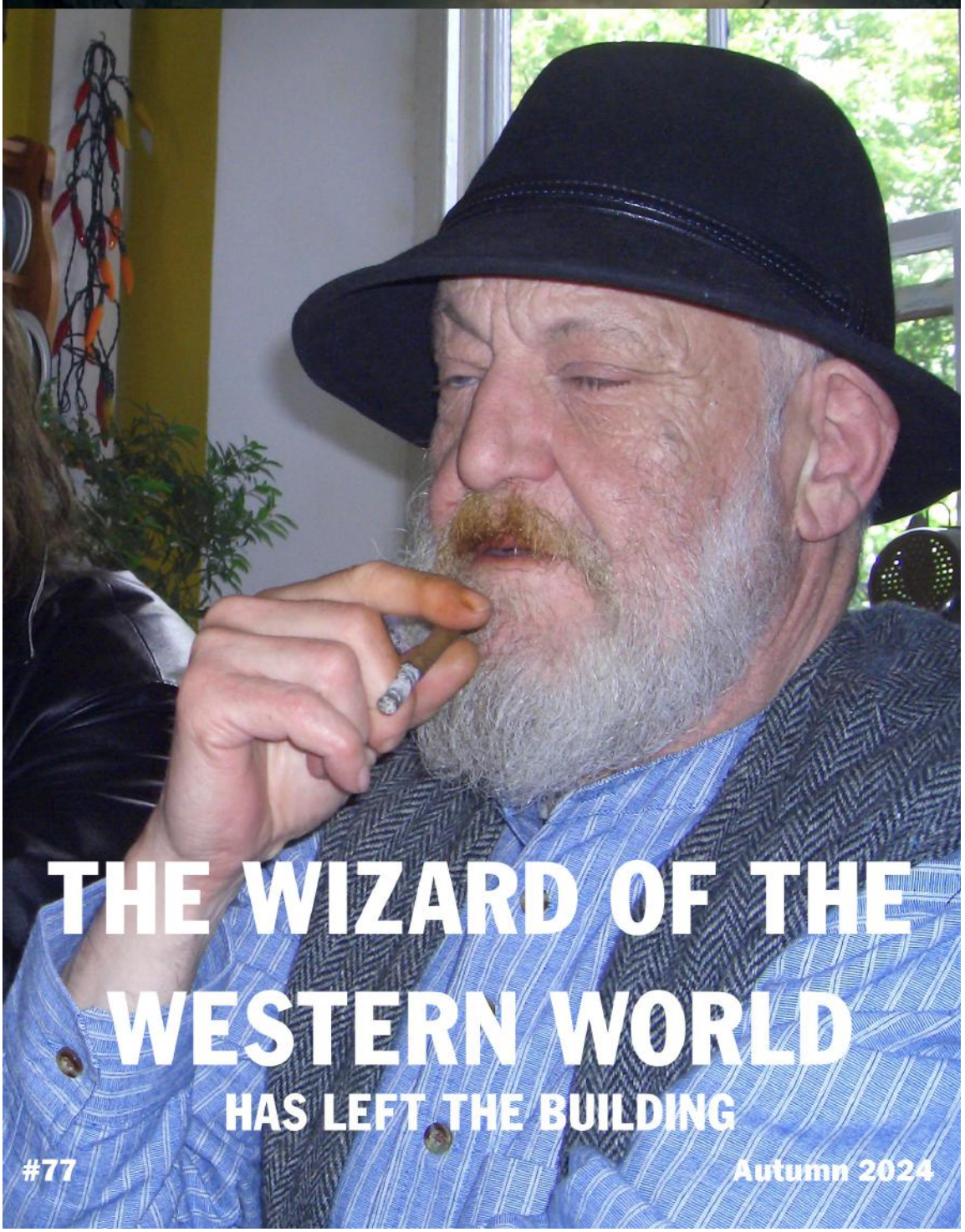
Animals & Men

The Journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology



THE WIZARD OF THE WESTERN WORLD

HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

#77 Autumn 2024

Animals & Men

#77

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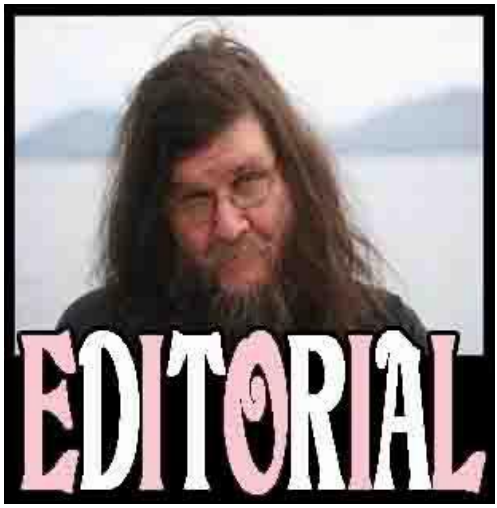
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Dear friends,

Welcome to another issue of this ever peculiar, indeed ever more peculiar little magazine.

I think I have expressed my feelings on the subject of social media before. I think this is probably the single most divisive and, indeed, egregious, thing in the world right now. And, I would go so far as to say, social media has caused more harm to the current social structure of the western world than anything else. I remember something like 15 years ago when I first read the term Web 2.0 in an article in the late lamented Word Magazine, and we were promised a fantastic utopian future of interactivity and free global communication, and look where it got us all.

It's another one of those things that sounded great on paper, but with the view of that wonderful thing hindsight, was always going to be a horrendously double edged sword.

But I want to tell you a story about one occasion that happened recently when things got completely out of hand for a whole bunch of people who live in one of these communities in cyberspace located on a Facebook social media hub. Now, I'm going to do my best to be tactful here. Indeed, I have to be because the whole affair is still being investigated by two different police forces. So I won't name names, and I will obfuscate as much as I believe is necessary in order to tell my story, make my point, and not end up in the chokey for contempt of court.

As many of you will probably know, my day job is Director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. In other words, I organise the largest mystery animal research group in the English speaking world. Towards the end of last year I was approached by a young man called Daniel who was researching sightings of Bigfoot type creatures in the UK. Over the years, I have always found the so-called British Bigfoot research community, to be completely toxic, and after the last clash I had with them, about eight years ago, during which I was sent death threats and there was a concerted effort to destroy my reputation, I thought "fuck this for a

game of soldiers" and vowed that I would never to have anything to do with the subject again, even though I had seen one of these apparitions back in 2003.

Daniel was such a nice boy, and seemed totally unaware of the cesspit that he was just about to go swimming in, that I broke my vow and joined the community again. And never a week went by, that I didn't regret it and wish I could leave again. But I had become very fond of Daniel, and decided that I would do my best to protect him.

One of the leading lights of the community back eight years ago, when I had undergone such a horrible time, there was a lady from the north of England whom I shall call Snarky Sue. (Handy hint: she wasn't called Sue).

She had quite a large personal following who apparently believed that flesh and blood Bigfoot-like creatures were roaming the north of England willy nilly. Well, some people believe any old shit, and – of course – they have right to do so. But regularly Snarky Sue, and her brigade of idiot followers appeared to take the fight and declare war upon hapless fellow toilers in the cryptoinvestigative vineyard. On one occasion, there were even allegations that she had broken into somebody's house with a heavy glass ball in a sock and flailed around with it destroying property and causing pain until she was eventually ejected.

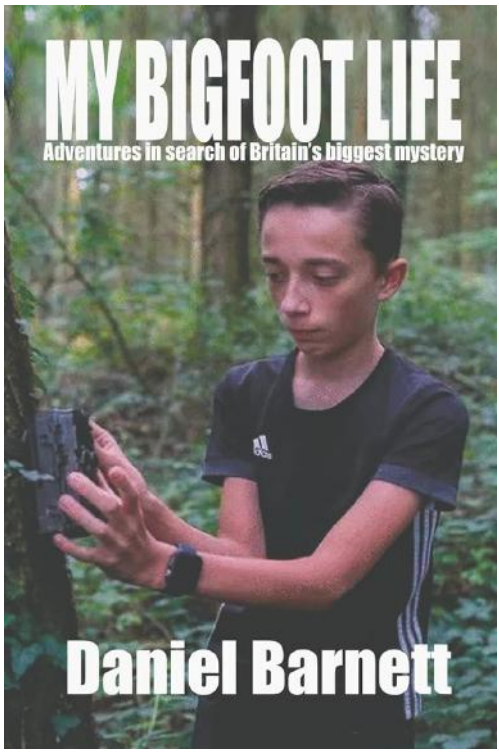
For some reason one of my team at the CFZ fell foul of her, and there were claims that he had stalked her, and even tried to sexually abuse her niece.

All of this, to the best of my knowledge, is complete bollocks.

But then it became my turn. I'm still not sure what I did wrong to have her wrath turned upon me, but something had happened. I was subjected to email death threats from people I assume were her followers, and she then teamed up with another so-called researcher for whom I have very little regard, and together they sabotaged my appearances on American radio by telling them that they would take out an injunction to stop them mentioning anything to do with British Bigfoot research if I was allowed to speak on the subject.

She wrote to particularly foul essay which was posted somewhere online accusing me of running a cult and saying that we were training up people to be internet trolls. I'm not, and we weren't.

I kicked everybody that I knew who was part of her organisation out of all the CFZ Facebook groups, and I appointed my old friend Ve Macrinnon Trollfinder General, and after about six months of deleting any abusive remarks and kicking the authors out permanently, the whole bloody thing eventually died down.



Then, last week, it all flared up again. This time, poor Daniel was the unwitting victim. Snarky Sue posted a piece of vitriol all over the internet claiming that Daniel had hacked into her Facebook page and used Facebook messenger to spread all sorts of nasty things about her. She included the screen grab which apparently had Daniel (according to her) claiming to have faked all his findings and to have done it in order to take over her group. However, what you didn't know, was that one of Daniel's relatives was a serving police officer, and he immediately reported this as online bullying. Something I forgot to mention is that Daniel is autistic, and therefore a protected class (I think that's) under the Equalities Act.

Then, the shit really hit the fan. Everybody in the relevant parts of the loose cryptoinvestigative community became polarised. And unfortunately, two people who are, or were, holding posts within the CFZ decided to openly support Snarky Sue who was by this time openly attacking us again for no apparent reason except for the fact that she could. Although I didn't like doing so, I gave instructions for them to be removed from all contact with us, and therefore the contagion didn't spread.

A well-known American TV person also decided to support her, and it turns out that they appear to have been in cahoots for awhile. However, events continued to unfold and it eventually became obvious that Snarky Sue, was more sinned against than sinning in this particular juncture. Her Facebook page has indeeed been hacked, and it hadn't been hacked by Daniel or anybody to do with him.

It turned out that a person who had been in Daniel's team, and who had been behaving oddly for a while was probably the culprit. At the time of writing nothing has been proven one way or the other, and I have no intention of naming names or pointing fingers, especially at this stage. The aforementioned American TV woman also had some sort of financial beef against the company who had been filming Daniel, and I suspect that this



will prove to been part of the motivation for all the nastiness. And that is just about that.

Oh yes, I sang a silly spoof of *I fought the law*, by Sonny Curtis of The Crickets, and at the time of writing it has been viewed over 3000 times.

But the real moral of the story is that none of this would've happened if it wasn't for social media.

Giving everybody an equal voice sounds like an admirable and a laudable concept, but the sad thing is that many people don't deserve an equal voice. Back when our written disputes were made by letter, people had time to think about what they were writing, and therefore what they were accusing the other person of. But now, we can contact people all over the world and communicate with them almost instantaneously, and there is no need to think, or even contemplate the results of one's words. Therefore, there is a whole generation of people who have been conditioned by social media and who are liable to behave in a nasty and vitriolic manner.

On this occasion, mainly due to the prompt and decisive actions by the aforementioned policeman, and some remedial action by me and my team, the whole affair died down fairly quickly. But it could've been so much worse.

I don't suppose that there is anybody reading this who is in a position to do anything about it. I did what I had to do, and I still feel bad about it. I just hope that somebody is going to start doing something about the rampant hooliganism that can be inherent in social media, before it is too late to do anything about it, and another bit of human society becomes ruined.

I hope you enjoy this issue,
Hare bol,



Jon



A LEGAL MATTER

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This has been a particularly difficult three months with open warfare on the Internet between differing factions. It has always been my policy to try not to get involved with such things, but on this occasion it was impossible not to. We have lost several members for reasons that I will not go into, mostly because the atmosphere was so toxic that they decided to turn their back on the cryptozoology community for good.

This is one of the problems at the moment. It seems that cryptozoology reality TV shows, are accountably popular, and millions of dollars are being thrown at this, often facile, medium. It's not all facile by any means, but the facile zeitgeist is tainting much of the community. And people like me who have been doing this for over half a century are being left behind.

The CFZ is a serious scientific organisation, even though we often operate in an unorthodox fashion. But, sadly, because we don't do the things that the great unwashed want us to do, or indeed expect us to do, we usually fall between the gaps of the public imagination. I don't really mind this indeed I expect it. But it is galling when what is a essentially a complicated turf war between various factions of popular bigfooting causes so many problems that the resulting fallout causes damage to us who have absolutely nothing to do with the various guilty parties.

Some of you may know that for a while I was one of the management committee of a group called the UK Bigfoot research team. Or UK BRT. I joined it because I have always found the previous groups involved in UK Bigfoot research to be so toxic that they often ended up attacking us for, various reasons. So I decided that if I could be part of the management of the upcoming group, I might be able to steer them in the right direction. However, the UKBRT has now closed. This was nothing to do with me, I would like to stress.

And so, together with Guin Palmer, Richard Monck, and Vivien Powell we are taking the rump of the UKBRT and starting up another CFZ based study group, probably to be called the Wodewose study group, or maybe the CFZ Wodewose Project. It is in the very early stages of development, but I think it is going to be a very exciting project, and I urge you all to watch this space.



Tony Shiels (1938-2024)

Whenever I question the world in any way, I remember that a wise man once told me, “It’s just the way the fockin’ world works, fockin’ get used to it”. And this issue, in my I want to write about this man.

I have told the story on a number of occasions about how, back in 1994, (bloody hell, thirty years ago) my first wife and I were at the inaugural Fortean Times Unconvention, when I found myself sitting at the bar next to a larger than life Irishman. We sat drinking and passing the time of day when a journalist from the Guardian came off and introduced himself to us. “You two gentlemen are obviously important,” He began, “Could we have an interview?”

The Irishman, introduced himself. “I am the Wizard of the Western world, and this Saxon bollocks is Britain’s leading Cryptozoologist“. Of course, at the time, I wasn’t anything of the sort, being just a fat bloke who had recently been fired from the employment of the late Steve Harley, and who had published the first issue of a fanzine about cryptozoology. But on the following Monday, the Guardian introduced me to the world as “Britain’s leading Cryptozoologist”, and my career has never looked back.

The introduction to his Wikipedia page reads:

“Anthony "Doc" Shiels (born 1938) is a Salford-born artist, magician and writer. After attending the Heatherley School of Fine Art in London, he moved to St Ives, Cornwall where in 1961, following the resignation of Barbara Hepworth, he was made a member

of the committee of the influential Penwith Society of Arts. In St Ives he ran the progressive 'Steps Gallery', where he showed artists like Brian Wall and Bob Law. He had several solo exhibitions in London."

It goes on to explain his career as an artist, and how:

"In the late 1960s, after moving to live in Ponsanooth near Falmouth, he rediscovered stage magic - something he had been taught as a boy by his father and grandfather - and wrote articles for The Linking Ring and The Budget magazines. This included interviews with Ray Harryhausen and Ray Bradbury. He also published a trio of magic books: 13, Something Strange and Daemons Darklings and Doppelgangers which were sold in both the UK and the US and led to him being associated with 1970s bizarre magic."

