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CRYPTOZOOLOGY

A to Z

The Encyclopedia of Loch Monsters,
Sasquatch, Chupacabras, and Other
Authentic Mysteries of Nature

LOREN COLEMAN AND JEROME CLARK



FIRESIDE

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For **CALEB** and **MALCOLM**,
new explorers of the wild country

For **ALEX**, **EVAN**, and **MOLLY**,
who will be there
when the next century learns
what we don't know now

CONTENTS

<i>Cryptozoology Timeline</i>	12	C	
<i>Introduction</i>	15	Caddy	51
Entries:		Cassie	53
A		Chacoan Peccary	54
Abominable Snowman	23	Chambers Affair	55
Agogwe	24	Champ	56
Ahool	26	Chuchunaa	60
Almas	26	Chupacabras	61
B		Clark, Eugenie	63
Barloy, Jean-Jacques	28	Clark, James Alexander	64
Barmanu	28	Clark, Ramona	65
Batutut	29	Coelacanth	66
Bayanov, Dmitri	29	Coleman, Loren	68
Beast of Bodmin Moor	31	Congo Peacock	71
Beast of 'Busco	32	Con Rit	71
Beast of Gevaudan	33	Corrales, Scott	72
Bergman's Bear	35	Crook, Cliff	72
Bessie	36	Crowe, Ray	74
Big Bird	38	Cryptid	75
Bigfoot	39	D	
Bille, Matthew A.	43	Dahinden, René	77
Black Panthers	44	Dao Van Tien	78
Blue Tiger	45	Dinsdale, Tim	79
Bondegezou	46	Dobhar-chu	80
British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club	47	E	
Brosnie	48	Ellis, Richard	82
Bunyip	49	Emela-Ntouka	83
Buru	50	Ernst, William "Ted"	83

