn't in the credits, so I wasn't surprised that I wasn't either, but it did strike me that what he spoke about all those months ago was very similar to the final product. Stated another way: it seems that many documentary makers know what they are going to show and what they are going to find even before they've started filming. So when you see a documentary that claims to be objective and scientific in its approach, you are instead seeing a carefully orchestrated, theatrical piece of popular entertainment that cannot claim to be authoritative or objective.

Comment: *Extant plesiosaurs may show characteristics not found in fossils.*

Response:

Those list members who remember, or bothered to read, the long discussion Karl and I had some years back on this list regarding plesiosaur survival may recall some of the points we brought up then. If there are living plesiosaurs then it is possible that they look substantially different from fossil ones. More on that below.

However, the CG plesiosaur in the BBC documentary was meant to be 'a plesiosaur': there was no indication that it was an evolved one which had accumulated a pile of autapomorphies following 65 million years of cryptic evolution. Indeed when Leonard was discussing basic points of plesiosaur anatomy, the CG plesiosaur displayed the relevant bits of its anatomy (no double entendre intended). It really was meant to be an accurate restoration of a live Mesozoic plesiosaur, and it failed on all counts. I know this isn't the point that Karl was addressing but wanted to make it clear nonetheless.

Karl's main point is that what we think we know about Mesozoic plesiosaur morphology and physiology may well not apply to hypothetical extant forms. Fair enough, I concede. 65 million years is plenty of time for hypothetical post-Cretaceous plesiosaurs to evolve tachymetabolic endothermy, an insulative furry coat, novel flipper morphology, whiskers, heterodont teeth, inflatable humps, hydrostatic snorkel-like organs.. etc. etc.. It just seems to me that this sort of thing is (1) rampant speculation, (2) special pleading [Karl and I may not agree on this, but I don't really see much in modern aquatic cryptid reports that really recalls a plesiosaurian identity], and (3) less parsimonious than other possibilities — viz, that people are not seeing live plesiosaurs at all but other animals. It is sometimes difficult to forget in these academic arguments that the theories are based on raw data, and how good is the data? Which aquatic cryptid reports REALLY sound like descriptions of plesiosaurs, and why?

Question: *How might modern plesiosaurs look today if they had survived?*

Response:

An interesting idea. Incidentally, hypothetical modern plesiosaurs already are in the (non-cryptozoological) literature: in Dougal Dixon's *The New Dinosaurs* there is a filter-feeding giant pliosaur called the whelk and a long-necked elasmosaurid which reaches up out of the water to grab seabirds and pterosaurs. I forget its name. However, the logic behind the evolution of Dougal's animals is often rather unrealistic: for a critique, see...<http://www.cmnh.org/dinoarch/2000Mar/msg00148.html>

What do I think hypothetical modern plesiosaurs would look like? As Karl hints above, plesiosaurs actually seem to have been rather conservative. During their 160-odd million years they retain essentially the same body plan, though of course there is substantial experimentation with neck and skull morphology, flipper size and shape and so on. Consistently, all plesiosaurs had a short tail, two pairs of wing-shaped flippers which were probably used in the alternating downstroke mode of Frey & Riess (1982) [Lingham-Soliar (2000) notwithstanding], ventrally located plate-like pectoral and pelvic girdle bones and a complex interlocking gastral basket that held the body stiff. They all have large eyes and pointed teeth and appear to have relied on bone-conducted hearing (some have a fused or absent stapes).

Given another 65 million years, it seems unlikely (but is of course by no means impossible) that any of these features would be lost. The evolution of tail-less plesiosaurs; plesiosaurs with enlarged forelimbs and diminutive hindlimbs; plesiosaurs with enlarged hindlimbs and diminutive forelimbs; plesiosaurs with flexible or elongate bodies; or plesiosaurs with reduced eyes that rely on hearing are therefore unlikely and not 'logical' given the conservatism seen throughout the recorded 160-odd million years.

And were plesiosaurs conservative? Well, Liassic plesiosaurs like the elasmosaurids *Microcleidus* and *Occitanosaurus* really aren't that different from end-Cretaceous elasmosaurids like *Callawayasaurus* and *Libonectes*, yet are separated by something like 115 million years. Among short-necked plesiosaurs, Late Cretaceous *Brachauchenius* is a close cousin of Middle Jurassic *Pliosaurus* and *Liopleurodon*. These taxa are all similar superficially, yet are separated by around 60 million years.

By no means do I wish to imply that plesiosaur evolution was static or lethargic — generic and species turnover seems to have been moderately high with few genera lasting more than 5 million years — but there are no major ecomorph shifts in plesiosaur evolution which result in an 'entirely new look.' How are Cretaceous plesiosaurs different from Jurassic ones? Cretaceous elasmosaurids are longer-necked and bigger than Jurassic ones, short-necked polycotyliids are new (but can be regarded as ecological replacements of Jurassic rhomaleosaurids and pliosaurids), and there are odd multi-toothed forms like *Aristonectes* and *Kaiwhekea*, aberrant Southern Hemisphere cryptoclidids/cimoliasaurids (or elasmosaurids according to some) with more teeth than their Jurassic relatives. Freshwater plesiosaurs? There is reasonable evidence that at least some Cretaceous plesiosaurs — namely leptocleidine rhomaleosaurids (using terminology of O'Keefe, 2001) — were denizens of freshwater. Unfortunately they don't appear to have made it to the Upper Cretaceous, but nevertheless it is entirely plausible that river- and lake-dwelling plesiosaurs might evolve if plesiosaurs survived the KT event.

My main point then is that plesiosaurs were rather conservative overall, despite contending with 160-odd million years of substantial climatological, palaeoceanographic and faunal change. This is *circumstantial* evidence for the view that hypothetical post-Cretaceous plesiosaurs wouldn't be that different from Cretaceous ones. While this is all entirely untestable in the absence of any post-Cretaceous plesiosaurs, it *suggests* to me that the notion of modern 'evolved' plesiosaurs which differ strongly in morphology and physiology from their Mesozoic ancestors is not backed up by the evidence.

Question: *So what might a modern-day basilosaur look like?*

Response:

Ah well, there are already 21st century basilosaurids... they're called mysticetes and odontocetes.

Dorudontines are the probable ancestors of all modern whales and, according to some [but not all] taxonomic arrangements, dorudontines + basilosaurines = Basilosauridae. There is no evidence to suggest that basilosaurines, the only long-bodied basilosaurids known (and there are only two genera: *Basilosaurus* and *Basiloterus*), survived beyond the end of the Eocene. The alleged 'post-Eocene archaeocetes' of the literature are more like dorudontines, and do not resemble basilosaurines.

If there are extant long-bodied cetaceans I favour the idea that they are super-weird members of the Delphinida. As I've pointed out in some of my articles, some extant delphinidans do undulate vertically when swimming, while others are very long bodied. So how about a super-long delphinidan that undulates vertically as it swims.

Question: *What is the current thinking on plesiosaur predation?*

Response:

1) All available fossil evidence strongly indicates that plesiosaurs (elasmosaurids included) were predominantly sub-aqueous predators. The presence in plesiosaurs of dense bones and gastroliths indicates that (as in all extant aquatic vertebrates with these features) they were generally trying to stay beneath the water surface and not at or near the water-surface interface. Incidentally there is some stomach content data from an Australian elasmosaurid which indicates that it was feeding on benthic invertebrates like crinoids.

2) The presence in plesiosaur skulls of a flow-through olfaction system (viz, where water flows into the mouth, through the internal nostrils and out via the external nostrils), eyes better shaped for under-water vision than vision in air (indicated by scleral ossicles: see Storrs & Taylor, 1996), and probable deafness to airborne sounds (as indicated by fused or absent stapes: see Carpenter 1996, 1997) strongly suggests that plesiosaurs did their sensing in water, not in the air.

3) Pretty much all plesiosaurs have dorsolaterally oriented eye sockets — that is, the eyes face upwards and outwards. This indicates that they attacked prey from below or the side, not from above. Indeed one wonders how the elasmosaurs of old restoration, waving their necks up above the water surface, are meant to see the fish they are supposed to be preying on.

4) Finally, plesiosaur necks do not seem to have been that flexible — indeed some workers are now arguing that elasmosaurid necks weren't that supple at all — and there is every indication that they could not bend the neck dorsally because of the height of the cervical neural spines. It also seems that elasmosaurids lacked the muscular power, or the required body mass, to lift the neck out of the water, as was shown recently by Everhart (2000).

Thus the evidence from plesiosaur fossils indicates that they were sub-aqueous ambush predators, specialised for life beneath the water surface, which did not plunge the head down through the surface nor elevate the neck above the water-surface interface. There is no reason why they couldn't forage at the surface from beneath the water-surface interface though.

Question: *What about the theory that Elasmosaurids were actually members of the Pliosauria?*

Response:

Tim is referring to a theory first published by Robert Bakker (1993) and based itself on technical

work later published by Ken Carpenter (1996, 1997). Bakker argued that all Cretaceous plesiosaurs — including elasmosaurids — evolved from pliosaur-grade Jurassic plesiosaurs. Carpenter did not go this far but argued that the short-necked polycotyliids (traditionally regarded as close kin of pliosaurids) are actually most closely related to elasmosaurids, thus the short-necked morph had evolved at least twice.

A lot of recent work has been done on this area. Though not all plesiosaur workers agree [Cruickshank (1997) for example still regards polycotyliids as descendants of leptocleidine rhomaeosaurids, and thus as members of the traditional Pliosauroida], several recent studies have supported the idea that polycotyliids — which are mostly short-necked — are part of a long-necked clade which includes cryptocleidids and elasmosaurids.

As for all Cretaceous plesiosaurs being derived from pliosaurids, forget it. No recent work supports this — indeed there are now several good Jurassic (even Early Jurassic) elasmosaurids, so the group is not restricted to the Cretaceous, plus there is no way elasmosaurids and pliosaurids are particularly close relatives. See Bardet et al. (1999) and O’Keefe (2001, 2002).

If anything is clear, it is that — as should be expected for the phylogeny of any group of organisms — the truth is seldom pure and never simple, which of course is in keeping with the philosophy that evolution is all about the creation of new diversity from existing raw material. Reversals are common and there is no inherent sense of progress. No longer is there a simple dichotomy between ‘long necked’ and ‘short necked’ plesiosaurs. However, this does not mean goodbye to the Plesiosauroida and Pliosauroida, it’s just that some plesiosauroids are short necked and some pliosauroids are long necked. In O’Keefe’s (2001) phylogeny, Plesiosauroida = *Plesiosaurus* + Euplesiosauria (and Euplesiosauria = Elasmosauridae + *Microcleidus* + Cryptocleidoidea) and Pliosauroida = *Thalassiodracon* + Pliosauridae + Rhomaeosauridae. Among his Plesiosauroida, the Cryptocleidoidea includes the short necked polycotyliids, and among his Pliosauroida, *Thalassiodracon* and *Attenborosaurus* are long necked taxa. If anyone is really interested in all this I advise them to check out the references below.

Returning to Tim’s question... bottom line: no, Bakker (1993) was not right in arguing that elasmosaurids and other Cretaceous plesiosaurs all evolved from pliosaurids, and even if he was right what are the important implications for plesiosaur survivability? Plesiosaurs did survive some significant extinction events but did not make it past the KT event.

Comment: [on the theory that the 1937 Cadborosaurus photograph shows an extant *Basilosaurus*]

Response:

With respect, I see no reason for this at all. If you accept the observations of the NHT by Bousfield & LeBlond (1995), the hind-flippers and head of the carcass look as different from a basilosaur as it is possible to be. Ben Speers-Roesch (right now on fieldwork in the Arctic — he stayed at my house a few weeks ago) has argued that features of the vertebral centra seen on the NHT definitely match those of basking sharks. This seems pretty convincing.