And then:

"Between 1970 and 1974, he performed as 'Doc Shiels: Wizard of the West' at festivals and fayres in Cornwall, UK. This, presented with the help of friend Vernon Rose and the rest of the Shiels family, was a magic show that incorporated illusions such as the headless woman, the sub-trunk and the buzz-saw.

In 1975, he set up 'Tom Fool's Theatre of Tom Foolery', which started as a troupe of 'mummers', before worked closely with the Footsbarn theatre.

He was involved in a series of 'monster-raising' exploits in 1976, which gave him considerable media attention, particularly when he began 'invoking' the monsters with the aid of a coven of nude witches. His attempts to 'raise' Morgawr the Cornish sea monster, were covered by BBC TV, Fortean Times, local newspapers, and appeared in national newspapers such as the Reveille and News of the World. At around the same time he reported on sightings of the 'Owlman' of Mawnan. In 1977 he obtained photos claimed to be of the Loch Ness Monster which appeared on the front page of the Daily Mirror newspaper. This and his associated 'Monstermind Experiment' appeared in other media outlets including The Daily Telegraph and Radio One's Newsbeat.

Alongside the monster-raising, Shiels continued to perform both as Doc Shiels and as a member of Tom Fools Theatre, and he wrote several plays including Spooks, The Gallavant Variations, Nightjars, Cloth Owl the Winking Curtain and Dr Beak Hides his Hands. One of his plays, Distant Humps, was co-produced by Ken Campbell and co-starred Christopher Fairbank. He also had other magic books published, including The Shiels Effect, Bizarre and The Cantrip Codex.

The events of the 1970s and 1980s were covered in his own book, Monstrum, and in the 1996 book Owlman and Others by Jon Downes.

During this period, and in the years since, he continued to paint and have exhibitions. He considered himself an artist first and foremost, and his life's work to be a form of surrealism that he refers to as 'surrealchemy'"

During the two years, it took me to research and write my book about the Cornish owlman, my then wife and I became very friendly with Tony and his girlfriend, Julie. Tony and his wife Chris had been together since the mid 1950s and he had been with his girlfriend since sometime in the 1960s and they all knew about each other. How that worked I have no idea, and it wasn't (and isn't) any of my business. Alison and I spent quite a long time staying with them at Julie's house in Falmouth, and later at her flat in Redruth, and so I probably have more insight into the private life of a wizard than any other living Fortean researcher.

I remember, about 30 years ago, At the same time as we were intermittently living with Tony and Julie and Falmouth, I was – as I am today – the editor of a polymath music magazine which dealt with all sorts of other stuff as well. I was sent a copy of Forward the Foundation by Isaac Asimov. I have always enjoyed the series, and was looking forward to what I believed correctly was going to be the final novel in the series. However, it was not a fun read. Slowly, and an extra ably, most of the supporting characters died, and in the end the protagonist Hari Seldon was left alone. And I am beginning to know how he felt. This year, so far (and remember we are only seven months in) I have lost six or seven people who were dear to me, two of whom - Tony Shiels and my long term girlfriend Maxine - I loved very much indeed. I feel completely crippled by their loss, and although it is a cliche to say that my life will not be the same without them, how could it be?

In 1996 Alison and I split up, and she filed for divorce. It was a messy, painful time, and although now I freely admit that the breakup of my first marriage was mostly my fault, I didn't realise it then and I went through Hell. My father and I had a bitter falling out over my divorce and he wrote to me saying "may God forgive you, because I never shall".

He claimed that by being the first divorcee in my family I had brought shame upon it (conveniently ignoring the fact that both his nieces and his sister were divorced years before I was). But my father didn't let the truth get in the way of a good moral argument and he left me alone to deal with my pain. Help came from an

THE SUN

Stage kids are brought up on sex, violence, nudity and swearing galore

THE WEIRDEST FAMILY IN THE LAND!

SHOWMAN Doc Shiels is shocking audiences with a "rude and vulgar" show featuring his five children.

BY ANN BEVERIDGE

An average of 15 people a night are walking out of the sex show—which is backed by a £1,000 Arts Council grant.

Doc's 18-year-old daughter Kate appears topless, and his youngest girl, Lucy, 14, swears throughout the two-hour performance.

One of his sons, Ewan, 16, wears a pink travelling "nude" costume sporting three artificial breasts.

Doc—real name Tony—admitted: "The whole thing is very rude and vulgar."

But he added: "I don't believe it is unsuitable for children. It is naive to think that kids don't have swearing and violence in their ordinary lives."

Doc, aged 40, said the play, called Gallevant, is his own "tongue-in-cheek poke" at sex and violence on TV..

But one playgoer, mother-of-six Mrs Jill Williams, said: "I was horrified. I was even booing. It is a shocking waste of public money."

Bawdy

Mrs Williams, a builder's wife from Redruth, Cornwall, walked out half-way through a performance although she had paid 80p for a ticket.

Falmouth teacher Leslie Hutton agreed that the script was "outrageous."

But she said: "Although it is openly bawdy, there is nothing nasty about it."

At the moment Doc is touring Cornish theatres and village halls with the show, but he plans to take it to London.

He said he got many of his ideas from his own children Gareth, 19, Ewan, twins Kate and Meg, and Lucy.

Investigate

Doc, of Devoran, Cornwall, runs the travelling Tom Fool's Theatre and is well known for his street shows.

But now the South West Arts Council—which awarded his group—may look into his latest presentation.

Director Ian Watson said: "We could not see Doc's script as it is largely improvised, but we will investigate any complaints."



Freaky family . . . the Shiels on stage in their gear. They are Kate, left, Gareth, Doc, Lucy, Meg and in front Ewan.



unexpected quarter, and much to my surprise, Tony Shiels took up the mantle of an unofficial father figure, and if it hadn't have been for him, I don't think I would've got through it. It didn't take long before my father came back into my life, but I have never forgotten Tony's kindness, and whilst it always annoyed him when I referred to the period when he was my unofficial father figure, I continued to think of him as such for the rest of his life.

And my second wife, Corinna, always referred to him as her Wizard -in-Law.

There was always a bond between Tony and my wives and girlfriends. Both of my wives adored him and he them. And he also got on very well with Linda, the girl to whom I was engaged about 25 years ago. Back in September 2009, Corinna and I, together with one of our unofficially adopted nephews, Max, now Dr Max Blake of the forestry commission invasive species unit, went to visit him and Chris at their home in County Kerry, and spent a happy few days wondering about his slice of Southern Island with them.

It was probably the happiest time I ever spent with him.

We saw him again the following year when he was visiting Julie in

Redruth, but apart from letters and phone calls I never saw him again. In about 2013, my life became taken over with family health problems. First one of my stepdaughters, then my mother-in-law, and finally my wife were seriously ill (The final two dying) and I lost touch with many people from the rest of my existence. A few weeks ago, we were visited here by Thomas Jorgenson from Denmark who is a Fortean investigator. He asked me whether Tony was still alive and I told him that I truthfully didn't know. His travels took him down to Falmouth, and he went into the Seven Stars, which have once been both mine and Tony's watering hole of choice. He asked after the health of the good doctor, and the bloke behind the bar told him that as far as he was aware Tony had been dead for about 10 years. I was a little surprised because I figured that I would've heard if he had died, but took this news at face value.

The next day he went into a bookshop which had various items of Tony Shiels related literature for sale, and the bookshop owner told him that Tony'd had a stroke but was still alive although Chris had died a few years before.

Not for the first time during my dealings with Tony Shiels, I was reminded of the character of Merlin in TH White's epic novel the Once and future King. One never found out exactly what happened to Merlin; he was left in a weird Schrödinger like state of uncertainty, where nobody knew whether he was alive, dead, or kept prisoner by the wood nymph Nimue. And I thought that it seemed fitting for the same thing to have happened to the Wizard of the Western World.

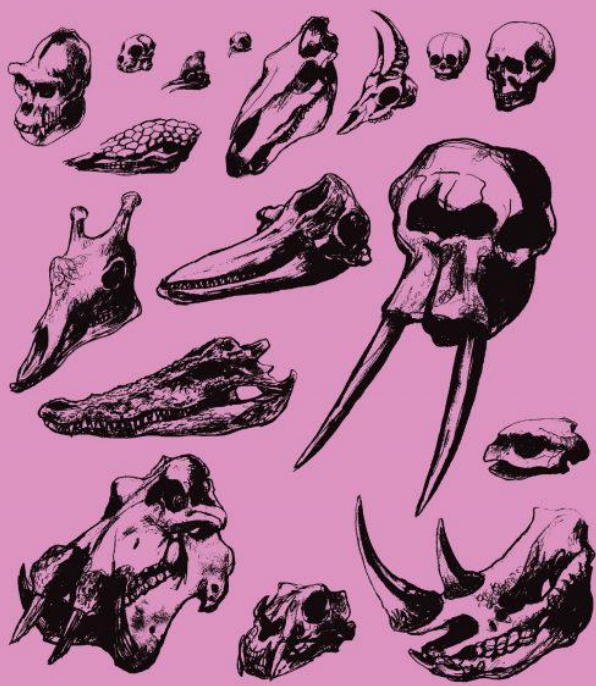
And then last Friday night I was in bed hoping to be propelled into the arms of Morpheus by those jolly nice people at Sanofi S.A., when Ian Squibbs, a regular contributor to my web TV show, and one of my favourites Loch Ness watchers told me that there was a rumour going around the net that Tony had died. It didn't take me long to check with the source of this rumour, who sent me to Kate, Tony's eldest daughter, who confirmed that the story was true.

And so, there we have it. One of the most important relationships in my life is now over.

The man who taught me more than anybody else about the way that the universe works is now dead. And, as I said above, although that is a cliche, my life will never be the same again

See you on the other side, Tony. I love you. I always loved you, and will always love you, very much indeed.

EXTINCTION



EVERYONE GONE FOREVER

extinction rebellion

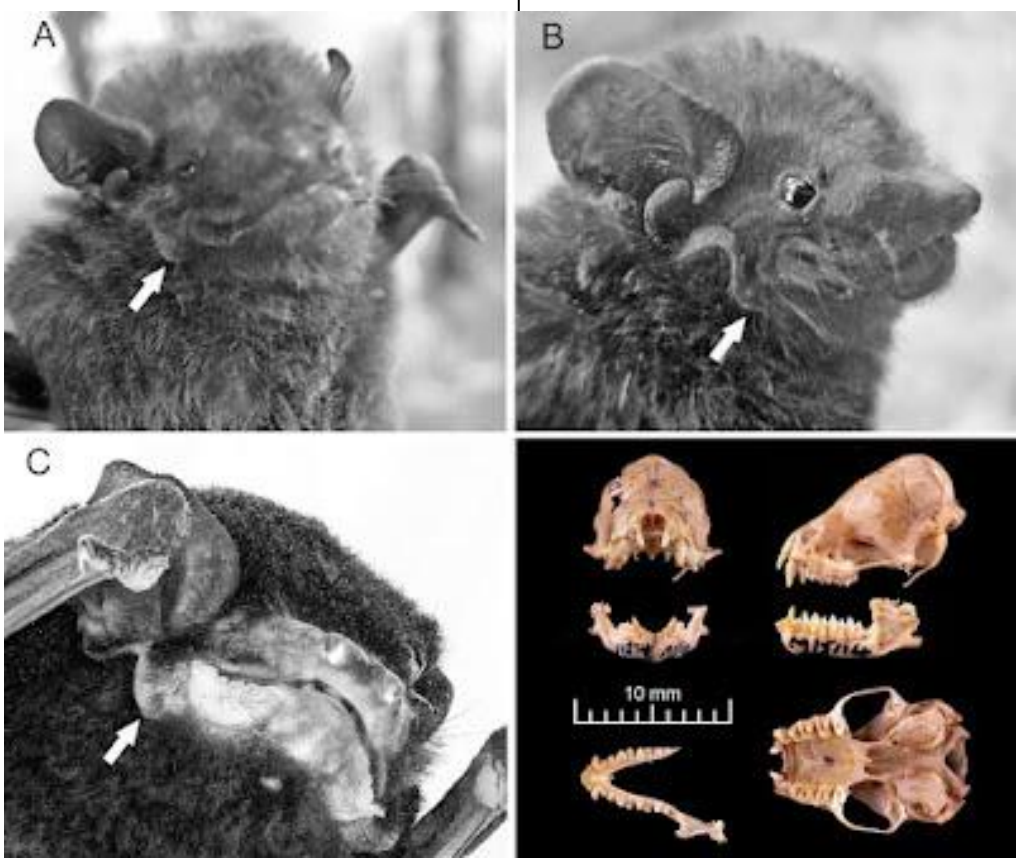
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Newsfile

New & Rediscovered

RELEASE THE BATS

It turns out that everything that we thought we knew about the lobe lipped bats of New Guinea is actually wrong. *Chalinolobus* is a genus of bats, also commonly known as pied, wattled, or long-tailed bats. They have fleshy lobes at the bottom edge of their ears and on their lower lips, hence the widely used common name. The hoary wattled bat (*Chalinolobus nigrogriseus*) is a species of this genus found in northern Australia and Papua New Guinea. Two subspecies are currently recognised. However, new discoveries have cast serious doubt on the existence of the species in New Guinea.



A new species of *Chalinolobus,*has recently been found *Chalinolobus orarius* sp. nov., from Papua New Guinea has been described based on DNA sequence and morphological criteria using material previously assigned to *C. nigrogriseus*.

This new species most resembles the eastern Australian subspecies of the Hoary Bat *C. n. nigrogriseus* in general size and appearance but is easily distinguished by an enlarged, rather than rudimentary lobe at the terminal outer ear margin. The new species might also be confused on external characters with smaller individuals of Australian Gould's Wattle Bat *C. gouldii*, from which it differs in having bifid first upper incisors and uniform dark dorsal fur. The inclusion of *C. nigrogriseus* in the bat fauna of New Guinea is now





in doubt, pending a re-assessment of the identity of *Chalinolobus* specimens in world museum collections. Locality records of all Chalinolobus spp. from Papua New Guinea have been reviewed. Most localities are below 60 m elevation in coastal savannah and woodlands.

The identity of specimens of *C. nigrogriseus* and *C. gouldii* from northern Australia should be reviewed to determine whether the new species also occurs in Australia. It really has put the bat amongst the pigeons.

