



The ISC Newsletter

International Society of Cryptozoology

Winter 1983
Vol. 2, No. 4

Editor
J. Richard Greenwell

The ISC Newsletter is an official publication of the International Society of Cryptozoology, and is published for Society members and Institutional subscribers. Membership is \$25 annually; Institutional subscriptions are \$35. Membership and subscription inquiries and correspondence should be addressed to ISC, Box 43070, Tucson, AZ 85733, USA; (602) 884-8369.

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ISSN 0741-5362

Congolese Biologist Observes Mokele-Mbembe



J. Richard Greenwell

Aerial view of Lake Telle in the People's Republic of the Congo, where the 1983 Congolese expedition leader claims to have seen Mokele-Mbembe

In the summer of 1983, dramatic news was received from the People's Republic of the Congo: a new expedition which had been sent by the Congolese government to the Likouala swamps had reached Lake Telle, and the expedition leader, Marcelin Agnagna, had observed Mokele-Mbembe, the supposed sauropod dinosaur reported for over 2 centuries by natives, explorers, and missionaries. This is the first time that a professional biologist claims to have seen a living dinosaur, which is, in itself, a landmark event.

Upon returning to Brazzaville, the capital, in May 1983,

Agnagna wrote up his official report to the Ministry of Water and Forests, a copy of which was subsequently forwarded to ISC Vice-President Roy Mackal and Secretary Richard Greenwell. They, in turn, had the report translated from French to English. Mackal and Greenwell know Agnagna well, as he was the biologist representing the Congolese government on the 1981 Mackal expedition, and they are convinced that he is both a competent biologist and trustworthy individual. In the meantime, a Field Report by Agnagna, providing the basic information on his expedition (including the sighting) is being published in the

Honorary Members:

Andre Capart (Belgium); Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer (South Africa); David James (United Kingdom); Marie-Jeanne Koffmann (Soviet Union); Ingo Krumbiegel (West Germany); Theodore Monod (France); John R. Napier (United Kingdom); and Sir Peter Scott (United Kingdom).

second (1983) volume of *Cryptozoology*, which should reach ISC members about the same time as this issue of the *Newsletter* (members outside of the U.S. will receive the journal somewhat later).

Interest in Mokele-Mbembe increased in the 1970s, following extensive bibliographic work on possible living dinosaurs in Africa by Bernard Heuvelmans. James Powell collected reports in Gabon, and later teamed up with Mackal to penetrate the unexplored Likouala swamps in the Congo. Their 1980 expedition, aided by local missionary Eugene Thomas, collected many reports, but they were unable to reach Lake Telle, the most identifiable supposed habitat of the animal. Mackal then teamed up with Herman Regusters and Richard Greenwell, but differences between the first two separated Regusters from the expedition. Joining Mackal and Greenwell were Justin Wilkinson and Marie Womack, and, in the Congo, Agnagna and Pastor Thomas. Regusters, meanwhile, proceeded with his own plans with his wife Kia, which resulted in the bizarre situation of two American expeditions being in the Likouala swamps at the same time. They never encountered one another, however. The Mackal team navigated the river systems using sonar, and the Regusters team, which was there longer, remained at Lake Telle.

Upon returning to the United States in early November, 1981, both groups claimed some success (see "Congo Expeditions Inconclusive," *Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring, 1982, and "The Search for Evidence of Mokele-Mbembe in the People's Republic of the Congo," *Cryptozoology*, Vol. 1, Winter, 1982). The Mackal team had encountered a wake in a river caused by a large, unidentified, submerging animal (neither elephant nor hippo), and had found a trail left by a large unidentified animal (not an elephant). The



Marcellin Agnagna (right), leader of the Congolese expedition, talking to villager about Mokele-Mbembe sightings.

Regusters team, however, claimed actual sightings at Lake Telle. Skepticism was expressed by the media at Regusters' press conferences, as he failed to produce clear photographic evidence. Further, his claims of great depth for the lake (hundreds of feet) contradicted previous French hydrographic findings in 1976, which found the lake to be very shallow (less than 10 feet). The official report by Agnagna now confirms that the lake is indeed very shallow, but vindicates, or at least supports, Regusters' claimed observations of the animal itself. Regusters, meanwhile, has submitted a Research Report to *Cryptozoology* on the analysis of the sound recordings which he made at Lake Telle, and which he believes contain trumpeting calls made by Mokele-Mbembe.

The new Congolese expedition was composed of seven persons, four from the Ministry of Water and Forests (including Agnagna, who led the team), and three from other ministries. The expedition left Brazzaville by air on April 3, 1983, for Epena, on the Likouala River. After several days of preparation, they proceeded by dugout on the

Likouala, south to the confluence of the Likouala and Bai rivers, and further south on the Likouala to Bouanila. They then worked their way back north to the Bai, visiting villages and seeking evidence from possible witnesses (the Mackal team had gone north on the Bai, so part of this was new territory). Villages visited were Mokongo, Botongo, Edzama, Djeke, and Boha.

At Edzama, an incident had occurred only 2 weeks prior to the team's arrival. A young girl had observed an enormous animal when canoeing on the river, but details are sketchy. The team was able to verify that the sand bar against which her dugout had reportedly been pushed by the animal was still swept clean, as if by the resting body of a bulky animal. At Djeke, the team talked to the same elephant hunter who had shown the Mackal expedition the trail of an unidentified animal. Fresh tracks were found in the same location, and were estimated to be less than 4 days old.