F

Flathead Lake Monster 84

G

Gaal, Arlene 85

Giant Anaconda 86

Giant Forest Hog 88

Giant Monkey 88

Giant Octopus 90

Giant Panda 92

Giant Salamander 93

Giant Sloth 96

Giant Turtles 96

Gibbons, William 98

Globsters 99

Goblin Universe 100

Green, John 100

Greenwell, J. Richard 101

Grimm, Jack 102

H

Hall, Dennis Jay 102

Hall, Mark A. 103

Harkness, Ruth 104

Heuvelmans, Bernard 105

Hominology 108

Honey Island Swamp

Monster 109

Horned Serpents 110

Huyghe, Patrick 112

I

Igopogo 113

Iliamna Lake Monster 113

Indonesian Coelacanth 116

International Society of

Cryptozoology 119

J

Jersey Devil 120

K

Keating, Donald 121

King Cheetah 122

Kirk, John 123

Koffmann, Marie-Jeanne 124

Komodo Dragon 124

Kongamato 125

Kouprey 128

Kraken 128

Krantz, Grover S. 130

Krumbiegel, Ingo 131

L

Lake Monsters 131

Lawndale Incident 134

LeBlond, Paul H. 135

Ley, Willy 135

Lindorm 136

Living Fossils 137

Loch Ness Monsters 138

Loofs-Wissowa, Helmut 143

"Lost World" of Vietnam 145

Lusca 146

M

MacFarlane's Bear 146

Mackal, Roy P. 147

MacKinnon, John 148

Mangiacopra, Gary 149

Manipogo 149

Mapinguary 150

Marked Hominid 151

Marozi 153

McLeod, James 154

Megalodon 154

Megamouth	156	Perez, Daniel	200
Meldrum, D. Jeffrey	157	Piasa	201
Merbeing	158	Porshnev, Boris F.	202
Minhocao	160	Proto-Pygmy	203
Minnesota Iceman	160	Pygmy Elephant	204
Mngwa	163	Pygmy Hippopotamus	206
Moas	164		
Mokele-mbembe	167	Q	
Momo	169	Queensland Tiger	206
Morag	170		
Morgan, Robert W.	171	R	
Mountain Gorilla	172	Raynal, Michel	207
Mountain Nyala	173	Rebsamen, William M.	208
		Roesch, Ben S.	208
		Russell, W. M. "Gerald"	209
N			
Nahuelito	174		
Nandi Bear	175	S	
Napes	177	Saber-toothed Cats	210
Neandertals	178	Sanderson, Ivan T.	211
Nellie	179	Saola	213
Nguoi Rung	180	Sasquatch	215
Nittaewo	181	Schaffner, Ron	215
Norman, Scott T.	182	Sea Serpents	215
		Short, Bobbie	219
		Shuker, Karl P. N.	220
O		Shunka Warak'in	221
Ogopogo	183	Sisemite	224
Okapi	184	Skunk Ape	224
Old Yellow Top	186	Slick, Thomas Baker	226
Olgoi-Khorkhoi	186	Storsjoodjuret	228
Onza	187		
Orang Pendek	189	T	
Oudemans, Antoon Cornelis	191	Taylor, Dan Scott	229
		Tatzelwurm	231
P		Tchernine, Odette	232
Paddler	192	Teh-lma	233
Pangboche Hand	193	Telebiology	234
<i>Panthera atrox</i>	195	Tessie	235
Patterson Film	197		

Thomas, Lars	235	X	
Thunderbird	236	Xing-xing	251
Thylacine	238		
Titmus, Robert	239	Y	
Tran Hong Viet	240	Yameneko	251
True Giant	241	Yeren	252
		Yeti	252
		Yowie	255
U			
Ucu	242		
Ufiti	243	Z	
		Zeuglodon	257
		Zuiyo-maru Monster	257
V			
Vietnam Cryptozoic and Rare Animals Research Center	245	<i>Appendix</i>	259
		Cryptozoology Museums and Exhibitions	259
		Cryptozoology Periodicals	260
		Cryptozoology Websites	260
W			
Waitoreke	246	<i>On the Matter of Style</i>	262
Walsh, Dave	246	<i>Texts Cited/Further Reading</i>	263
Wasson, Barbara	247		
Winnipogo	248	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	269
Wood, Forrest G.	249		
Woodland Bison	249		
Wright, Bruce S.	250		

Cryptozoological research should be actuated by two
major forces: patience and passion.

—DR. BERNARD HEUVELMANS, 1988

Cryptozoology Timeline

Milestones	Cryptozoology Timeline	Animal Discoveries
1800	1810	<input type="radio"/> 1819 American tapir
<input type="radio"/> 1812 Cuvier's "Rash Dictum"	1820	<input type="radio"/> 1834 first chimpanzee brought to Europe
<input type="radio"/> 1817-1819 "New England Sea-Serpent" sightings peaked	1840	<input type="radio"/> 1847 lowland gorilla
1860	1850	<input type="radio"/> 1856 giant squid
Philip Henry Gosse's <i>The Romance of Natural History</i>	1870	<input type="radio"/> 1869 giant panda
1880	1890	<input type="radio"/> 1901 okapi
A.C. Oudemans's <i>The Great Sea Serpent</i>	1910	<input type="radio"/> 1902 mountain gorilla
<input type="radio"/> 1892 "Giant Octopus" of St. Augustine, Florida		<input type="radio"/> 1903 dwarf siamang
		<input type="radio"/> 1904 giant forest hog
		<input type="radio"/> 1906 pygmy elephant officially described; now in dispute
		<input type="radio"/> 1912 Komodo dragon/pygmy hippopotamus
		<input type="radio"/> 1913 water civet
		<input type="radio"/> 1915 Chinese river dolphin
		<input type="radio"/> 1916 bonobo (pygmy chimpanzee)/crocodile lizard
		<input type="radio"/> 1918 New Guinea crocodile
		<input type="radio"/> 1928 kouprey
		<input type="radio"/> 1929 coelacanth/Selevin's dormouse
		<input type="radio"/> 1936 first "live" giant panda/Congo peacock
		<input type="radio"/> 1937
		<input type="radio"/> 1938
		<input type="radio"/> 1940
		<input type="radio"/> 1945
		<input type="radio"/> 1946
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		<input type="radio"/> 2030