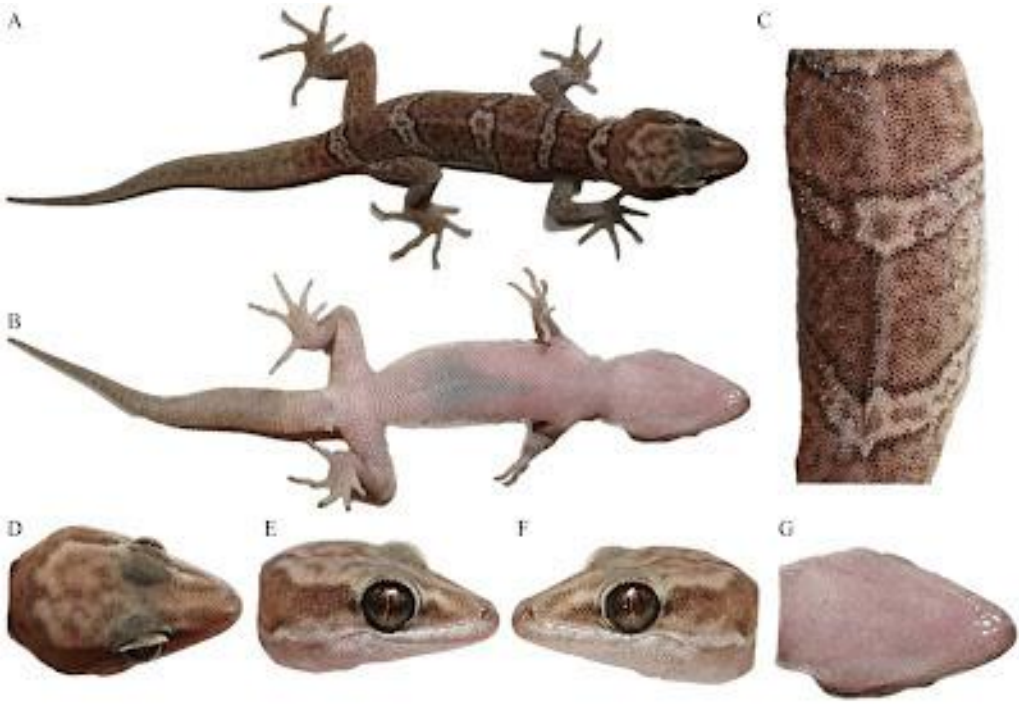
SOURCE: Harry E. Parnaby, Andrew G. King, Steve Hamilton and Mark D.B. Eldridge. 2024. A New Species of Lobe-lipped Bat (Chalinolobus: Vespertilionidae) from southern Papua New Guinea. Zootaxa. 5492(3); 301-324.



GROOVY GECKO

I don't think that I would have been so fond of geckos if I hadn't been brought up in Hong Kong. From a young age I became used to seeing these delicate, sucker toed, Little reptiles climbing up walls, or more often the outside windows of our apartment. For some reason they seemed to particularly like hanging around by the air-conditioning outlet, and every night I would easily go to watch them there. Now there is a new Chinese gecko.

A new Cyrtodactylus species, *C. laevis* sp. nov., from the dry-hot valleys near the Yarlung Zangbo River in Re Village, Jindong Countryside, Lang County, Linzhi



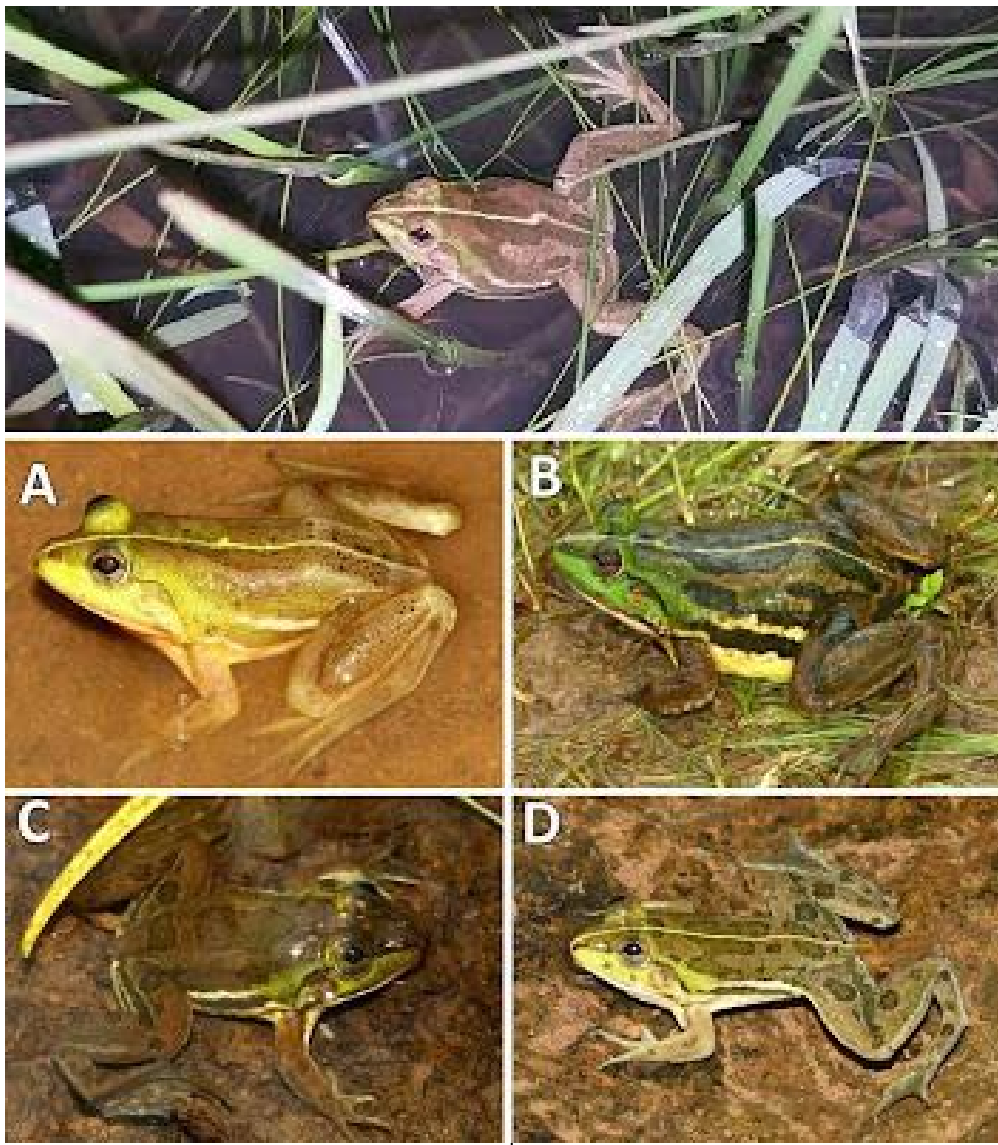
City, Xizang Autonomous Region, China, has been described based upon the integrative taxonomic results combining molecular phylogenetic systematics and morphological characteristic comparisons.

The description of *C. laevis* sp. nov. increased the total species number of the *C. tibetanus* group to three, and the total *Cyrtodactylus* species number in Xizang to six and in China to eleven. The new species is currently only known from the type locality with its extremely small populations and needs future surveys to reveal its distribution range, population status, natural history, and mechanisms so that the new species can coexist with *Altiphylax medogense.*

SOURCE: Shun Ma, Sheng-Chao Shi,Tian-Yu Qian, Lu-Lu Sui, Bin Wang and Jian-Ping Jiang. 2024. A New Species of Cyrtodactylus tibetanus Group (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Xizang Autonomous Region, China. Animals. 14(16), 2384. DOI: 10.3390/ani14162384

PECULIAR POND FROGS

Until now, the pond frog genus *Phrynoderma* is known with genetic representation from peninsular India and Bangladesh, with four described species. Although *Phrynoderma* is an historical available name, its recognition as a genus is very recent, compared to the sister genus *Euphlyctis* (skittering frogs). Pond frogs prefer freshwater bodies of low



elevation in coastal plains with a few exceptions.

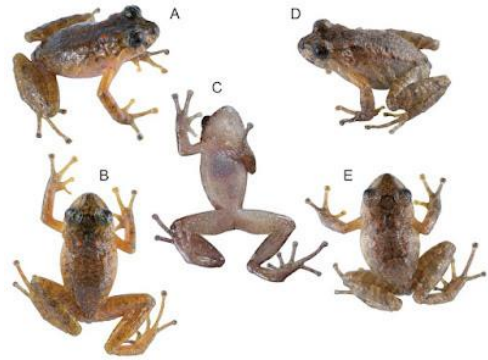
Now a fifth species of pond frog has been discovered: *Phrynoderma konkani* sp. nov. from the Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra, western India. This is, by the way, where the pond frogs have colonised the western coastal plains so thoroughly that this is where they have the highest species diversity in

the entire range of distribution of the genus. The new species is distinct from its congeners by a set of morphological characters including body size, head width, dermal projections on ventral side and dorsum patterns. Genetic studies based on mitochondrial 16S rRNA gene and nuclear Tyrosinase gene suggest the novelty from the congeneric species.

As the divergence of small sized Phrynoderma is recent (3.8 to 2.1 mya), the discovery of new species highlights the need of assigning the recent diverging linages to the species status from the conservation perspective in the backdrop of rapid urbanization and climate change scenarios, wherein distribution ranges for most of the amphibians are shrinking.

The fact that until now the members of this species were considers as part of a much better known species actually is bad news for amphibians, because it means that the range of the original species has shrunk further than had originally been thought,

SOURCE: Omkar Yadav, Amrut Bhosale, Yogesh Koli, Sujith V. Gopalan, Gurunath Kadam, Akshay Khandekar and K.P. Dinesh. 2024. A New Species of Pond Frog Phrynoderma (Anura: Dicroglossidae) from the Coastal Plains of Maharashtra, Western India. Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity.



PRETTY PRISTAMANTIS

Although I am always excited to read of the discovery of new species of animal, for some peculiar reason, I am even more excited to read about the rediscovery of species which were thought to be lost. The most recent of these is a tiny tree frog called *Pristimantis ruidus* from approximately 6 km northeast of its type locality, in a montane forest from the western Andes of southern Ecuador.

This species, which was described by John D. Lynch in 1979, based on specimens collected in 1922 (the year my mother was born) by George H. Tate, was previously known only from the type series, all specimens originating from a single locality (Molleturo, Provincia Azuay, Ecuador, 2317 m elev.). The rediscovery occurred in November 2022 in the Reserva de Conservación Quitahuaycu, Molleturo Parish, Azuay Province. The two specimens, both females, are characterised by rough skin with numerous rounded









low warts and tubercles on their dorsum, a W-shaped occipital fold, tympanum and tympanic ring not externally visible and by the lack of cranial crests, characters that correspond with the description of the holotype.

An investigation of its phylogenetic relationships, based on two mitochondrial genes (12S and 16S rRNA) and one nuclear gene (RAG-1) was carried out. These analyses reveal *Pristimantis ruidus* as a member of the subgenus *Huicundomantis*, being most closely related to *P. philipi*, a species with a distribution restricted to the paramo of the same mountain region (Macizo del Cajas). *Pristimantis ruidus* co-

exists with *Pristimantis jimenezi*, three additional species of *Pristimantis* and one *Noblella* with uncertain taxonomic status. This rediscovery underscores the urgency of implementing effective conservation and monitoring measures for the few remnants of the original ecosystems from western Ecuador, which face ongoing anthropogenic threats and harbour a diversity that remains insufficiently studied.

SOURCE: Juan C. Sánchez-Nivicela, Diana Székely, Luis A. Salagaje M., Nicolás Astudillo-Abad, Jaime Culebras, Ernesto Arbeláez Ortiz and Paul Székely. 2024. One hundred years of solitude: The Rediscovery of Pristimantis ruidus (Anura, Strabomantidae) in the southern Andes, Ecuador and its phylogenetic relationships

GET YER SKATES ON

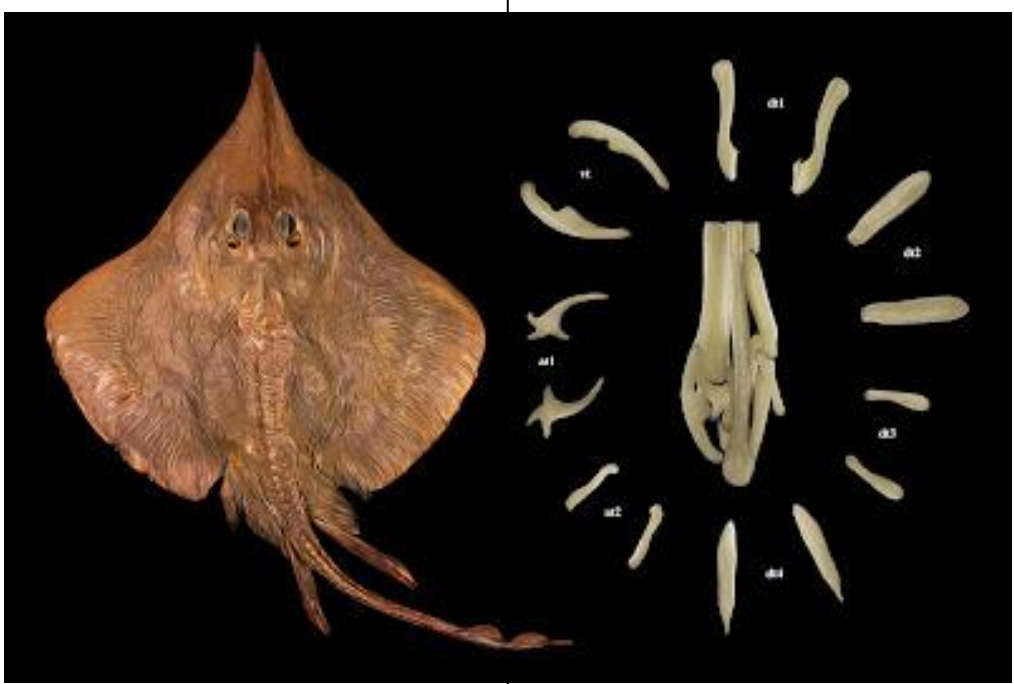
A remarkable new deep-water skate,



Leucoraja longirostris n. sp., is described based on eight specimens caught during different expeditions to the southern Madagascar Ridge in the southwestern Indian Ocean. The new species differs from all congeners by its remarkably long and acutely angled snout.

Furthermore, it is apparently endemic to the Madagascar Ridge, distant from the known distribution areas of all congeners. In addition to *L. fullonica* and *L. pristispina*, *L. longirostris* n. sp. is also the only species with plain dorsal coloration. Furthermore, the new species is the only *Leucoraja* species with an external clasper component dike and, besides L. wallacei, the only one with four dorsal terminal (dt) cartilages. The shape of the accessory terminal 1 (at1) cartilage with four tips is also unique within the genus. A new approach for the visualization of the clasper characters is introduced based on 3D models of all skeletal and external features. This enables a much easier and much more precise interpretation of every single clasper component, of the entire structure, and, in particular, the relationship between external features and skeletal cartilages.

I am always fascinated to hear about how new technology can help cryptozoological and zoological investigations, and feel sure that with the adventive even more new



technology, exciting new discoveries await us all.

SOURCE: Simon Weigmann, Matthias F. W. Stehmann, Bernard Séret and Hajime Ishihara. 2024. Description of a Remarkable New Skate Species of Leucoraja Malm, 1877 (Rajiformes, Rajidae) from the Southwestern Indian Ocean: Introducing 3D Modeling as an Innovative Tool for the Visualization of Clasper Characters. Biology. 13(6); 405.

A CUTE NEWT

I first came across the Chinese fire





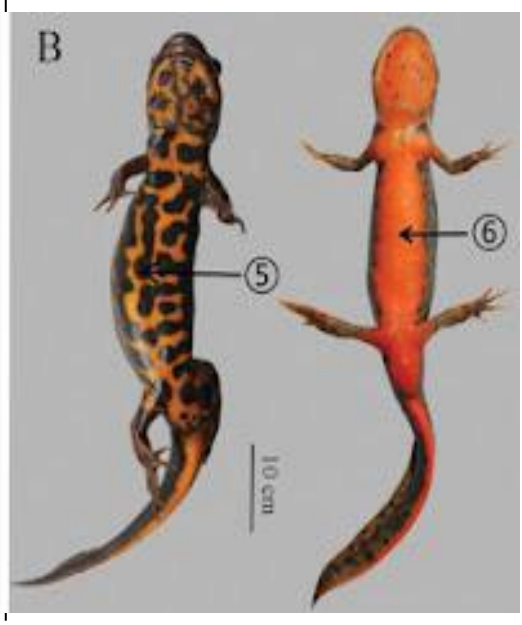
bellied newts on my 10th birthday when I was given one as a present. I don't know which species, but I suspect it was *Paramesotriton hongkongsiensis*, The only member of the *Caudata* known from the former British colony, and known in English, unsurprisingly, as the Hong Kong newt.