The same individual claimed observations of Mokele-Mbembe on three separate occasions in the 17 months since the Mackal expe-

dition had been there. All involved descriptions of long necks protruding from the water, and of the animal feeding on nearby vegetation. In his report, Agnagna notes that "Mongoumela [the witness] is one of the few witnesses who remains unmystified by the presence of these animals. He considers them as natural to the ecology of the area as others he encounters."

Proceeding north to Boha, the team encountered great difficulty in obtaining the cooperation of the villagers, who "own" Lake Telle, despite the fact that Agnagna's group represented the government. After a week of negotiation, the villagers agreed to allow the team to go to the lake. The long, 60-kilometer trek began early on April 26, and lasted over 2 days. It proved to be extremely difficult negotiating a passage through the swamp-forest with equipment and provisions. Seven Boha villagers accompanied the expedition. A base camp was established on the eastern side of the lake.

Two full days of observing at Lake Telle produced no sightings of Mokele-Mbembe, but other faunal observations were made. On May 1, Agnagna and two Boha villagers, Jean Charles Dinkoumbou and Issac Manzamoyi left the camp early in the morning to explore the forest near the lake, and observe the local fauna. At about 2:30 p.m., Agnagna was filming a troop of monkeys when Dinkoumbou fell into a pool of muddy water. He went to the edge of the lake to wash himself, and a few minutes later began calling his companions to come quickly. The others joined him, but were at first unable to see what he was pointing at excitedly (the thick vegetation ends abruptly at the water's edge, with no break or beach between the trees and the water).

They were then able to see a large animal out on the lake, at

an estimated distance of 300 meters (over 900 feet). It had a long neck, small head, and large back, and its length visible above the water was thought to be about 5 meters (15 feet). Agnagna immediately recognized that it was not part of the known fauna of Central Africa, and, in fact, that it greatly resembled a Mesozoic sauropod in morphology. In his Field Report to *Cryptozoology*, Agnagna states that "the emotion and alarm at this sudden, unexpected event disrupted the author's attempt to film the animal." What happened, as has subsequently been determined, is that Agnagna, with only a little film left on his last roll, began filming steadily after recovering from the shock, and began wading out into the lake to get closer, despite fearful shouting by Dinkoumbou. At some point he realized that, in his haste, he had forgotten to take off the movie camera's lens cap, which he then did, and continued to film, uncertain if there was actually any unexposed film left in the camera. The subsequent development of the film in a French laboratory (Agnagna hand-carried it) proved that his fears were correct. The end of the film developed black.

Agnagna continued to wade toward the animal for a distance of 60 meters (almost 200 feet), and the animal moved its head around "as if to determine the source of the noise." Agnagna, who includes a drawing of the animal in his Field Report in the journal, described the front part as brown, "while the back part of the neck appeared black and shone in the sunlight." The animal then submerged, leaving its neck and head above the water. It remained this way for another 20 minutes, and then submerged completely.

Agnagna and the two Boha natives then rapidly trekked back through the forest to the camp, about 2 kilometers (3 miles) away. They immediately

went out on the lake in a small dugout, this time armed with video equipment, but the animal did not reappear. Another day of observing produced no results, and the team then had to return to Epena to rendezvous with the aircraft supposedly being sent to pick them up.

The expedition left Lake Telle for Boha on May 3, and then went by dugout upriver to Epena. However, the expected aircraft never arrived, and after waiting a week, the team was forced to make its way by foot across swamps and through "the great forest" to Impfondo, on the Ubangi River. The distance covered was over 100 kilometers (60 miles), and the expedition members were forced to call upon all their physical resources to make their way back. They flew to Brazzaville on May 17, bringing the expedition to a close after 45 days.

In his report, Agnagna is quite emphatic about his observation. He states: "It can be said with certainty that the



Agnagna wading through swamp-water on the trek to Lake Telle

animal we saw was Mokele-Mbembe, that it was quite alive, and, furthermore, that it is known to many inhabitants of the Likouala region." In a recent personal communication to Mackal he states: "Mokele-Mbembe is a species of sauropod living in the Likouala swamps and rivers. I saw the animal, but I didn't have experienced photographers or other scientists with me... It may be hard to convince people, because I didn't get any pictures... I am not going to let it end like this. A return must be made to the Likouala, perhaps for a lengthy stay, to get the needed proof."

Undoubtedly, Agnagna is disappointed that, in the emotion of the moment, he failed in his task to film such a remarkable animal. His word alone, despite

his credentials, is certainly not proof of anything, but perhaps zoologists and paleobiologists will now examine the possibility of living dinosaurs with a little more interest.

Agnagna received his graduate training in terrestrial mammalogy at the University of Havana, Cuba. He is one of only two biologists in the Congo, and is affiliated with the Brazzaville Zoo, an agency of the Ministry of Water and Forests.

What happens next is anybody's guess. Agnagna hopes to get his government to sponsor a new expedition, but he proposes better equipment and personnel. The Congolese Minister of Information visited Mackal in Chicago recently, and it is hoped that a collaborative program will even-

tually be worked out. The main problem, as usual, is money. The Congolese have limited budgets, and most U.S. funding sources are reluctant to support projects which are not in the mainstream of science and are less likely to produce conclusive results quickly. Perhaps the published article by Agnagna in *Cryptozoology* will change that.

If the animal is, in fact, a dinosaur, its verification would have a dramatic impact on paleobiology, science generally, and, of course, the public consciousness, fully vindicating the role of cryptozoology, as well as eyewitness reports from the native peoples of the world, who often know more about their own environment than is recognized by Western science.

