

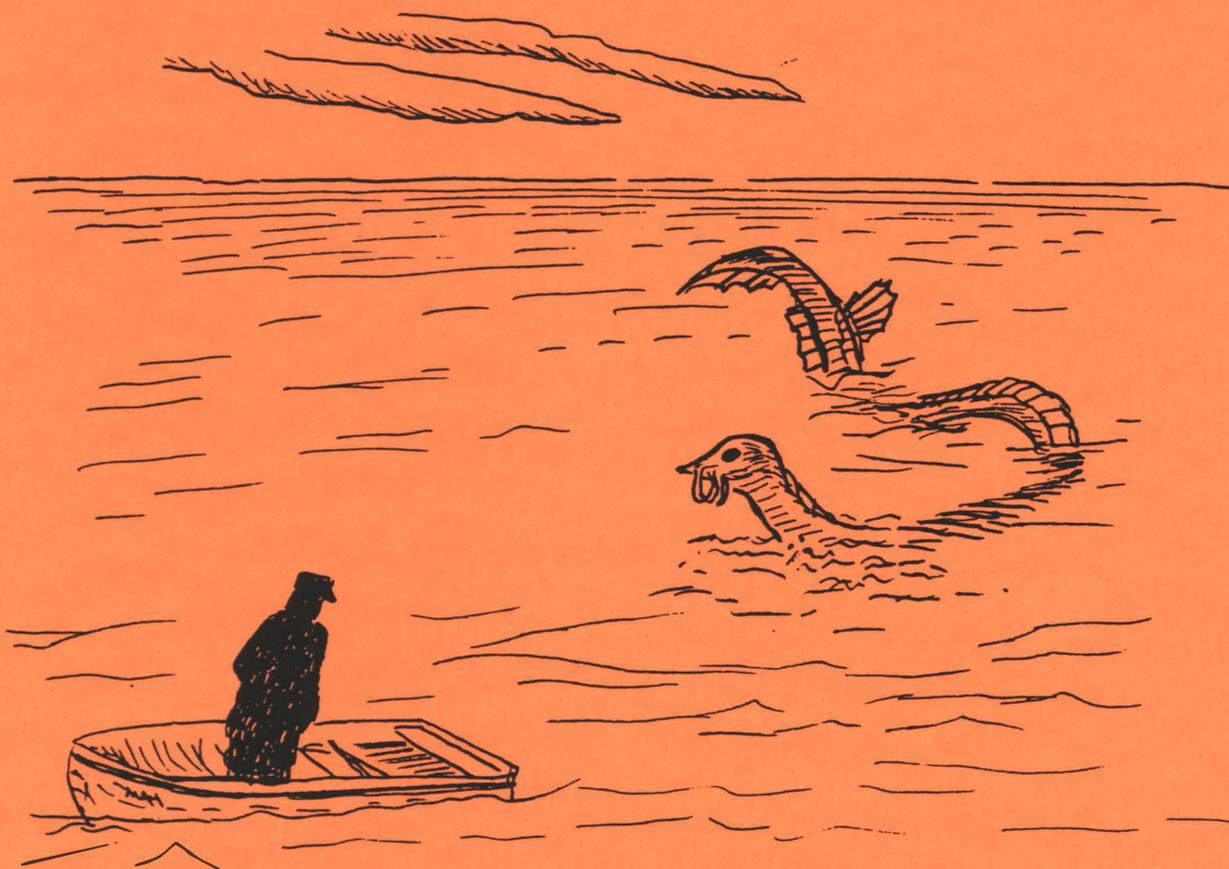
# WONDERS

Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries

Vol. 2 No. 2

June 1993

## Lake Michigan Monsters



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# WONDERS

Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries



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## EDITORIAL

### An Editorial Preamble

Editorial space is normally confined to filling out the lines below the masthead on this single page. This constraint requires the editor's personal and undocumented views to be brief. They can be digested or skipped entirely with little effort either way. In this issue I depart from this practice to write the multi-page editorial that follows. In it I discuss in summary form many of the subjects that either have been or in the future will be the content of this quarterly publication.

For the moment these are my personal views. Documented essays on many of these topics will be produced as time goes by. I have struggled to keep references and examples to a minimum in this particular discourse. Otherwise it would quickly grow to book length and that would delay its publication by years. I am firstly outlining the nature of the wonders you will find here and secondly laying out the greater context in which we should be looking at them.

One can devote an entire book to expounding upon a topic that has been neglected by science. And whatever the subject matter, the topic is likely to appear to the reader to be a singular anomaly, an isolated oversight upon the part of diligent scientists. The most difficult information to convey to a readership is the context in which that topic and others like it exist. The known world as it is popularly defined is a narrow spectrum of reality. Mysteries abound because collectively we put them beyond those narrow boundaries and run away from them.

At one time for all of us the world seemed a simple place with few real mysteries to ponder. When this view dissolved will be different for each of us. It might have occurred thirty years ago, three years ago, or three days ago. Some people are still waiting for that time to come in their lives. The sooner it happens the better. Exploring wonders is a good way to savor life and enjoy our brief flicker on this primitive and little-understood planet.

**EDITORIAL****Why The World is Full of Wonders**

There is no need to invent titillating mysteries. Our planet abounds with strange happenings, and we can learn much by pursuing explanations for them. During my lifetime I have talked with people who have reported experiences with hairy man-like mysteries, peculiar things in the sky, spook lights, Thunderbirds, UFO abduction, and other things difficult to characterize briefly.

People sometimes ask me where my interests began. To the best of my knowledge I have had none of the experiences mentioned above. In common with many people, if I ever came close, I was probably looking the wrong way at the time. But I have always been curious about such stories and began reading about them when I was much younger. At that time the world seemed a more orderly place. There were only a few things remaining to be explained. They all had famous names. People seemed to be earnestly seeking to explain those few things. Over decades of time I became acquainted with the complexity of those famous mysteries and with the existence of many more enigmas. Their number continues to grow with no end in sight. The world is full of wonders.

I would define wonders as the unexplained experiences of human existence. Wonders are puzzling and disturbing matters that create the expectation that there is more to existence than what we already regard as known and as legitimate pursuits for the sciences.

If they are measurable phenomena then they are natural phenomena. To call them anything else would be to wander off needlessly into a semantic swamp. We should not be troubled or hindered by personal attempts to categorize or label strange happenings. People will make individual judgments that satisfy themselves. The most important thing is to recognize the need to explain adequately the nature of repeated wonders, ones that persist in spite of neglect or efforts to discard them as unmeasurable fiction. Today's wonders will become tomorrow's common knowledge, as they have in the past.

I have found there are many reasons for the persistence of wonders. Below are two dozen of the many reasons why we find wonders with ease. The first dozen relate to the validity of unexplained natural phenomena. The second dozen relate to the filters that human beings experience when observing the natural world.

**1. THE WORLD OF OTHER INTELLIGENT LIFE**

If your thoughts of other intelligent life in the universe involve only occupants of outer space vehicles, please think again. Those occupants are certainly part of the picture, however, so I will start with them. One earthling visited by space aliens was advised by them that there were 22 different sources of unidentified flying objects and their controllers. That is, there were over 20 separate worlds, planets, "civilizations" -- what have you -- active around, on, and within this planet's biospheres. While I am not one to accept at face value all that is said by either the earthling in this case or the reported space aliens, I would recommend this particular view

as a good working hypothesis. We may be visited by a multitude of different beings, each with its own technology and motives. The universe is a very old place while our own species is, to say the least, a newcomer on the scene.