A new Species of Chinese fire bellied newt species, *Hypselotriton huanggangensis* sp. nov., has been described based on nine specimens collected from Huanggangshan Mountains, Yanshan County, Jiangxi, China. Morphologically, the new species is characterized by the combination of nine external characters: (1) obvious black patches with clear boundaries on the whole body; (2) ground color of the dorsal body tan; (3) ground color of venter bright orange; (4) skin rough; (5) vertebral ridge weak; (6) fingers and toes overlapping when forelimb and hindlimb adpressed towards each other along body; (7) postocular orange spot absent; (8) small white warty glands around the eye; (9) two discontinuous longitudinal lines formed by white warty glands from neck to lateral parts of tail.

Furthermore, the new species and H. fudingensis are geographically isolated by a series of high mountain ranges, including the Wuyishan and Jiufengshan Mountains. The number of Hypselotriton species is now 11.

SOURCE: Zhihao Jiang, Song Huang, Qiangyong Fan, Lin Cheng, Yanan Gong, Zhangbo Cui, Tierui Zhang, Wenjun Lan, Zhian Zou, Xuanzhi Huang, Jean Raffaëlli and Jinmin Chen. 2024. A New Species of the Newt Genus Hypselotriton (Amphibia, Urodela, Salamandridae) from Jiangxi Province, southeastern China. ZooKeys. 1208: 331-346.





Man Beasts (BHM)



This is a follow on from something I wrote in the last issue

The idea of there being flesh and blood giant higher primates living undiscovered in parts of England's green and pleasant land is purely ridiculous. However, these things are reported, and on occasion they even leave behind physical evidence of their existence. So, what are they?

In the closing months of 2002 we became involved in a spate of "British Bigfoot" sightings, and we seem to be in the middle of another spate of these things at the moment.

One of the most recent manifestations of this type of phenomenon was in February this year, when a group of hikers led by a man called Ziggy Austin, found what look like giant human footprints leading along a stretch of the coast path which goes past some ancient woodlands at Maidencombe, which have existed since the ice age .

Unfortunately, they didn't take more photographs, and we only have one photograph of an isolated footprint.

The news story reads:

I interviewed Ziggy and he told us and some detail about the event of that faithful walk along the Coast path. Apparently, there is one place where the coast path gives a steep turning and it appears that these footprints came out of the woods and continued along the path for some yards until there is another junction in the path and they disappeared back into the woods.

Ziggy described the footprints as being about the size of his feet plus, 50%. Size



11 shoes are just under a foot in length, which makes Ziggy's guesstimate that the feet that made the prints in Maidencombe an estimated 18 inch in length. Far too large to be those of any human being except for those suffering from one of several conditions of pituitary gigantism, and the idea that a hairy and rather spry giant was wondering around barefooted in South Devon in the early part of the year does seem to be somewhat unlikely.

Richard Freeman, together with a small film crew, went to the location with Ziggy and his interpretation of the



photographs is that somebody was walking along barefoot and slid in the mud slightly causing a an artificially elongated footprint.

When I first became team leader of the UKBRT Southwest team I decided that I would book a series of study days. I'm not going to call a few hours doing some exploration and experimentation in a wood in Torbay an expedition, because in doing so that would belittle the proper expeditions which my organisation, the Centre for Fortean Zoology have carried out around the world, and which usually involve anything up to a month under canvas under extraordinarily difficult conditions often with a fair amount of physical danger involved. But I felt that a series of days like this would be advantages in order to teach the scientific method and how we do things to the less experienced team members.

I am disappointed to say that of the eight or nine people who were going to come, most of them didn't turn up. Some of these absentees with the perfectly acceptable and upsetting reasons. Others less so. However, at lunchtime on Sunday, the 30th of June 2024 my old friend, carer, colleague, and deputy director of the CFZ, Graham Inglis drove me from my home in North Devon to a leafy and strike the ramshackle car park in a hamlet called Maidencombe on the Eastern edge of Torbay. There we liaised with Richard Monck, His partner, Andreana and her eleven year old son, Toby. And let me say, that these three were complete bricks throughout the day, and I am very grateful for all their hard work and effort, especially the bits in involving pushing me in my wheelchair across challenging terrain.

Sadly, for a number of reasons, we were unable to liaise with Ziggy Austin who was the person who first reported seeing outsized footprints on the coast path leading through the woods to Maidencombe Village. I had planned for the various members of the team to interview him as they saw fit. I was then going to question them afterwards and what they thought of the testimony that



they had heard. That was a great idea in theory but didn't work out in practice. However, I would've liked to have heard from Richard what he thought of the eyewitness testimony.

It was a beautiful midsummer day, search the ones that one remembers from one's childhood and that are very seldom experienced by adults. Apart from being in a wheelchair and being manhandled up the hill, I felt very much like I had when I was a 12-year-old and played at being characters from Swallows and Amazons, or one of my other favourite books of juvenile literature.

With Richard and Graham pushing and pulling my chair we managed to get quite a long way up the hill towards the beginning of the coast path. And Richard, Graham and Andreanna, utilising the just three words app and the information that should be given to us by Ziggy went off to look for traces of footprints, but more importantly to explore the wood, put up trail cameras and do a sweep of the woods with EMF meters and compasses to find out whether there were any electromagnetic anomalies.

Now, this is where it starts to get weird. Toby and I got on like a house on fire, and I asked him whether he thought that he had the mindset of a 64 year-old or whether I had the mindset of an 11-year-



old and we agreed that it was probably the latter. Several very strange things happened to him and me as we stayed in the vicinity of a park bench which should be placed there by a benevolent Torbay Council. The first of these was that, suddenly, we could smell an immensely strong aroma of candlewax, or rather lit candles. I don't think I've ever smelt this so strongly outdoors, and there was not only nobody in sight, but the nearest house was visible about a quarter of a mile away. We had excellent visibility from where we were and there was nobody else in sight. I sent to Toby, who – like me half a century previously to him – had been a Cub Scout, off to the limits of where I could see to (although I am sure he would've been perfectly safe, I was not going to let him out of my sight when I was in loco parentis) and much to my surprise, the smell of candlewax could still be discerned for quite a distance in all directions away from where we had been sitting.

Then it stopped as suddenly as it had started. Then, we both clearly heard the first of three woodknocks. I will go no further than saying that this was indicative of something wouldn't banging something else wouldn't. Indeed, we managed to replicate it quite well when Toby, and my instruction, took my walking stick, went up to the tree line and banged it ferociously against the trunks of several trees Maybe on the other side of the wood there was



an 11-year-old boy with somebody else's walking stick doing exactly the same. I am not saying that this is indicative of a sub or superhuman primate trying to contact us, it was just two bits of wood banging together. But there is no obvious reason for it, the wind was minimal, and in view of the rest of the stuff that happened, I think it bears, having been noted.

It was a beautiful, warm afternoon and – as elderly gentlemen do – I was beginning to feel dozy. Suddenly, in the middle of a conversation I was having with Toby about his various adventures in the scouting organisation, I heard a young female voice with a broad Devon accent saying "alright?" interrogatively in my left ear.

When I told Graham about this on our way home, he pointed out to the there is something about the sea air that carries voices. He had been walking along the coast path and her conversation. He turned around to see who was talking, and realised that it was coming from somebody on the beach hundreds of feet below him down a steep cliff. I was reminded of the murder in Agatha Christie's last novel which took place along the Torbay coast path, but it has very little relevance towards the events of the afternoon.

And finally, the away team (as my Star Trek infused imagination had dubbed them) returned. They had seen no signs

of footprints, and had found no electromagnetic anomalies whatsoever. They did, however, put up the trail cameras In a triangular deployment based upon the things that the CFZ expeditions to Tasmania had learned over the years. Supplying them like this means that if something is photographed we can find out it's gait and its speed and we have more than one view of its behaviour.

There are two reasons for utilising trail cameras. Of course, when you have a reasonable expectation of being able to photograph something rare, beautiful, or enormous, one should use the best quality trail cameras that one can afford. However, on an occasion such as this, where there is every likelihood that they are going to be stolen, treat trail cameras as potentially consumable items of equipment. In this case, in particular, I think that the chances of us filming a Bigfoot or any other anomalous animal practically zero. No, the reason that I wanted to use trail cameras was because I wanted to see if the animals which one would normally expect to find in South Devon woodland, are there.

At the time of writing we are at the moment involved in a Sasquatch research project in southern Canada, where the areas in which the Sasquatch have been reported and heard are now almost entirely denuded of their native wildlife. This either means that the Sasquatch have eaten them all, or – more likely – that the appearance of a new, very large, and potentially threatening creature has scared the normal denizens of the area away. I wanted to see whether the same thing has happened in Maidencombe Wood.

As I have written elsewhere, in January 2003 when I had my first and only encounter with one of the things that are popularly known as British Bigfoot I noticed that there were a whole string of electromagnetic anomalies, which I now believe were caused by subterranean veins of a magnetic iron ore called Magnetite, in the target area, and these had the effect of rendering useless much of our electronic equipment and even one of our car batteries. I have read of these anomalies elsewhere, and I am very interested to find out whether we can make such records in any of the places where investigations take place.

The only other thing to report is that the await team heard a definite "whoop" while they were in the woodland. This is another thing, like tree knocking, that has been reported from places where BHM phenomena have been claimed. There are, of course, a myriad of different explanations that could be found for such noises and there is no reason to believe that they were made by an unknown animal. However, we would be remiss if we didn't make note of it.

Someone, (probably Richard, but I haven't asked him yet) will go back in about a month time and collect the trail cameras so that we can announce the next results then.

Newsfile Xtra

PINE MARTENS IN NORTH DEVON

Regular readers of my inky fingered scribblings, here and elsewhere, will know that I am particularly interested in the rarest of all British mammals; the pine marten. 28 years ago, in 1996, the year that my first wife and I split up, I published a book called 'The smaller mystery carnivores of the WestCountry' in which, amongst other things, I predicted that it would be proven that the hypothesis put forward by Langley and Eldon in 1977 when they stated that pine martens had been hunted to extinction across England by the end of the 19th Century, was simply wrong. They were, I said, likely to be relict populations of this rare and beautiful carnivore across the country, especially in the four counties of the WestCountry. Within the past 10 years, I have been present to be correct, with populations of this species being founded in various



parts of the Midlands and southern England. However, natural population have not been founded, yet, in Devonshire.

A few years ago a dead pine marten was found on the edges of Dartmoor, but it had been microchipped and appears to have been illegally moved from a population in Wales. However, within the last couple of months, new evidence merge that there are pine martens on my veritable doorstep.

Our old friend Suzi Marsh wrote to me with some fascinating information which inspired this editorial that I wrote for the parish magazine:

"Welcome to another issue of the Village News. I have written about all sorts of things in these pages over the last few years, and no doubt will continue to do so for as long as I am editor, and for so long as the magazine is published. But I think this issue is unique in that for the first time I'm asking you to help me with my professional life.

This is a pine marten. It is the rarest mammal known to live in Britain today, and until a few years ago it was thought to have been hunted to extinction across all of England and only to be found in parts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Some years ago I wrote a book called



'The Smaller Mystery Carnivores of the Westcountry', which – in part – covered the possibility that this beautiful and engaging species still lived in parts of England, including parts of Devon.

This is a still from video taken a few weeks ago in Covelly, and it is unquestionably of a pine marten. The person who gave it to the person from whom I received it (an old friend of mine) said that I was welcome to use it, but did not want to be identified or interviewed. My friend did a bit of digging, including talking to people working as gamekeepers, and it turns out that there have been a lot of sightings of the species in the region over the last year, and the gamekeepers suspected that they had been introduced.

It is, actually, illegal to introduce species to an area without a license. It convenes the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and I believe this is punishable by a fairly hefty fine. However, there is a very active subculture of people calling themselves 'introductionists' who, frustrated by the length of time it takes to apply for such a license, and even more so, the number of hoops through which one has to jump, have taken the law into their own hands and carried out very successful reintroduction programmes of their own. I am not one of these people, although I broadly support them and their activities.

Have you seen any of these animals in Clovelly or elsewhere in the region? Even better have you got photographs or video of them? If so, can you get in touch with me and tell me your experience? Contact me by email or on Facebook messenger. My telephone number is 431413.

If you are the person responsible for the introduction, please be reassured that I would love to hear the details of how you did it, but that I will not divulge your name to the authorities.

Thank you very much for letting me rant on about one of my favourite subjects for this editorial. I assure you all that we will return to more conventional parish magaziney subjects next issue.

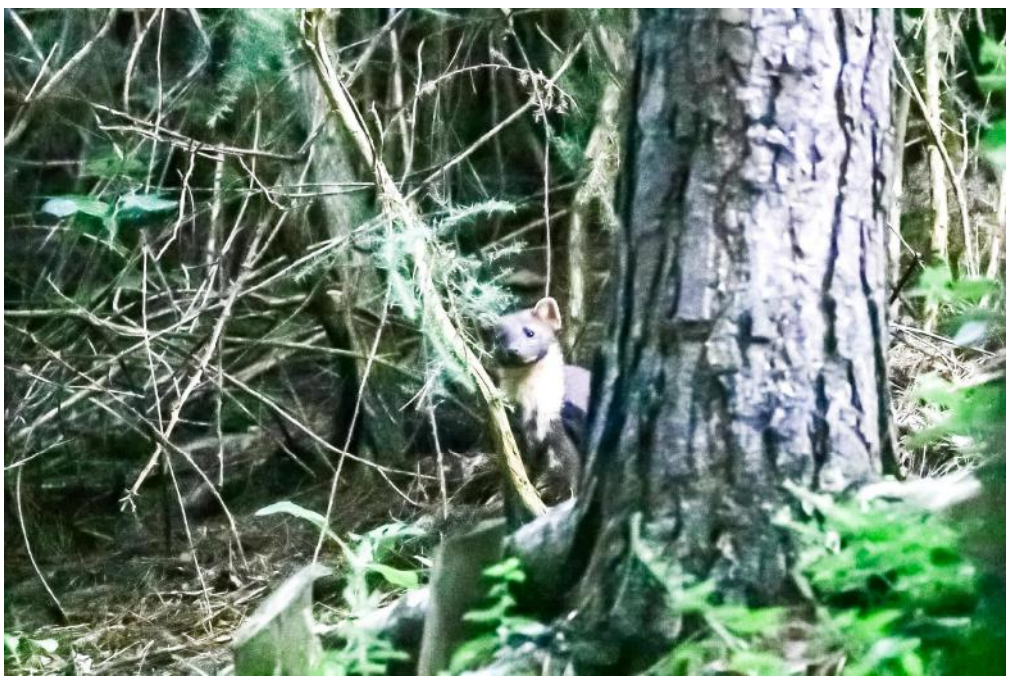
Yours, as ever,

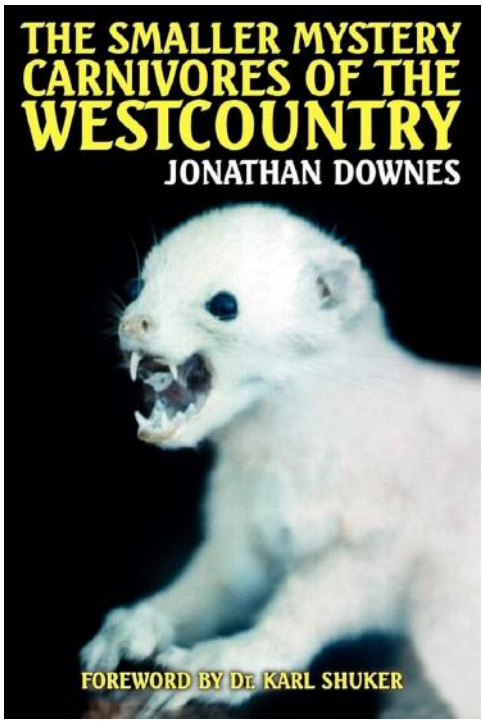
Jonathan Downes
(Editor)"

I wasn't actually expecting any replies, so I was overjoyed to receive this one:

'I don't know if this will be of any interest, Jonathan, with regard to your appeal for information about pine martens in this area. A friend of mine who lives in Buck Cross used to walk a lot in the woods there and used to sit quietly sometimes and observe the wildlife. She told me about 20 years ago that on two occasions she had seen a pine marten. I told her she ought to report this but she got it into her head that if she did the creatures would be trapped and killed, so she refused. Seeing that it was not my sighting and her strong feelings about the matter I didn't feel that I could do anything myself. So it might be possible that the martens have been around for a long time, they are very illusive. When I lived in Northern Island the managers







of one the forests was astounded to find a pine marten in a live trap put out for grey squirrels. They had been believed to be extinct for many years. It made news headlines.