Comment: [Ziphiids are representative of “superweird elongate odontocetes”]

Response:

Yes, ziphiids are weird. I’m thinking though of something even longer-bodied than *Berardius* or *Hyperoodon*: the longest-bodied delphinidan is *Lissodelphis*. He was stretching the point (..... no pun intended) but Richard Ellis once described one of the two species as ‘eel-shaped.’ Imagine a lissodelphinine 7-8 m long with a slightly more elongate body. With more elongation might come the vertical undulation Buchholtz (1998, 2001) demonstrated for *Inia* and *Delphinapterus*. Rampant speculation of course, but as I said in my FT aquatic cryptids article, IF there are long-bodied extant cetacean cryptids, this is what I think they might be. BTW, I’m going to patent the term ‘superweird elongate odontocete’:

Question: *Could plesiosaurs have survived in small populations? Is the coelacanth a viable example of such survival?*

Response:

There are a few post-Cretaceous coelacanth fossils, though they were overlooked or unreported until recently. One is a single fin spine (IIRC) from Palaeocene Denmark while the other is some good material from Miocene Israel.

A point I've tried to make in some of my articles (see Naish 2000a, 2001), and also in discussions on this list, is that the fossil record really isn't as bad as some people imply. The range durations of lineages are generally well represented in the geological record — those of you that want to chase this up in the technical literature should see Benton & Storrs 1994 and Benton et al. 2000 for starters. Notably, large aquatic vertebrates have among the best fossil records of all — indeed some studies find that plesiosaurs and their kin are disproportionately *well* represented (Storrs 1993), and this is true even when they are reduced in diversity following extinction events.

Importantly, no known group of large aquatic vertebrates disappears from the fossil record for anything like 65 million years, even those that appear to have been low in taxonomic diversity or population size.

In my opinion — and of course people are quite entitled to disagree with me entirely — we can be extremely confident that plesiosaurs did not survive beyond the KT event. Coelacanths and megamouth sharks do not provide analogues for cryptic plesiosaur survival, every aspect of plesiosaur palaeobiology and stratigraphic distribution is against it, and there is no evidence to support it.

So I think it's time we came back to the 'raw data' aspect of this debate I mentioned previously. WHY has anyone ever suggested that modern cryptids might be extant plesiosaurs, and specifically which eyewitness accounts do they have in mind? IMHO, if you go back to those sightings you'll see very little in them that really recalls a plesiosaur.. you are instead seeing the effects of historical contingency (see Naish 2000a, 2001) whereby cryptozoologists have grafted their own preconceptions about plesiosaur lifestyle and appearance onto the cryptids. And for the most part, these preconceptions are based on the way plesiosaurs were depicted in the artwork of the 19th and 20th centuries.

So it is not the cryptids that are the problem — and BTW let me state for the record that I do think there are unidentified large animals at the bottom of at least some lake and sea monster reports — but the interpretations that have been grafted onto them.

Comment: *[On the Cadborosaurus image, and the lack of evidence for Basilosaur tail fins]*

Response:

In all living whales, the shape of the centra of the caudal vertebrae are round in cross-section throughout the tail EXCEPT FOR those vertebrae to which the flukes are attached. Unlike all the other vertebrae in the column, in these the centra are square in cross-section. The vertebra at the junction between these two centrum morphologies is convex on both articular faces and is informally called the 'baseball vertebra'. ALL of these features are seen without question in the caudal vertebrae of basilosaurids (see Gingerich 1998 and Gingerich et al. 1990 for the data).

Ergo, basilosaurids had tail flukes the same in form and location to those of extant cetaceans. The flukes of extant cetaceans consist of a tough fatty core, a fibrous collagenous meshwork around the core and then several layers of fat and dermis. Parsimony dictates that basilosaur flukes were built exactly like this.

The NHT appears to have a sort of tail fluke or fin on one of its sides. Bousfield & LeBlond (1995) argued that this was a sort of 'pseudo-fluke' and mirror-imaged it to produce a bilobed tail. They then

made completely erroneous comparisons with the hindlimbs of pachypleurosaurs and plesiosaurs, but that's another story. However, whatever it is, the NHT's 'pseudo-fluke' clearly has a skeleton-like system of supporting struts and appears to have been partially foldable. Maybe the supporting struts are bones or maybe they're cartilaginous rods or collagen bundles. Whatever they are, they demonstrate that the NHT does not have a fluke like that of any cetacean. So I wouldn't agree with you that the NHT is at all like a basilosaurid on that basis.

Question: *What do you think about the Mansi photo of Champ?*

Response:

My take on the Mansi photo has already been published — see Naish (2001) — and my opinion on it might make me unpopular but here we go...

There are several things in the Mansi photo that make me doubt it really is an animal with a smooth back and a long sauropod-like neck and head. If you look closely at the base of the object, on the left side, there are a number of amorphous lumps sticking out of the water on the same plane as the 'creature' itself. These do not look as 'sharp' as the neck and head but if you look at the focus on the 'body' you'll see that much of that — particularly the part of it closest to the water's surface — is also less sharp than the neck and head.

Where are these lumps?

Specifically, they are between the neck base and the body, linking them together (lump 1); immediately to the left of the neck base, giving it a sloping 'shoulder' (lump 2); and to the left of the neck, a short distance away from the neck base (lump 3). To see exactly what I mean look at Fig. 7 in Naish (2001).

For independent verification of what I report, see also Fig. 2 in LeBlond (1982). LeBlond also illustrates these features (though doesn't mention them in his text). From his diagram it seems that he interprets lump 3 as a flipper (see below) and he illustrates lump 2 accurately. His diagram is not detailed enough to determine whether or not he saw lump 1.

These lumps become more obvious on photographic enhancement. Those of you who have seen Discovery's 'Out of the Unknown' episode on Champ (broadcast in the UK as 'Myths and Monsters') may recall Peter Suthers scanning the photo, tinkering around with the contrast etc., and also demonstrating the presence of the lumps. Because Discovery wanted the photo to depict a basilosaurid tail (!!!!) this wasn't a problem for them, but it is if you want the object to be a sauropod or plesiosaur-like animal. For more on this see below.

Why are the lumps a problem?

Put simply, the lumps are a problem as they totally destroy the profile and show that the object is not really a sauropod or plesiosaur-like animal, but a far more irregularly shaped object. The following will be easier if you have a copy of the Mansi photo in front of you... Try and work out how the object would look if it were a long-necked animal with its body to the right. Logic and vertebrate morphology dictate that the tail will be out further to the right, the chest and shoulder region will be more or less directly beneath the head, and thus the forelimbs will also be more or less directly below the point at which the head is. How then, can the animal have a sloping 'shoulder' (lump 2) on the left side of its neck? Where does this shoulder go if the body is to the right? Also, how on earth can any part of the body (lump 3) be far out to the left?

I therefore submit that the object in the photo LOOKS like an animal because it has a realistic neck, head and back profile but is actually a more complex object. The only likely thing I can think of is that it's a tree stump with branches or roots sticking out of it. Mansi reported definite movement of the object. Tree stumps which float to the surface may rotate, bob around and create the impression of a

moving animal. I need not explain that decomposing vegetation which floats to the water surface can sink again once gas is expelled.

Bottom line then is that the animal-like look of the object is a good illusion. I've noticed that most people who want the photo to depict a cryptid refuse to believe that it can't be any thing other than an animal, but as yet I've never heard any response to the problems raised by the 'lumps.' As for Mansi's own assertions I regret that these don't hold much weight for me.

Anyway, feedback would be appreciated — though do remember to ask yourself if you are being objective and reasonable in your interpretations and/or dismissal of my hypothesis. Emotion and belief don't count for much.

Here is the relevant section on the Mansi photo from Naish (2001). Much of it will repeat what you've just read...

“Perhaps the most impressive aquatic cryptid photograph is the Mansi photograph, taken at Lake Champlain in July 1977 by Sandra Mansi. The photograph appears to depict a long-necked grey-brown animal that is curving its neck over its rounded back, as if it is looking behind itself. It looks rather like a traditional depiction of a sauropod though some writers have compared it with basilosaurid whales (Michell & Rickard 1982). This is odd because all whales, including basilosaurids, have very short necks.

“It is clear that the object in the Mansi photo is large, and that the neck and body are connected beneath the water surface. Image enhancement by the photographic expert Peter Suthers (shown in an edition of the ‘Out of the Unknown’ *Discovery* series) provides an interesting new perspective on the photo. By bleeding out the colours and thereby enhancing the shape of the object in the photo, Suthers revealed several previously unreported features. These were a group of amorphous black shapes to the left of the object, a sloping ‘shoulder’ on the left side of the base of the object’s ‘neck’, and another ‘shoulder’ on the right side that joins the base of the neck with the body (Fig 7). Suthers interpreted these new features as vindication for the idea that the object does represent an animal. Bizarrely, Suthers went on to suggest that, rather than representing the body, neck and head of an animal, the object might instead be a bifid fluked tail. *Discovery* elaborated on this suggestion by drawing the outline of a cetacean-like tail onto the object in the Mansi photo, thereby endorsing their speculation that ‘Champ’ is an extant basilosaurid. It should be clear from examination of the photo that the object cannot possibly be a whale’s tail.

“Furthermore, rather than supporting the suggestion that the Mansi object was an unknown animal, these findings call such an identification into question. The new profile of the object provided by Suthers indicates that the object is less like an animal that perceived before: the left-side ‘shoulder’ makes no sense anatomically and completely ruins the plesiosaur-like profile of the object while the shapes on the left defy explanation. I suggest that the object is a large mass of wood with a neck-shaped branch: according to Mansi’s testimony, this momentarily burst through the water surface before turning and sinking.” (Naish 2001, pp. 87-88)

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Gold, Treasure Hunters — And Bigfoot!

An Unwanted Occupational Hazard
While in Pursuit of Monetary Gains by Hobbyist Individuals.

Dr. Dwight G. Smith* and Gary S. Mangiacopra**

“For This, Men Have
Crossed continents — and double-crossed
friends ———
Conquered nations — and surrendered
their souls ———
Settled states — and unsettled hearts
and minds ———
Been cursed and cured — known power
and pain ———
Sacrificed, squandered it, lusted for it,
lived for it — and many, many have died for it.
But the lure and the lore live on —
the desire for it never diminishes ———
IT’S GOLD!”

— *GOLD!*, the treasure magazine, Winter 1974.

“WARNING!: These treasures may be hazardous to your health.” — The Editor’s
Deck, *TREASURE*, February 1988, concerning Louisiana’s Honey Island Treasure and its
Swamp-Ape Monster.

Treasure Seekers vs. Bigfoot

Since the early portion of the 19th century when the North American continent was being explored and exploited by individuals in their pursuit of wealth, written accounts of their adventures became available to the public in general. Their writings revealed rugged loners who trekked across regions of this continent that formerly only the native Americans had previously walked upon, sometimes venturing into areas where even the Indians fear to tread in search of gold. It is through these adventures that strange encounters with “hairy wild men” — which today we would call Bigfoot — had befallen treasure seekers in remote and rugged areas, many of which are even today almost never visited by humans.

A few of these early Bigfoot accounts survived to the present and have found their way into contemporary lost treasure articles often as simply an afterthought or anecdote related by the writer. These almost forgotten Bigfoot encounters by gold seekers of nearly two centuries ago have great historical significance for today’s Bigfoot researchers.