Our very own corner of the universe may harbor intelligent life quite unlike ourselves. Some people have had the notion of life forms that inhabit our atmosphere and are every bit as native to the planet as we are. Reports of them have been obscured by the variety of UFO reports chronicled for centuries. I would say that further evidence of this intelligent Earth life is the best of the Crop Circle evidence. This atmospheric life form, which has no name that I can give you, may be trying to communicate with us earthlings by its capability to make the beautiful patterns in the crops. There may even be variations of this "no-name" life, especially if they have evolved to exist variously in the earth, air, and water worlds.

More intelligent life on Earth comes up below under No. 11, the World of the Primates. I should mention also time travelers from our own future, a subject I can neither defend nor deny. Some people ask "Where are they, if time travel is possible?" Even in our science fiction time travelers have the guile not to declare themselves as such. And, perhaps time travel renders one invisible at one's destination. Personally I don't worry about such travelers. I don't have the time.

## 2. THE WORLD OF UNSEEN FORCES

There are natural and artificial forces that influence life on our planet. These forces are as yet barely studied and little understood, resulting in puzzlement in our lives. The behavior of living things and the timing of natural events may sometimes be accountable to these forces.

For convenience I group the unseen forces under the headings of **time, place, shape, color, artificial, and subtle**, the last being the subtle forces of nature.

The **subtle** forces include weather, light, radiation, magnetism, and so on. Consider, for example, the existence of the jet stream of wind that winds unseen in the atmosphere. Is it the source of noises from the sky repeatedly reported from some locations? Is it the cause of personal irritation to some people who report hearing a constant hum that others do not detect? Does the shifting of the stream affect your weather with regularity on a seasonal basis?

The **artificial** forces might easily be grouped with the subtle forces for subtlety is one of their qualities. We create with greater frequency broadcast waves that assault all of us while unseen. To radio, radar, television, and microwave broadcasts we are adding beepers and cellular phones. Interpersonal communications -- radio links between individuals -- will surely be the norm one day. Microwaves, x-rays, and power lines have come under attack as having effects upon nearby life. We are probably wrong if we assume that all of the rest of this unseen pollution is not having its effects on us as well.

The forces of **time** have to do with the changing positions of celestial bodies and with the means by which we record time. The

most familiar of these potential forces derive from the relative positions of the Earth, Sun, and Moon. The unexplained phenomena here have nothing to do with newspaper astrology, however. First of all, there are undeniable effects of the Moon upon Earth, the tides and the rise or fall of the ground beneath our feet each day. Few people may be aware of the latter but it happens to us all nevertheless. These facts are not denied. In concert with these there are other effects which are the unstudied wonders of time. Periodic lunar influences on human behavior have been denied, for example. I think they have been masked by the complexity of the changes in positional relationships of Earth and its neighbors. It seems to me, while still unaware of the nature of the influence, we are by human testimony subject to daily, yearly, and extra-annual cycles of the unseen forces of time.

I include among the unseen influences of place the subject of dowsing for water. In my view a human dowser is responding to something that is peculiar to the location. This is, let it be noted, far from a blanket endorsement of the geological views of dowsers over the views of geologists. The extent of "psychic abilities" of successful dowsers may be a largely separate but valid topic as well.

The influences of shape and color upon us have been subject of some study and merit further attention because we understand next to nothing of these pervasive topics.

### 3. THE WORLD OF GEOLOGY

We live on a geologically active planet. I am not referring merely to earthquakes and volcanism. Or even to other agents of change such as storms and tsunamis. Our Earth appears to be subject to frequent and periodic shifts of its very crust. Continents and oceans with all their cargo are shifted about upon the far greater mass of the inner tiers of the globe. Perhaps every 30,000 years this lurch of the crust changes the latitudes of plant and animal life, putting stress upon living things to move, adapt or die in the new regime. Doubters should take some time to study Charles Hapgood's book *Path of the Pole* before dismissing this view. If this hypothesis were not widely useful and not increasingly supported by our greater knowledge of prehistory -- which it certainly is in both cases -- I would have dismissed it along with the many other catastrophic views concocted in the past century.

The effects of periodic shifts are a rich diversity of life on this water planet and a broken and hard to read record in the geological remains. Volcanic upheavals, grinding glaciers, and fluctuating sea levels have both helped to provide and helped to wipe away the fossil records we find so fascinating.

The clues to shifting crusts are increasing and some decades hence geologists will find the courage to push forward this hypothesis and build it into a useful theory.

### 4. THE WORLD OF GEOGRAPHY

The typical citizen of the 1990's has been trained to look upon the modern landscape with a particular focus. What can this space

and its resources do for mankind. This is the viewpoint of many textbooks on geography. I would compare the result with someone who looks at a doughnut and sees only the hole, missing the substance and greater meaning of what lies before them.

We are usually looking for a place in that landscape to be comfortable. We have in mind a ski lodge or a rock by a river from which to fish. We should also contemplate the landscape as it will be without our presence. Our very presence inhibits the behavior of nature and all the things new to us but old to nature's scheme.

The vast spaces of water, desert, mountain, and forest were once seen as dreadful and mysterious. Some want to think we have sapped their mysteries by navigating rivers and flying over every kind of landscape. But the spaces remain vast and if one goes looking for mysteries they can still be found.

## 5. THE WORLD OF WATER

We live on a water planet. We cannot avoid functioning in the constantly active hydrosphere. Water condenses above us, falls, pools, percolates, flows, and gathers in great lakes and oceans. As I wrote in *Natural Mysteries*:

...springs, lakes, streams, rivers, and oceans. Here is a world so vast as to be beyond the comprehension of any one of us. It may be beyond the combined senses of us all, so great is its capacity to conceal from us its make-up, history, and inhabitants.

The places we call wetlands are of extraordinary importance because, while sharing the capacity to conceal their secrets, they are often encroached upon and penetrated by mankind.

## 6. THE WORLD OF NIGHT

We are on a half-shadow planet. Almost half the globe is in darkness at all times. Many things are specially adapted to the nocturnal world. We are not. If something wants to avoid us, it is highly effective to become a night animal.

Our early response to the darkness has been to try to turn night into day. Fires, torches, flashlights, and flares make us more comfortable. To get to know the world of night we must try to meet it on its own terms. We are developing the means to amplify our feeble eyesight. We will have ever better technology to explore the nocturnal. What must be done next is to realize that the dreadful bugbears of our folktales are real and still waiting for us to find the courage to face them in their world of night.

## 7. THE WORLD OF PLANTS

We have divided the world of living things into two kingdoms, plant and animal, for our convenience and not on any strict basis of observable nature. This basic but poorly appreciated point was made by none other than Dr. Herbert Zim in the introduction to *Plant Biology*, a Golden Press introduction to botany. There are living

things that hover in an unsortable balance between the obvious distinctions of plants and animals. You can call them plants or animals because they have characteristics of both. There is nothing controversial about the fact that no boundary exists between the two kingdoms.

The continuum of life through both kingdoms has importance when considering the experiments that suggest psychic connections between plants and those people who attend to them. When we begin to explain the psychic sphere of mysteries we will find the plant world is a natural part of it.

#### 8. THE WORLD OF THE PSYCHIC WEB

Living things on our planet appear to be linked for the most part by a psychic web of a nature we cannot yet fathom. Human beings are peculiar for no longer participating easily in the kinds of communication that psychic links allow. This communication remains a mystery to us despite efforts for countless years to find the physical basis for it. It appears likely to me that many animals other than ourselves are engaged in this communication. They probably perform at varying levels of ability. The fundamental abilities might be an awareness of the presence and intentions of (1) prey and (2) of such threats as human beings can represent.

Human beings have either lost or never perfected this communication. We know of it by spontaneous and uncommon incidents reported by people over centuries. I would say that our success among the primates is bound up with being out of this psychic loop. Consider how unliveable would be your day if all your fellow humans could follow your every thought. Human beings are, after all, complex creatures. Our minds ponder thoughts rapidly. Some of our daily responses and urges are not admirable and not to be shared with everyone. They can be cruel, petty, unkind, unjustified, lustful, or even too candid. They can be fleeting and rejected thoughts, but they would be hurtful all the same. Yes, they can be positive also. The plus of sharing thoughts would be the certain communication of admiration, praise, and love.