Why Ley's *ine lungtiss* and the unicorn
 1946 ○
 Charles Barrett's *The Bunyip*
 1948 ○
 Ivan T. Sanderson's "There Could Be Dinosaurs" inspires Bernard Heuvelmans
 1950 ○
 Ralph Izzard's *The Hunt for the Buru*/Eric Shipton's photographed Yeti attacks
 1951 ○
 1954 ○
Daily Mail Snowman Expedition
 1955 ○
 Bernard Heuvelmans's *On the Track of Unknown Animals* (in French)
 1957-1959 ○
 Slick-Johnson Snowman Expeditions
 1958 ○
 1959 ○
 Soviet Snowman Commission founded/"Bigfoot" coined
 1960 ○
 Loren Coleman inspired by *Half Human*, Sanderson, and by Heuvelmans/"globster" coined
 1961 ○
 Sanderson's *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life*
 1966 ○
 "Napes" coined
 1967 ○
 Patterson Film
 1968 ○
 Heuvelmans's *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents*/"Minnesota Iceman" described
 1970 ○
 1974 ○
 Chacoan peccary (tagua)
 1975 ○
 king cheetah
 1976 ○
 megamouth
 1977 ○
 Prosperine rock wallaby
 1984 ○
 bondegezou
 1985 ○
 1985 ○
 Bilkis gazelle
 1986 ○
 bamboo lemur/hairy Sumatran rhinoceros
 1988 ○
 black tree kangaroo
 1992 ○
 saola (Yu Quang ox)
 1994-1998 ○
 four new muntjacs
 1997-1998 ○
 Indonesian coelacanth
 1998 ○
 megamouth #11
 1999 ○
 blue Timor monitor

1945 ○
 Andean wolf
 1951 ○
 water-loving mink
 1952 ○
 "second" coelacanth
 1954 ○
 pygmy otter shrew
 1955 ○
 golden langur
 1959 ○
 dwarf brocket muntjac
 1960 ○
 woodland bison
 1964 ○
 ufti
 1965 ○
 yameneko
 1967 ○
 long-footed potoroo
 1974 ○
 Chacoan peccary (tagua)
 1975 ○
 king cheetah
 1976 ○
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 1997-1998 ○
 Indonesian coelacanth
 1998 ○
 megamouth #11
 1999 ○
 blue Timor monitor

1978 ○
 John Green's *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*
 1982 ○
 International Society of Cryptozoology formed
 1983 ○
 "cryptid" coined
 1984 ○
 CryptoQuest Expedition, Idaho
 1986 ○
 Heuvelmans's "Annotated Checklist" published
 1989 ○
 British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club founded
 1995 ○
 "Chupacabras" coined
 1997 ○
 Vietnam Cryptozoic and Rare Animals Research Center
 1998 ○
 Chad Arment's first cryptozoology e-mail list
 2000 ○

INTRODUCTION

The word **cryptozoology** first appeared in print in 1959, when Lucien Blancou dedicated his new book to “Bernard Heuvelmans, master of cryptozoology.” Four years earlier, when Heuvelmans first published *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, the term “cryptozoology” as such did not exist. It was not until the publication of *On the Track of Unknown Animals* and the sensation it created that Heuvelmans began to call his lifelong pursuit “cryptozoology,” and a new discipline was born. Since then it has become part of modern vocabulary, and appears in nearly all standard dictionaries.

But what exactly is cryptozoology?

It is not, Heuvelmans insists, an “arcane or occult zoology.” It fuses three Greek words: *kryptos*, *zoon*, and *logos*, which mean, respectively, hidden, animal, and discourse. Thus cryptozoology is the science of “hidden animals.” Heuvelmans prefers “hidden” to “unknown” because to those people who live near them, the animals are not unfamiliar; if they were, there would be no native accounts, and we would never have heard of them. They are, however, undetected by those who would formally recognize their existence and catalogue them.

In 1982, when the International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC) was founded at a meeting held at the Smithsonian Institution, an effort was made to produce a sharper, clearer definition. Cryptozoology, the assembled scientists and investigators agreed, also concerns “the possible existence of *known* animals in areas where they were not supposed to occur (either now or in the past), as well as the unknown persistence of presumed extinct animals to the present time or to the recent past. . . . What makes an animal of interest to cryptozoology . . . is that it is *unexpected*.” This further definition failed to address one crucial aspect: the minimum size. In subsequent reflection on the subject, Heuvelmans insisted that “a minimum size is essential,” though he left the precise dimensions open to further discussion. Nonetheless, he wrote, for an animal (or alleged animal) to be of cryptozoological interest, it must have at least one trait “truly singular, unexpected, paradoxical, striking, emotionally upsetting, and thus capable of mystification.”