The following accounts of Bigfoot encounters by gold seekers were culled from nearly 1,300 treasure magazines from author Mangiacopra’s vast private collection. This collection dates back nearly four decades and contains over 10,000 treasure caches stories.

The accounts reveal all too clearly that on a routine basis, treasure seekers had to contend with

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hostile landscapes, extreme heat or cold, lack of drinkable water, treacherous partners, hostile Indians, attacking wild animals, running out of supplies and ammunition, and unavoidable accidents. Added to this was another dangerous hazard they sometimes had to deal with — encounters with Bigfoot!

The California Gold Rush — And Bigfoot Too!

By the early 1840s, California mountain men first began hearing about a mysterious “yellow” lake located somewhere in the High Sierra. From accounts given by Indians, this small granite-bound lake was located in a little valley inhabited by a strange monster that was supposedly so horrible that the Indians avoided the whole region.

Inferring that this “yellow” lake meant nearby gold deposits, prospectors went in search of this lake, assumed to be somewhere north of the Yuba and east of the Feather Rivers, but it was never found.

In 1890, writer E. C. Kemble wrote that an old Indian Chief warned him not to seek the yellow lake. According to the chief, the gold that ran through the mountains belonged to a terrible demon who ate all those in search of it. This demon (Bigfoot?) resided by a lake in the mountains whose shores were lined with gold. [1]

Another of California’s famous lost treasures is a gold mine reported to be somewhere in the Devil’s Backbone wilderness region. This area is also the same reputed haunt of Bigfoot, who is said to be residing there.

The Devil’s Backbone stands in the northwest corner of Trinity County, along the Humboldt county line. This area is the crest of a ridge that forms the boundary between two counties and is a natural pathway between the Salmon Mountains and Trinity Summit. Local terrain is sun-bleached rock that is sparsely shaded by scattered manzanita brush and digger pine. The ridge slopes fall sharply down into a steep boulder-strewn canyons below.

During the post-Civil War period, the Devil’s Backbone was an important pack-trains link for travel between the mines of the Salmon River and Trinity River. In the early 1880s, two sourdough prospectors that had regularly appeared to buy their supplies with gold disappeared into the region never to be seen again. In the 1890s, the townspeople of Willow Creek in Humboldt County became suspicious of an Indian who within six years became very wealthy from his gold nuggets and dust that he had used to pay for items, when he had no apparent source of income. He agreed to show a Willow Creek merchant the location of his gold source, only to be killed in a freak accident by being impaled on the picket fence around his yard.

The lost gold mine was again discovered in the summer of 1914, by Mr. Mack Jones who died in 1915 from pneumonia. Before dying, Mack told his two sons the location of the mine. The sons spent the next five summers searching for the gold mine, but they never found it.

As to the extent of wilderness of this region, author Wayne Moss explains: [2]

“The spine of the Devil’s Backbone offers an impressive perspective of the empty valleys brim-full of silence... At night, a shadow whispers across the silhouette of the rare weeping spruce tree, a shadow that might be caused by the legendary Bigfoot. This is his country. There are no trails off the ridge into any of the canyons. Why should there be? No one ever goes down into them, which perhaps explains why a fabulous gold mine has been lost for a hundred years in one of them.”

Like all treasure adventures, there are many dangers that may be encountered as Moss noted and concluded in his 1991 article:

“HAZARDS: Encounters with rattlesnakes and poison oak probable. *Bigfoot a possibility.* (Italics — authors) Entire area is a designated wilderness area and should be respected as such.”

An Arizona Gold Mountain with a Questionable Wasteland Bigfoot?

Like California, Arizona had more than its fair share of prospector's tales of mountains of gold nuggets that were found, only to be lost again in the trackless wastelands.

One such post-Civil War tale describes a possible Bigfoot encounter amidst the arid Arizona desert. Gold seeker survivor John Hix, a Missourian, arrived in Arizona in 1872 and teamed up with fellow old-timer gold prospector by the name of "Jackass" Dobson. Traveling northeast until reaching Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River, they followed the river for awhile. A short distance out of Flagstaff, Dobson took his partner to a small Indian village. An Indian maiden called Shining Flow agreed to accompany them to point out the location along a dry stream bed where much gold could be found. During their journey she became concerned that the party was being followed but here the story diverges into two different versions as given by two different authors.

The first author in 1974 credited that what Shining Flow had seen was something in the desert which she thought to be a very hairy, unshaven and unkempt man who she later saw again near their camp. The "wild man" had long whiskers and hair down his back tangled with brush. [3]

The second author gave more specific details of what transpires: [4]

"However there was one thing about the girl that was puzzling to Hix and Dobson, for throughout their trek across the wasteland, the girl claimed to hear sounds, as if someone were following them. Too, she heard a soft sound, like soothing talk, or was it simply the wind? In the evening shadows, more than once, she claimed to see a 'manlike creature' slipping from bush to bush, as it watched them. It ran on two feet like a man, yet was hairy and crouched like an animal, too, at times. She glanced so often behind her that soon she had Hix and Dobson throwing an occasional look back over their shoulder for the creature that was supposed to be stalking them. Still, Hix and Dobson never saw anything unusual at all ... at least not then."

The second author had listed two reference sources to this lost gold tale (Western Treasure Lost and Found by Roscoe; and A Guide to Treasure in Arizona by Tom Penfield). Which of these two versions is the more correct one cannot be determined. One version indicates that a sabotaging bushwacker may have been following them as later in their travel their waters bags were drained by someone. This deadly act would ultimately caused both Shinning Flow and Dobson to later perish during this gold expedition.

The later second version suggest a "wild man"— either a feral human or possibly a sighting of a Bigfoot? Thus this 1872 incident leaves much to conjecture as to what the correct explanation may be.

Although Hix did find and manage to bring out some gold he was unable to locate the mountain where these nuggets had came from. Never again did he seek out this lost gold treasure that cost his companions their lives, and almost his own life, too.

The Dean of America's Treasure Hunters — And a Supporter of Bigfoot.

To the treasure hunters of the world, the name of Michael Paul Henson conjures up a man of many talents: History buff, treasure researcher, seeker of the odd and unusual, maker of history... dreamer.

Henson, who died of cancer on 18 March 1995, was one of the most prolific writers on lost treasure, having written over 500 articles and some 13 books on this topic during his lifetime. Many of his articles contained his own accounts of how he found many lost treasures, and also how he lost several found-treasures.

Through his treasure seeking adventures, Paul Henson also became interested in "offbeat" treasures that he and others have been discovering for decades. These numerous archaeological anomalies include such controversies as to why ancient coins from the height of the ancient Roman empire are

being found scattered throughout the United States; or where did ancient Celtic relics being plowed up in cornfields come from; and even on the zoological controversy on Bigfoot by those treasure hunters who claim to encounter them.

Having since 1950 built up the largest collection of treasure sources in the world, Henson drew upon them for information that he then quoted in his series of treasure articles that he regularly wrote. [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13]

For nearly two decades Henson drew upon his private sources for a monthly treasure article. In this series, one state of America would be chosen and brief summaries of that state's lost treasures was listed. Each state would be cited for 3-6 different treasure tales; of how the lost treasure was originally buried or found and how ultimately it was relost; or the dangers that the original treasure seeker had endured ... such as encounters with Bigfoot!

In his 1993 state series on Wisconsin's lost treasures, Henson related an odd tale about Wildmen/Bigfoot that were inhabiting the most northern of the Apostle Islands as late as the 1880s!

Located between northwestern Michigan and northern Wisconsin in Lake Superior, the Apostle Islands are now part of the National Lakeshore. These islands have many lost treasure stories connected with them according to author Steven Michaels' *Michigan Treasures*. But the wildmen report came from another source Henson quoted: [14]

"The following came, in part, from the October-November 1961 issue of *Prospectors Guide*, a publication devoted to treasure hunting.

"While this mixture of gold discoveries and wild men called 'Swalahists' by the local Indians of the 1880s sounds like fiction, the white men in the story did exist, were prospectors and did find gold.

"Somewhere near the headwaters of the South Sixes River in Curry County, there is a gold ledge on Star Mountain near Benson Creek, in an area known as Star Gulch.

"In 1861 an old prospector had a placer claim in the Gulch and wondered where the gold came from, as it was coarse and had not traveled far. One day he got his gear together and worked his way up Star Mountain at the head of Star Gulch.

"Being old, progress was slow, so he chipped away at every likely looking outcropping that he passed. Nightfall found him high on the mountain, so he made a dry camp.

"Next morning, 'Nugget Tom,' as he was known, was up early to continue the search for the outcropping. Later that day, as he was about to give up the search his hammer, he struck a piece of quartz, rich in gold, which fell at his feet.

"Filling his pack, Tom started for his cabin. As he neared it he sat down to rest near a steep cliff. And that was all he could remember after a search party found him the next day, lying at the foot of the steep cliff. He was badly broken up, but still alive, so they patched his broken bones as best they could.

"One of the party who found him went through his pack and took out a piece of gold-ore quartz, the richest he had ever seen. The old man, being unconscious, was unable to tell what had happened.

"It was several days later that Tom was able to talk, but when asked about the location of the rich specimens, he refused to tell anyone anything.

"Next spring he again headed for the ledge where he had gotten the samples, but search as hard as he could, he was never able to locate the deposit again. And for four years he searched the mountainside in vain. Because the fall had affected his memory and he could not remember how he had gone up the mountain, Tom gave up the search and left the country.

“In the Spring of 1889, two prospectors, Benson and Robbins, decided to look for Tom’s lost ledge in Star Gulch. They made a thorough search, finally finding a trace of gold where a spring fed the stream during the rainy season. But on examining the ore, they learned it was not ‘Nugget Tom’s’ deposit. However, the ore was rich, so they continued to work it.

“One day, while going back to their camp for lunch, Benson happened to look back, at the same time pulling his gun, but not soon enough to stop a hairy creature from throwing all of their gear over a cliff. Later they told that the beast was big and powerful, covered with yellow fuzz over the body. None of their bullets seemed to affect it, as it vanished out of sight.

“They sold their mine, but the new owners never worked it, even though rich ore was showing. No one said so, but the reason may have been the rumors of wild men who lived on the mountain. In the 1870s four prospectors were mysterious killed in this area while prospecting. They are buried in a little graveyard on Huckleberry Knoll near Bear Penn Flats.

“Indian legends say that a lost tribe of Indian devils, called ‘Swalahists,’ inhabited this area, and it was taboo for other people. Over the years, fear of these creatures has kept many prospectors and lost-mine hunters out of the area.

“This is a good site for a prospector who is not afraid of Indian legends to investigate.”

In another article of his state treasure series, Henson told of the six treasure sites in Alaska, it was the last that he gave the greatest amount of column space regarding the “Kooshdakas” that drove off many of the gold prospectors of 1898: [15]

“This story concerns a legend of hairy creatures the Indians called Kooshdakas, who scared early treasure hunters away from the area of Crescent Lake on Thomas Bay.

“Supposedly around 1900, an Indian showed to a white man named Charlie Stone, a chunk of gold quartz he said he found in the area. Charlie and some friends made several attempts to find the ore deposit but were supposedly chased away each time by the ‘hairy creatures’ inhabiting the area.

“On one such trip Charlie was alone and claimed to have found the correct place and picked out landmarks to guide him back to the spot. He picked out the largest tree, one about 40 feet to the right of the gold-bearing ledge. Over the top of the tree he could see Frederick Sound, Cape of Strait Light, and Point Vanderput at the mouth of Thomas Bay. To the left he saw the Sukio Islands and the mouth of Wrangell Narrows. Turning half-way around, he sighted on some distant mountain peaks; below the point was Crescent Lake.