Ness Teams Crowd Loch

This year (1983) marked the 50th anniversary of the first publicized sightings of Nessie--a colony of animals supposedly inhabiting Loch Ness, Scotland (see *Newsletters*, Winter, 1982, Spring, 1983). It also marked the season with the largest number of organized efforts to try to obtain further evidence of Nessie. In all, at least four separate teams were present:

- Robert Rines and associates of the Academy of Applied Sciences, based in Boston, Massachusetts
- Adrian Shine and associates of the British Loch Ness Project (formerly the Loch Ness and Morar Project)
- Alan Kielar and Rikki Razzan, of Rochester, New York
- Eric Beckjord and Anya

Kuratchin-Lincoln, of Seattle, Washington

The Rines group continued its sonar/underwater photography approach, which proved highly successful in 1972 and 1975 (see *Newsletter*, Winter, 1982, and "Summarizing a Decade of Underwater Studies at Loch Ness," *Cryptozoology*, Vol. 1, Winter, 1982). The approach of this team, essentially, is to pursue a low-profile, continuous monitoring program, adapting new equipment and techniques when necessary, in an effort to increase the probability of a hit: obtaining clear, close-up, underwater photos, supported by sonar data, which would represent irrefutable evidence of large, unknown animals in the loch. Year-round monitoring is a new component of this approach, but the Academy is not releasing many details of its work to the media or the public.

Their 1983 work included the development of small sonar-triggered camera units, but problems developed with the sonar trig-

gers, which started acting oversensitive, despite successful trial runs in labs and lakes in the U.S. Those who attended the 1983 ISC Membership Meeting at New York University in June had a chance to hear Dr. Rines talk about the Academy's general progress. Further results will be made available to the Society for publication in the future.

Adrian Shine's team has been conducting fieldwork at both Ness and Morar for many years, but is now concentrating on Ness almost exclusively. A summary of their work was published in the February 17, 1983 issue of *New Scientist* ("The Biology of Loch Ness," Vol. 97[1345]:462-67). In it, Shine stated that 40 sonar contacts have been made with unidentified targets, many of them of some significance. Shine has organized his project around large numbers of volunteers who are willing to work at lochside under rustic conditions, and he has been able to obtain the cooperation of industrial firms and scientific authorities in Britain. His

group is the only exclusively British team working at the lake. No specific details of the Project's 1983 activities have been received by the Society.

Kielar and Razzan perhaps had the most sophisticated equipment at the loch in 1983. They deployed a 6,400-square-foot raft, outfitted with 144 mini-sonar transducers and nine biopsy dart "harpoons" which could harmlessly obtain tissue samples from a passing animal triggering the electronics. The cost of all their equipment was estimated at \$100,000, but by the end of August no "monsters" had been detected. The couple expressed skepticism to the Associated Press, and Kielar was reported to have stated: "We have studied all the books and all the photographs going back 50 years, and all the sonar recordings of strange shapes underwater, and we find no scientific evidence for the claim that monsters are here." Nevertheless, press reports from New York stated that the two engineers had temporarily closed down their Rochester business, Iscan, Inc., which developed eye-tracking systems for biomedical research, to pursue their attempt to get Nessie tissue samples.

The raft was set up so that anything swimming beneath it, within 100 feet of the surface, would appear on a color video screen showing the size of the object. Monitoring was done on displays in a shore building. If the object was larger than a certain size, the dart guns would be triggered, either manually or automatically. As far as is known, only fish were tracked passing below the raft.

Probably the most colorful event of the season, however, was the arrival of Beckjord, the Bigfoot investigator from Seattle. He first announced his plan in late July in London. It involved the use of a bank surveillance camera loaned to him by a London electronics firm.

"The camera can videotape a small area continuously for 240 hours straight, day or night," Beckjord told the press... I think we got a better chance at seeing something." Beckjord, who recently founded the "National Cryptozoological Society" (which has no connection with ISC), is known for his paranormal beliefs related to unknown animals. He has produced photographs showing psychic manifestations of Bigfoot, which he believes slips in and out of dimensional "space warps."

After setting up his camera on the second floor of a lake-side hotel, the predictable filming occurred on August 4. He described the 17-second sequence to the Associated Press in a telephone call: the object was "15 to 20 feet long, shaped like an overturned boat [which] appeared to swim across the light swell of the lake, surfacing four times like a porpoise." Two days later, August 6, more successful filming: "We have suspicious, significant things on tape," Beckjord told United Press International. This new sequence was filmed from a farm 500 feet above the loch. It reportedly showed a dark body 30 feet long drifting below the surface. A few days later, reports over the Associated Press wires quote Beckjord as talking of three "shadowy shapes" visible in the 3-minute film. "They certainly show something funny is going on out there," he said.

As the international wire services carried Beckjord's claims across the planet (even the Soviet Union's *Komsomolskaya Pravda* carried it on August 23), a *Seattle Times* correspondent's curiosity was sparked, and he managed to get Beckjord on the phone in Scotland: "Things are going fantastic! We were on the BBC. We're going to be on 'Good Morning America' on ABC. CBS is coming up. Germany and Japan called! AP and UPI and Reuters! Every newspaper in Britain is on

my tail. I've got 12 people here in the lobby waiting for me after I get through talking to you" (see *Seattle Times*, August 11, 1983). After viewing the sequence on "Good Morning America," the reporter, Erich Laci-tis, wrote: "...No monster has ever sued for libel."