To most persons familiar with the term, cryptozoology is seen as the study of such spectacular and disputed creatures as Sasquatch, the Yeti, and the Loch Ness Monster. These legendary beasts do interest cryptozoologists, but such “cryptids” (as cryptozoologists call them) comprise only a fraction of the hidden, uncatalogued, or out-of-place animals that have intrigued and frustrated cryptozoologists before cryptozoology as such existed.

Writing in 1988 in *Cryptozoology* (Vol. 7), Heuvelmans underscored the aims of cryptozoology:

Hidden animals, with which cryptozoology is concerned, are by definition very incompletely known. To gain more credence, they have to be documented as carefully and exhaustively as possible by a search through the most diverse fields of knowledge. Cryptozoological research thus requires not only a thorough grasp of most of the zoological sciences, including, of course, physical anthropology, but also a certain training in such extraneous branches of knowledge as mythology, linguistics, archaeology and history. It will consequently be conducted more extensively in libraries, newspaper morgues, regional archives, museums, art galleries, laboratories, and zoological parks rather than in the field!

CUVIER'S RASH DICTUM

In 1812 Baron Georges Cuvier, the revered French biologist considered the father of paleontology, declared the end of the age of zoological discovery. “There is,” he said, “little hope of discovering new species” of large animals. From now on, he continued, naturalists ought to focus their attention on extinct fauna. As for fabled creatures such as Sea Serpents, which some of his colleagues held to merit further investigation, Cuvier had these words: “I hope nobody will ever seriously look for them in nature; one could as well search for the animals of Daniel or for the beast of the Apocalypse.”

In 1819, a mere seven years later, the American tapir was found, only the first of thousands of “new” animals to be uncovered in the past two centuries. They include the giant squid (1870s), okapi (1901), the Ko-

modo dragon (1912), the kouprey (1937), and the ultimate “living fossil,” the coelacanth (1938). The largest land mammal to be documented since the kouprey is the extraordinary saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*), a new bovine species. Since the startling discovery in 1992 of a “lost world” of animals stretching sixty-five square miles near the Laotian border, Vietnam’s Vu Quang Nature Reserve has produced evidence of two previously unknown bird species, at least one new fish, an unknown tortoise with a striking yellow shell, and two other mammals besides the Vu Quang ox.

The giant panda of Tibet was often cited during the 1950s and 1960s to demonstrate how a large animal could remain elusive and unknown in montane habitats not unlike some valleys of the Himalayas. Cryptozoologists note that it took sixty-seven years from the time of the giant panda’s “discovery” until its live capture.

There is yet another example, especially germane to the ongoing hunt for uncatalogued large primates. Though the lowland gorilla was officially recognized in 1840, the mountain gorilla eluded detection, considerable searching notwithstanding, until the twentieth century. Indeed, not until 1860 were the first native tales collected of a monster ape said to live on the misty heights of the Virunga volcanoes of East Africa. But to Western zoologists these were no more than unconfirmed anecdotes until October 1902, when Belgian army captain Oscar von Beringe and a companion killed two gorillas on the Virungas’ Mount Sabinio, thereby removing the animals from the realm of mythology and into a secure place among the world’s recognized fauna. New primates have continued to turn up at an astounding pace throughout the twentieth century. Besides the mountain gorilla, two other apes, the dwarf siamang and pygmy chimpanzee, close relatives of humans and the hominoids* described in this encyclopedia, have been found.

* The word “hominid” refers to members of the family of humans, *Hominidae*, which consists of all species on our side of the last common ancestor of humans and living apes. Hominids are included in the superfamily of all apes, the *Hominoidea*, the members of which are called “hominoids.” Members of the family of apes, *Pongidae* are also hominoids, but not hominids. Apes and humans are hominoids. The close-to-human hominids are, for example, the Marked Hominids, the classic Bigfoot, and Neandertals. Cryptids such as Napes, Skunk Apes, and more apelike animals are included in the broader term hominoids—which then, of course, encompasses the hominids. All hominids are hominoids, but all hominoids are not hominids.