“The Indian had originally told Charlie how to get to the place where the gold was found. His direction were, ‘Go up to the Bay of Death (as the Indians called Thomas Bay). Travel up right side of Patterson River about eight miles and turn up toward the high country. Go a mile and a half to Halfmoon Lake (Crescent Lake). Plenty gold there.’

“Thomas Bay was called the Bay of Death by the Indians because several years earlier a huge landslide had wiped out a native village of 500 inhabitants. Thomas Bay is northwesterly about 50 miles from Wrangell. The bay is somewhat circular and about ten miles in length. On the southeast side is a broad bight, a curve on the shoreline, extending eastward to the moraine of Patterson Glacier. The Patterson River, formed by melting ice from the glacier, flows through the moraine and empties into Thomas Bay.

“Charlie returned to Wrangell after finding the correct place, showed the rich ore samples to his partners, told the story of the ledge, then without any explanation, left for the United States and never returned to Alaska.

“Several hunters, in the quest for the gold quartz have (so the story goes) gone crazy from their contact with the Kooshdakas and left the country, never to return, or to be heard from, again.

“It would be interesting to investigate this site and learn what the ‘hairy creatures’ were.”

Henson also wrote an article two years before his death in 1993. In this article Henson commented about the many strange discoveries people had unwittingly uncovered during their pursuit of lost treasures. One discovery mentions finding giant human or human-like skeletons!: [16]

“While searching for a hidden cache of gold coins in 1975, Clel Smith of Pineville, Kentucky, found a cave on the Kentucky-Tennessee state lines. Inside were numerous giant human bones. The University of Tennessee assembled two complete skeletons from this cave which measured almost ten feet tall.”

Unfortunately, Henson did not give any reference sources to this finding. But if true, could these skeleton remains have been of possible Bigfoots that had died?

Treasure Hunter from the 1960s — Seeking Lost Treasure and Bigfoot, But Finding Neither!

Another treasure hunter who incorporated into his pursuits of locating lost treasures the search for Bigfoot was John Seginski. Writing of his Bigfoot exploits from the perspective of the late 1960s when the Bigfoot controversy was strongly sweeping across North America, he authored “Bigfoot — Man Or Ape?” This was Seginski’s personal account of his two Bigfoot investigations to the Klamath River area in Northern California to acquire hard evidence of Bigfoot existence, though finding nothing. Yet his 1968 field investigation had the groundbreaking distinction of being recognized as the very first article on the Bigfoot subject to be published, in 1970, in a nationally distributed treasure magazine. Seginski raised the question on whether there was existing in the American wilderness an unknown creature that some described who had encountered them as either like a man or an ape. Recounting in his 1960s article what was then known from the reported Bigfoot sightings in the California-Oregon region, he included his own personal investigations in northern California and Idaho: [17]

“Last summer (1968 — authors) while I was camping in central Idaho, I asked several road crew men and forest rangers if they had ever heard of a bigfoot creature. They all told me that two such creatures had been sighted a few weeks earlier, near French Creek in central Idaho. They told me that a logger had been drinking water from a stream, and when he looked up, there stood a bigfoot creature. They said his color was light — not like the near black ones sighted in Northern California.”

Southern Pirate’s Treasures of the Gulf Of Mexico — With the Water Ape of Louisiana and the Skunk-Ape of Florida.

In 1988, Treasure magazine reprinted excerpts from the 1973 edition of *Gulf South Journal* in connection to their lead article on Louisiana’s Honey Island lost early 19th century buccaneer treasures. The Journal’s writers wrote about a local swamp monster that was said to be residing on Honey Island: [18]

“Long regarded as one of the most primitive areas of the United States, the Honey Island Swamp is a nature lover’s dream. The frog population, for example, is said to be the densest in any area of comparative size in the world, and almost every known species of birds and animals native to the South are believed to make their homes deep within the unbelievably thick growth. Such animals as bear and wild boar, while seldom seen, are known to inhabit the area, because their tracks are often in evidence.

“And just about a week ago, another creature was added to the list of Honey Island dwellers, a creature dubbed by the press ‘The Honey Island Monster.’

“The ‘Monster’ story was aired by a local television news show when an experienced swamp guide reported his powerboat struck something just beneath the surface of one of the bayous which weave through the swamp like a network of webbing, woven by the fingers of nature eons ago. The guide said he had rolled over the creature with the boat, causing the motor to ‘kick-up.’ The guide stopped the

boat, and searched for whatever it was he had hit, at first believing it to have been a turtle. Suddenly, his companion sighted something emerging from the water behind them. ‘We turned around, and coming out of the water was the animal, about five foot (tall), it was black, I couldn’t tell if it had hair or if it was skin. It was running — it was on two legs.’

“The guide related how the creature went up onto the bank and immediately disappeared into the swamp.

“The tracks made by the animal were described as fairly large, with five webbed toes.

“Similar creatures have been reported from all parts of Louisiana, Mississippi and the Gulf Coast area, and some years ago there was a sighting reported in the Lake Borgne area. Those familiar with the Honey Island Swamp say it is a perfect spot for an unknown species of animal to remain unknown, and speculate that there could be more than one type of unusual creature deep within its morass.”

This lead-in promotion column helped introduce the feature article for that month’s issue, giving the historical background for the numerous lost treasures secreted by roaming pirates and local bandits throughout the 19th century. Nested between the east and west branches of the Pearl River, Honey Island divides the river before its entry into Lake Borgne; as Louisiana lies to the west and the Mississippi to the east. U. S. Highway 90 crosses its southern end, while most of the area to the north is accessible by boat, being a salt marsh known as Honey Island Swamp. It is an inland island roughly 30 miles long and five miles wide at its broadest point and consists of 27,000 acres of alluvial plains, twisting bayous, marsh, and grassy hummocks.

From prior to the War of 1812, to after the Civil War, Honey Island was in constant use as a depository for stolen and buried treasure caches. At the beginning of the 19th century, buccaneer pirate Pierre Rameau plundered merchant vessels in the Gulf of Mexico and buried his loot on this island. His buried treasures was estimated at (then) \$450,000 in gold coins, in addition to precious gems.

Other bandits consisted of John Murrell, said to have secreted a fortune in gold and silver coins. Pirate Calico Dick stashed his loot on Honey Island also. Renegade James Copeland who from 1840-50 used the island as his hideout and to stash his caches. After the Civil War, ex-Confederate soldiers plunder this region, leaving behind one cache of rifles and pistols hidden in an Honey Island cave.

A few caches have been discovered: in 1907, a hunting party found \$1,000 in Mexican coins. Another old fisherman found a chain attached to a tree leading to the water’s edge; when dragged ashore, a chest containing an unspecified amount of money was found. Other treasure troves may have been found by others but never reported to the general public.

This region is still almost as wild and forbidding as it was 2 centuries ago.[19] Honey Island is inhabited, although very sparsely. Most of the land (as of 1969) was owned by a paper company which engaged in timber cutting and reforestation; while smaller portions of the land was owned by various hunting clubs and a few small farms. [20]

In 1973 another Gulf of Mexico Bigfoot was sighted on Florida’s west coast. Floridian treasure hunter Herb Goldberger wrote others who attempted to locate the various buried treasures of the vicious cutthroat buccaneer Jose Gasper. Buccaneer Gasper (later changing his name to Gasparilla), held a reign of pirate terror for some 37 years in this Gulf of Mexico region. During his first eleven years as a pirate in Florida waters he captured 36 ships resulting in millions of dollars of stolen booty. He continued his preying upon Spanish shipping for another 26 more years, before making a fatal error in 1822 after pursuing a supposed British merchantmen, only to discover it was a decoy United States naval vessel. In the ensuing naval battle, upon when Gasparilla realized that all was lost, he evaded capture by wrapping an anchor around his waist and jumping into the sea. Thus ended his Florida pirate dynasty of nearly four decades during which much human life was lost and much captured treasure buried and never retrieved.

During his decades of pirating, Gasparilla established his base on Cayo Pelau, lying 3 miles inside

Charlotte Harbor from Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island. It is in this mangrove island that his pirate loot had been claimed to have been buried. Rumors — sustained by pirate markings found on the island trees — gave indications of the potential locations of these lost treasures.

What may also be on the island is an occasional visit of the Florida Yeti — the skunk-ape creature that may be roaming from one mangrove island to another. Reports from that period of time were coming from the west coast of Florida of this skunk-ape whose color was ranged from brown to black and could easily amble from one island to another in ankle deep water during low tide.

Goldberger heard from one treasure seeker that had twice visited the island seeking lost buried treasure, that he ‘had a strange feeling I was being watched.’ And after his second attempt of treasure hunting, simply abandoned any further attempts of going back to the island to seek any pirate treasure. There was an unnervingness about this area that the treasure hunter did not wish to tempt. [21]

Back to the Northeast — A Treasure Dowser vs. a Maine Bigfoot (Or a Hoaxer in a Gorilla Suit?)

In 1989, author and treasure hunter Bob Ater wrote of an unusual request that he had undertaken and told in his “Doodle Bugging — Methods For The Modern Dowser” column for *Treasure* magazine.

Ater was using the still mysterious phenomena of “Dowsing” to discover lost treasure caches. Taking the position, “If it works, use it,” even if it may seem strange or even impossible, Ater went ahead and tried it.

One method of dowsing concerns the “psychic imprint” that a trail of a person may leave after burying a treasure. A “sensitive” dowser can track such a trail and Ater was one. He then related a strange personal experience he had during a tracking.

A few years prior (circa 1985) Ater was living in Maine. He was quite familiar with the local news reports of a “gorilla” (some refer also as possibly Bigfoot) running wild in the local area. This beast was seen near the edge of his town but disappeared into the woods after the local residents observed it. Rumor ran rampant that it might be Bigfoot. Ater contacted a police officer and offered to track the animal using his dowsing abilities. His services were accepted and he was driven to a remote cemetery where the “gorilla” was seen the day previous. Ater requested to be left alone in the cemetery for half-an-hour and then for the officer to pick him up.

Using an “L” type swing dowsing rod, he stood alone in the cemetery center trying to determine the path the “gorilla” had made. This area was surrounded by thick woods with no houses or other structures nearby. His dowser indicated a presence to the rear of the cemetery, leading him down an embankment, than back toward the cemetery again. At the embankment’s edge, a deep footprint was found, much bigger than an ordinary’s man. A young and sturdy sapling was growing there, and something had as someone grasped it to pull itself up the incline. Placing his own foot in the creature’s footprint and grasping the small tree, he pulled himself up in the same manner.

Back in the cemetery, Ater continued dowsing the trail which led to the far side of a cleared area, across the road and into the woods on the other side. This wooded area was a jumble of tangled vegetation, but the trail soon came to an area where many tall pines were growing. The ground beneath was thick with a pine needles layer. Here, more large and deep footprints were found. At this point, Ater realized that he may have placed himself in jeopardy if he was dealing with a wild creature, and decided to head back toward the road.

On the way back to town, they heard a police radio report that the gorilla had been just spotted in another location. Driving immediately to that location, they were met by several other police officers and eyewitnesses. After a short conference, they headed into the woods in the direction that the creature had been seen going. They went for a block or more, but found nothing.

This incident was later cited as a hoax when a local costume company reported that a customer had rented a gorilla suit and then failed to return it. It was accepted that whoever this culprit was, he had fooled everyone.