I would say that our success as *Homo sapiens* is due in great measure to working together while guarding our complex and contradictory thoughts from each other. The development of psychic powers may not be a higher level of evolution toward which we are growing. Instead it may be something that we have put behind us as a price to be paid for our achievements. That is, we have achieved more than our competition. To understand this notion requires some appreciation of the competition we have experienced as a species. Some of that competition is characterized under category No. 11 below.

The attribution of psychic senses to other animals, especially to such proposed relatives to humans as are labeled "Bigfoot," has bothered some people. They complain of trying to explain one mystery with another. Such a view supposes that the nature of the world must not stray far from what we already know.

The complainers have an inflated notion of what we already know. If we have not yet solved the mysteries of "Bigfoot" and the mysteries

of the psychic sphere then so be it. Both may be legitimate. They appear to be so to me.

Other animals may be relying on psychic abilities to elude our scrutiny and our intentions to kill them in our quest to collect and catalogue (as indicated under No. 10 below). Their abilities, which we would all like to understand better, are the natural way of things.

The world of psychic mysteries for humans is an enormous area of experiences, of history, and of attempts at organization. Fraud is surely a big part of its history. Some categories that help define the psychic sphere have been developed based upon human experiences, not having to do with the abilities of other animals. The bulk of human experiences seem to be uncontrollable manifestations. Demonstrations of controllable psychic abilities often turn out to be fraudulent. I do not wish to define all valid manifestations as necessarily spontaneous. Advertised manifestations are likely to be fraudulent.

Those categories that help define the subject are: ghosts and phantoms, thought transference, clairvoyance, psychometry, psychokinesis, and reincarnation.

#### 9. THE WORLD OF DISCARNATE WORKERS

Please understand that this category has nothing in particular to do with laborers, either employed or unemployed. "Discarnate workers" is my attempt to identify things that others might call spirits, poltergeists, or some other label. People encounter things that give the appearance (please note) of having no body (hence "discarnate") and the things do work by moving objects (hence "workers"). Sometimes they communicate with the appearance of speech, sometimes not.

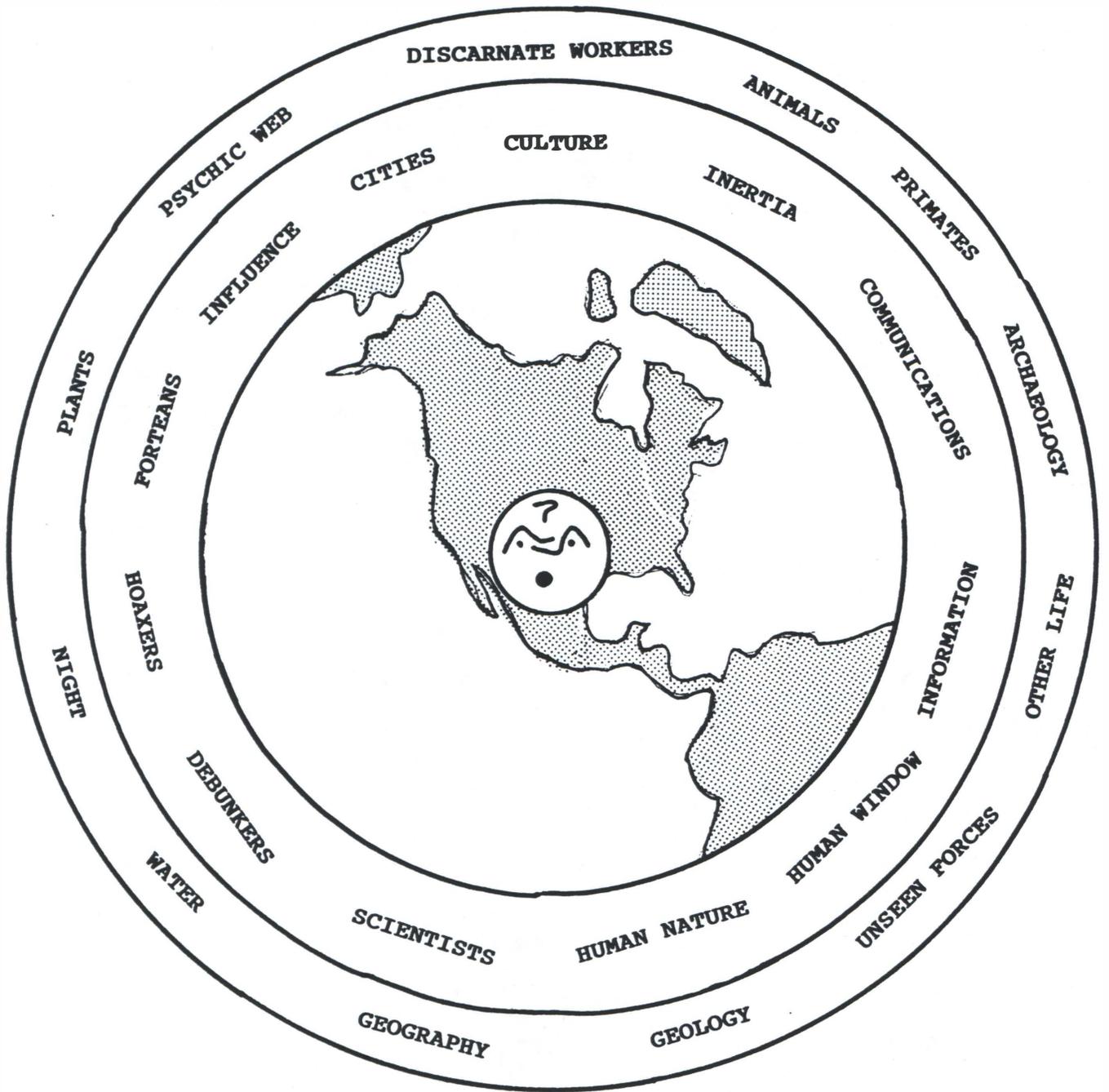
This is a most troublesome topic. When I suggest that they exist, people might be expecting me to go on and explain exactly what they are and how they exist. I find the biggest problem with them is that to explain them we have too many answers provided by different sources. None of those answers is satisfactory. I am trying to avoid a label that appears to provide one of those answers.

I don't know where these happenings belong; perhaps there are multiple sources. While looking for a good answer or good answers, I recommend that we not embrace pat labels or pat answers. Also we should be wary of answers served up by the discarnate workers themselves.

#### 10. THE WORLD OF ANIMALS

Our knowledge of the world of living animals has been woefully hampered by self-imposed limits. We know about the animals that are easily caught or for which there is a chance carcass washed up from the oceans. We have let wither our curiosity about what other things live on this planet. This is not for a lack of unknown animals, the "monsters" of land, sea, and air. My books and the pages of **Wonders** devote a lot of space to them because they are numerous.

The complacency and laziness of biologists are the main reasons why these topics are left to myself and other people now identified



as cryptozoologists. For a long time I was reluctant to be known by this label. I have no interest in putting on airs and I do not want to give people the impression that I am being paid to do what I do. No one is being paid to pursue cryptozoology! Over time, however, it seems to me the proper view has been presented to an ever greater audience. People have been advised that cryptozoologists consist of many amateurs and a few professionals who devote their own time to topics the backward-looking establishment will not finance.

Many of those cryptozoologists may want nothing to do with the many other categories of wonders being discussed here. That is their privilege. I would only advise them and any one else to be circumspect about what they say on topics that they have not studied. There is an unfortunate ploy to cultivate credibility that can be found among investigators of wonders. That ploy is to denigrate others without good foundation in an attempt to create a false contrast with their views. A major point of my presentation here is that there are numerous legitimate wonders to pursue.