As Cuvier's "rash dictum" (Heuvelmans's phrase) has been destroyed, the modern world of zoology, of which cryptozoology is a small subdiscipline, continues to be startled as "new" animals keep getting found. It is safe to say that in its essence, cryptozoology represents a throwback to the way original zoological study was conducted. In the beginning, as explorers trekked to new lands and listened to local informants, they were led to remarkable new species. These animals would then be killed or captured, shipped back to the zoological societies and parks of Europe, and formally classified. Today, with the addition of DNA testing and telebiological techniques, cryptozoology keeps alive the tradition of discovery and recognition of new species of animals.

GROUNDING IN SKEPTICAL ZOOLOGY

Though probably no zoologist today, even two centuries after Cuvier, would make so sweeping an assertion about the unlikelihood of interesting animals remaining to be documented, many zoologists, paleontologists, and physical anthropologists still view cryptozoology with suspicion. To them, cryptozoologists' willingness to consider as possible, or at least as deserving of inquiry, some especially extraordinary claims raises eyebrows and fuels the occasional charge of "pseudoscience" (however impeccably credentialed many cryptozoologists may be).

In response, Heuvelmans has called A. C. Oudemans's *The Great Sea Serpent* (1892) the "true starting point of the new discipline." It should be stressed that Oudemans was no crank; at the time his book was published, he was director of the Royal Zoological and Botanical Gardens at The Hague and was one of the best-regarded European men of science. His book received generally respectful reviews. Even though many of his colleagues were skeptical, and a scientist with less sterling credentials would have at least hesitated before expressing a positive view of so contested a subject, Oudemans was not entirely alone in arguing for the reality of what nineteenth-century observers often called the "great unknown." Decades earlier, prominent biologists Thomas Henry Huxley (a towering figure in Victorian science, if usually remembered today only as "Darwin's bulldog") and Louis Agassiz argued for the existence of Sea Serpents. In 1847, on assuming editorship of England's *Zoologist*,

Edward Newman wrote of Sea Serpent sightings, “A natural phenomenon of some kind has been witnessed; let us seek a satisfactory solution rather than terminate enquiry by the shafts of ridicule.”

At the same time, however, Sea Serpents and their freshwater cousins, Lake Monsters, figured largely in all manner of hoaxes. In the Americas particularly, stories about such creatures were regularly concocted in newspaper offices when space needed filling. For example, in 1892 the *Chicago Tribune* reported that a giant serpent was menacing Wisconsin’s Lake Geneva, causing “thousands of people” to flock to the shore hoping to glimpse the beast. Tellingly, not a single other contemporary source refers to this remarkable matter, but the *Tribune* yarn is only one of many hundreds to generate confusion among later cryptozoologists and to engender deep doubts about fantastic creatures generally in scientists then and now.

To figure in a hoax, the critter in question did not have to live in water. The (Victoria, British Columbia) *Daily British Colonist* for July 4, 1884, reported the capture, by a train’s crew, of a beast “of the gorilla type standing about 4 feet 7 inches and weighing 127 pounds. He has long, black, strong hair and resembles a human being with one exception, his entire body, excepting his hands (or paws) and feet are covered with glossy hair about one inch long. His forearm is much longer than a man’s forearm, and he possesses extraordinary strength.” A young Sasquatch? Alas, no. Historically minded Bigfoot researchers have reluctantly concluded that this is just another tall tale cooked up by a local newspaper.

There were other notorious hoaxes, including an ill-conceived brontosaurus hunt in Africa in the early years of the twentieth century. No sooner had the Loch Ness Monster started to attract international attention (in 1933) than pranksters were faking photos and footprints. To many observers, the search for unknown animals was at best a tainted enterprise, at worst an exercise in folly.

Yet some serious-minded scientists, amateur naturalists, and journalists could not restrain their curiosity, and a small library of books and articles attempted to document reports and other evidence of a variety of cryptids. Among them was the Swedish scientist Gunnar Olof Hynten-Cavallius, who in the late nineteenth century investigated reports of giant snakelike creatures (known as lindorms) in the provinces of his

native country. Another, Rupert T. Gould, an educated Englishman with wide-ranging interests, wrote *The Case for the Sea Serpent* (1930) and *The Loch Ness Monster and Others* (1934), the first book on that destined-to-be-much-discussed subject. When he was not writing about rockets and space travel, Willy Ley, who in 1935 fled Hitler's Germany for the United States, pursued what he called "romantic" or "exotic" zoology, even to the point of radical speculation about living dinosaurs, without notable damage to his reputation. (Years later biologist Aaron M. Bauer would praise Ley for drawing on "not only zoological information, but historical, mythological, and linguistic clues, presaging the modern, interdisciplinary approach to cryptozoology.")