Hope you get more useful information about this.

All good wishes,

Kay Wardle'

The story doesn't end there, however. The video from which I took the still on the previous page has now been removed from Facebook, and the explanation as to why is coming. However, I did find these photographs which were allegedly taken somewhere in "North Devon" during the summer of 2023, together with an anecdotal report of another one seen and photographed near Combe Martin within the last few years.

This is where the only known museum specimen of one of the indigenous wild Devon pine martens cam be found. A photograph of it can be found within the pages of my book.

On top of this, Devon Wildlife Trust have announced their plans to reintroduce the species to Dartmoor and Exmoor, and so, the debate as to whether the original population still survives in parts of the county will soon be purely academic. My personal thought that they have probably always been here and just kept themselves hidden. They are criptic creatures at the best of times. However I have presented evidence to suggest that the lake HG Hurrell conducted a pure unofficial introduction program in the 1950s and 60s, and the peculiar vents surrounding the discovery of the carcass on the ad of Dartmoor has convinced me that unofficial introduction -ists are also at work.

When it comes down to it, I don't think it really matters where they come from. The most important thing is that because pine martens are slowly recovering their ancestral lands, Mother Nature is in the process of repairing herself and to misquote Russell Hoban, the pine martens can carry on with their "pine marten work" and our sadly beleaguered ecosystem can slowly recover.

An Alien Big Cat in 1933 in Germany

There have been several series of sightings of animals identified as lions, or big cats, or wolves, early in the 20th century but these were few and far between (for Austria, see Taake 2022, .Kramer 2020). Then came 1933, the year of monsters, when sea-serpents appeared in every port and all the lakes of the world teemed with monsters. This alien big cat, mainly identified as a lynx, began to haunt the valley of the Lahn, in the modern federal state of Hesse.



This text is based on newspaper sources. I had no opportunity to search out and consult official papers. This means that all I describe is clearly second hand, but as this series of sightings and killings is among the very first such long-durance ABC incidents in Germany, this treatment appears to have some justification. There are always allusions to other press reports in the ones I have collected, and a summary of all material published in the press in these one and a half years would probably result in a book length treatment!

I first came across the case in a foreign newspaper, the *Irish Daily Telegraph* which reported, on 6 February 1934 and on p. 8:

"Mysterious wild beast takes toll in Germany. Some beast of prey, which has not been identified, is taking toll of the deer in the forests around the Lahn, and is providing a first class mystery (says a Berlin message).

From time to time, young deer are found with the head missing and deep claw marks on the flanks. The latest discovery of this kind was at Obermoerlein [Ober-Mörlen]. A fortnight earlier a headless deer, obviously killed by some wild animal, was found at Driedorf.

Cases were recorded last spring and summer, and they increased towards the autumn. Despite the efforts of foresters and huntsmen no trace of the marauding beast could be found.

ULRICH MAGIN



The nature of the kills points to a lynx having been at work, but no lynx has been reported in Germany for more than a century. There has been no report of any lynx escape from a zoo. The matter, therefore, remains a mystery."

I never managed to find German press accounts for the case, although I searched many papers. Then came the digital age and digitalized German newspapers. Finally, after discovering that the mysterious ABC had had the nickname "the roe strangler", I managed to trace additional press reports. I proceed chronologically.

It all started late in 1933. On 2 December 1933, the "General-Anzeiger" of Bonn writes that several dead roes had been discovered "in the forests between Marburg and Gießen" recently and suggested that the "roe killer" was a lynx.

The next account I found was in the "Riesaer Tageblatt und Anzeiger" on 23 January 1934, on p. 8:

> "The roe strangler in the Westerwald [the mountain range north of the Rhine between Koblenz and Siegburg]. The mysterious roe strangler, which has been ravaging the Westerwald's *game population for several months, has not yet been detected despite the greatest efforts of hunters. It is now reported that in the previous*

week eight roe deer were found with their throats bitten through in the Dausenau (Lahn) and neighbouring hunting districts. At the beginning of this week, a woodcutter in Driedorf found a dead roe deer that was missing its head. An examination carried out by several forest officials revealed that the head had been bitten off by a predator. There is increasing suspicion that it is a lynx. The hunters of the Westerwald have been given the duty to examine all tracks when they find torn animals, so that the territories can finally be freed from this evil."

On 29 January 1934 the "General-Anzeiger" reported a new kill, possibly by a lynx. A long piece was published by the "Gießener Anzeiger" on 15 February 1934 which explored the lynx option. I reprint is, in my translation, in full.



"The Lynx

by General Major ret., Rolf Mohr, Gießen

If I speak out on this matter again – for the last time – it is not to take a stand against the representatives of other views, but because I think it is time to bring the case to a preliminary conclusion. For it seems as if the robber, if it is not lying dead somewhere, has at least preferred to leave the local area and has moved the centre of his activity elsewhere. The roe killers with their typical traces – head cut off, deep claw cuts on the back and on the sides of both sides, game only slightly bitten on the neck and sides, the rest of the body untouched – have suddenly stopped completely. The few pieces that have been found recently bear different traces and are more or less "mangled" in such a way that dogs and foxes undoubtedly played a part. No sensible person or hunter will deny it, or has done so up to now, that poaching dogs are terrible pests of hunts, while foxes are more likely to kill sick or weak game. Hence their name "forest police".

But I still remain convinced that this death on four legs, which raced through our forests as a "en mass head-hunter", must have a completely different, specific cause, and I do not base this solely on the knowledge of tracks and claws, but above all on the views of the hunters, who judge from years of personal experience and, after all the traces and appearances, have expressed their opinion unanimously and without wavering:

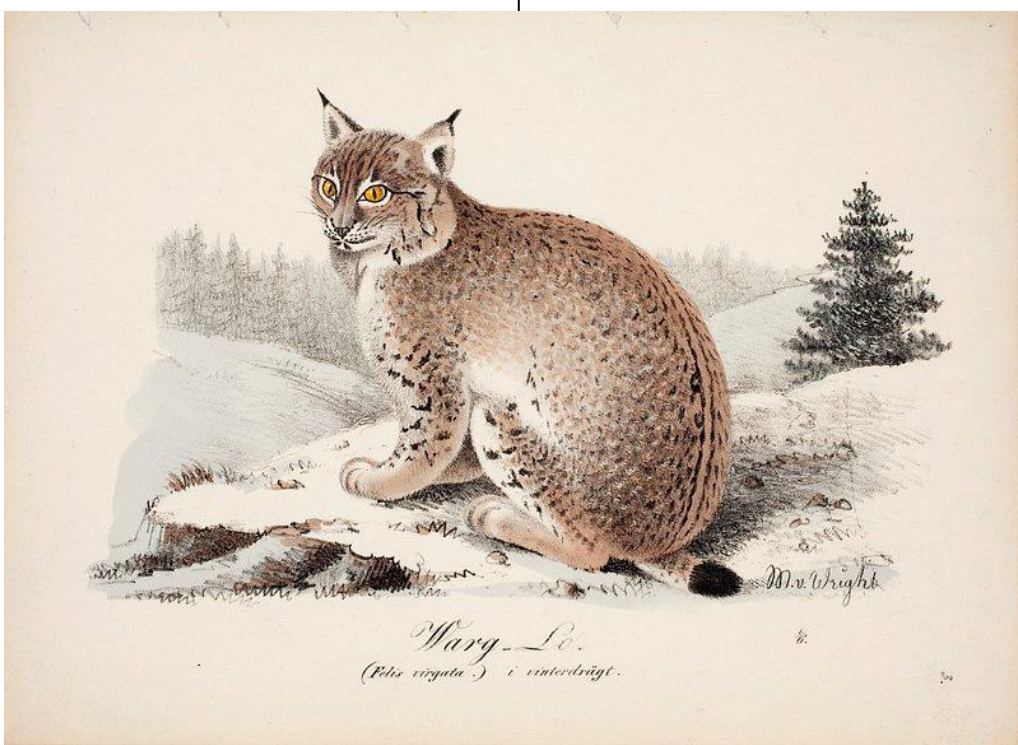
"Only a lynx can be the culprit."

As to the question "Where from?" "I have already commented sufficiently why it has not been hunted down despite all efforts. I would like to point to the example of the black panther near Zurich, whose presence was known with certainty and through numerous deer killings. [This refers to a case in Switzerland where a panther had escaped from a zoo and spent several weeks in the wild.] It was sufficiently identified, evaded all stalking and persecution, until an accident caused by heavy snow and severe cold brought him to a miserable end. I would also like to point out how endlessly long, often years, it takes until a known strong boar or deer finally is

shot. Woodworkers, berry pickers, etc. often see such sought-after animals, yet they always know how to avoid the hunter. I know this from my own experience in the Vosges! And it is much more difficult to kill such a hardened, unstable predator like the lynx, which appears here today and 50 kilometres away tomorrow.

Old Brehm [a German author who popularised zoology in the 19th century] already says about it: "The lynx often stays in one and the same area for a long time, roams through it in all directions, wanders for miles in one night, taking well-travelled paths without any shyness, right up to the vicinity of the villages. When it visits isolated farmsteads, it may return to the same area after several days and explore them again. It chooses the closest shelters for its campsite, without paying much attention to any traffic that may occur. The best roe population will be annihilated by a lynx that manages to evade the hunter's vengeful lead for some time."

Do not these words hit the nail on the head for what happened here?! In the past there have



been poaching dogs too, more than hunters could bear, but nobody ever encountered such a mass murder with always the same characteristics?!

I am firmly convinced that more observations have been made by uninvolved people, walkers or hikers, than was previously known.

The fear of being "laughed at by people who know better" has probably suppressed some important reports.

It is all the more commendable that two witnesses now have the courage to make their experiences known. When I withhold their names for the time being – but I am happy to give them to doubters – it is only because I want to protect them from questions, etc. The first incident was reported to me by a gentleman who is particularly highly respected in Gießen and well-known for his animal research, and who will probably write about his experience himself. He said: "In mid-November 1933, on one of my hikes, I walked the high path to Königsberg and further in the direction of Frankenbach and stopped on the forest path leading to Hohensolms, looking towards the Helfholz. Then a strange animal crawled out from the edge of the forest and retreated in a flat arc back towards the forest. I couldn't distinguish the colours and details of its built from a distance of 150 meters. I estimate the duration of the observation to be around eight seconds. Despite the brevity and incompleteness of the observation, I was very interested in this incident.

Judging by its appearance (outline and gait), it was neither a cat, nor a fox, nor a dog. As an observer of animals in zoological gardens, I had the impression of a small tiger due to its size and gait. I didn't think of a lynx, nor did I know anything about the killed roe deer or the assumption that a lynx was the author. I only heard about the newspaper articles at the end of November 1933."

And now the second case: A lady coming from Hamburg said the following: "I drove on the 4th of this month from Gießen by train towards Gelnhausen when I saw an animal standing between Garbenteich and Lich at the edge of the forest, which I initially thought was a fox. As the train approached, to my great surprise I recognized it as a lynx that I knew well from the zoological garden. I saw


Ein Luchs wie er sich saeumt .
N. 63.

exactly the tufts of hair sticking out of his ears (brush ears), the short thick tail and the grey spotted fur. Confusion with another animal is completely impossible.

It was a lynx like the ones I have often seen and observed.

The distance was about 50 meters, the animal stood completely still and in full light. I was not aware of the newspaper articles with the "lynx theory". I came to my observation completely uninfluenced and without bias and immediately after arriving home I expressed my great astonishment about the incident. I still say that most definitely 'I saw a lynx!'"

These are two incidents whose truthful description cannot be doubted. There will still be unbelievers, as was and always will be the case. And just in time came the description of the experience by two Marburg men on June 10, 1933, a time when most of the roe killings took place between Gladenbach and Marburg, which was published yesterday in the "Gießener Anzeiger". Again a proof on the thorny path of enlightenment! Lucky hunting!"

In addition to the General Major's article, the paper brought a new correspondence with a new possible identification – signed with the greeting of the times …

"A new letter.
A good friend for 20 years, an avid hiker and nature love greeted me with the words: "It's a shame that you weren't with me half an hour ago. I just had a strange encounter on the forest road with a strange animal, and you as an old hunter could certainly have provided information." I was vividly reminded of these words when reading the latest article about the lynx. At that time the gentleman gave the same description of the encounter as Mr. E. G. with the final statement that it could only have been a foreign animal, such as a lynx. I immediately suggested a badger, but he denied this as he knew badgers from school days. When I caught two badgers while digging in the presence of that gentleman in the autumn, he explained: "You were right then, it really was a badger." I would like to assert with the same certainty that the alleged lynx observed in the Rothaar Mountains, just like the animal that was hit by a train between the tracks and which was mentioned in an earlier treatise, was nothing other than

a badger. The short ears – auricles – of the badger can mimic the hair tufts of the lynx even at a close distances. And our badger, which hardly knows enemies above ground, can behave as carelessly, stupidly, foolishly bold as was claimed in yesterday's paper regarding the supposed lynx, but never like that astute, cunning robber who was able to evade all stalking and observation for so long. I would like to take this opportunity to note the following: several decades ago a dispute over the same question was fought out in the Neudamm-based Deutsche Jäger-Zeitung with the final result that a foreign predator was ruled out. The roe heads, whose bearers may have died as a result of illness, gunshot wounds or strangulation, were only afterwards separated from the body by local predators, including cats, and taken to a quiet hiding place for enjoyment. It is my firm conviction, with very few exceptions, that only poaching dogs can strangle roes.

Heil Hitler!, county geometer ret. Grünberg. Rhine Hesse"

Increasingly, a lynx was ruled out as the mysterious predator. On 24 February 1934, the "Bürener Zeitung" said that "the often voiced suspicion that a lynx is at loose can easily be referred to the realm of fable. For example, at Oberlahnstein it was observed that a large Alsatian chased a roe."

And, in two final articles, the ABC was buried. I cannot judge whether a lynx was in the Westerwald at the time or not, I only document the press coverage.

On 24 December 1934, "Der neue Tag" said that a lynx had been seen on 23 December, at Herborn – and had been identified as a wolfhound. A larger piece appeared still three months later, in the "Mittelrheinische Landes-Zeitung" of 13 February 1935, on p. 9:

"The fairy tale of the lynx as a roe killer

Poaching dogs and foxes are the predators
Dillenburg: A year ago the news wouldn't stop that a lynx was up to his devilish mischief in the territories of the local forests, for example in the Biedenkopf and in the Wetzlar districts. In fact, under initially mysterious circumstances, roe deer were found, most of which were missing their heads. In some cases, people even claimed to have observed the lynx. In many cases the game was sent to Gießen for examination, and the well-known hunter and expert for game diseases, Privy Councilor Prof.