The reaction around the loch was one of extreme skepticism, not so much concerning the actual filmings, but more related to Beckjord's interpretation of the films. He claimed to have obtained in a few days what other groups have been unable to get after trying for years and decades with much better equipment. Tony Harmsworth, curator of the Loch Ness Monster Exhibition in Drummadrochit (in Urquhart Bay), which keeps tabs on the comings and goings at Loch Ness, expressed dismay over the claims. "People like those young boys [Kielar and Razzan] are doing all the work, and Beckjord is getting all the publicity." Beckjord's response to such criticisms: "They're sore-heads. They're jealous... These people don't like me because I'm getting publicity." Beckjord was reportedly trying to sell his film to U.S. and Australian television companies, but according to the Aberdeen (Scotland) *Evening Express* (October 13), a London video-copying firm had "confiscated" his film until back bills were paid.

But the 1983 carnival at Loch Ness was not yet over. Next came the book cancellation and bomb plot. In late August, *The Times* of London revealed that W. H. Allen had suddenly withdrawn the book *Hunting Nessie* from their publication schedule. The author was Frank Searle, a colorful individual who has lived by the loch in a camper trailer since 1969. Searle, famous for his allegedly false Nessie photos and his requirements for female assistants, had written up his life's work at the loch, but publication was

canceled when Adrian Shine provided the publisher with certain files. "We suspected that a libel was about to be perpetrated," Shine told *The Times*, "and took up the question with the publishers before the book appeared. We keep files on all Loch Ness evidence, which are for internal use only. In this case, we provided information from them to the publishers."

About that time, a bomb attack was made on Shine's camp. At 5:30 a.m. on August 21, Shine and four others saw a boat approaching in the early morning. A petrol bomb was then thrown at their beached inflatable catamaran; it bounced off and then exploded. No damage was done, but Shine said, "Somebody could have been killed. The petrol tank was full."

Despite all the teams, equipment, controversies, and bomb plots, Nessie marked its 50th anniversary by appearing just six times--to casual observers only. So ended the 1983 Loch Ness Monster season.

Society Receives Federal Tax Exemption

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) notified the Society late in 1983 that it is "exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code." Furthermore, the IRS stated: "Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in Section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes..."

What this means is that ISC members, as well as corporate entities, can now donate funds to ISC which can then be deducted from their federal taxes. (Such exemptions, of course, apply only to U.S. taxpayers.) The ISC Tax Determination Number is 95-2915129.

The IRS notification comes at a time when the Society suddenly finds itself in financial diffi-

culty due to the 1983 journal going several thousand dollars over budget (see "Special Message" in this issue of the *Newsletter*). In a sense, the Society is subsidizing (with money it doesn't yet have) a much larger journal in the hope that members will be so pleased at receiving it without a fee increase, that they will voluntarily add a donation to help pay for it when renewing their memberships for 1984.

The Officers of the Society have also decided to request the Board to approve two new status categories in the Society: Benefactor (which will include life membership), and Corporate Sponsor. Details will be announced in a future issue. Meanwhile, we very much need the generous, voluntary support of all members to help pay off our 1983 printing costs.

Special Message

By the time members receive this newsletter (late, as usual!), they will have received the second (1983) volume of the journal, or will receive it shortly (non-U.S. members should realize that it will take several additional weeks to reach them).

It is hoped that members will generally be pleased with Volume 2, which has grown from the 100 pages of Volume 1 to over 170 pages. This 70 percent increase in size resulted in a corresponding increase in production costs, which escalated well over the 1983 publishing allocation. Even so, at the last moment, the agonizing decision had to be made to cut two articles, now postponed a year until the publication of Volume 3. Two gen-

erous contributions (see "Sustaining Members: 1983") helped alleviate the problem, but the total expense leaves the Society with a debt of about \$4,000 to Allen Press. The Society can eventually meet this obligation, utilizing the income generated by 1984 renewals (see renewal return envelope provided in the plastic mailcover of the journal), but this would then deplete the 1984 funds, which should really be used to cover 1984 expenses, including Volume 3 of the journal.

As a result of this crisis, all members are urged:

1) to renew for 1984 immediately upon receipt of the 1983 journal;

2) to include a donation of their choice with the membership fee, automatically making them Sustaining Members for 1984. Such donations are entirely voluntary, but are now tax-deductible (see "Society Receives Federal Tax Exemption" in this issue) to U.S. members.

In considering this voluntary contribution, members should remember that the membership fee has not been increased since the Society was founded (remaining at \$25 for 1982, 1983, and now 1984), despite the increased size of the journal. The membership fee will probably be increased for 1985, a decision to be made by the Board of Directors at its annual meeting this June in Paris. The increase in memberships and institutional

subscriptions expected in 1984, and the expected increase in membership dues for 1985, will ultimately solve the Society's financial woes. In the meantime, voluntary help from the general membership would permit us to continue operating effectively.

Membership now stands at almost 600 paid members; in addition, there are almost 100 1982 (charter) members who did not subsequently renew.

Sustaining Members

The Officers and Board of Directors of the Society wish to express their appreciation to the Sustaining Members listed below, who contributed generously to the Society's operations during the 1983 membership period (March 1, 1983 to February 29, 1984).

- William S. Bailey, Jr.
- David Blomstrom
- Bruce and Beverly Burgess
- Michael R. Charest
- Loren Coleman
- N. B. Cooke
- Joseph Dalessandro
- Louise Deadman
- Robert C. Dorion
- Gerald and Lee Durrell
- F. Gary Gieseke
- Richard Heiden
- Mark A. Kolodny
- Cory Laughlin
- Michael T. Martin
- Dirk Mattheisen
- Aaron Pearl
- Cira Peragine
- Michael T. Pugliese
- Andrew T. Ragan
- Gale J. Raymond
- Ennio Scannapieco
- Ken Toth
- Gavin Troster
- E. B. Winn
- Joseph Zarzynski

Members may become Sustaining

Members when they renew their memberships. They may also do so at any time during the year, simply by sending a separate donation check. All Sustaining Members in the U.S. may now deduct their additional ISC contributions from their federal taxes; ISC was granted nonprofit status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service in late 1983.