"Catchability" has determined which living animals inhabit the modern reference books. Cryptozoology grows ever larger as we explore our planet with an open mind. The field defies any simple summary. Perhaps it is enough to say that the easy questions in zoology have been solved. The tough questions have been neglected. Seeking the expanding boundaries of cryptozoology is part of the fun. I recommend the exercise to you.

## 11. THE WORLD OF PRIMATES

We tell ourselves we are the smartest animal on the face of the planet -- make that, animal native to the planet. Are we ready to consider that there could be a primate that is smarter? More than one that is smarter? These are possibilities, but I don't raise them as probabilities. We are the most numerous of the higher primates. Does that necessarily mean we are the smartest? I am not going to answer that question. None of these questions is easy. Some day we will be actively seeking the answers, however.

Homo sapiens has achieved its prominence on this planet in competition with other primates. The records of them are fossils found on the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. There are, I maintain, other records of those primates as well. Those primates are still around. They are the causes that lie behind the stories loosely labeled as "wild men," "Bigfoot," and "giants" around the world. People still see them, and they have popular names that one day will be roughly equated to the scientific names given to the fossil remains. I have been looking at these reports for 35 years and have been writing about them for 20 years. But all that I have so far written has merely scratched the surface.

The evidence for highly developed primates other than Homo sapiens will take a long time to delineate. There are reasons to credit the survival into the modern day of at least nine types of primates. They are still unrecognized in their living forms. And some of those have substantial variations within their types.

What I have already written on the survival of Gigantopithecus, of Paranthropus, and of what we know best as the Yeti is sufficient to illustrate this category of wonders.

## 12. THE WORLD OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeologists review the past by way of its remains. It is of importance for them to examine their finds in the original place. When that act is not possible they tend to shun finds that appear controversial. They fail to pursue further finds that might substantiate earlier finds that are disputed. The Acambaro collection of Mexico is a prime example of these failures.

Archaeologists have demonstrated a fondness for easy answers when controversy arises. In the course of taking the easy way out the field has left a lot of topics in its wake that deserve better treatment. Sometimes the artifacts at issue have been allowed to disappear. When not, they can be revisited and we can still learn from them.

## 13. THE HUMAN WINDOW

As individual observers we are limited to our five senses. Those senses have their limits. We are not made to be all-seeing, all-knowing creatures. We have evolved to function in a narrow band of Earth's biosphere.

We have found the means to extend ourselves and function in deep oceans, on mountain peaks, and in the vacuum of space. But not everyone shares those capabilities and does those things. If you, as an individual, return from the ocean depths and report a sea monster don't expect an eager and receptive audience. If you see a Yeti in the mountains, you are still just one person. And so on.

Our personal senses of hearing and light are limited in the ranges we detect. And we don't have eyes in the backs of our heads. I can recall being at the scene of three traffic accidents. But at two of them I was looking the wrong way at the time. In those two cases all that I can personally report is the sounds I heard.

Human beings function best as a group. To tackle wonders we need to avail ourselves of the experiences of others and whatever records human beings have created. We should also accept that the world has room beyond the range of our immediate senses for wonders to exist.

## 14. HUMAN NATURE

As human beings we are naturally suspicious. We have reason to be. Fakes sell better than the real thing. Fakes can be produced on demand and be tailor-made for the customers. Wonders are the real thing. They don't appear on demand. They may not be just what the customer is already looking for.

We are comfort seeking creatures. We welcome the familiar. The prospect of intruding space aliens, for example, is not a pleasant topic to us on other than a science fiction basis. Better to move on to some other subject in conversation.

As you may have noticed, life is a beauty contest. It is hard to make many wonders appear beautiful when looked at in all their parts.

Coping with our daily problems takes up most of our lives. A job, a family, and personal needs such as trying to relax from all the rest of it. We can tell ourselves that wonders are someone else's concern. Scientists, for example, who are the next filter to our awareness of wonders.

## 15. SCIENTISTS

Professional scientists are regarded by the general public to be smarter people. Upon this basis the public has invested their faith in scientists' abilities to determine the validity of mysterious phenomena. The unvarnished truth is that scientists are ordinary people. They are ordinary people who have found a particular interest in life. They have pursued that special interest to the point of devoting years of preparation and experience toward earning a living from that interest. Having a special interest does not make them smarter than plumbers, day-care supervisors, clerks, or merchants. They have a narrow focus in their lives and have acquired arcane information. They have been trained to behave in ways that please their colleagues. These traits will earn them a living but will not give them wisdom that necessarily exceeds non-scientists.

Scientists function in a world where prestige is of great importance. They are seeking acclaim not controversy. A quotation attributed to Harry Truman is: "An expert is a person who is afraid to learn something new, because then he wouldn't be an expert any longer."

I enjoy reading an in-depth discussion of a controversial wonder by a scientist who has spent some real effort investigating it. I don't get the chance to do that very often.

## 16. DEBUNKERS

Debunkers are a separate category from scientists. The two groups seldom overlap. Scientists don't debunk things in their specialties, they dismiss them. Debunkers do attack subjects. Who are these debunkers? They are high school science teachers, journalists, magicians, ordinary citizens, and some scientists. They see themselves as the guardians of scientific rigor. They resent the attention given to any wonders when they see them as obviously untrue.

Some debunkers are science writers, journalists who are always looking for something to write about. These people hardly function independently. They have a symbiotic relationship with professional scientists. Scientific establishments and medical organizations give awards to these writers which boosts their resumes. When the award-givers get into trouble, as they sometimes do, they can count on their friends the science writers to tell their stories.

Debunkers can be scientists who have strayed from their own specialties into all manner of other fields. They feel their training gives them the standing to pronounce on topics where non-scientists are being misled.

When scientists attempt some debunking in their specialties the results are often deficient. This comes about because the particular professionals who turn to this activity appear to be the least skilled and accomplished in their fields. They look like people who think they are taking on soft targets and they tend to treat the subjects that way. Oversimplifications and weak arguments are common. They are seldom overseen and criticized by their colleagues in these particular endeavors.

Some debunking is accurate and necessary. Sadly the justified efforts are often the equivalent of telling us the Moon is not made of green cheese. What is missing from the debunking camps is an admission that many wonders are genuine mysteries. The negative side of debunkers is that they give people generally the impression that someone is seriously examining the wonders in our world. The debunkers also make extravagant claims to have solved mysteries and to have exposed fraud. These people are no more regulated or accountable to anyone than the trashpapers sold at your supermarket.

#### 17. HOAXERS

Hoaxes come from all directions. They are perpetrated by ordinary pranksters, journalists, debunkers looking to show someone up, and even by scientists upon other scientists. They are often based upon some example that may well be genuine evidence of a wonder.

I have a shelf full of books dealing with the subject of hoaxes. I call them "The Accused." Not everything branded a hoax is one. Looking for hoaxes is always prudent. When the accusation is made, please look carefully at the evidence and logic in the charge. The charge needs to be proven as much as extraordinary claims require a demonstration of proof.

#### 18. FORTEANS

Fortean are the people who spend their own time looking at wonders. Charles Hoy Fort (1874-1932) was a collector of strange happenings. His data were not isolated stories but repetitive occurrences. He wrote four books in which he assembled his data. The words "fortean" and "forteana" have been derived from his name. The latter is a word equivalent to "wonders" as used here.

Someone is surely going to want me to point out that forteans are ordinary people as well. They are. What forteans often bring to the study of wonders is years of patient effort to solve difficult problems. They apply their experience from life as it really is -- not based upon textbook babble. They are willing to go look-see, to talk with people who have something unusual to say. They can take advantage of all accumulated knowledge -- not just one specialty -- and apply it without the hidebound views of scientists. (The biggest problem scientists have is their failure to do anything at all about wonders.)