Ater concluded from his dowsing experience that this was simply a man running around in a gorilla suit. Yet this explanation is too pat for the more experienced cryptozoological investigator who has seen similar Bigfoot incidents in which it is later claimed that the rational explanation for what was reported was a hoaxer running around scaring people in a monkey suit. [22]

Though it is possible that this Maine incident was a hoax, there are too many inconsistencies in his account to accept this as being the correct explanation. If one takes into account all of these inconsistencies — the description of the deep footprints found; the use of a sapling tree as a level to pull whatever up an incline; the tangled vegetation it went through — they are more typical of the movements of a wild beast than some hoaxer running around in a gorilla suit! For such a hoaxer would have deliberately placed himself in potential harm's way, as Maine is noted for their large number of gun-toting hunting inhabitants, and would easily become a large shooting target by some frightened individual protecting himself; or a shoot-first, look-at-it-later, hunter.

This explanation of a hoaxer in a gorilla suit may itself not be truthful, and simply given out to calm the local residents. Or even if there was an actual gorilla suit hoaxer, the hoaxer may have been prompted to do the hoaxing after hearing of the initial news reports as the local gorilla/Bigfoot accounts became widely known.

In this instance, there is a strong possibility that a series of Bigfoot sightings were happening in Maine, and should be carefully considered.

To Those Seeking Lost Treasure — But Finding the Hazard of Bigfoot Instead

In the quest of the anthropological mystery that is commonly called “Bigfoot” or “Sasquatch,” it is without realization both on the part of the treasure seekers and Bigfoot investigators that their two different pursuits actually are overlapping each other. The treasure hunter seeking non-living non-moving materialistic treasures; the Bigfoot investigator seeking a living and moving biological treasure of zoology.

Both different groups in their respective quests utilize the same local, the wilderness areas of North America. And it is a fact that there are far more treasure hunters than Bigfoot seekers, going into regions where the last white man or native Indian had trekked a century or more ago trying to find a lost treasure. And because of the higher number of treasure seekers, there is a greater chance of an encounter with Bigfoot. These encounters are not becoming generally known because of the secretiveness of the treasure hunters who do not want others to know they are in these regions seeking lost treasures.

An alliance of these two different groups would benefit greatly the Bigfoot hunter with sightings of these mysterious creatures.

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Treasure Caches & Bigfoot Hazards

No.	Date	Location	Treasure	Bigfoot Characteristics
1)	Early 1840s	High Sierra region, California	gold nuggets	"Terrible demon"; cannibalistic
2)	1872	Area before Little Colorado River, Coconino County, Arizona	gold deposits	Whiskers and hair on neck; or hairy "man-like" creature, ran on 2 legs; feral human?
3)	1889	Apostle Islands, Ashland County, Wisconsin	gold deposit	Wildmen called "Swalahists"; big and powerful; covered with yellow fuzz over body
4)	Circa 1900	Area of Crescent Lake on Thomas Bay, Alaska	gold quartz	Hairy creatures called "Kooshdaks"
5)	1960s	Lake Borgne area, St. Bernard County, Louisiana	_____	_____
6)	1968 summer	Near French Creek, Idaho County, Idaho	_____	Light in color
7)	Prior 1973	Honey Island, St. Tammy County, Louisiana	1800-1870s pirate caches; post-Civil War bandits loot	5 foot tall, ran on two legs; black coloration; fairly large tracks with five webbed toes
8)	Prior 1973	Cayo Pelau Island, Charlotte County, Florida	1780s-1822 buccaneer treasures	Ape-like creature; coloration brown to black; skunk-like smell
9)	1975	Kentucky-Tennessee state line	gold coins cache	Giant human bones; measured almost 10 feet tall
10)	Circa 1985	Maine	_____	Possibly Bigfoot?; hoaxer in gorilla suit?
11)	1990	Devil's Backbone ridge, Humboldt-Trinity County, California	lost gold mine	Bigfoot available; occupational hazard if encountered

A Sampling of U.K. Mermaid Folklore

Chad Arment

The folklore of mermaids is too often tied to misidentification of sirenians in popular literature. While no investigator suggests that misidentifications do not occur, more often than not they are based on pinnipeds or optical illusions. The merfolk tales of the United Kingdom are a good case in point. Obviously, there are no known dugongs inhabiting the offshore waters of Great Britain. Still, we see some interesting sightings which point to a biological source rather than pure imagination. Three of the following tales describe two variants of the folk-mermaid, while the fourth illustrates how easily a hoax can be played out.

“A Story of a Mermaid

“The following curious story is related in a lively and agreeable work entitled *A Tour to Milford Haven in the Year 1791*, written in a series of letters by a lady of the name of Morgan, and published in London by John Stockdale in the year 1795. Mrs. Morgan appears to have been a lady of an elegant and cultivated mind, and to have mingled with the best society of Pembrokeshire during her sojourn in what was then almost a *terra incognita* to an English-woman. In her forty-third letter, addressed to a lady, and dated Haverfordwest, Sept. 22, Mrs. Morgan says:—

“If you delight in the marvellous, I shall now present you with a tale that is truly so; and yet, from the simple and circumstantial manner in which it was told by the person who believed he saw what is here related, one would almost be tempted to think there was something more than imagination in it. However, I will make no comments upon the matter, but give it you exactly as I copied it from a paper lent me by a young lady who was educated under the celebrated Mrs. Moore, and who has acquired a taste for productions of the pen, and likewise for whatever may be deemed curious. Mrs. M—— inquired of the gentleman who took down the relation from the man’s own mouth, a physician of the first respectability, what credit might be given to it. He said the man was of that integrity of character, and of such simplicity also, that it seemed difficult to believe he should be either able or willing to fabricate this wonderful tale. Farther the doctor was silent, and so am I.

“Henry Reynolds, of Pennyhold, in the parish of Castlemartin in the county of Pembroke, a simple farmer, and esteemed by all who knew him to be a truth-telling man, declares the following most extraordinary story to be an absolute fact, and is willing, in order to satisfy such as will not take his bare word for it, to swear to the truth of the same. He says he went one morning to the cliffs that bound his own lands, and from a bay near Linn Stack. From the eastern end of the same he saw, as he thought, a person bathing very near the western end, but appearing, from almost the middle up, above water. He, knowing the water to be deep in that place, was much surprized at it, and went along the cliffs, quite to the western end, to see what it was. As he got towards it, it appeared to him like a person sitting in a tub. At last he got within ten or twelve yards of it, and found it then to be a creature much resembling a youth of sixteen or eighteen years of age, with a very white skin, sitting in an erect posture, having, from somewhat about the middle, its body quite above the water; and directly under the water there was a large brown substance, on which it seemed to float. The wind being perfectly calm, and the water quite clear, he could see distinctly, when the creature moved, that this substance was part of it. From the bottom there went down a tail much resembling that of a large Conger Eel. Its tail in deep water was straight downwards, but in shallow water it would turn it on one side. The tail was continually moving in a circular manner. The forms of its body and arms was entirely human, but its arms and hands seemed rather thick, and short in proportion to its body. The form of the head, and all the features of the face, were human also; but the nose rose high between its eyes, was pretty long,

and seemed to terminate very sharp. Its head was white like its body, without hair; but from its forehead there arose a brownish substance, of three or four fingers' breadth, which turned up over its head, and went down over its back, and reached quite into the water. This substance did not at all resemble hair, but was thin, compact, and flat, not much unlike a ribbon. It did not adhere to the back part of its head, or neck, or back; for the creature lifted it up from its neck, and washed under it. It washed frequently under its arms and about its body; it swam about the bay, and particularly round a little rock which Reynolds was within ten or twelve yards of. He staid about an hour looking at it. It was so near him, that he could perceive its motion through the water was very rapid; and that, when it turned, it put one hand into the water, and moved itself round very quickly. It never dipped under the water all the time he was looking at it. It looked attentively at him and the cliffs, and seemed to take great notice of the birds flying over its head. Its looks were wild and fierce; but it made no noise, nor did it grin, or in any way distort its face. When he left it, it was about an hundred yards from him; and when he returned with some others to look at it, it was gone. This account was taken down by Doctor George P—— of Prickerston, from the man's own mouth, in presence of many people, about the latter end of December, 1782.'

"The physician who took down the foregoing statement from the mouth of the eyewitness, was George Phillips, M.D., of Haverfordwest, a gentleman of high social position.

"John Pavin Phillips."

From: *Notes and Queries*, 2nd Series, IX, May 12, 1860.

Mer-Folk in 1814

The three following accounts are copied from an old scrapbook of newspaper cuttings for 1775-1814, which is in my possession:—

"Mermaid.

Extract of a letter, dated Ardsheal, Argyllshire 2nd August curt. (14 miles from Fort William).

Our curiosity has been greatly excited by the appearance of a Mermaid on this coast. I daresay you will give an incredulous smile; but really we have had such distinct accounts of it from different people, that we can have no doubt of the fact, though we are all very anxious, you may be sure, to have ocular demonstration.—

The last time she was seen is nearly a fortnight ago; since that the weather has been very stormy. When it settles we may have a chance of seeing, or at least having more accounts of this strange animal, which I hope has not left our shores.

"It is some time since she was first seen, very early one morning, by a lad lying on the shores of Ardsheal. He was at a considerable distance, and thought it was some person hiding himself in the sea weed, with an intention of frightening him, but on coming nearer he saw that though the upper part was like a human being, the lower part was like an immense fish. He was so frightened that he ran off; and when he mentioned what he had seen, people only laughed at him, and thought no more about it. Near a month afterwards some children were gathering blackberries, on the top of a rock immediately above the sea, about a mile further down than Ardsheal; they thought that they saw a woman drowning, and trying to get on the rock; some of them ran home to tell, and the rest staid to see what would become of the woman as they thought; but, on looking more attentively, they discovered that it was not a human being; they gave a very distinct account of what they saw. The upper part was exactly like a woman, the skin appeared very white, and a good deal of colour in the cheeks, and a very darkish looking hair; the arms were very well proportioned above, but tapered very much towards the hands, which were no larger than a child's of eight or ten years old, the tail

was like an immense large cuddy fish or scith [?saithe], in colour and shape. By the time the people of the farm came, it was about a gunshot from the shore, sitting quite upright on the water. One of the men proposed to shoot her, but the rest opposed this, so he did not do it; he whistled, on which she turned round, but did not go away; she remained in sight about two hours, at times making a hissing noise like a goose. When she disappeared she laid herself very gently down on the water, and swam away, the head only appearing above the water. She was seen a little distance from the shore twice after this, always early in the morning and when the sea was calm.” [York Chronicle, 1st Sept., 1814.]

“To the Editor of the Caledonian Mercury.

Sir—As the existence of mermaids is a point that had long been disputed of *adhuc sub judice lis est*, and as it may contribute in some degree to settle a point of so great importance to the naturalist, I send you the following account, which I received from two fishermen residing at Port Gordon, a small fishing village in that parish, whom I believe to be of undoubted veracity, and respectable enough in their station of life. As these men (Thomas Johnstone and William Gordon) were returning from their fishing, about three or four o’clock yesterday afternoon, about a quarter of a mile from the shore, the sea being perfectly calm, they observed, at a small distance from their boat, with its back towards them, and half its body above the water, a creature of a tawney colour, appearing like a man sitting with his body somewhat bent. Surprized at this, they approached towards him till they came within a few yards, when the noise made by the boat occasioned the creature to turn about, which gave the men a better opportunity of observing him. His countenance was swarthy; his hair short and curled, of a colour between a green and a grey; he had small eyes, a flat nose, his mouth was large, and his arms of an extraordinary length. Above the waist he was shaped like a man, but, as the water was clear, my informants could perceive that, from the waist downwards, his body tapered considerably; or, as they expressed it, like a large fish without scales, but they could not see the extremity. The men, however, had not long time to observe him, for, after looking steadfastly at them for about a quarter of a minute, he suddenly dived, but rose again at some distance from the boat, accompanied by another, whom the men supposed to be a female, as they could perceive she had breasts, and her hair was not curled, but reached to a little below the shoulders; the skin of this last one too was fairer than the other’s. By this time the men had become considerably alarmed, and made to shore as fast as possible, and for some time they could perceive the mermaids looking after them. Soon after their arrival they called on me, and gave the above account, without the slightest variation, between them; which, if you think proper, I shall be glad to see in your paper as soon as convenient.