Special thanks go to Sustaining Members Robert C. Dorion, in Guatemala, and E. B. Winn, in Switzerland, for helping the Society meet its financial obligations in publishing Volume 2 of the journal.

Message from the Editor

The Society has now operated for 2 years, and has published eight newsletters and two journals. We have not always been on time, and we have not always had a lot of news. But what we have published has been sound, has been personally verified, or has come from sources regarded as reasonably reliable.

To produce the *Newsletter*, the Editor has to review many other scientific and popular periodicals, correspond with and/or call many individuals, and abstract from (or condense) written reports or newspaper articles. Great care is taken, however, to ensure accuracy. The continual barrage of sensational stories appearing in the tabloids are generally ignored; whatever bits of truth they might contain are beyond our capabilities to determine. Some members have questioned why we do not, in fact, disclaim the tabloid stories. The answer, of course, is that we are a scientific society. Let the tabloids do their "thing," and let us allocate our short space to verifiable events, evaluations, and

debates, rather than to debunking efforts. Although we are not debunkers, preferring a calm -- even slow -- scientific approach, that does not mean that we sanction the tabloids in any manner whatsoever. The Board of Directors has not addressed this question, and it is doubtful that it will.

We have been pleased to note that the scientific community, as a whole, has accepted the Society gracefully. Most comments have been positive, not in the sense that the individuals involved necessarily accept the existence of cryptozoological animals, but more related to the manner in which the topic is being handled. (Ironically, the Society has been attacked more by some of the established lay experts--which it was, and is, hoping to help--than by the scientific community, which leaves one wondering.)

The Society is not intended to promote "belief" in unknown animals, and, in fact, all viewpoints are welcomed, provided they are consistent with zoological principles. More individuals who are very skeptical are actually joining, and it is hoped that further publications of a skeptical but rational nature will be submitted for publication. Readers will note that about 10 of the publications in Volume 2 of the journal are of a skeptical/critical nature, including three of the five major articles.

We hope to continue providing you with this service, and we hope you will want to continue as a member in 1984.

-- J. Richard Greenwell
Editor

STOP PRESS.

As this issue was being prepared for publication, news came of what may be an important

cryptozoological discovery. Daniel Taylor-Ide and Robert L. Fleming, of the Woodlands Institute in West Virginia, report finding tracks, nests, and skull specimens of a new species of bear in Nepal, known previously only from native reports. A live specimen of what is believed to be this new species has also been located. Dr. Taylor-Ide will be providing full details to the Society, and further news will appear in the Spring, 1984, issue of the *Newsletter*.

News & Notes

Nessie on a Diet? Roger Tippet, of the University of Glasgow's Department of Zoology, has presented preliminary data which he believes discredits the possibility of large predators inhabiting Loch Ness. He believes there simply isn't enough food. Dr. Tippet, a limnologist, presented his preliminary conclusions at a special joint seminar at the University of Arizona on September 28, 1983, sponsored by the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, the Arizona Cooperative Fishery Research Unit, and the School of Renewable Natural Resources. Essentially, he has calculated that there is insufficient native energy in the loch to provide enough food to support a colony of large predators. This calculation is reached by determining the primary productivity of a typical Scottish lake, Loch Lomond (the northern part of which is glacial, like Loch Ness), calculating the energy loss through different trophic levels to the predator, and extrapolating the results to Loch Ness.

During the question period, an impertinent attendee asked if figures on the annual importation of energy into Loch Ness (in the form of many millions of eels, trout, and salmon) had been plugged into the calcula-

tions, as they represented a far greater energy source than the local primary productivity. Dr. Tippet admitted that such figures had not been included because very little data on energy importation were available. Nevertheless, "I feel I have been kind to the Monster," he stated. When his one-year research project is completed, Dr. Tippet plans to submit his findings for publication in *Cryptozoology*.

"Flattie" Back in Action. Reports of a "monster" in Flathead Lake, northwestern Montana, have persisted for a century (see *In Search of Lake Monsters*, by Peter Costello), with some claiming it is a "prehistoric" creature, and others a giant sturgeon. The latest sighting occurred on August 30, 1983, when six boaters reported seeing a "giant fish," between 25 and 30 feet long, break the surface of the lake and cross in front of their boat in Yellow Bay. "We couldn't believe what we were seeing," Dan Knight told the Associated Press. "That was the biggest freshwater fish I've ever seen. It was 25 to 30 feet long. Its fin was about 2 feet out of the water, and it was cutting the water like a shark." When it passed the bow it "sent a wake off that would put my boat to shame," he added. "There was water coming over the bow, and the boat was bobbing up and down." Knight's motorboat is over 15 feet in length.

The six witnesses watched the object for about 4 minutes, and they estimated its distance at about 90 feet. After the sighting, jokes surfaced concerning what they might have been drinking or smoking. "But we saw it, and that's all there is to it," said Knight. "We were all stone sober, and we all saw it. And we'd all swear to it and take a lie detector test."