Fortean are the best friends the scientists have. Let me qualify that. They are the best friends the next generation of scientists have. The future of science will come from the work of unpaid amateurs whose only resources are what they can personally muster.

They have few resources and do their work in their "spare time." Some ludicrous accusations have been made about how fortune tellers sustain themselves (e.g. via the C.I.A. and other sources of a conspiracy ilk). They invariably have modest employment which has little or nothing to do with the subjects they pursue. Their labors are to point to the existence of wonders in spite of all the factors described above in Nos. 13-17 and those that follow in Nos. 19-24.

## 19. INFLUENCE

Decision-making in today's world can be a dismal error in short cuts says Robert Cialdini in **Influence: How and Why People Agree to Things** (1984). He points out that the "pace of modern life" compels people to forego a "time-consuming, sophisticated, fully informed brand of decision-making." Instead they pay attention to only one piece of information and make a decision about a larger situation based solely upon that one piece.

What is important in today's world? If it's important it will be on the evening television news and in the paper tomorrow, right? Is this wonder for real? If it were genuine, everyone would be talking about it, wouldn't they? These are the kinds of decisions that cut people off in the modern day from getting to know the world and its wonders.

## 20. CITIES

Many of us enjoy the benefits of cities. In them we can marshal our resources and accomplish much of what occupies human beings. But they insulate us from the vast majority of what the planet is and what the planet sustains. They are threatening to become the limits of our reality.

The environment of cities and suburbs push a natural world further from us and enclose us in bright lights, haze, heat islands, and radar.

## 21. CULTURE

We are exposed massively on a daily basis to the beat of our culture, wherever we live on the planet. The needs of our work life and personal life are fed by our culture. Entertainment options are paraded before us.

It is easy for wonders to get lost in the daily pace of modern cultures. When wonders are somehow manifested, cultures around the world sometimes have ready-made labels and pigeon-holes for those wonders. Expediency often triumphs over logic in such applications.

## 22. COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

People have noticed for the longest time that bad news tends to occupy the media of print and broadcasting. The reason has long been apparent to me. Media people are lazy. They don't have to go looking for bad news. It comes to them by way of police and other emergency authorities. Bad news drives out both good news and wonders. This condition is not going to change.

### 23. INERTIA

The power of inertia is greater than anything you can name. No great change in the way things happen is going to overtake us.

Scientific organizations meet and make preposterous declarations about their successes. They are content. Politicians respond when people demand action. The demands are presently for other things. The best hope for action lies with many individuals acting on their own, individuals seeking truth. Truth is not something someone else tells you. Truth is something you find out for yourself.

### 24. INFORMATION

In my youth I worked in one of the many branches of military intelligence gathering. One of the lessons of that work was what happens to information as it works its way up channels from the point of origin. Facts that were crystal clear at the lowest level and were properly labeled became unrecognizable and lost the further they went. Try to be at that lowest level of the information gathering in whatever you do. Or at least stay in close touch with the people who are. Check original sources whenever you can. Read and make use of the notes and sources that support what you read.

This concludes the 24 reasons why the world is full of wonders. I could go on with more topics. Some people find a category of "Chaos" useful, for example. It is a valid admission that there may be things going on around us that in our ignorance we cannot pigeon-hole.

For the sake of brevity I have put aside much that I might have added to the topics above. Those words will be used when I return to some of these topics in the future.

After such a listing of wonders as I have made some might expect an appeal of the type that starts "If only one of these things is real..." I will not do that. I don't want to create low expectations. I do want to create high expectations. Explore these things and you will learn as have the fortune tellers, the cryptozoologists, and others that these wonders all have merit.

The pursuit of wonders may not always lead to new discoveries. Wonders are defined here as "creating the expectation that there is more to existence." That expectation might not always be met. A wonder might prove upon investigation to be solved another way. If today's scientists could point to such solutions for all these wonders, they would be worthy of the blind faith now accorded them. They cannot and they are not.

Probing these mysteries is a life-long experience. They can enrich your life. They can be a window onto the universe which the human mind cannot encompass. The easy questions have long been solved. The tough questions are shunned and await the diligence of younger and quicker minds in our future.

We have a stubborn affection for the status quo. The status quo is maintained by an accumulation of ignorance, complacency, and fear shared in small doses on a large scale. But there is a future for us that is different from the present. We must find the courage one day to open our minds and accommodate ourselves to that future.

## LAKE MICHIGAN MONSTERS

by Mark A. Hall

In recorded history the earliest reference to "sea serpents" in the Great Lakes of North America is probably one made by Pierre Esprit Radisson. The French explorer was only using a 17th century term for poisonous water snakes, however.[1]

Early references to "sea serpents" as "sea monsters" of great size also date from the 17th century. John Josselyn wrote of them in 1674 in his **An Account of Two Voyages to New-England**: "They told me...of a Sea-Serpent or Snake, that lay quoiled up like a Cable upon a Rock at Cape-Ann."

In 1818 they were still being seen as noted by W.D. Williamson in **The History of the State of Maine** (1832): "The present [1818] is the third year, a monster of the deep called a **Sea-Serpent**, has been oftentimes seen along our eastern coasts." [2]

When people spied great serpents in the Great Lakes in the 19th century they used the label they knew best for the kind of creature they were seeing. So it is that "sea serpents" were transposed into the freshwater lakes of North America. Today we resort to the use of the word "monster" for these water animals in much the same way. Even though they do not inspire the horror that the word implies.

The use of "sea serpents" for lake beasts went out of fashion in the 20th century, but people still see such wonders.

Lake Erie has known reports through the past two centuries. They have been seen as recently as June of 1985. The Toronto newspapers in the 1960's and 70's reported sightings in Lake Ontario. At the same time Canadians were reporting something strange in Lake Simcoe. An Ojibwe tradition of a monster in that lake was recorded in 1918.

Lake St. Clair, between Lakes Erie and Huron, was spotlighted in 1948. Something was sighted from the deck of a cruise ship, the **City of Detroit III**. The ship's social hostess is reported to have fainted at the sight of something "60 feet long, green and purple colored, scaly, and with a huge horned head." It was said to 500 feet from the ship.[3]

Lake Huron also has its monsters according to resort visitors at Wasaga Beach, Ontario, in June of 1938.

Lake Michigan has had an illustrious history of monster reports. I will cite here the best known of them and appeal for more research into this topic.

In 1867 a series of sightings at the southern end of Lake Michigan indicated that one creature was making its way through that region. We are fortunate that it was well reported in the **Chicago Tribune** at the time. I am re-printing here those items in full as I have transcribed them with much effort from the small type used by the paper in that era.

I have added my own illustrations (Fig. 1 on p.38 and the cover illustration on p.21) basing them upon the text of these newspaper stories. The original stories are without illustrations.

---

From the Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, 6 August 1867, p. 4 column 5

### A LAKE SERPENT

#### The Monster of the Ocean at Our Doors

Who has not heard of the Great Sea Serpent? that mighty inhabitant of the vasty deep, whose reappearance from time to time has excited the wonder but never satisfied the curiosity of the world. We all know him intimately. His dimensions, his shape, his color, his habits and peculiarities are familiar to all readers of newspapers. He always came to the surface when a dearth of news occurred. But of late years he has disappeared from the pen of both sailors and editors. His march was no longer on the mountain wave, nor his home upon the deep. Very unexpectedly the mysterious Leviathan turns up again and in a place few would have dreamed of looking for him -- namely, in the bosom of Lake Michigan. He has grown tired, it seems, of salt water, and sought refuge in the great inland seas of fresh water.

The monster has actually been seen in our lake by the crews of several vessels. An average description would give his length as between forty and fifty feet, his shape serpentine, the size of his neck about that of a human being, the size of the body about that of an ordinary barrel. He is quite retiring in his habits, ducking swiftly under the water as soon as a vessel approaches him, and steering away to some retired spot.