In the January 3, 1948, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, biologist Ivan T. Sanderson—who would later play a significant role in early post-*On the Track of Unknown Animals* cryptozoology—suggested (in the words of the title) "There Could Be Dinosaurs." This and other Sanderson articles gripped a young Belgian, who found the whole question of "unknown animals" so fascinating that he vowed to devote the rest of his life to it, which is exactly what Bernard Heuvelmans did. Bernard Heuvelmans's interest in writing about what he felt was a vast neglected area of zoology led to the 1955 French publication of his book *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. This was followed by years of personal correspondence among his colleagues, and the first published use of the word "cryptozoology" in 1959. Because of Heuvelmans's important presence in the early history of the science, today he is generally referred to as the "Father of Cryptozoology."

CRYPTOZOLOGY TODAY

Nowadays cryptozoology is all around us. Just a few years ago, only a handful of people even knew the word. Today, from the Internet to the corner newsstand, cryptozoology has become an integral part of our culture. Mainstream magazines such as *BBC Wildlife* now regularly carry articles on hidden animals, and numerous documentaries on PBS, Discovery, A&E, and other television networks treat the subject seriously.

Less seriously but still indicative of cryptozoology's influence, an episode of the popular science-fiction series *X-Files* called "Quagmire"

concerned reports of a monster, “Big Blue,” at a Georgia reservoir appropriately named “Heuvelmans Lake.” In the course of the drama, FBI agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully debate the pros and cons of “cryptozoology.” Though other *X-Files* episodes have employed cryptozoological motifs, this was the first time the word itself passed through the characters’ mouths. As the episode ends, a large alligator is destroyed and blamed for the “monster” sightings. The agents turn their backs on the lake just as Big Blue rises from the depths of Heuvelmans Lake in a kind of symbolic representation of what happens often enough in real-life cryptozoology, where many mysteries have a way of staying stubbornly unsolved.

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE

Before you start your trek through the following pages and into the world of cryptozoology, we wish to insert some words of caution:

If to many mainstream biologists cryptozoology has yet to make its case, there is reason for such a cautious judgment. Until or unless there is better, more conclusive evidence for the reality of the cryptids with which you will become acquainted in the pages ahead, their status as reality will remain uncertain. Cryptozoological animals are by their nature intensely controversial. Reasonable persons come down on both sides of the debate, and even the authors of this book do not entirely agree about which cryptozoological animals are most likely to coexist, however covertly, alongside us on this crowded planet.

In what follows, we accentuate the positive. For the sake of argument, we take the best available evidence—even if, by the more demanding standards of scientific proof, it may not be satisfactory in one fashion or another—and scrutinize it through the lens of what zoology does know about conventionally recognized animals, living and (allegedly) dead, and early protohumans. Seen that way, even the most exotic reports begin to make a surprising kind of sense—even as they remain unproved and problematic.

Most of the mysteries here are potentially solvable. They demand, however, real commitment, real expertise, real funding, and real open-mindedness to nature’s possibilities—the last being a quality not always

in evidence in scientists' confrontation of (or, on occasion, unwillingness to confront) the unknown. In the meantime, many curious and intriguing questions nag away like muffled voices just slightly outside the range of hearing. What they are saying to us, we don't know. In the pages you are about to read, we suggest one way of hearing the words.

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A

ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

When most people ponder on the “big three” of cryptozoology, they are thinking of the **Loch Ness Monsters**, **Bigfoot**, and the Abominable Snowman. Though many assume these beasts to be mythical, a body of intriguing evidence exists for each. Of the three, the Abominable Snowman is the cryptozoological animal longest known and discussed in the West.

The more proper name is **Yeti**, but most Westerners have been more familiar with the moniker “Abominable Snowman.” “Abominable Snowman” is a phrase coined, accidentally, by a *Calcutta Statesman* newspaper columnist, Henry Newman, in 1921.