As in most instances of North American "monster" lakes, Kalispell Indian legends of a large

animal in Flathead Lake predate the arrival of Europeans. Reports have continued, decade after decade, up to the present, with many reports including giant fish-like descriptions. Local fishery experts have never observed or detected anything unusual, despite their sonar, diving, and trawling activities. Yet, because of the persistence of the reports from reliable witnesses, officials do not dismiss the reports. "I wouldn't rule out the possibility," said one state fishery expert. "The chance of a sturgeon being in the lake is a possibility, but 25 feet I don't know about."

Flathead Lake was the home of the largest sturgeon ever caught in Montana, in 1955. It weighed 181 pounds and its length was 92 inches, less than a third of that reported by the boaters in August. According to *North Idaho Metro* (September 21, 1983), "the largest [sturgeon] ever caught in the U.S. [was] a 407-pound monster." But *The Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats* (see "Wood's Animal Facts," back page) states that "the largest freshwater fish found in North America is the alligator gar (*Lepisosteus spatula*)... an alligator gar taken in Moon Lake, Mississippi... measured 10 feet and scaled 230 pounds."

Flathead Lake is only about 60 miles from the British Columbian border, and only about 250 miles from Lake Okanagan, reputed home of the more famous Ogopogo.

Big Bird Is Back. A curious incident was reported on September 15, 1982, in the *Valley Morning Star*, of Harlingen, Texas, a community a few miles north of Brownsville, on the border with Mexico. James Thompson, an ambulance technician, reported seeing "a large bird-like object" fly over Highway 100 at a distance of about 150 feet from his vehicle. "Its tail is what caught my attention," he said.

He stopped the ambulance, which he was returning after an inspection on South Padre Island, to watch the "bird." The sighting occurred at 3:55 a.m. on September 14, and the location was about 4 miles east of Las Fresnas.

"I expected him to land like a model airplane," Thompson was quoted as saying. "That's what I thought he was, but he flapped his wings enough to get above the grass... It had a black, or greyish rough texture. It wasn't feathers. I'm quite sure it was a hide-type covering... I just watched him fly away." Thompson said its body, which was thin and ended with a "fin," was about 8 to 10 feet long, and the wingspan "at least the width of the ambulance" (5 to 6 feet). He also described "indentations" on the top, and maybe the bottom, of each wing, but the most interesting description is that of the head: There was a "hump" like that of a Brahma bull on the back of the head; it had "almost no neck at all"; and it had something like a "pelican's pouch" near its throat. While the description is obvious to anyone with the slightest knowledge of paleo-animals, Thompson only referred to the animal as a "strange bird."

Two months later, after being dubbed "the bird man" by co-workers, Thompson told United Press International: "I take it in stride. I know what I saw." He now refers to the animal he claims to have seen as a "ptero-dactyl-like bird," and he wonders why other people have not reported it. Al Schriver, assistant manager of the Laguna-Atacosta Wildlife Refuge, said some of the explanations he and his associates had offered had ranged from ultralight aircraft to white pelicans "that like to glide a lot."

South Texas has repeatedly been the scene of "big bird" reports for decades. San Benito policemen had several sightings

in 1975, and three San Antonio teachers reported seeing two large birds--which they later identified from books as pterodactyls--circling cattle. The sighting by Thompson occurred only 200 miles east--as the pterodactyl flies--of Mexico's Sierra Madre Oriental, one of the least explored regions of North America.

Megamouth Described. In November of 1976, a strange fish was accidentally brought to the surface from a depth of 500 feet in a parachute anchor lowered by a U.S. Navy research vessel off Hawaii. It was a shark, almost 15 feet in length, but did not seem to belong to any known species or genera. Fortunately, it was quickly frozen and subsequently studied by marine biologists. Megamouth, as it was nicknamed, aroused considerable interest, and it has served as a reminder that there is still much to learn about the animals inhabiting the oceans. Indeed, megamouth--so named for its large mouth (obviously making it a plankton feeder)--is listed in the Society's information sheet as one of the most recent discoveries of cryptozoological interest.

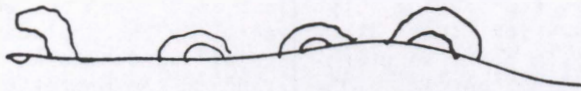
Now, after seven years of study, megamouth has been scientifically described and named by Leighton R. Taylor, L. J. V. Compagno, and Paul J. Struhsaker. Named *Megachasma pelagios*, the shark represents a completely new species, new genus, and new family. Although its teeth are very small (and there are 236 rows of them), they are structurally similar to those of the great white shark. It appears to exhibit bioluminescence by opening its mouth. The description, published in 1983 ("Megamouth--A New Species, Genus, and Family of Lamnoid Shark [*Megachasma pelagios*, Family Megachasmidae] from the Hawaiian Islands," *Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 43[8]:87-110), calls megamouth "extraordinary

in its distinctness from other sharks." John McCosker, an expert on the coelacanth and the great white shark, called the find "a demonstration of the remarkable plasticity of evolution"; while most sharks are fast and aggressive, this one is quite sluggish, and merely opens its large mouth to filter feed on small organisms (only two other kinds of sharks do so, whale sharks and basking sharks). Dr. McCosker, Director of the Steinhart Aquarium of the California Academy of Sciences, stated in a press interview that the discovery suggests there could be other large unknown animals in the marine environment.

Dr. Taylor, Director of the Waikiki Aquarium, could not identify the animal when he first saw it, and he gradually realized that it was a new species (the same gradual realization occurred to J. L. B. Smith in late 1938 when trying to identify the coelacanth through Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer's drawing). In an October, 1983 interview with the *Waikiki Beach Press*, Dr. Taylor stated: "The discovery of megamouth does one thing. It reaffirms science's suspicion that there are still all kinds of things--very large things--living in our oceans that we still don't know about. And that's very exciting."