He was described yesterday by the crews of the tug "Crawford" and the propeller "Sky Lark," off Evanston, lashing the water with his tail, very like a whale, into a perfect tempest. The vessel in question did not think it advisable to approach too near the creature, not being provided with the means to resist an attack. Probably there will be a fleet out in search of him in the course of a few days. He would form a valuable acquisition to the curiosities in the Museum.

---

From the Chicago Tribune, Wednesday, 7 August 1867, p. 4 column 2

### THE LAKE MONSTER

Description of the Animal by a Fisherman -- Communication from a Vessel Captain -- The Monster Seen at Michigan City.

That Lake Michigan is inhabited by a vast monster, part fish and part serpent, no longer admits of doubt. We have already published the fact that the crew of the tug George W. Wood and the propeller Sky Lark had seen him off Evanston, hurling the waves into a tempest. It is to be regretted that those vessels were not able to approach nearer to him, as from the united testimony of so many persons we might have been able to obtain an accurate idea of the nondescript. As it is, the evidence of the crews sufficiently establishes the fact that

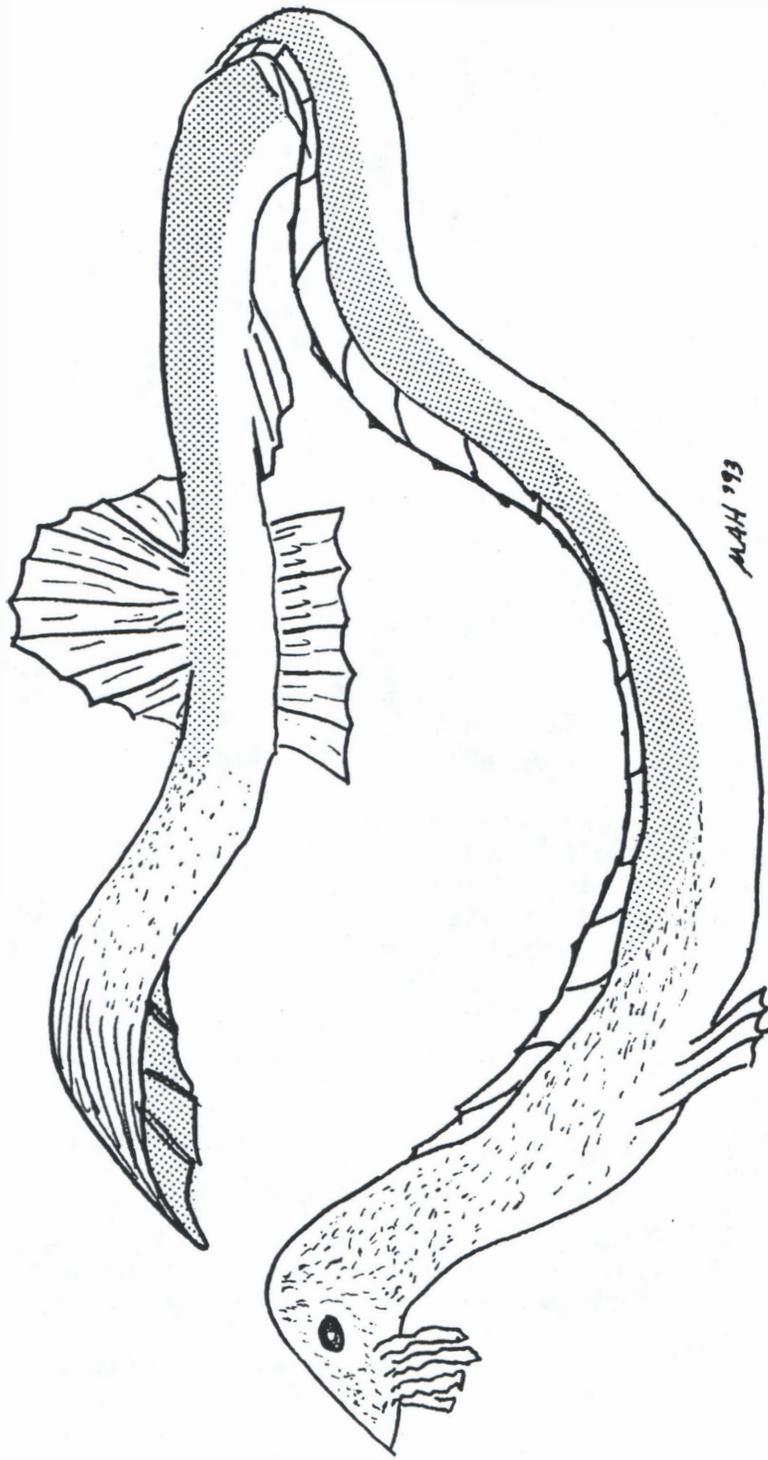


Fig. 1. This drawing shows the traits described by Joseph Muhlke after viewing a lake monster perhaps fifty feet long in 1867.

the animal is between forty and fifty feet in length, his shape serpentine, the size of his neck about that of a human being, and the size of the body about that of an ordinary barrel. This is all that could be obtained of the appearance of the monster from the Wood and Sky Lark, from the fact that he was seen on the surface of the water but a very brief time, and at a great distance from both vessels, and evidently alarmed by their smoke and noise, disappeared beneath the water and did not appear again.

The monster was not again seen until yesterday morning, when he suddenly made his appearance just below Hyde Park, about a mile and a half from shore, where the bed of the lake suddenly dips to a great depth. The facts we are about to state we have derived from a fisherman living in that vicinity named Joseph Muhlke. Mr. Muhlke is an intelligent German, who gains his living by fishing, and is well known to residents of the southern part of the city, where his cart and fishbox have been constant callers every week for the past three or four years. We have no reason to doubt his statement as he is entirely honest, and has no means of knowing that others had seen the fish or described him. While their general statement is confirmed by him, he adds many interesting details which are new.

Mr. Muhlke, as is his custom, took boat and lines at daybreak yesterday morning, nearly to the edge of the flats, where the fish are abundant, threw out his anchor and set his lines. It was a bright, clear morning, a gentle south breeze just rippling the surface of the lake, but not sufficiently strong to impart any motion to the boat. For some reason his usual good fortune did not attend him. He fished on for about half an hour, and still no better. It was now growing light very fast, and he determined to go in nearer shore and fish awhile for perch, and return to his grounds after the sun was up. He therefore drew in his lines, and was about to weigh anchor, when he became aware of a singular motion of his boat. The ripple of the lake was not sufficient to cause it. There could not be a swell on the lake as the weather has been very still during the past two or three days. Again the wind was from the south. And the boat was headed to the north, so that if the disturbance had been the result of natural causes his boat would naturally have had a corresponding motion, while in reality the motion was lateral, or from east to west, and differed from that caused by a swell, not being long and gradual, but abrupt and broken. He turned his eyes to the eastward, but could see nothing, and still the motion of the boat increased. Alarmed by this unusual phenomenon, he again commenced pulling his anchor, but was this time interrupted by a sound to the eastward -- a peculiar noise, half puffing like a heavy breath and half an actual vocal sound, harsh and grating -- as the fisherman described it, like the noise a catfish makes when first caught, only a great deal louder and more frightful. He immediately let go the rope and turned his eyes in the direction of the sound, and for the first time became aware of a dark object in the water, oval in shape, resembling very much a boat keel upward, and only about eighty rods distant.