Dr. Olt of Gießen emphatically pointed out that a lynx could not, under any circumstance, be considered as a roe killer. As is well known, it has been clearly established in the last few weeks that poaching dogs and also master Reynard are chasing roe with a lot of zeal. It was possible to catch dogs and even the fox in the act. These were always the culprits in the areas.
Now the news of the killing of a lynx in East Prussia is spreading through the papers again, with the conclusion that this big cat is still native to the forests of that province. Privy Councilor Pros. Dr. Olt of Gießen declares that this is not the case under any circumstance. The lynx captured in the Nanjock forestry district in East Prussia crossed over from Lithuania. The penultimate lynx migrated there 80 years ago and was also captured after it appeared. The following factual report shows how easily a lynx is shot:

"The forester's dog in Nanjock caught the robber and finally made him jump up, whereupon the lynx was shot." Since no game has since been killed, its appearance in East Prussia probably only lasted a short time. – It had a total length of 1.21 meters [4 ft] and weighed 20 kilos. Such immigrant lynxes cannot be viewed as the remaining population of a predator that was once native to our forests; it died out in Germany almost 100 years ago. In the period from 1773 to 1796, five lynxes were shot. A few years later a lynx was killed in Silesia and in 1817–1818 in the Harz Mountains. The last lynx in the Germany ended in Württemberg in 1840."

In this paper, I have left out several press accounts which describe individual killings and sightings, as most are repetitive, and have concentrated on summaries of the case.

However, I would add, in conclusion, that this was not the first "roe strangler" reported in Germany. I located an account in the 13 December 1897 edition of the "Saale -Zeitung" which says that at Köthen (Saxony-Anhalt) 17 strangled roe deer had been discovered on 12 December in the Grimmesche and Bärenthorensche hunting grounds. It was assumed that a lynx had killed them.

Notes

- Kramer, André: Der „Bauernschreck" in der Steiermark. Ein früher Fall der Alien-Big-Cat in Mitteleuropa? *Jahrbuch für Kryptozoologie* vol. 1, Nr. 1 (July 2020)
- Taake, Karl-Hans: Vom „Bauernschreck" der Lavanttaler Alpen bis zu den französischen „Bestien": Wie Angriffe geflohener Großkatzen zu Wolfsangriffen umgedeutet warden. *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* 22 (2022), Nr 1, pp. 136–155, DOI: 10.23793/ zfa.2022.136

Some Fortean Zoology from Germany

Ulrich Magin

"There are millions of persons who would think this a dreary existence. But the challenges—the excitements—the finds" – Charles Fort said in "Lo!" (part III, chapter 28). With many German and Austrian newspapers now available online in digitalized form, one can search for almost any topic (although OCR does nor work too precisely with the old German Fraktur typeface). While researching totally different topics, I often come across other relevant fortean data, and I note down material that refers to animals. From this pool of notes, I'd like to select four topics for which I have found items that will be new to most readers in Britain (and in Germany, too). The first is folkloric and about cryptic behaviour of animals, about snakes in stomachs and toads in holes, then come the cryptids, the discovery of feral people, lake monsters, and finally real instances of lynxes killed around or beyond the time of their extinction.

Snakes in stomachs and a toad in hole

The belief that snakes crawl into the open mouth of sleepers and live in their stomach is an ancient one, and I have found several instances from the German-language press. Take this rather long report from the "Kärntner Zeitung" (Austria) from 30 December 1924:

An adder in the stomach of a living human.

The daughter of a rich Swiss landowner, twenty-one-year-old Marie Rosser, died in the Bern University Hospital on December 18th. The girl lay sick in the hospital for weeks and suffered unspeakable torment, especially in the last week before she died. Despite their best efforts, the doctors at the hospital were unable to determine the cause of her illness and professors from Geneva were called to the girl's bedside, but they were no more able to help her than their Bernese colleagues. A few days ago a famous French internist, professor at the Sorbonne, had even appeared at the bedside of the girl who was constantly complaining of terrible stomach pains; the Parisian professor examined her in detail, but was unable to determine the cause of the torment. The girl died in the hospital and the director of the hospital, Professor Braun, asked the parents to allow them to clarify the strange case of illness in the interest of science

by dissecting the unfortunate woman's corpse. The dissection was actually carried out and led to an almost sensational result. Professor Braun found a live, well-developed otter in the stomach of the unfortunate woman. The snake appeared so suddenly that the professor who was doing the dissection was almost bitten by it. It was now clear to the doctors why the unfortunate girl had to endure such terrible torture. The doctors believed that she was suffering from a stomach ulcer and initially prescribed a strict diet for her. The less food the unfortunate woman ate, the more unbearable her pain became. The otter in the stomach could not feed itself and bit through the stomach wall of the unfortunate woman. When the young girl was finally allowed to eat some food, the otter also satisfied its appetite and the patient found peace for a while. Now the question arose as to how the snake got into the girl's stomach. The parents were unable to give the professor any information about this. It seemed as impossible to them as it did to the doctors that the young girl could have swallowed an adder. Finally the father remembered that his daughter had taken a trip to the mountains about two months



ago. During the trip, the young girl felt intense thirst, which she quenched at a forest spring. The father of the deceased was even able to indicate the place where the forest spring was located. Now the case was clear to the professor. Adders are found in the spring water from which the young lady unfortunately drank. It therefore seems probable that the unfortunate woman had swallowed a small adder without noticing it. The snake developed in the girl's stomach and bit the stomach wall. The death of the intelligent and pretty young lady, who attended the University of Bern and also played a certain role in the society there, arouses general regret in Bern.

This is the standard tale told in all instances, and I have not looked after more reports on the case. Did the young lady suffer from a serpentine parasite such as a worm?

The next case is even younger, coming from 1930. The "Der sächsische Erzähler", the newspaper covering the towns of Bischofswerda and Neukirch in Saxony, had this short piece om a Savoy stomach snake on 23 February 1930, on page 6:

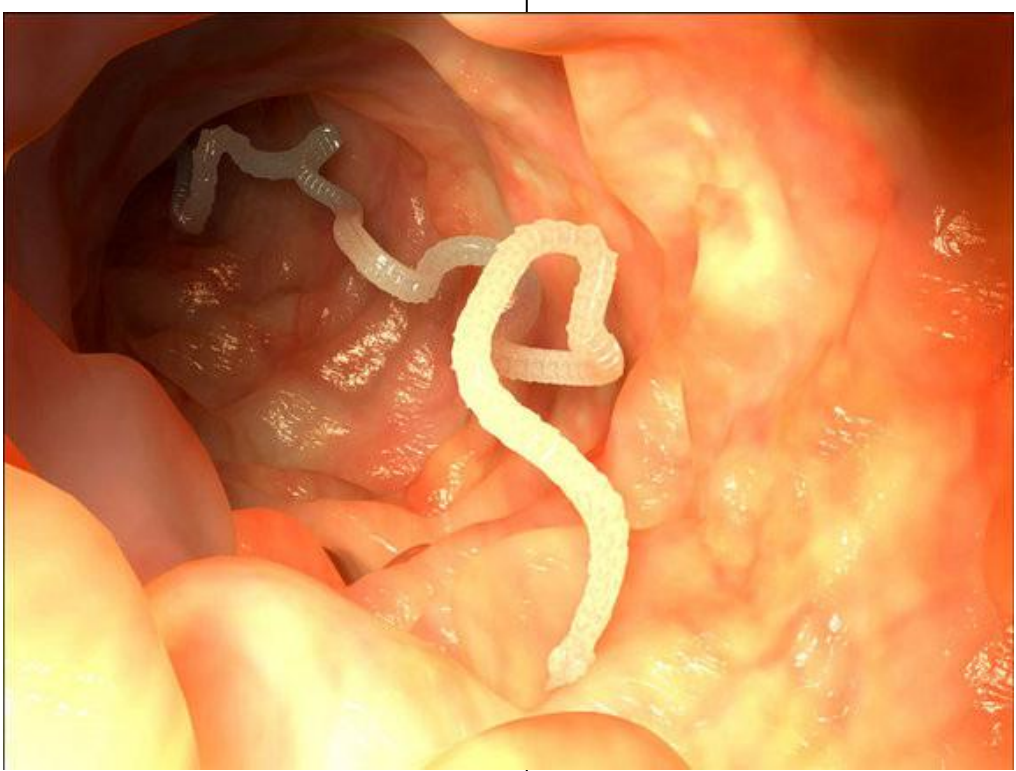
The snake in the stomach. […] A farmer's wife from Upper Savoy had been complaining about increasingly severe stomach pains for several months. Finally, she recently felt compelled to see a doctor. He was surprised to notice strange stomach movements during the examination, for which he could not give any explanation. That is why he thought it would be appropriate to x-ray the diseased organ. One can imagine the doctor's astonishment when the X-ray plate revealed the lively movements of a snake about forty centimetres [1.5 ft] long. Now the farmer's wife also remembered that she had drunk from a stream in the open field in the summer because she was very thirsty. She must have swallowed a snake that had just hatched. However, it remains inexplicable how the animal, which found enough air and food in its stomach, was able to survive and grow against the effects of stomach acid for months without having to make its way through the intestines. Perhaps the operation to be carried out to remove the annoying parasite will shed light on this question.

Which are valid questions indeed. The stomach snake is still with us, although more recent news reports tend top come from more exotic places. In contrast, I think that

reports about toads found in solid rock are slowly dying out, most likely because modern mining techniques prevent any such discoveries anyway. The case I present here concerns a toad in wood and comes from modern Wrocław in Silesia, Poland. At the time of the report, the city was part of Germany and called Breslau. As the "Kölnische Zeitung" wrote on 15 September 1858:

> *— In Breslau, while splitting a block of wood, a worker recently found a still-living toad that had grown into the wood and fell out during the splitting. Unfortunately, the reporter only saw the animal dead because the worker killed the toad immediately. As he stated, it was made movements and stared at him with its eyes. The cavity in the wood was elongated and round in shape and had the shape of a flattened lemon. The walls of it were covered with a greasy substance, which was, as it were, etched.*

In my paper "Das Phänomen der Kröte im Stein" (*Zeitschrift für*





Anomalistik, vol 17 (2017), p. 124–146) I have collected several dozen newspaper and magazine reports from the 19th century reporting and discussing cases of toads in holes in Germany.

Wild children and men

Newspaper reports on feral people still read shocking today. They often talk about handicapped children who were abandoned in the forest because their parents felt they were a burden on them. Also, the 19th century newspaper reports rarely display any sensibility or sympathy with these children. They are mainly short as well, but each tells a story that one would like to know more about.

In contrast, the news stories from the 20th century are more refined. The noon edition of the "Karlsruher Zeitung" warmly reported from Pforzheim, halfway between Karlsruhe and Stuttgart in the federal land of Baden-Württemberg, on 18 October 1895:

> *— A worker made a remarkable discovery in Pforzheim near Eutingen on the banks of the Enz [River]. There was a half-clothed young man sitting there, apparently so frozen that he couldn't speak a word. Clothes were now brought in and the young man was taken to local detention in Eutingen, where he was given soup. It turned out that we were dealing with an unfortunate patient, an epileptic who was unable to speak. The local police officer took the poor person to the district office. His*



relatives were soon identified and informed, who then picked him up in a car and took him home.

Another instance is in the "Hörder Volksblatt", 25 May 1905, p. 4:

— Returned to the animal stage. Reports from Klostergrab in the Bohemian Ore Mountains say: A few days ago, several woodcutters who penetrated the thicket of a neighbouring forest made a remarkable discovery. Sitting on a stone block in the middle of dense bushes was a half-naked girl, dressed only in a few rags, in a completely wild state. Unable to escape, the child, who was about 13 years old, remained sitting on the rock and stared shyly at the newcomers. When asked questions, she only made inarticulate sounds. One seems to be dealing with a deaf and mute child who was perhaps abandoned years ago. The discovery caused a great stir here and the authorities tried to clarify the origin of the unfortunate little one. It is reported from Aussig that there is a suspicion that a couple who

had been there years ago got rid of the child by abandoning it.

Aussig is the German name of Ústí nad Labem in the Czech Republic, the largest city close to the place of discovery. This case was reprinted in many German newspapers, among them the "Lüdenscheider Tageblatt" (26 May 1905) and the "Ratinger Zeitung" (27 May 1905),

The last account on an ape man gives no location. It forms part of a longer piece on the hardship endured by carnival exhibitors, and, from today's perspective, reads very insensitive. The German is as vague as my English translation – why he quarrelled with his girl friend and why a man masked as ape had to go to prison is not made clear. But the clip proves the fascination of alleged ape-men at the time. It is from the "Frankenberger Tageblatt" (Saxony), 12 November 1927:

The fact that show stall owners who work with freaks have to constantly be alert in order to avoid failure is proven by the case of an alleged ape man who aroused the public's emotions years ago. This ape-man, who had sewn himself into a skin, was the sensation of numerous fairgrounds. He was so adept at deceiving those around him that the entrepreneur wanted to extend the man's contract, which he refused. The ensuing argument with his fiancé was overheard and the ape-man was exposed as a fraud. The consequence for the "honest" man was that he had to swap the bars of his cage in which he was paraded every day with the much more stable ones of a prison cell ...

Lake Monsters

Lake Monsters are not unknown in Germany, with creatures reported from the river Rhine, the lakes Chiem and Constance, and in regions that are now part of Russia. In 1034, the Loch Ness Monster had become global news, and local newspapers resurrected older tales from all over Europe, hardly a day went by in 1934 without some new sighting in the seas or a lake. The following case is taken from the "Ohligser Anzeiger" of 21 March 1934, on page 5:

Miscellaneous. A lake monster in East Prussia. Loch Ness cannot lay claim to being the first to have a humped lake monster, because, according to an old Prussian legend, East Prussia already had its lake monster several hundred years ago. At that time there is said to have been a pond near Löbegallen, of which a

local forester repeatedly used to say that a monster or even the devil himself lived in it. He had observed that every bird that flew over the pond suddenly fell in the middle and sank into the water. One day, in order to solve the mystery, the forester tied a thread around the foot of a wild duck and let it fly over the pond, holding the other end of the thread. However, when the duck was in the middle of the pond, the thread broke, the duck fell and disappeared into the water. When the forester wanted to ride his horse close to the lake, the horse suddenly shied away and stopped, trembling. No matter how hard the forester tried, he couldn't make any progress. Suddenly, to his horror, he saw a humped white mass moving forward in waves on the water. Then the monster disappeared.

Löbegallen today is called Tolstovo and is situated in the Kaliningrad Oblast. That birds cannot cross monster-infested or diabolical bodies of water is a wide spread tale – I have heard it from an American tourist I the 1980s about Loch Ness, it is also told about the volcanic Avernus lake in Italy and the lake Laach in Germany, and several other lakes. The description of the monster in East Prussia is purely legendary and vague.