"Sea Serpents" Seen off California Coast

A new "sea serpent" sighting took place at Stinson Beach, north of San Francisco, California, on October 31, 1983. The incident involved several witnesses, five of whom were members of a construction crew repairing Highway 1 on a Marin County cliffside overlooking the



Drawing of the Stinson Beach "sea serpent" by Matt Ratto

sea. Shortly before 2 p.m., according to Steven Rubenstein of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who interviewed the witnesses, a flagman named Gary saw the unidentified animal swimming toward the cliff, and he called Matt Ratto, another crew member, on his two-way radio, telling him to get his binoculars. The binoculars were reportedly used by the crew to observe distant objects of interest, particularly nude sunbathers on the beach below during their lunch breaks.

Ratto watched the animal through the binoculars; it was reportedly only a quarter of a mile away and 100 yards off-shore. Of particular interest was the detail that the animal was being followed by about 100 birds and two dozen sea lions. "There were three bends, like humps, and they rose straight up," said Ratto. "Then the head came up to look around." The "serpent" then turned, lowering its head beneath the surface, and moved out to sea, gradually lowering its humps beneath the water until it disappeared. "Look," Ratto told reporters, "I'm not a psycho, I'm a regular guy. If I was going to make up something, I'd make up something like a 12-foot Mickey Mouse with five arms." The animal was described by all witnesses as dark, slim, and about 100 feet in length.

Another witness, truck driver Steve Bjora, said, "The sucker was going 45 to 50 miles an hour. It was clipping. It was boogeying. It looked like a long eel." But Bjora says he only saw two humps. Marlene Martin, a safety inspector with the Department of Transportation, also saw the animal. She

was subsequently "unavailable for comment," but her daughter told the *Chronicle*: "Mom came home and told us it was the biggest thing she ever saw in her life, and my Mom doesn't lie. She said it made 'Jaws' look like a baby." Apparently, Mrs. Martin described four humps to her family.

According to the tabloid *Weekly World News*, another witness surfaced--on the beach itself. Roland Curry, 19, said it was the second time he'd seen the "sea serpent" in less than a week. On the first occasion, he claims, it was visible for about 30 seconds, but the head appeared for only about 2 seconds, just before the body submerged. "I told my girlfriend about it, and she said I was nuts," commented Curry, "but this time I saw it and there were other people who said they saw it. That makes it real in my book. From now on, when I go to the beach, I'm bringing my camera."

The *Chronicle* also spoke to Jack Swenson, a biologist of the nearby Point Reyes Bird Observatory, who said there have been "periodic sightings" of unknown marine animals off the Marin County coast, and that "no one ever figures out what the sightings are... A whale surfacing in backlit sunlight, silhouetted with a lot of glare, could look like the Loch Ness Monster. On the other hand, there may be all sorts of prehistoric creatures swimming around out there that we know nothing about."

Witness Ratto was emphatic that "there's no way it could have been a whale or a porpoise, and it was too graceful to be a

machine. Anyway, a submarine doesn't have a head." Two points add credibility to the incident: 1) the construction crew members admitted to having the binoculars to observe nude sunbathers, and although this in itself is of little (if any) significance in California, the admission tends to indicate a truthful version of the events; and 2) a separate witness, Mrs. Martin, who holds a responsible job, saw the same phenomenon, although she later was "unavailable." This gives independent support to the claimed sighting by the construction crew.

Later in the week, on November 2, a group of surfers reported seeing a "sea serpent" near Costa Mesa. "It was just the way they described it up there--a long black eel," said Young Hutchinson, 29. The sighting took place in mid-afternoon, about 60 feet off the Santa Ana River Jetty. He thought the observation was "too crazy" to report, until he read about the Marin County sightings. "At first I thought it was a whale, but I've seen a lot of whales and it didn't look the same," said Hutchinson, who claims that it surfaced only 10 feet from his surfboard. "There were no dorsal fins," he added. "The skin texture wasn't the same [as a whale], and when it broke water it wasn't like a whale at all. I didn't see the head or the tail."

The Costa Mesa *Daily Pilot* quoted a spokesman for the Corona del Mar marine facility of the California Institute of Technology as stating: "It could have been a pilot whale or a gray whale... It also could have been three or four porpoises in a line jumping from the water." The spokesman preferred to remain anonymous.

"It was really moving," concluded Hutchinson, "like a whale with a purpose... We got the hell out of there and paddled for shore."

Cryptoletters

The Editor welcomes letters from readers on any topic related to cryptozoology, but reserves the right to shorten them or to make slight changes to improve style and clarity, but not meaning. Specific commentaries or critiques related to items published in Cryptozoology should be sent double-spaced for publication in that journal.

Dear Editor:

I was very interested in the interview with Forrest G. Wood in the Spring, 1983, Newsletter.

In my opinion, the habitat of these Bahamian giant octopuses is the "blue holes," caverns, and tunnels of the limestone Bahamas Bank, at relatively shallow depth (0-150 meters). Several divers who have explored some of these blue holes (Cousteau, Benjamin, etc.) have reported that many huge crustaceans live there--a possible food source for *Octopus giganteus*.

It must be added that the Bahamas region is a well-known habitat of the migration of the spiny lobster (*Palinurus argus*). There are good reasons to believe that millions--and maybe billions!--of spiny lobsters are living off the Bahamas Islands, enough food for perhaps hundreds or even thousands of giant octopuses.