At first, the object seemed stationary, but as he watched it, it gradually increased in bulk, still preserving an oval, or rather the segment of a circle in form. Suddenly the motion ceased, the object apparently rising out of the water, at its highest point, about three

or four feet. In a very short time, another dark object commenced rising about twenty feet nearer to him, as he judged, which he could clearly enough see was the head of some animal, as the eyes were plainly visible. Almost at the same time, the tail became apparent, equi-distant from the first part of the animal he had seen. As he judged, about two thirds of the monster was out of the water. Thus far the animal had made no forward motion, and manifested no disposition to do so, the only sign of activity displayed being a gentle motion of the head, north and south, an occasional shifting or stretching of a long neck out of the lake, and a few splashes of the tail upon the water, but not by any means with the fury described by the crews of the Wood and Sky Lark. The fisherman, rightly judging that an animal so huge would not approach the flats, determined to watch him until at least he could get a good idea of his general appearance.

As we have said, his estimate of the length, which, he informs me, was five times the length of his boat, very nearly tallies with the previous accounts, while his estimate of the circumference is equally confirmatory. The general color of the animal was bluish black, darkest in the centre, graduating nearly to a blue towards the head and tail. The under side of the animal was only visible as he lifted his head and tail occasionally, and this appeared to be of grayish white, resembling the color of the dog fish somewhat. The head was a little larger than the human average head, growing smaller toward the mouth, and sloping gradually towards the neck, somewhat like a seal's. Towards the snout, which was triangular in shape, the head was very much depressed, and on the extreme end of the snout, Mr. Muhlke thinks there were barbels, but of this he is not sure. No teeth were visible. The eyes were large, larger than the human eye, but of their color or shape Mr. M. could form no idea whatever. Only a portion of the neck was visible. This appeared to be rough, and along its upper surface and extending nearly to its tail was a series of what looked like the bony plates of a sturgeon. This ridge extended over the first portion of the animal which Mr. M. saw, but apart from this there was no appendage visible on the forward part of the animal. Mr. M., however, is confident that there were either fins or legs, towards the head and under the water, as there was a constant wash of the water on either side of him, near that point, as if he was sustaining his huge bulk by the motion of such appendages. A few feet forward of the tail there was a well-developed fin of a greenish hue corresponding with the dorsal fin of the sturgeon, but many times larger, and evidently very powerful. The entire fin had a lateral motion, and the various spines of which it was composed had an individual longitudinal motion so that sometimes the fin almost closed up like a fan. Immediately beneath this was an anal fin, possessing the same characteristics, but different in shape, being very long, and the spines of equal length. Immediately in front of this fin were two well-developed legs. Mr. M. thinks they ended in a webbed foot. In any event, they were jointless, but were so flexible the animal could draw them up to the belly when they were not in use. By analogy, therefore, we should infer that the animal has similar legs at his other extremity, which favors the supposition that he walks at times on the bed of the lake, in search

of his prey, and at once banishes the supposition that he might be of the sturgeon family. The tail itself was of great size and strength, very unsymmetrical in shape, with something resembling long hair covering its entire upper surface, the under surface being diversified with sharp ridges, radiating to the outer edge.

To observe these facts was but the work of a few minutes. Mr. M., fearing to remain too long in the neighborhood of the monster cautiously pulled in his anchor, shipped his oars and headed for shore. He had hardly turned round and struck the water with his oars before he heard the same peculiar sound, and saw that the animal was in motion. His progress through the water was precisely like that of a snake, undulating, the head rising and falling at intervals, the body now in and now out of the water, and the tail striking terrific blows, throwing the water to a great distance and churning it into foam. The effect was like that of a strong wind, and the heavy wash which rolled in shoreward, decidedly accelerated the motion of Mr. M.'s boat, much to his edification. Suddenly the animal repeated the peculiar noise he had made before and sank out of sight.

Mr. M. went on shore and came up on the early Hyde Park train, and was decidedly the centre of attention on the train, as he had to narrate the facts several times over to different parties.

From the train he came to the TRIBUNE office and narrated the facts substantially as we have told them. Making allowances for the natural tendency under the circumstances to exaggerate, still his story is confirmatory of what has been already told, that the lake is inhabited by a monster of uncouth shape but harmless habits, provided with legs and fins. Our own opinion is that it is indigenous to the lake and belongs to same family as the Newt, which is well known and bears a strong resemblance to this leviathan, although many hundred times smaller. We had almost forgotten to say that Mr. Muhlke thinks no one else saw the animal at the time, as no other boats were out, and only one vessel in sight, and that, at a considerable distance, heading for our harbor.

We have thus presented the facts as far as they are known and are glad to know that the Academy of Sciences have taken up the subject and will investigate it thoroughly. One or two of the members had an interview with Mr. Muhlke at the office of the TRIBUNE, but succeeded in eliciting nothing more than we have told. Dr. Johnson, we understand, is confident that the animal is only an immense sturgeon, and thinks the legs exist only in the imagination of Mr. M. On the other hand Colonel Danby, who goes into all subjects *con amora*, is equally confident that it's one of the whale species, who must have come through the Welland Canal when he was much smaller than he is now. The subject, however, will be fully canvassed at the next meeting of the Academy, when we shall probably arrive at some clear idea of the character of the animal. In the meantime, at the request of members of the Academy, we urge upon the officers of the vessels who have already seen him, and those who shall encounter him, to send everything they may learn to the Academy.

LATER -- we have just received the following note from the Captain of the schooner Alert, which arrived to-day, from Michigan, loaded with lumber consigned to John T. Noble, on the North Branch. The Alert is evidently the vessel spoken of by Mr. Muhlke:

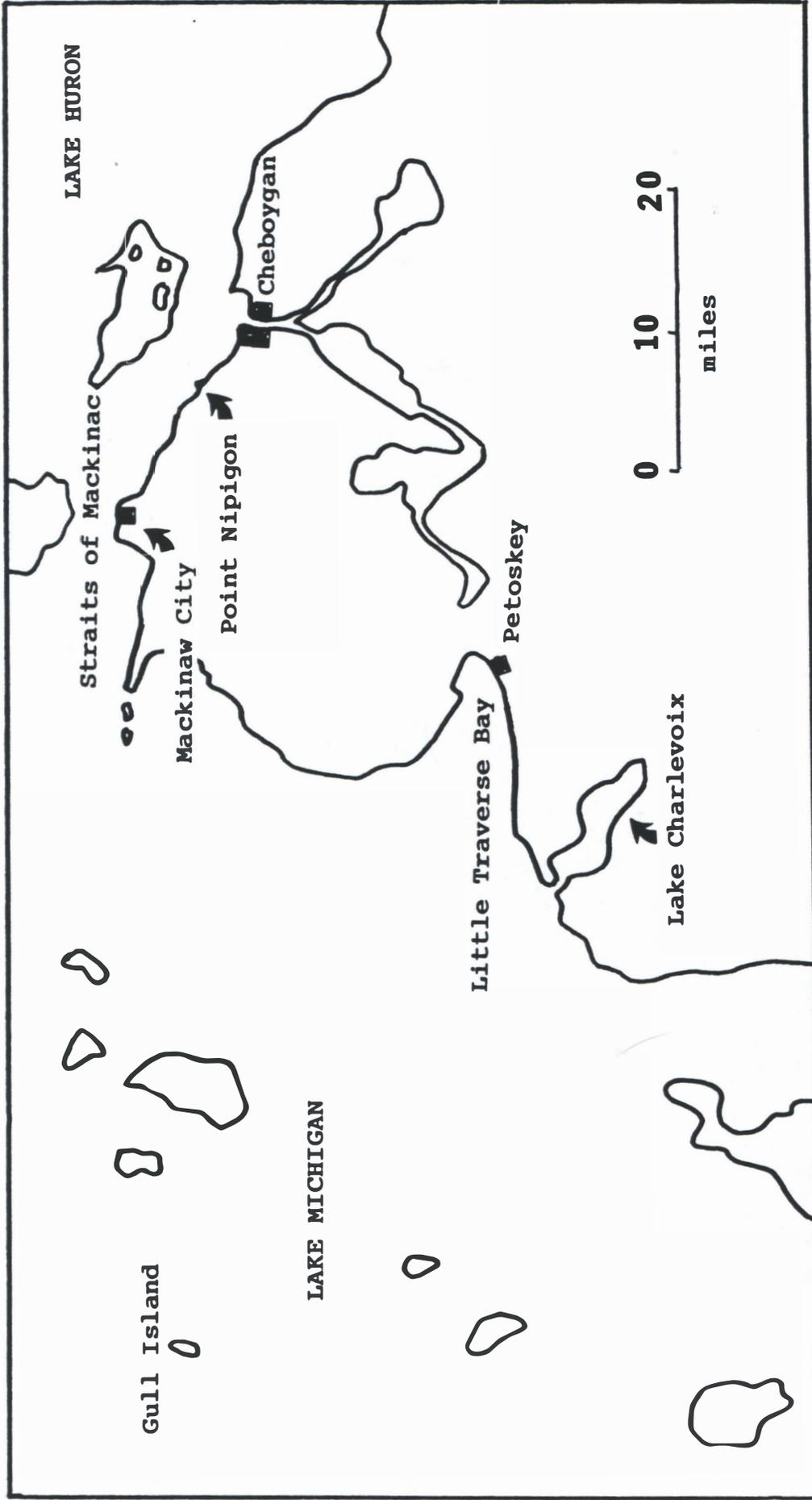


Fig. 2. Reports of lake monsters at the northern end of Lake Michigan were made in years from 1895 to 1976.

SCHOONER ALERT, NOBLE'S DOCK  
Chicago, August 6, 1867

To the Editor of the Chicago Tribune:

This morning about 4:30, I was called on deck by my first mate, Alexander Barret, and my attention directed to a singular looking object, apparently swimming, about four miles to windward, bearing almost in the range of Hyde Park House. I examined it with a glass for a minute or two, but it sunk before I could determine anything further than it was evidently a very large fish, larger than I have ever seen on any of my trips before. I have often seen sturgeon in the lake, but never of a size like this. The morning was very still at the time, wind very light from the southeast, the Alert making for Chicago. The Alert sails for Grand Mivet in the course of two or three days. Should I see anything more of the fish on the east shore of the lake, I will inform you.

Yours truly,

Henry Durant  
Captain, schooner Alert

The following dispatch, received this evening confirms still further the fact that such an animal is in the lake:

(Special Dispatch to the Chicago Tribune.)

MICHIGAN CITY, Ind. August 6, 1867

Considerable excitement has been created here this afternoon by the sudden appearance of a monstrous animal in the lake, about a mile and a half from shore. He was on the surface of the water only for a minute or two; appeared to be, as far as we could judge, about forty feet in length, of a dark color, and resembled a snake, both in appearance and motion. He was at such a distance from shore, and in sight for so short a time, that we could form little idea of his real character.

The brig Echo is unloading railroad iron at the dock to-day.

Charles Sanger  
Justice of the Peace.

The communication from Captain Durant, and the dispatch from Justice Sanger, a well-known resident of Michigan City, as well as the narrative of Mr. Muhlke, establish the fact that the animal which the crews of the tug Wood and the propeller Sky Lark saw off Evanston on Monday, has made his way to the extreme south end of the lake. We shall probably hear of him next on the east shore of Michilimichigan.

---

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The identity of the creature in 1867 is certainly nothing recognized then or now as a living animal. It is no whale or eel even if one draws upon the marine animals. It is no sturgeon. We must look at large animals known from fossils, an exercise that assumes fossils for its relatives have been classified. We should keep in mind that whatever has been seen in the lakes has had millions of years to evolve from the state of the fossil forms we can consider.

Fossil snakes are not well represented in the records. Primitive whales have been proposed to account for some freshwater lake monsters. The *Tribune* writer proposed a giant newt. This would raise the possible survival of something like *Eogyrinus* or *Greererpeton*. [4]

Personally I would look to the Mosasaurs that were around at the end of the Cretaceous period 65 million years ago. They had the size and characteristics indicated. We may be hearing of an animal that has adapted to a freshwater environment and succeeded as a "big fish" in the relatively "small ponds" of freshwater lakes until recent times.

The best candidate might be a relative of *Clidastes*. This lizard grew to a length of at least ten feet. Here is how David Peters describes it:

It swam with rapid flicks of its tail, keeping its limbs tucked in except while maneuvering. Shaped like a streamlined torpedo, *Clidastes* had a pointed snout, large chest, and slick flanks that narrowed to merge with the base of its long, slender tail. A distinct fin emerged near the tip of its tail. [5]

Other candidates that undoubtedly had the size of the 1867 monster are *Plotosaurus* and *Platecarpus*. [6]

Before the end of the 19th century Lake Michigan was the scene of many more monster reports. They occurred at the northern end of the lake (see Fig.2).

The reports were summarized by Detroit *News* Staff Writer Gerald Nelson in 1974. [7] He felt the need to try to explain away those reports. I think we would all be well served if the original reports were recovered and reconsidered in the light of all we can recover on the history of these lake monsters.

According to Nelson, the reports began in 1895 when people in the dozens at Petoskey reported sighting a "sea serpent" in Little Traverse Bay. A photograph was produced at the time and was widely publicized. In 1931, wrote Nelson, a writer of Indian stories by the name of John C. Wright confessed that this photograph was a hoax. [8]

In years following 1895 more serpents were reported in Lake Charlevoix, elsewhere in Lake Michigan, and especially at Gull Island. A green serpent 30 feet long was described sunning itself along the shore of Gull Island. This serpent, Nelson concluded, was found to be "two logs covered with seaweed."

In 1976 giant snakes were reported in the Straits of Mackinac between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The story was covered in a somewhat abbreviated fashion in the *Detroit News* for 24 and 25 June 1976. I was fortunate to get the assistance of the *Cheboygan Daily Tribune* in the summer of 1976. They provided me with copies of their

issues for 22 through 25 June where the events in the vicinity are covered in detail.

The owner of the Four Seasons Motel was out in a boat with his wife and two children on 21 June when he saw a giant snake in the water off Point Nipigon. He estimated its length at 18 to 20 feet and its head as 5 inches across. The head was flat and of a dark color. He thought of quickly maneuvering his boat for a closer look. However, his children stood up in the boat, causing him to refrain from the maneuver. He got no closer before it vanished.

In subsequent days many people reported sighting more than one "giant snake" at a time off this shore. When approached in canoes or boats, the creatures submerged. After widespread publicity, the local sheriff declared the sightings could be attributed to lines of swimming carp. By the 24th of June the motel owner was declaring that, in spite of the comments of the sheriff and conservation officers, he was sure of what he had seen and would swear to it for the rest of his life.

Many reports and traditions of monsters have been identified with lakes in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana. All these creatures should be pondered in light of the extensive Great Swamps that once were found in those states and on the borders of the Great Lakes.[9] The wonder of 1867 is part of this history. It does not have to be the only kind of large and uncatalogued animal in those lakes and swamps. This detailed account does provide an excellent model for one of the aquatic mysteries in the region.

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8. I have found only one of the works of John Couchois Wright. It contained nothing on the subject of monsters. The rest of his books are harder to locate. They should be checked, though he may not have written on this subject. His reported 1931 confession may well have appeared only in the newspapers. His writings include: CROOKED TREE: INDIAN LEGENDS OF NORTHERN MICHIGAN (Lakeside Press, 1916, 148 pp.), (also C.F. Erwin, 1932, 143 pp.) both in Harbor Springs, Mich.; THE GREAT MYTH (Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Education Co., 1922); CHICAGO-JIG: LEGEND OF THE INDIAN PARADISE (Alma, Mich.: Babcock & Babcock, 1935, 37 pp.)
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