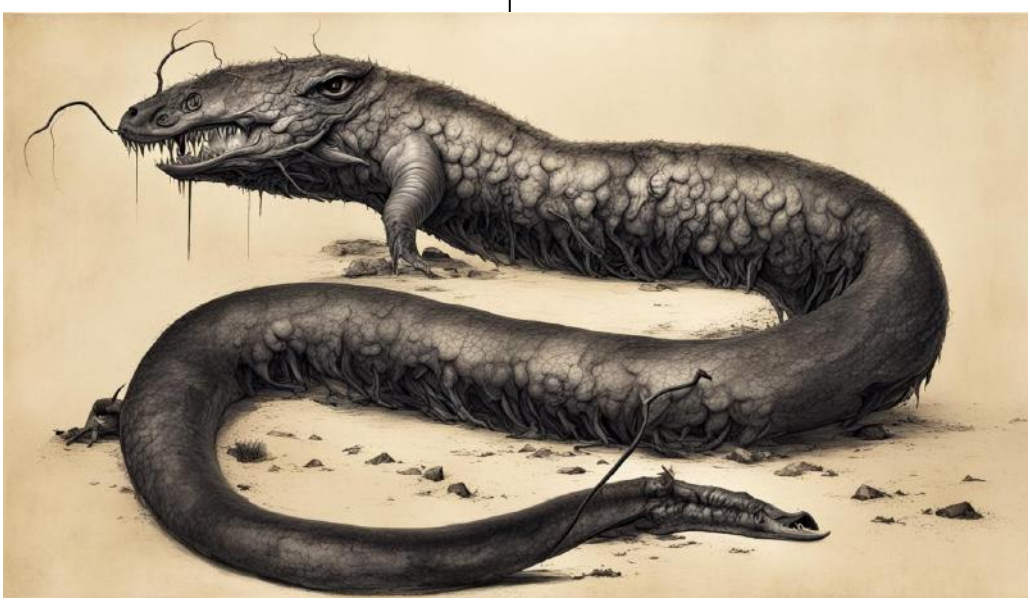


The Ukrainian "tatzelwurm"
Tatzelwurm-like creatures or modern dragons are also spread all over Europe. Many cases have been reported from the Appenin and Sicily in Italy, from parts of Greece, from the Carpathian Mountains, the Pyrenees – and from Ukraine.

The piece is all too short but gives a source that might be worth following. We read in the "Badische Presse" on 9 June 1926:

Johann Georg Kohl, perhaps the best German travel writer – his descriptions from what was then Russia, Poland, Hungary and Austria. England, etc. have become classics – Kohl tells us that in some areas of southern Russia the belief in the presence of gigantic snakes that even venture into the villages is widespread. The German settlers, he says, also share this belief. Nothing has been heard of such South Russian boas in recent times. Couldn't extraordinarily large adders have given rise to this legend? Tschudi reports on a specimen of Coronella austriaca that he found in an Alpine meadow: it was several meters long. Our grass snakes sometimes reach an almost uncanny size. Just as Kohl's Ukrainians believed in their giant snake, many people in the Alps still believe in the famous Tatzelwurm today.

An Alpine adder several metres long would be as surprising as a real tatzelwurm!



Lynx

The lynx, once a dreaded beast of prey in the forests of Central Europe, had become rare in most parts of Germany by the mid 19th C, and was thought to be extinct by the end of the century. Still, we sometimes come across reports of lynx being shot, but most are brief.

From the Retyezat Mountains, then Austria, now in Romania (modern Munții Retezat), and a part of the Carpathians, we read in the "Norddeutsche allgemeine Zeitung" of 11 August 1882:

> *(Austrian hunts.) In the Retyezat Mountains there in January a lynx 1.40 meters long was shot, a very strong animal. The last one was killed there in 1863.*

Closer to Central Europe was the "deer strangler" of 1897, an old German word for lynx. Many such "deer stranglers" caused panics and posses in the early 20th century. The brief news report in the "Saale-Zeitung" from 13 December 1897 reports from Köthen in Saxony-Anhalt.

> ** Köthen, December 12th [17 strangled deer.] In a short time, 17 dead deer were found in the Grimmes and Bärenthoren forest areas; the animals had been strangled. It*





is assumed that a lynx or a large wild cat lives in the forest area and has strangled the animals.

And, even closer to the centre, at Villingen in the Black Forest of Germany, a lynx was killed, as told by the "Bonner Zeitung" and the "Landbote" of Sinsheim on 27 December 1922:

Villingen, December 22nd. A very rare animal in Germany, a lynx, was killed during a hunt in the Kappel district. The animal measured 1.30 meters.

At these late dates, the lynx can hardly have been natural ones but may have escaped from an owner.

Yet, in the still more densely populated Lahn valley, a lynx was reported in 1933 and 1934 which killed many deer and was probably a native animal. As far as I could



ascertain, zoologist seldom use old newspaper reports, but the surveys of the colleagues, and their extinction dates might nor be correct. (When I looked for newspaper reports on wolves killed, I often found that the last wolves killed as appeared in the newspapers was several dates younger than their alleged extinction date.)

Luckily, both lynx and wolves have returned to Central Europe.



DISCUSSION DOCUMENT: DUTIES FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Ronan Coghlan

The CFZ had had regional representatives for over twenty years now. Some of them have done remarkable things, some nothing at all, and some something in between. I originally intended my first wife to manage the list of regional reps, but as history shows, that never happened.

Ever since Alison and I split up I have been intending to ask someone else to take over the job, and finally a few months ago I got around to it. Ronan Coghlan has agreed to take over the onerous task, and has come up with a list of suggested roles for regional representatives, which I post here for public discussion.



[1] In the event of a reported sighting of a mystery animal in the representative's area, all possible data should be gathered and forwarded to CFZ. Likewise, news of further developments should be sent on as they occur.

[2] Representatives should try to discover if there were any sightings or other anomalous events in their areas in the past, but should only send on stories of UFOs or ghosts if they consider them important, as otherwise their is the danger of CFZ being swamped.

[3] Representatives should, if possible, look into local folklore to discover if stories of anomalous events in the area occur. Liaisons should be initiated with the Bird, Butterfly and Conservation Officer in their areas where possible. They should, in addition, try to gather an archive of Fortean zoological material from their local studies libraries.

[4] Representatives should initiate liaisons with groups dealing with anomalies and nature in the area, provided they consider them and their personnel suitable.

[5] Representatives should have the option of offering sales of books to local bookshops. However, some might find this distasteful and so this should not be regarded as an actual representatives' duty.



MARTEN HUNTING

Hi guys,

As a sort of adjunct to the longer piece that I wrote elsewhere in this issue, I want to make an appeal for information about every sighting of pine martens that you can find in Southern England going back to the beginning of the 20th Century.

There is no doubt that there are pine martens all over the place now, and many of them are the result of official or unofficial reintroduction programs.

However, as I said in my 1996 book, I strongly suspect that there are some





pockets of the original population still in existence in parts of the country, and I would very much like to try and work out which of the current population is which. The other thing which I prophesied in my book was that the other species of Marten that was once believed to live in Britain, actually still does so.

The Beech Marten or Marten Cat was a well-known species on the British mammalian list until the late 19th century when a chap called Edward Alston decided that all British Martens were actually pam martens. This being despite all the available evidence, pointing to the opposite conclusion.

The main morphological difference between the two species is that, as you can see from the photographs of beech martens on this and the previous page, is that the beech marten has a white chest bib, rather than the tan coloured one sported by the pine marten. The two species are found alongside each other across Europe, and it seems both unlikely and logical that they would not have survived until the present day in the British Isles.

If there are relict populations of pine martens that have survived for the past century and a half in various parts of England then, logically, if I am correct (and I think that I am) it will not be long before beech martens are described as well.

So please send all the reports you can get to me or to Guin I email or by Facebook messenger.
Yours as always
Jon



Cryptid Conference UK
20th July 2024
A Very Special Day

It has been many years since I last attended a conference as a speaker. In fact, the last time this happened was at the Weird Weekend 2016 in Hartland Devon for the CFZ (Centre for Fortean Zoology).

When I was contacted by a young man called Daniel Lee Barnett, to appear as a last-minute replacement as a speaker from the US had sadly been unable to travel over, what could I do but, accept. My name had been suggested by the founder of the CFZ, Mr Jon Downes, who is a good friend of mine and someone I have worked with while I lived in Devon.

Following a video call with Daniel and Jill (Daniel's Nan), I decided that the best way I could do a presentation, would be to overhaul an old presentation from my first Weird Weekend Talk in 2015. It would be the first time I had spoken on this subject since 2016 and I have to say that I was nervous and worried I might do my usual trick of waffling on too much and exceed my thirty-minute time slot, especially as I only got the presentation updated less than forty-eight hours before the event. It also means that I have decided to dust of my Infinite Realities Research name and see how things progress.

On the morning of the event, I was picked up by Monika of M and M Film Productions International. Monika is working with Daniel to produce a documentary film based on his journey to date. On our arrival, just before the doors opened, it was a little hectic as these events always are, I have helped put on a number of events and conferences and those last few minutes can be as stressful as all the planning you have put in beforehand. I briefly met Daniel and his Nan, Jill, before setting up my table and preparing for what was to come.

The day was kicked off by the MC for the day, Tony Badham who, alongside Daniel flitting around and occasionally taking over MC duties, kept the crowd engaged throughout the day and kept the whole thing running to the rather tight schedule. Now, as I was not on until 13:30, I had time to sit back and enjoy some of the speakers, as well as chatting to conference goers, speakers and catch up with Jon.

Let me give you a brief rundown of the speakers and a brief look at their presentations for the day:



First up was **Paul Howard**, a paranormal investigator who has had a long history of looking into paranormal phenomena. Paul is currently part of South Coast Ghosts and spoke about his interests and some of his experiences during his career. Paul had a table next to mine and it was very interesting to talk to him during the day and look at a very interesting picture that was captured during a recent investigation. Paul was followed by a young researcher by the name of **Harlem Jones** who delivered a fascinating talk on his investigations into phenomena associated with Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. I have known of the strange happenings and sighting around this area for years and Harlem has done a great job and will be someone I'll be watching and checking out his work.

Chris Allsford gave a brief talk on how he became involved with Daniels project and some of his other work. His talk may have been brief but, as one of the more local researchers it was good to know who there is in the area and some background on their areas of interest. Following Chris, it was time for the **Bigfoot Round table**, which featured Daniel, Chris Allsford, Richard Freeman (CFZ), Brian King Sharp, Harlem Jones and Gwendolyn Purcell. This was a very interesting part of the day where the researchers discussed a number of interesting topics related to cryptids and Bigfoot in general, including the case for and against a UK Bigfoot and the possibilities of a more paranormal aspect to hominid cryptids in general. The

information that came across in this one-hour section gave the audience a lot of information to debate and consider.

As the Bigfoot round table drew to a close it was time for me to make my way to the stage in preparation for my presentation. Before I knew it Tony was introducing me to the audience, and I stood there thanking everyone before delivering my talk around some of the issues investigators face with photographic and indeed observational evidence. Before I knew it, I had reached the end of my talk, in sufficient time to give the audience a few minutes break, as there were no questions forthcoming. I left the stage, satisfied with my talk, to make way for podcaster and researcher, **Gwendolyn Purcell**. Gwendolyn delivered a fascinating talk that detailed her own experiences with Bigfoot and also looked at the best ways to gather evidence as a researcher, along with some stunning photos, her talk gave a great insight into what it is to be both an experiencer and what that does to make you want to learn more and research the subject.

Next up was a cracking half hour in the company of **Ron** and **Joe** who presented a live broadcast of their podcast **Wild and Weird West Virginia**, linking directly with the conference and even taking some questions from the audience. Having this link up live was something different and gave the audience a chance to be a part of the podcast, one which I'll be catching up with from now on, I'm sure. Ron and Joe were superb hosts and really kept the energy levels up and the audience engaged. It was then time to welcome





Jon Downes to the stage. Jon is the founder of the Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ) and gave a somewhat light-hearted talk on how he started the CFZ, his encounter with a UK cryptid and much more besides. A legendary figure in the field of Cryptozoological research, Jon is also an author, podcaster and jolly good chap to boot, with a wealth of knowledge that is second to none.

Finally, it was time for conference organiser, author and podcaster **Daniel Lee Barnett** to take to the stage. For a fifteen-year-old he has achieved, in just a year or so, more than some do in a lifetime. Daniel detailed how he got started researching after watching and episode of Expedition Bigfoot with his grandfather to writing a book published through the CFZ and on to making a documentary of his journey and the amazing evidence he has already gathered. Daniel is an inspiration to so many, that his future is likely to be more of the same. Daniel also introduced a special trailer for his upcoming documentary, followed by a special guest appearance from researcher **RPG**, who appeared live on video link and delivered just a few minutes that spoke to the very core of your being as he spoke on setting an intention before going into nature and treating every trip into the forests with the upmost respect, just as the native American tribes do by leaving offerings of tobacco. It is this connection with nature that will help your expeditions to bring forth so much more than you might believe possible. These few minutes had a profound

impact on me, especially in the passion and sincerity you could here in his voice, I wonder how the rest of the audience felt too…

Following the culmination of the days silent auction for some one-off signed photos and a baseball bat, there was a surprise guest announced in the form of a live video link and talk from **Ronny LeBlanc**. Sadly, I did not get to see much of this talk due to chatting with some other people. But, his appearance was an added bonus to all those present as he was one of those due to appear live at the conference before family matters caused him to cancel the trip.

As five PM rolled around it was time for the guest headliner **Brian King Sharp** to do his presentation. Brian is a former police officer from Northwestern Georgia in the United States, he had an interest for sasquatch from an early age. Following his law enforcement career, he began his hobby creating Sasquatch Odessey, which now enthrals audiences worldwide. He is the CEO of Paranormal World Productions and author who also speaks at many conferences. Brian delivered a fascinating talk on his interests and the close encounters he has had living deep in the forest. He detailed photographic evidence of tracks and other physical evidence that fuelled his continued interest, research and investigations into this elusive creature, whatever it maybe.
It was finally time to end the conference with the final talk of the day. Appearing live via video link, Dr Jeff Meldrum is a professor of anthropology, author and speaker, he is considered to be the premier authority on the bigfoot subject. He delivered a mind-blowing presentation that looked at the subject from a scientific standpoint and delivered some stunning facts about the anatomical nature of bigfoot, its distribution in the US in comparison to the Black Bear, he even touched on the possibility of the UK Bigfoot. There is simply too much information for me to cover here but, it was a truly thorough talk that made you want to sit through it all again in case you missed something.
Going into the day, I actually had no preconceptions as to what to expect. Having been away from research for some years I was not that familiar with some of those present but, that has now all changed. I also had no idea that this experience would rekindle a fire inside me that made me remember why I enjoyed this subject so much. Yes, things like ufology and ghost research kind of took me in a different direction but, I left research thinking that I needed no more convincing that ghosts exist etc and that research was something no longer high on my list.

2024 has seen some changes and a recent talk on big cats got me thinking again and the cryptid Conference UK has well and truly lit the touch paper. I feel compelled to look more into the cryptid side of things again and connect with these amazing researchers and people.

Seeing this event so well attended and people hanging on the every word of the speakers gave me a renewed sense that people what to know whats going on and the that amazing dedication and passion shown by all the speakers really touches you deeply. Just you cannot help but be

touched by Daniel and the support he has received by his family. Watching the emotion of his grandparent on stage was a truly beautiful moment.

There is also a deeper massage here and one that might have gone under may people's radar. The message is to todays youth and says it is now time to put down your phones, not all the answers are there, there is a world of beauty and mystery beyond the smart phone screen and if you put your talents and your mind to use by going out and connecting with nature and looking for the answers to the mysteries out there, there is a reward bigger than endorphins produced by social media, you just have to out there and find it…

The only thing that took some of shine off the day was that the acoustics in the sports hall where the conference took place meant that the sound reverberated around the hall, which included the conversations going on where the displays and tables had been laid out. There was little the technical side could do to balance this, it is just the nature of this kind of hall. However, that is just a minor detail and did not take anything away from the day for me personally. I'm sure as the conference develops and do hope it goes on to bigger and better things, all these little details will be overcome. The team around Daniel did such a great job on the day, keep things flowing well and always on time they are a credit to themselves.