It happened when Newman wrote about the 1921 sighting by Lieutenant Colonel (later Sir) C. K. Howard-Bury and his party, who saw dark forms moving about on a twenty-thousand-foot-high snowfield above their location, the Lhapka-La pass on the Tibetan side of the Himalayan mountains, and viewed them through binoculars. This is the first credible Western sighting of what until then had been mostly a shadowy tale (at least to Westerners) of strange, hairy upright creatures in Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Mustang, and Nepal. Howard-Bury would later, on September 22, 1921, find footprints “three times those of normal humans” at the site where the dark forms were moving about.

The Sherpas insisted that the prints were those of the *metoh-kangmi*, as Howard-Bury rendered it. *Kang-mi* loosely means “snow creature.” The *metoh* part should have been written as *met-teh*, which translates as “man-sized wild creature.”

Newman’s mistake was caused in part by Howard-Bury’s mistransliteration of the Sherpa word. Howard-Bury did not understand that the Sherpas recognized several types of creatures; on this occasion they had used a generic, not a specific, term. The error was compounded when Newman changed Howard-Bury’s *metoh-kangmi* to *metch kangmi*, which he explained as a Tibetan word meaning “Abominable Snowman.”

In any case, this proved to be a pivotal event in cryptozoological history. As **Ivan T. Sanderson** wrote, “The result was like the explo-

sion of an atomic bomb.” The melodramatic name “Abominable Snowman” spurred gigantic press interest. Newspaper coverage multiplied as more and more expeditions sought to climb Mount Everest.

The true origin of the phrase “Abominable Snowman” has been misrepresented over the years. For example, on a 1992 episode of the television series *Unsolved Mysteries*, a well-known Irish explorer wrongly claimed that the creature got its name because of its horrible odor.

The real animal behind the name is neither abominable nor a true creature of the snows. These beasts usually appear to live in quiet retreat in the steamy mountain valleys of the Himalayas, using the snowy passes as a way to move from one spot to another, leaving

behind huge mysterious footprints. They are not—contrary to another widespread misunderstanding—white. And they are not a single creature.

A better generic term for Abominable Snowman is the Sherpa *yeti*, loosely meaning “that there thing.” Yetis are known as huge creatures—humanoid beasts, covered with thick coats of dark fur with arms, like those of anthropoid apes, which reach down to their knees.

A description of the reportedly three types of Yeti is discussed, in depth, within that entry.



The 1957 footcast of the seven-by-ten-inch track of an Abominable Snowman found in mud, in Nepal, by Tom Slick. Five toes were originally visible, but two blurred in the casting process. (Bernard Heuvelmans)

AGOGWE

The Agogwe is a little downy, woolly-haired unknown biped reported throughout East Africa. Said to have yellowish, reddish skin underneath

its rust-colored hair, the Agogwe allegedly inhabits the forest of this remote region.

One of the most discussed sightings occurred around 1900 when Captain William Hichens was sent on an official lion hunt to this region. While there, waiting in a forest clearing for a man-eating lion, he saw (as he would write in 1937) “two small, brown, furry creatures come from the dense forest on one side of the glade and disappear into the thickets on the other. They were like little men, about four feet high, walking upright, but clad in russet hair.” The native hunter said they were *agogwe*, the little furry men. Hichens made efforts to find them, but without success, in the impenetrable forest.

In support of Hichens’s story, Cuthbert Burgoyne wrote a letter to the London magazine *Discovery* in 1938, noting that he and his wife had seen something similar while coasting Portuguese East Africa in a Japanese cargo boat in 1927. Close enough to shore to see things on the beach using a “glass of twelve magnifications,” they spied a troupe of feeding baboons, apparently picking up shellfish or crabs. “As we watched, two little brown men walked together out of the bush and down amongst the baboons. They were certainly not any known monkey and yet they must have been akin or they would have disturbed the baboons. They were too far away to see in detail, but these small human-like animals were probably between four and five feet tall, quite upright and graceful in figure. At the time I was thrilled as they were quite evidently no beast of which I had heard or read. Later a friend and big game hunter told me he was in Portuguese East Africa with his wife and three hunters, and saw a mother, father and child, of apparently a similar animal species, walk across the further side of a bush clearing. The natives loudly forbade him to shoot.”