I am, Sir, your’s, &c.,
Geo. McKenzie, Schoolmaster
School-House of Raffan, Aug. 16, 1814.”
[York Chronicle, 1st Sept., 1814.]

“A Mermaid Hoax.

Some facetious wag, desirous of discovering what number of *simple fry* could be taken in this neighbourhood (Belfast) baited a hook so dexterously on Saturday last, (the 1st inst.) that he succeeded in making a great haul the next day. For this purpose he dressed up a very plausible story respecting a Mermaid having been taken alive and brought on shore at Portmuck, Island-Magee, where it was kept in a boat filled with salt water for the inspection of the *curious*. Minute particulars were stated, and the names of several respectable persons were given who had seen it—To finish the deception, the letter was signed *Wm. McClelland*, who stated himself to have been very active in taking this rare fish; assisted by other two person, and a water-dog. The circumstances thus detailed were transmitted in a letter addressed to the Editor of the *Belfast Chronicle*,

bearing the Carrickfergus post mark, and was inserted in that paper on Saturday; the Editor, however, very properly stating how he had received it, and leaving the public to judge for themselves. The wag gained his point, the bait was greedily swallowed, and the Mermaid was, even in these gloomy times, the whole subject of conversation through the day. The most fastidious sceptics gave in, and no one accused his neighbour of *credulity*, for the *facts* were so *distinctly stated* that the *veracity* of *William McClelland* could not be doubted. Next morning all was bustle; gigs, coaches, carts, equestrians and pedestrians thronged the roads for many miles round, so attractive were the charms of this sea-nymph. Arrived at the wished for spot, every one enquired for the *Mermaid*. The people there looked at their visitors with astonishment, and wondered what they meant. The crowd continuing to increase still the wonder grew till the dupes of the stratagem becoming ashamed of their credulity, looked on each other with such a vacant stare, as to exhibit the most ludicrous picture imaginable. Each man blushed for himself, and the simple ninnies withdrew from the risible scene, vowing the most terrible vengeance on *William McClelland* and *printer's devil*. Their penance however, did not finish here, for those who returned by Carrickfergus had to pass through a long lane of inhabitants, who cheered them with loud huzzas, preceding their march with a large *codfish* and a *horse's tail* hung to its back. And so ended the wonderful story of *Wm. McClelland's Mermaid*." [Manchester Express, 15th Oct., 1814.]

From: A. R. Wright. 1929. Mer-Folk in 1814. *Folklore* 40(1): 87-90.

One aspect of the historical “debunking” of mermaid reports that has always annoyed me is the persistent claim that this phenomena is invariably based on ordinary species. Carrington, for example, in his *Mermaids and Mastodons* [1961, Scientific Book Guild, London], tries to implicate the common harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and the Atlantic grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) as the primary candidates for U.K. mermaid reports. What he overlooks entirely in his haste to disavow half-human, half-fish monsters, is the possibility that these individuals were seeing pinnipeds of a different sort altogether. Certainly, the presence of a wandering Arctic species (known or unknown) would be more likely to trigger an individual's sense of wonder than a perpetually common species of seal..

A few known, but rare, wanderers to British waters noted on the British Marine Life Study Society's website [<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/BMLSS/seals1.htm>] include the bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*), hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*), and walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*). Of these, the bearded seal is a distinct possibility in certain merman or mermaid sightings.



Mermaids? [Common Seals]

The Legend of the *I'iga Yaaga*

Debbie Hynes

There is a legend in Australia about a creature called a *Yowie* which is said to be closely similar to North America's *Sasquatch* and similar legendary entities, such as the *Yeti*, from elsewhere around the world. The *Yowie* is said to come in 2 different types. There is a large, approximately 2 metre tall, "hairy hominid" very like *Sasquatch* and a smaller, approximately 1 to 1.5 metre tall, creature known in folklore as a *Brown Jack*.

The story is not a European invention. The legend comes from the *Koories*, the Australian aboriginal people, whose own mythology relates how once there were two "nations" in Australia, namely the aboriginal people themselves and the "others," the *Doolargarl*. A long time ago a great forest covered the world and it shielded the Earth and its inhabitants from the scorching heat of the sun. The forest, which indeed was a sort of aboriginal Eden, was home to giant animals as well as the People and the *Doolargarl* alike. But then there came a day when the waters that sustained the forest-world dried up and the trees and great animals all died. Blame for this catastrophe is generally ascribed to the People's misdeeds. In the aftermath of the great dying there began a long war between the *Doolargarl* and the "People." However, the People were more cunning and they slew most of the *Doolargarl*. Eventually a Serpent sent a devastating flood and only a few of the "People" survived. The tale is a creation myth of the type told by native peoples the world over. Indeed it appears to have themes in common with Judaeo-Christian stories from the Book of Genesis. The story varies in detail across the Australian continent but the above outline, I think, encapsulates the essential elements of it.

The Quest

For several years I have taken an interest in reports of possible relict Pleistocene fauna and other "out of place" animals in Australia. It would be a wonderful thing if putatively extinct animals such as, for example, the Thylacine were to be found still alive. Foreign big cats, if shown to be established in Australia, would also be of very great scientific interest. To further these ends I maintain a web site, **The Quest for Thylacoleo**, www.thylacoleo.com, which tells of my travels and doings. In the course of the project I inevitably hear the stories of *Yowies* and the *Brown Jacks* which are told in remote areas of mountain and desert. But "tall tales" demand evidence and so I tended to regard the legend of Australia's unknown hominid as part of "bush folklore" and have never paid it much notice.

However, about 18 months ago I heard an extraordinary tale that not only asserts that such creatures do in fact exist but also tells of their origin. Whether the mere assertion of the existence of relict hominids or the bizarre account of how they come into the world is the more extraordinary I shall leave to the reader to judge.

In the course of pursuing the **Quest for Thylacoleo**, I became acquainted with a man who has lived in the Australian Outback since the 1950's, where he spent most of his working life as a professional shooter/hunter. He knows the aboriginal people and their legends pretty well. This is the story he told.

He has a cousin who married a full blood woman of the *Adnyamathanha* back in the '60s. There was great prejudice against interracial marriages in those days but, in spite of all that, his cousin and his wife stayed together and they grew old together.

By the late 1970s they had bought a "station" (=cattle/sheep farm) a little to the north of the northern tip of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. It is remote desert country, harsh and unforgiving and little populated. One day she and her husband and a stockman were in the cattle yard when all of a sudden one of these *Brown Jacks*, or *Little Grey People* as the local whites call them, walked into the yard where they were. The wife was affected so violently that she collapsed. Her husband and the stockman chased after it but, as these things are extremely quick, it escaped.



Flinders Range

When she recovered somewhat I suppose she felt that, given the circumstances, an explanation was called for. So she told the story of her life before her marriage. Normally these matters are not allowed to be disseminated to “outsiders.” They’re not even supposed to be revealed to non-initiated tribal members.

Aboriginal religious/traditional beliefs are *animist* in nature. That is to say, they attribute natural phenomena to the presence of sentient spirits who inhabit virtually every part of the physical world. Stones and rock formations, water holes and trees, animals, mountains and sky all have their resident spirits or devils who influence human fortune. Aboriginal beliefs also have a *totemic* aspect in that individuals are assigned a sort of identity with particular features of the land or specific animals or plants. Tribal and personal totems are thought to afford not only a sense of identity and oneness with the Land but also to offer protection against the baleful influence of numerous spirit-devils. Strict attention to ritual and compliance with very intricate tribal laws are highly necessary to secure such protection.

Aboriginal people’s beliefs appear, to an outsider at least, to be revealed in three levels. Firstly, there are the “public domain” themes about spirit beings like the *Rainbow Serpent*, the *Lightning Brothers*, the *Wandjina* and so on who tend to be actors in aboriginal creation myths. Anybody can read about them in (white) books. Secondly, there is the “black magic” level, which deals with such matters as *Kadaitcha* sorcery and secret *T’churinga* lore. Then there’s the third and most secret level: it appears this came to light in the stockyard.

The reason she was so shocked by the sight of the creature was that she recognised it as her son.

When she was young, back in the 1940s, she embarked upon a relationship with a young man with whom she was forbidden to have anything to do. Tribal aboriginal marriage laws were extremely complicated and they forbade certain unions altogether.



In the “good old days” before European incursions into the Outback, the penalty for transgressors in these matters was death. However, since the coming of white law they have had to ease off a little and banishment became more usual.

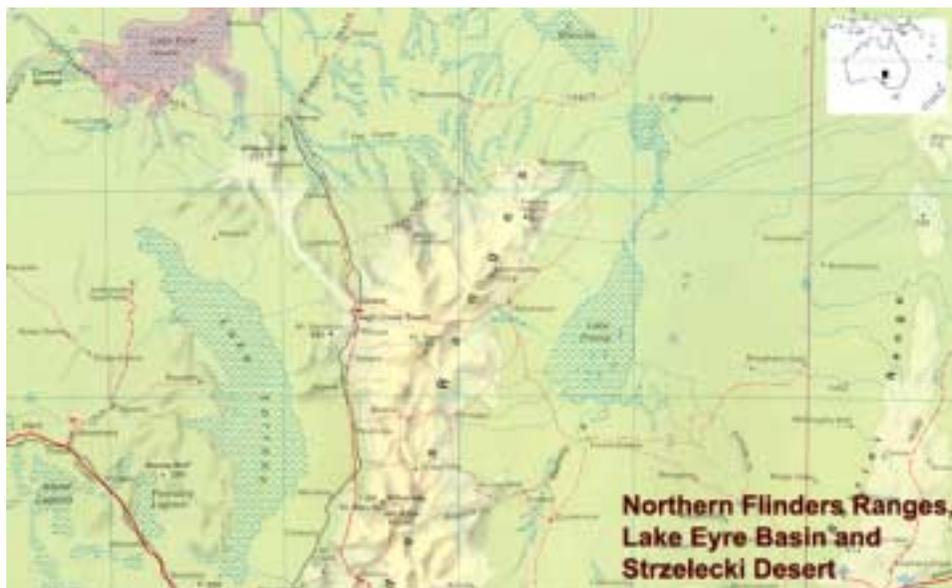
Readers should realise that it took until the 1940s to subjugate the entirety of Central Australia. Aboriginal tribes of the desert resisted fiercely the takeover of their lands and the destruction of their way of life and beliefs. They prosecuted a low level guerilla war that lasted from when the Whites arrived in the Red Centre in the late 19th century up till the 1930s - 40s.³ It is an episode that receives scant recognition in official histories. The conflict pitted spears against bullets yet the natives were able to hold out for so long because they were brave and tenacious and the desert was their friend. The more successful spearsmen of the inland tribes were celebrated heroes among their people and stories of their exploits travelled widely. White police/troopers were still being killed right up until the end but wholesale massacre and the seizure of native children by missionaries with help from armed police finally secured White victory. Australia is sometimes called the “Lucky Country” but another appellation is the “Secret Country” because of our tendency to gloss over and bury in forgetfulness the less savoury aspects of our history. Even now, as a visitor, one feels one is an outsider in certain parts. I find it somewhat unsettling, as an Australian, to come upon road signs in the Outback that are written in two languages. I suppose it’s because there is so much I was never told about the history of my country.