Michel Raynal
Narbonne, France

Dear Editor:

I attended the recent Society meeting at New York University. It was suggested there that once a hidden animal is revealed, it is no longer a subject for cryptozoology, but instead becomes

an interest of zoology proper. I believe such a view is too narrow, and unintentionally does ISC a disservice.

Specifically, the June 1983 issue of *Science* '83 contained a fascinating article on the pygmy chimpanzee. The journal noted the animal was only discovered in this century. The writer went on to note that the chimp was perhaps a small but intelligent chimp, or perhaps a live "missing link."

I believe an animal which is not hidden, but whose nature is, is a proper subject of cryptozoological study. In addition, if we spent as much time studying Littlefoot as we do Bigfoot, it would bolster the assertion that cryptozoology is a subdivision of zoology.

Robert Takaroff
Jackson Heights, New York, U.S.A.

By definition, the discipline of cryptozoology studies the possible existence of unknown animals (unknown, that is, to systematic zoology, not necessarily to native populations). Once an animal is "discovered," therefore, the methods of cryptozoology--in the opinion of the Editor--serve no purpose, and the methods of other biological disciplines (such as ecology, physiology, cell or molecular biology, to name a few) then become relevant. What else can cryptozoology do to increase knowledge of a newly discovered animal that other disciplines cannot do themselves? That does not mean, of course, that cryptozoology should not continue to be interested in such animals after their discovery and subsequent study by other disciplines. Many of us continue to read new scientific literature on the coelacanth decades after its discovery.

Further discussion by other members of the points raised by

Mr. Takaroff is invited.

-- Editor

Dear Editor:

The Mozambique expedition in which I participated ("Cryptotrips," Newsletter, Summer, 1983) came to a successful end in the autumn.

Unfortunately, I did not have many opportunities to actively investigate the Tokoloshe problem. The information gathered from hunters, natives, and Ministry of Agriculture officials was not very convincing. I got the impression that observations and tales related to the chimpanzee, which is found in some nearby regions, are embedded in the Tokoloshe myth. This could also be the case in northern Mozambique, the most remote parts of which remain unexplored. I hope to penetrate these areas during 1984. That is where the answer to the whole question may be found.

Nikolai Spassov
Department of Mammals
National Museum of Natural History
Bulgarian Academy of Science
Sofia, Bulgaria

ISC PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Past issues of both *The ISC Newsletter* and the journal *Cryptozoology* are available to both members and non-members. Newsletter prices to individuals are \$2.50 each (\$3.50 to institutions, corporations, and libraries). Journal prices to individuals are \$15 each (\$21 to institutions, corporations, and libraries). Prices include postage good for all orders from all countries.

All past ISC publications are still available.

Cryptoquote

"We were drifting easily along on the sluggish current, not far below the confluence of the Rio Negro, when almost under the bow of the igarite there appeared a triangular head and several feet of undulating body. It was a giant anaconda. I sprang for my rifle as the creature began to make its way up the bank, and hardly waiting to aim, smashed a .44 soft-nosed bullet into its spine, 10 feet below the wicked head. At once there was a flurry of foam, and several heavy thumps against the boat's keel..."

"With great difficulty, I persuaded the Indian crew to turn in shorewards. They were so frightened that the whites showed all around their popping eyes... We stepped ashore and approached the reptile with caution. It was out of action, but shivers ran up and down the body like puffs of wind... As far as it was possible to measure, a length of 45 feet lay out of the water, and 17 in it, making a total length of 62 feet. Its body was not thick for such a colossal length--not more than 12 inches in diameter--but it had probably been long without food. I tried to cut a piece of the skin, but the beast was by no means dead, and the sudden upheavals rather scared us... Everything about this snake is repulsive."

"Such large specimens as this may not be common, but the trails in the swamps reach a width of 6 feet and support the statements of Indians and rubber pickers that the anaconda sometimes reaches an incredible size, altogether dwarfing that shot by me. The Brazilian Boundary Commission told me of one they killed in the Rio Paraguay exceeding 80 feet in length! In the Araguaya and Tocantins basins there is a black variety known as the *Dormidera*, or "Sleeper," from the loud snoring noise it makes. It is reputed to reach a huge size, but I never saw one. These reptiles live principally in the swamps, for, unlike the rivers, which often become mere ditches of mud in the dry season, the swamps always remain. To venture into the haunts of the anaconda is to flirt with death."

Percy H. Fawcett

(From: *Lost Trails, Lost Cities*. Funk and Wagnalls, 1952).



Wood's Animal Facts

"The largest and bulkiest fish in the world is the comparatively rare plankton-eating whale shark (*Rhiniodon typus*), which is found in the warmer areas of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. This species was first discovered in April, 1928, when a 15-foot (4.6-meter)-long specimen ... was harpooned in Table Bay, South Africa... More than 40 years elapsed before *Rhiniodon* was heard of again... Since then, more than 100 of these marine giants of varying sizes have been stranded or rammed by ships. Only a few have been scientifically examined... The largest scientifically measured whale shark on record--length taken from the tip of the snout to the notch in the tail in a straight line--was a 41-foot, 6-inch (12.65-meter)-long specimen captured off Baba Island, near Karachi, Pakistan, on November 11, 1949... This [specimen] ... measured 23 feet (7 meters) round the thickest part of the body ... and weighed an estimated 21.5 tonnes [21.15 tons]."

Abstracted from:

The Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats, by Gerald L. Wood. Guinness Superlatives, Ltd., Enfield, England, Third Edition, 1982.



The ISC Newsletter

International Society of Cryptozoology
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