These primitive, hairy, long-haired beings of small size are known by a variety of names throughout Africa. The Agogwe of East Africa match exactly the descriptions of little reddish-haired *sehite* of the Ivory Coast, where, in the 1940s, numerous reports were heard, even though no known pygmies at all live there. The cryptozoologist **Bernard Heuvelmans** believes these small African creatures may be **Proto-Pygmies**, proto-bushmen, or australopithecine (gracile species). In *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, Heuvelmans comments: “Now there is no known

ape, even among the anthropoids, which normally walks upright on its hind legs. . . . Perhaps the *agogwe* are therefore really little men.”

AHOOL

In 1925 Dr. Ernest Bartels, son of the noted ornithologist M. E. G. Bartels, who discovered many new bird species in Java, was exploring a waterfall on the slopes of the Salek Mountains when a giant unknown bat, the Ahoool, flew over his head. Named after its call—a long “ahOOOooooo!”—this as-yet uncatalogued bat was, according to crypto-zoologist **Ivan T. Sanderson**, still reported from time to time. Bartels’s account had been passed on to Sanderson by **Bernard Heuvelmans**. In an article about the Ahoool written in 1966, Bartels and Sanderson noted that sightings of this giant bat have been reported throughout western Java. According to the locals, the Ahoool is quite real and known in several areas; it is not merely a folkloric beast.

The Ahoool looks like a huge bat in flight, larger than any known flying fox (a fruit-eating bat). The Ahoool, however, is a fish-eater. It allegedly uses its enormous claws—situated at the tops of the forearms, which are part of the wings—to capture large fish from the rivers it lives near. An Ahoool is said to be the size of a one-year-old child, dark gray in color, with a head like a macaque or gibbon.

Sanderson thought the Ahoool was an Oriental form of the giant unknown bat he had seen in Africa, known most popularly as the **Kongamato**, although he knew the Kongamato as the *Olitiau*. Sanderson felt the Ahoool, like the *Olitiau* or Kongamato, was an unknown giant bat related to the species *Microchiroptera*.

ALMAS

In the 1420s Hans Schiltberger, a Bavarian nobleman held prisoner by Mongols, took note of the presence, in the Tien Shan mountain range of present-day China, of “wild people who have nothing in common with other human beings.” Except for hands and face, they were covered with hair. Subsisting on grass and wild vegetables, they lived like animals. Schiltberger himself saw two of them, a male and a female, whom a warlord had given as a gift to his own captors.

A second early printed reference to a Mongolian “man-animal,” as the text calls it, appears in a drawing in a natural history manuscript pre-

pared in China in the late eighteenth century. The serious context, an exposition on local flora and fauna, makes it clear that the creature was not thought to be supernatural or fantastic.

Though unrecognized by science, *almas*—Mongolian for “wildmen”—allegedly dwell in the Altai Mountains in the west of Mongolia and in Tien Shan in the neighboring Chinese province of Sinkiang. They have been the object of periodic attention by individual scientists. In 1913 one of them, V. A. Khakhlov, sent a report of his investigations to the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, but it has not survived.

From the 1890s until 1928, another investigator, the ill-fated Leningrad-based professor Tsyben Zhamtsarano, conducted considerable field research into the Almas question, interviewing numerous witnesses. For the crime of being interested in Mongolian culture and folklore, the Soviet regime under Stalin declared him a “bourgeois nationalist” and sent him to the gulag, where he perished around 1940. His field notes, including illustrations (a professional artist had accompanied him to provide sketches based on eyewitness accounts), were lost or destroyed.

Most of what we know about Zhamtsarano’s research comes from Dordji Meiren, who participated in some of the work. According to Meiren, sightings began to decline in the nineteenth century, perhaps suggesting that the creatures were retreating into more remote locations in response to population pressures (a view endorsed by a later Mongolian researcher, Y. Rinchen). Meiren also claimed to have seen an Almas skin in a Buddhist monastery in the southern Gobi region of Mongolia. Because the cut was straight down the spine, the features had remained intact. The body was covered with curly red hair except for the face, Meiren said, and its fingernails and toenails resembled those of a human being.

Both adult and young Almas have been reported, according to researcher **Marie-Jeanne Koffmann**. The adults are said to stand approximately five feet tall, with prominent eyebrow ridges and jutting jaws. Almas use simple tools but are without language. Anthropologist Myra Shackley, one of the few Western scientists to pay attention to the question, has proposed the radical hypothesis that the creatures are relict **Neandertals**. Critics of her work, however, point out that she used outdated models of Neandertals, instead of the very different and intelligent, phys-