Anyway, to return to our narrative. A child was born of their union but it was no human child. It was one of the “Grey Creature” beings. As the mother’s story unfolded, it became clear that one reason for the complicated marriage taboos was to prevent just such births occurring. It seems that the genes which produce these creatures are embedded in the human genome and, among tribal people certain marriages can bring them out and cause an “atavistic birth.” It was the task of tribal matriarchs to keep track of family lines and rule on who can marry whom.

However, as in all human affairs, there was a certain amount of “rule breaking” and such births did occur from time to time. When it happened some tribes killed the “baby” outright: others took them and abandoned them in certain places in the hills where they might be found, and perhaps cared for, by others of their kind. That’s why these beings are called **Hill People** in the local Koorie tongue: they are the *I’iga Yaaga*. Anyhow, that is supposedly “The Secret” in aboriginal secret folklore.

In this case the babe was duly abandoned to its fate and the mother was expelled from her tribe, cursed and never readmitted.

It’s already most bizarre tale I ever heard, by a long shot. However, it gets weirder still.



These “Grey People” are described as standing about 1 metre tall, they don’t have language, they can’t make fire but they can make simple tools from stones, tree branches and so on. They walk bipedally, exactly in the manner of humans, but they are covered in hair from head to foot except for the face, hands and soles of their feet. Their skin is ebony black and their faces are “anthropoid” with prominent brow ridges, a low forehead and prognathic jaw. Curiously, I have not heard accounts of them producing children among themselves and so it is possible that they are sterile. If that is the case then the implications *vis-a-vis* the sustainability of such a population are obvious.

The really odd part of the yarn, and I find it hard to imagine anyone thinking to add this wrinkle, is that these creatures are said to live significantly longer than “normal” humans. It had been nearly 40 years since her “son” was born but when she saw it again, in the 1970s, although it was adult by then it was still relatively youthful looking.

The part that’s intriguing is that hybrids usually are bigger, stronger and live longer than either parent of different species. For example, the mule usually lives 25% - 50% longer than either a horse or a donkey. However, hybrids generally pay a price for their increased vigour in the form of reduced fertility.

So, the scenario that is implied by this yarn is that atavistic hominid creatures may actually arise from human stock and that they may live for perhaps twice as long as we do. Perhaps even longer — who knows? One wonders who on Earth would think up a twist in the tale like that — if the story were pure invention, that is?

What are they?

First of all we must ask if the tale is total fantasy. The easy course would be to answer in the affirmative and dismiss the entire narrative.

The legend of the Brown Jack, or the Grey People in the specific case of the Flinders Ranges, appears to be widespread in remote deserts and mountains of Australia. If it is a fantasy it has a lot of currency. In any case, Europeans continue to report sightings up till the present. It’s not unknown for foreign hikers, whom one might expect to be ignorant of local legends, to stumble into Leigh Creek or Parachilna or other towns on the outskirts of the Ranges in an agitated state after an encounter with a “Little Grey Person” in the hills. Are they hallucinating? Are they deliberate liars? Or did they really see something?

Secondly, if we make the bold assumption that there is a kernel of truth in the yarn, we need to ask ⁵ whether there is some sort of sociological explanation for the persistence of this strange belief.

For one thing, one might ask how the mother could have known that the creature was her son, if it was taken from her at birth? ⁵ Surely it’s more than likely that the sight of such a creature revived the memory and she then assumed that this particular one must have been her son? ⁵

On the other hand, it’s not as if these creatures disappear never to be seen again once they are disposed of as infants in the wilderness. Those that survive are said to live in groups in the hills, although there are supposedly not so many as in former times on account of outside genetic influence over the last 60 or so years. Consequently travellers in remote parts do see them now and then. Since the mother continued to live on the fringes of her former domain it’s plausible she may have seen the creature, and others like it, from time to time. Possibly it even followed her from place to place over the years, eventually becoming her own private nemesis?

Another aspect to consider is that “abnormal” births may perhaps be incorporated into traditional beliefs. Tribal peoples presumably lacked the perspective of scientific systematics ⁵ and so whenever a birth defect was observed, the aberrancy may have been attributed to the *I’iga Yaaga* legend. That is a plausible scenario. On the other hand, the legend appears to describe a consistent set of morphological features that remain stable from generation to generation. Not, in other words, the spread of different genetic defects and syndromes which, tragically, are produced by damaged genes.

The Journey

In late 2002 an opportunity arose to travel to the Flinders Ranges and look into these and other riddles at first hand. The Australian Outback is extremely hazardous. Daytime summer temperatures regularly rise above 50 °C, water is the difference between life and death and modern civilisation is but thinly spread. Help may not be available if something goes wrong, especially if the traveller ventures off road as we did. Our objective was to visit a certain remote valley in the rugged Gamons at the very northern tip of the Flinders Ranges where we had been told a colony of *I'iga Yaaga* lived. The country is said to be too difficult even for a modern 4WD vehicle to penetrate. So the plan was leave the vehicle and walk for two days into the supposed heart of their territory. There we were to bivouac for several nights, with cameras at the ready, and wait upon events. But disaster almost struck our expedition when the tyres of our Nissan Patrol began to be shredded by the razor sharp stones which are prolific in the region and we were forced to turn back.

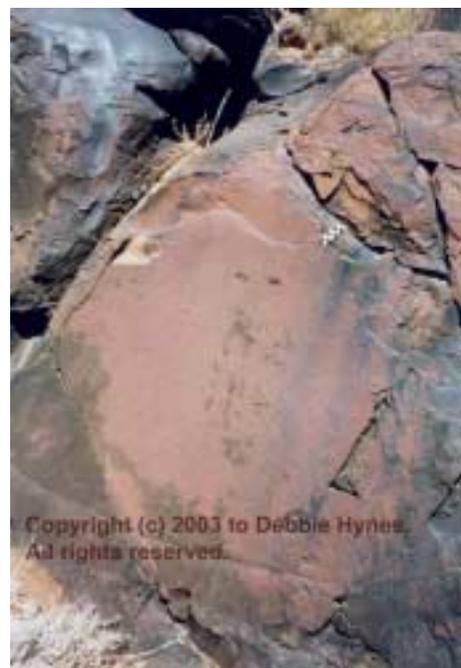
Before we had to beat our retreat however, we reached Red Gorge in the northern Flinders Ranges where we came upon large panels of rock art. Some of these are reportedly very ancient. Rock engravings of the style found in Red Gorge occur throughout the Olary-Panamaritee-Karolita -Flinders Ranges region have been dated, by means of radiocarbon and cation-ratio techniques, at 30,000 to 40,000 years before present.¹ There were numerous engravings, numbering perhaps several thousand, and they featured a wide variety of wildlife as well as representations of people. Some of the animals depicted appear to be of animals extant in the Holocene, while other designs appeared to represent now extinct megafauna from the Pleistocene.

The *I'iga Yaaga* Depicted in Rock Art?

There are many images of humanoid beings who appear to possess an enlarged torus about the eyes but no visible cranium. They are depicted with diminutive bodies, often with intagliated markings which are usually taken to indicate fur or hair in the engravings of “normal” fauna. The carving shown here is an interesting example. The eyes are bored deep into the rock, producing the illusion that they follow the observer about. Faint lines of the torus can be seen above and to the sides of the eyes. There appears to be a tiny skull suspended or held by the creature at waist level by its left side. The overall effect is highly unsettling, even sinister. This particular engraving is very much worn down and shiny with desert varnish. It appears to be among the oldest of the works.

Images such as this are utterly unlike traditional aboriginal artistic themes and motifs. Who made them, and how long ago may be impossible to say. Could they represent the “others,” that is to say, could they be renderings of an encounter long ago with human-cousins not of our kind? Could this very gorge be one of the refugia, well watered and blessed with abundant game, where both our kind and their kind saw out the great dying at the close of the Pleistocene?

Some of the images depict human feet alongside giant human-like tracks with grotesquely clawed toes. Indeed engravings of human tracks come in a range of sizes from pygmies up to true giants. It is hard to know what to make of them. Engravings of tracks at least have some continuity with later artistic tradition indigenous to Australia. Taken as a whole, the site appears to depict a veritable menagerie of long extinct creatures, graven in stone. Some tracks appear to represent the giant ostrich-like flightless bird, *Genyornis*, while others may record the giant kangaroo, *Procoptodon* and the giant marsupial



Various images of the “big-eyed” human-like figures



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quadruped, *Diprotodon*. We had only a few hours at the site: it would require weeks to photograph and catalogue the works in their entirety.

Where might the *I'iga Yaaga* come from?

Towards the end of the Pleistocene epoch, most of the megafauna in Australia became extinct. The pattern of megafaunal extinction was repeated on other continents. The reasons for the great dying are vigorously debated by palaeontologists.⁶ One school of thought holds that humans themselves were responsible because they hunted the megafauna into extinction. A second school holds that climate change was the leading culprit. The fact that the disappearances of large animals the world over is associated with the end of the Ice Age is regarded as more than coincidental. However, the fact is that no one really knows why the megafauna died out at that time.

For two main reasons, my own opinion favours climate change as the causal agent. Firstly, many genera went extinct which were unlikely ever to have been hunted and yet others, which have been hunted almost down to modern times, not only survived but thrived.⁶

The second reason concerns humans themselves. In the last ten years it has become clear that populations of related species of *Homo* not only encountered one another but they shared the world together for a long time. For example, populations of *Homo sapiens* encountered *H. neandertalensis* in the middle east and appear to have coexisted for perhaps 50,000 years.⁷ *Homo erectus* appears to have held out in Java until perhaps 30,000 years ago.¹⁰ Since humans are thought to have arrived in Sahul at perhaps 60,000 ybp,² it means that *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens* coexisted in S.E. Asia for at least 30,000 years. If one counts *Homo heidelbergensis* as a species distinct from *H. sapiens*, *H. neandertalensis* and *H. erectus* then one concludes that, at the beginning of the terminal phase of the Pleistocene the world was inhabited by at least 4 different species of *Homo*. Yet at the start of the Holocene, when the killoff was more or less complete, only one remained: ourselves, *Homo sapiens*. This is an extinction rate of 75%. It begins to look as if whatever killed the megafauna took almost as drastic a toll of *Homo* species. That speaks not of over-hunting but of disaster suffered by all.

Although no direct evidence of *H. erectus* has yet been discovered in Australia, it remains very possible that both *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens* arrived in Australia/Sahul at about the same time. Readers are referred to the web article listed below for elucidation on this question. ⁴

The terminal phase of the Pleistocene in Sahul was characterised by extreme aridification and low temperatures. ^{6,6A} How did humans cope in those circumstances, particularly in the inland? One idea is that the few permanent water sources acted as refugia for small bands of people over many thousands of years. ² However, if *H. erectus* were present alongside *H. sapiens* in Sahul, it seems likely that both species may have been compelled to inhabit the same restricted areas where water was available. If thus confined, cheek by jowl as it were, is it possible that interbreeding might have taken place?

If so, is it just remotely conceivable that inbreeding among modern tribal groups could bring together remnant clusters of *H. erectus* genes to produce something like an *I'iga Yaaga*? In that case one might expect to find some sort of physical evidence such as fossils. In that context, there are the Kow Swamp and similar remains to ponder upon. ⁴

Whether such a long-term conservation of genetic clusters is possible is a question I am not qualified to answer. One serious difficulty with the idea, ⁵ is that such a gross effect can not involve a mere recessive/dominant interaction between one gene, or a few genes. The trait would make itself felt throughout an affected population causing a spectrum of phenotypic effects to be exhibited.

Another question arises: why should only a small group of people in the Australian Outback be so affected? If, in truth, they really are affected in this way. One might expect the entire human race to harbour relict clusters of *H. erectus* genes, dating from the time when our ancestors, *H. sapiens*, moved into the wider world from Africa and encountered the cousins who had gone there before? In that case might one expect this putative phenomenon of atavism to manifest itself elsewhere in similar situations around the globe? Is there a connection between these diminutive *I'iga Yaaga* and other alleged hominid figures, larger of stature? Could the former be an immature, adolescent form of the latter? Who knows? The entire narrative beggars belief.

Obviously, questions outnumber answers by a huge margin as things stand at the moment. The first task is to return to the Outback, better equipped next time, and see what can be discovered.

Addendum: Methusela & Modern Science

There is one aspect of the puzzle that is greatly intriguing, namely the matter of alleged enhanced longevity induced by the condition.

There is a well known correlation between body weight and lifespan. Basically, larger creatures tend to live longer than smaller creatures. It's a fact of physics that smaller creatures lose heat more rapidly and therefore must run their metabolism at a faster rate in order to compensate. The idea is that every creature is born with a kind of finite energy content, rather like a battery. The faster its rate of discharge, the shorter its life. There are correlation graphs and tables, which illustrate the effect. ⁹ An elephant may live about 90 years, a horse maybe 30 years, a dog say 15 years, a domestic cat, say 10 years and a mouse lives, in ideal conditions, a mere 2 years. Given our average body weight, humans might be expected, on the basis of such correlations to live for about 15 - 20 years. But, of course, we live much longer, say 70 - 80 years. Humans are an anomaly in the lifespan stakes. Why is this so?

There are evolutionary reasons for our relatively lengthy lives. Humans have an extended childhood and pass through an adolescent phase that is absent from the lives of other creatures. We have always relied on the accumulated knowledge of older generations to enhance the survival prospects of younger generations. Humans have more to learn in order to be even a minimally functioning member of their species than any other creature. Long life, it seems, is one way we have accommodated these demands.

But did our ancestors always have the potential for our longevity? Did our cousin species have the same potential? Could human longevity be, at least in part, a product of hybridisation between species

at an early date in our history? Did early humans find selective advantage in an extra span of years so gained, one that they employed to build up a reservoir of knowledge and experience in the form of an older generation in a way that is quintessentially human. And in a way that the “others,” perhaps, did not? ⁸

Thus, a question that may be relevant in the context of this narrative is: did early *H. sapiens* live significantly longer than their cousins? Could the activity of gene complexes that determine lifespan be altered in an atavistic birth? If the answers are affirmative, then discovery of such beings as these alleged *I'iga Yaaga* would not only cast light upon the history of the human race but, with study, might provide fundamental insights into the mechanisms which govern human lifespan and mortality.

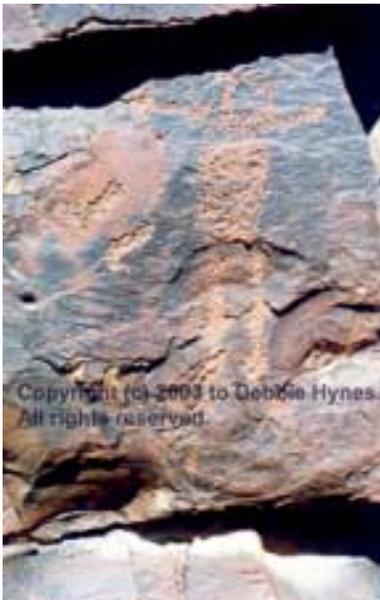
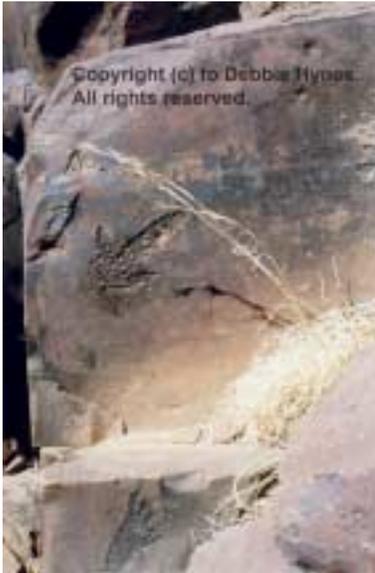
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Additional Rock Art Images



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BioForteana:

The Talking Dog

Harry Miles Johnson
The Johns Hopkins University

[From *Science*, May 10, 1912, 35(906): 749-51.]

Extensive comment has been made in the German and even in the American daily press on the reported conversational ability of "Don," a German setter seven years old, belonging to the royal gamewarden Ebers at Theerhutte in Gardelegen. Numerous observers reported that he had a vocabulary consisting of eight words, which he could speak if food were held before him and the following questions propounded: "Was heisst du?" "Don." "Was hast du?" "Hunger." "Was willst du?" "Haben haben." "Was ist das?" "Kuchen." "Was bittest du dir aus?" "Ruhe." Moreover, he was said to answer categorical questions by "Ja" and "Nein"; and in reply to another question, to speak the name, "Haberland." Among others whom popular report mentioned as witnesses to this extraordinary ability of the dog was Mr. Oskar Pfungst, of the Psychological Institute of the University of Berlin, whose important tests on the horse of Herr von Osten, "Der Kluge Hans," have lately been published in English.¹ Mr. Pfungst had in fact investigated the behavior of the dog in collaboration with Professor Vosseler and Dr. Erich Fischer, keeping detailed memoranda on the tests, and making a number of phonographic records. Partly to clear up misapprehension of his own position and partly for the enlightenment of the serious general public, he gave out a brief popular report of his work,² a summary of which appears below.

Having proposed three definitions of speech: first, properly, as the use of vocal sounds to convey to the listener an idea experienced by the speaker; secondly, more loosely, as the production of vocal sounds learned by imitation, but used without knowledge of their meaning to the hearer; and thirdly, as the production of vocal sounds not imitative of human speech, having no meaning to the speaker, but producing in the hearer illusions of definitely articulated, spoken words, uttered to convey meaning — Mr. Pfungst then asks to which class the speech of Don properly may be referred.

First, it is plain enough that the dog does not use words with any consciousness of their meaning to the hearer. His vocabulary is always given in order, beginning with "Don" and ending with "Ruhe." If the order of questioning is varied he is called "Kuchen" and he desires "Hunger," etc. (Here it may be noted that the author was unable to get even approximations to the last three words in the list accredited to the animal.)

Secondly, it is evident, says Mr. Pfungst, that he is not using words learned by imitation. The author assumes that any imitator of another speaker would vary the pitch, intensity or accent of his words as the imitatee's were varied. Don's voice — a high tenor, ranging from F on the bass clef to the octave above middle c, usually pitched in talking near d above middle c — is not varied when the pitch of the questioner's voice is altered. Furthermore he does not imitate changes in accent or intensity. He is as likely to say "Kuchén" as "Kúchen"; "Hungér" as "Húnger," etc. From the legitimacy of the author's adoption of this criterion, however, the reviewer is inclined to dissent. His own experience with a child of two and one half years, learning readily to speak a large number of words and phrases from imitation, and able to give both vowel and consonant values with perfect distinctness, for several months was that she would not imitate changes of intensity or pitch, although she usually showed apparent willingness to try. To apply this principle in the case of the dog would require the assumption of an attentive ability as well as of motor skill, far in excess of any of which that animal has given evidence.

¹ Pfungst, Oskar, "Clever Hans." Translated by Carl L. Rahn. New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1911.

² "Der sprechende Hund," von Oskar Pfungst (Berlin), Sechste Beilage zur Possischen Zeitung, 27 April, 1911

But Mr. Pfungst offers other disproof of the imitation hypothesis which to the reviewer seems adequate. This is found in the method of learning. The first word which the dog is reported to have uttered is "Haben." We are assured that being asked, "Willst du etwas haben," he thereupon pronounced distinctly the words, "Haben haben haben," and was rewarded with food for his pains. When he afterwards attempted to pronounce the words he would give many inarticulate gurgles, but the food was given only when the correct number of syllables were uttered at once. The owner's family state that ten repetitions, some a week apart, sufficed for this learning. The word, "Ruhe," was first uttered after a command, "Ruhe," by the owner's daughter. Hearing the dog's response, she demanded, "Was sagst du da," and obtained again the answer "Ruhe." He was then taught to give this word after his fifth question, "Was bittest du dir aus?" The name, "Haberland," which none of the investigators could obtain from him, was first answered without instruction to the question, "Wer hat den ersten Artikel über dich in die Zeitung gebracht?" These facts are hardly consistent with any provable experience in learning by imitation. Indeed, it may be remarked that to the reviewer, who has spent the greater part of two years in experimentation on the behavior of dogs under controlled conditions, the animals' vagueness of perception and extremely low degree of attention would make a very strong presumption against the possibility of their learning even the simplest acts by "observation and imitation."

Mr. Pfungst concludes that the speech of Don is therefore to be regarded properly as the production of vocal sounds which produce illusions in the hearer. He calls attention to the fact that not even the number of syllables in any given "word" of Don's is constant. The dog makes only one vowel sound, having a value lying between o and u, varying considerably, but usually nearer u. The experimenters could not hear from him certainly either a or e. His one guttural-aspirant is like the German ch, and does duty for k and h. There is also a nasal, of a value lying between n and ng. When it is not prolonged it passes for a d, as in "Don." He really never makes the sound of b, d, k, l or r. When he utters a word expressed by [(ch)unguo], not much effort is required from a suggestible hearer to perceive the sound as "Hunger." When in making phonograph records the questioner asked merely "Was?," the dog gave the customary answers, "Don," "Hunger?" "Haben haben," "Kuchen," etc., of which however only two out of sixteen answers were intelligible. Of 168 answers preserved on phonograph records, 71 per cent. were disyllabic and of the monosyllabic noises 68 per cent. were given when a considerable pause had elapsed between the last answer and this question. The "answers" were really incorrect fully as often as otherwise. Disinterested hearers could seldom distinguish his "Hunger" from his "Haben," nor his "Ruhe" from his "Kuchen," etc. It was as easy for others to perceive some of these same sounds as "Engelhopf" or "Hallelujah"; "Huhn" or "Honig." Here it seems to the author we have a case quite parallel with our common interpretation of the night-swallow's call as "Whip-poor-Will" when in fact the sounds are nearly "Pfif-ah-rih"; and with the common German interpretation of their Steinkanz's "Kuwitt" or "Kumiff" as "Komm mit," thus making him in popular superstition the messenger of death. But for a strong and uninhibited tendency thus to "apperceive" them, neither these calls nor the "words" of Don would be taken as other than meaningless noises.

On psychological grounds, Mr. Pfungst concludes, the explanation is comparatively simple; the uncritical do not make the effort to discriminate between what is actually given in perception and what is merely associated imagery, which otherwise gives to the perception a meaning wholly unwarranted; and they habitually ignore the important part which suggestion always plays in ordinary situations.

Accepting this explanation as satisfactory we may expect the majority of animal lovers to continue to read their own mental processes into the behavior of their pets. Nor need we be astonished if even scientists of a certain class continue at intervals to proclaim that they have completely demonstrated the presence in lower animals of "intelligent imitation" and of other extremely complicated mental processes — inferred from the results of brief and lamentably superficial tests, and published as proven facts without further reflection