The value of a conference like this and the people you meet there is invaluable, not just to your interest or hobby but, also in a social and community sense





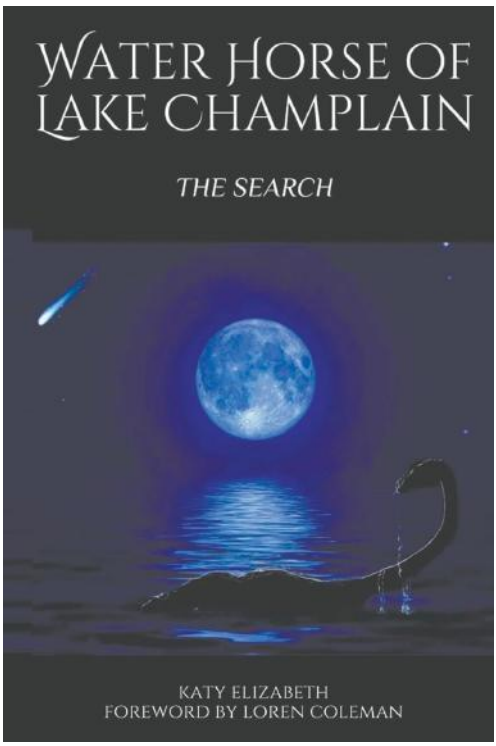
too, bringing likeminded people together without judgement and stigma, and we need this right now for us as human beings.

I send my thanks to Jon Downes for putting my name forward and to Daniel Lee Barnett and Jill (Nan) for the kind invitation, I hope you enjoyed my little talk will have me back another time. My humble thanks too to all the speakers and people I met, you have awakened something in me, see you all soon…

Steve Rider
Infinite Realities Research

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST PUBLISHING GROUP

We publish a lot of books. Indeed, I think that we could quite easily claim to be the world's foremost publishers of books about Fortean Zoology and allied disciplines, and our Fortean Words imprint is doing a great job in producing books on other non-zoological esoterica. However, I feel that it would be unethical to review our own titles. So here, to end this edition of *Animals & Men*, is a brief look at the books we have put out so far this year.



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Paperback : 250 pages
ISBN-10 : 1909488739
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Dimensions : 15.6 x 1.35 x 23.39 cm

Katy Elizabeth was born in Warwick Rhode Island. Katy is a world-leading authority on the Lake Champlain Monster. Katy has been studying the existence of Champ since she was a child. She made her lifelong dream into reality when she had her own sightings of this elusive creature on Lake Champlain. It prompted her to start her own group called "Champ Search."

The group's goal is to study, investigate, prove the existence and most importantly protect the unique animals that inhabit New York and Vermont's beautiful Lake Champlain. Katy currently resides on the shores of Lake Champlain in Ferrisburgh VT.

In 2018 she was honored with an official

world record as the only full-time Dedicated Woman Lake Monster Hunter in the world. Also in 2018, Katy approached the town of Port Henry NY known as the "Home of Champ" with a written resolution to protect Champ. In April of 2018 this law was passed. She has been featured on the History Channel, Discovery Channel, The Science Channel and NBC.



Publisher : cfz (10 Jun. 2024)
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Paperback : 430 pages
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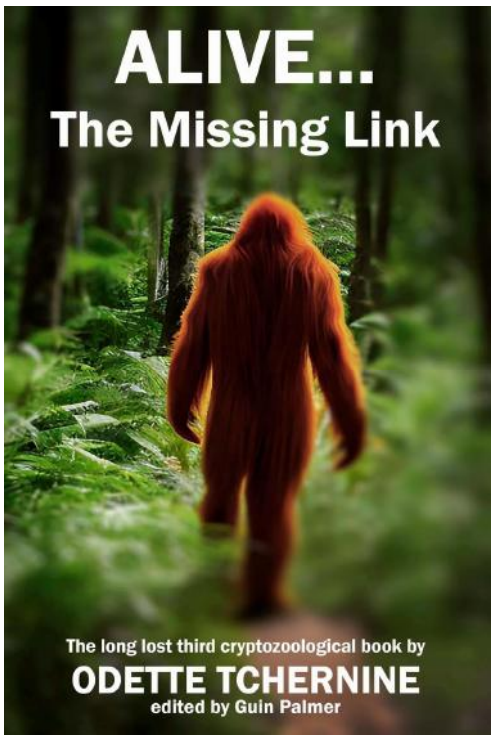
The world of forteana (strange phenomena) is by its nature, odd. Encounters with sea serpents, ghosts and UFOs for example are far from everyday. Yet there are reports in the annals of forteana that go far beyond the simply weird. In this book we look at high strangeness cases that make even the most seasoned of researchers balk. This parade of the damned includes...

THE GHOST OF A TREE THAT HAUNTED A FORMER DOCTOR WHO
A GIANT CAT WITH HUMAN EYES THAT SAVED TWO BOYS FROM A PAEDOPHLE
LATTER DAY DRAGON SIGHTINGS AND DRAGON WORSHIP CULTS
THE EXORCISM OF LOCH NESS
BIGFOOT HAUNTING HOUSES LIKE A GHOST
THE BLOOD SUCKING VEGETABLE MAN
GIANT AMOEBAS FROM SPACE
THE IRISH WATER RHINO
DAEMONIC BLACK DOGS IN FLYING SAUCERS
THE RABBIT SMASHING GOBLIN OF LIVERPOOL
THE BIG GAY RAPIST HIPPO MAN
THE GIANT SNAKE THAT HAUNTED A WHOLE TOWN
MINCE PIE MARTIANS
A PHANTOM SPACE CLOWN ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT
GEF THE TALKING MONGOOSE
THE DEMON THAT HAUNTED N.A.S.A
THE GIANT PHANTOM CRAB
THE PIG STRANGLING EVIL CLOUD OF RUNCORN
SPACE PENGUINS
THE MELTING MAN OF BRAZIL
A COMIC BOOK CHARACTER WHO CAME TO LIFE
HAUNTINGS BY MUPPETS
THE GHOST OF ELVIS IN JARROW

Who, what where and why? This book attempts to find out.

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Publisher : cfz (16 Oct. 2023)
Language : English
Paperback : 186 pages
ISBN-10 : 1909488690
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Dimensions : 15.6 x 1.02 x 23.39 cm

Odette Tchernine (c. 1897-1992) was a British author, cryptozoologist, novelist and journalist. She was born in Paris to a Russian financier father, Dimitri Tchernine (Dmitry Chernin), and a French mother, Yvonne, from Toulouse. She grew up in Kensington and had a younger brother, Serge Tchernine. Odette Tchernine is best known for writing several books on the abominable snowman or yeti, such as In Pursuit of the Abominable Snowman, Taplinger Publishing, (1971). Before 'In Pursuit', she published The Snowman and Company. Initially a socialite and novelist, she earned a reputation from the 1950s through the 1970s "as one of Britain's most formidable monster hunters." This is her



hitherto unpublished third cryptozoological book.

In 'ALIVE...The Missing Link' Odette brings together evidence of bigfoot (and its counterparts) in an effort to encourage researchers and explorers to keep looking for the missing link between these mysterious beasts and the human race.

Odette believed (and many others do too) that this link in human history to bigfoot has been either ignored or covered up for a very long time and she wanted to bring it out into the light of day, have it investigated, researched, and discussed as commonly as one would with any other branches of the 'tree' but was unfortunately unsuccessful before her passing in 1992.

In her book, she highlights the difficulties in doing this from a political, moral and financial viewpoint but reminds the reader of the importance of keeping their mind open to every possibility and to keep fighting to find the truth. She also coins a new phrase in 'Anthropo-zoology' which she very much hoped would become a common term, to describe the study and research, to prove a

biological link exists between bigfoot and humans. She believed some research had started to be taken seriously by a very select few individuals, but no serious research had been done since the 1970s. It has been the work of 'Fringe science' to investigate unexplained phenomena for centuries and she longed for this type of research to become more mainstream.

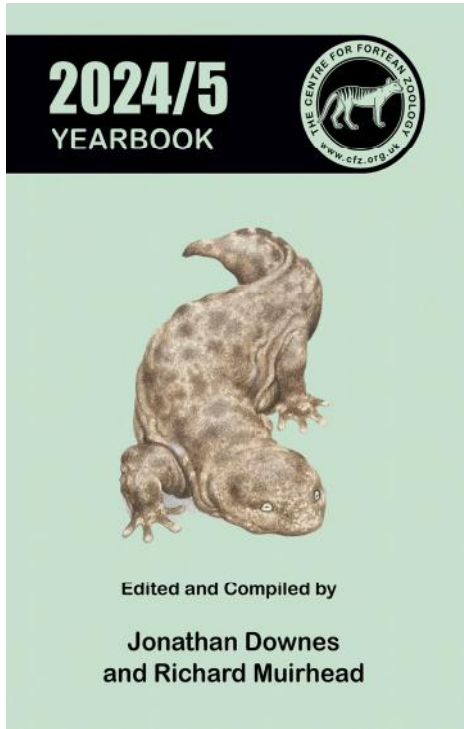
We hope the publishing of this lost manuscript will help reignite the flame under this research and finally be able to prove that these incredible beasts are not just a cryptid hidden in the trees but perhaps distant cousins of ours or even much closer on the family tree than we think...

Guin Palmer, the Assistant Director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ), worked diligently on the manuscript which turned up in a North Devon Auction House. It was purchased accidentally by someone who - serendipitously - knew one of the senior members of the CFZ to whom he subsequently sold it.



She also amassed a collection of reference material appertaining to Odette which can be found at this address:

https://cfz.org.uk/more/odette-tchernine/

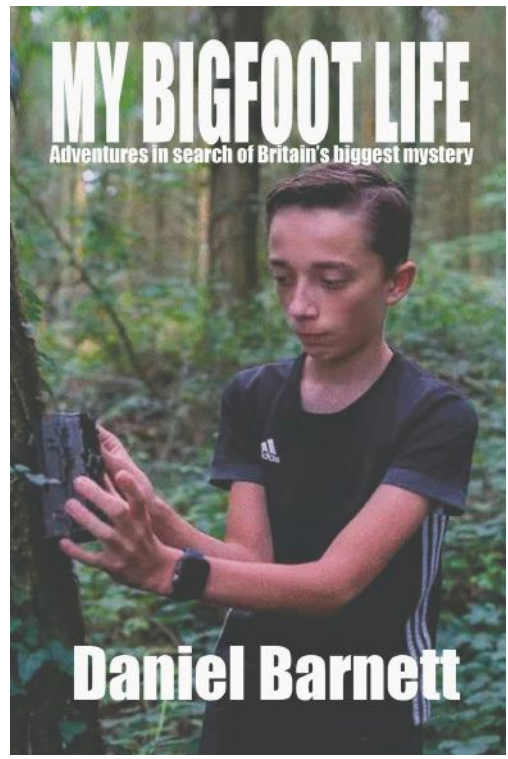


Publisher : CFZ (12 Nov. 2023)
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ISBN-10 : 1909488704
ISBN-13 : 978-1-909488-70-0
Dimensions : 6.140" x 9.210" (234mm x 156mm)

The Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ) is a professional and scientific organisation dedicated to cryptozoology: The study of unknown animals and allied disciplines. Since 1992, we have carried out extensive research into mystery animals and animal mysteries around the globe. We produce a weekly WebTV show called On The Track (OTT),

which covers Cryptozoology, Natural History and Green Issues, all mixed with a little light (and often peculiar) comedy. We also operate our own publishing house, producing both magazines and books on subjects that would otherwise not see the light of day The Centre For Fortean Zoology Yearbook is a collection of papers and essays too long and detailed for publication in the CFZ Journal Animals & Men. With contributions from both well-known researchers, and relative newcomers to the field, the Yearbook provides a forum where new theories can be expounded, and work on little-known cryptids discussed.

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- Page 193: CFZ Annual Report 2022



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Paperback : 68 pages
ISBN-10 : 1909488712
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Dimensions : 15.57 x 0.36 x 23.5 cm

Daniel Barnett is a remarkable young man. At the age of 14, he has decided to take on the current populist belief in Bigfoot, both in the

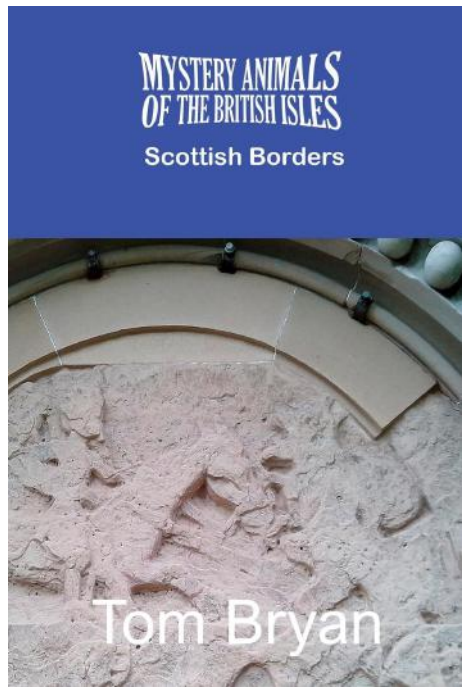


United States and, more importantly, in the United Kingdom. People have been claiming that there is a British Bigfoot for many years. There is certainly a recurrent Fortean phenomenon which appears to be a humanoid giant. Our ancestors called them woodwoses.

I know that these things exist. I have seen one. In January 2003 an immensely tall figure ran between two marked trees in Bolam Lake Forest in Northumberland. I was one of five people that saw it. What exactly it is I still don't know.

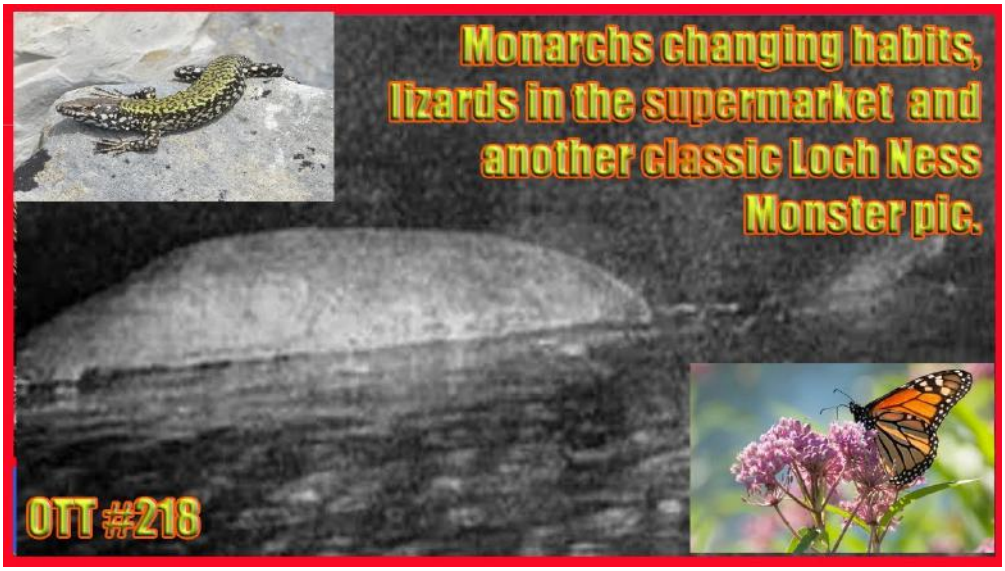
Daniel has taken it upon himself to recruit a team of like-minded individuals, and to utilise modern technology and the scientific method to investigate these, the most intangible examples of modern cryptozoology. Whether he will succeed, none of us know, but he has already garnered some remarkable results.

This is his story, and it is also the story of his remarkable family, who have encouraged him every step of the way. What is going to happen next? I have no idea, but I can't wait to find out.



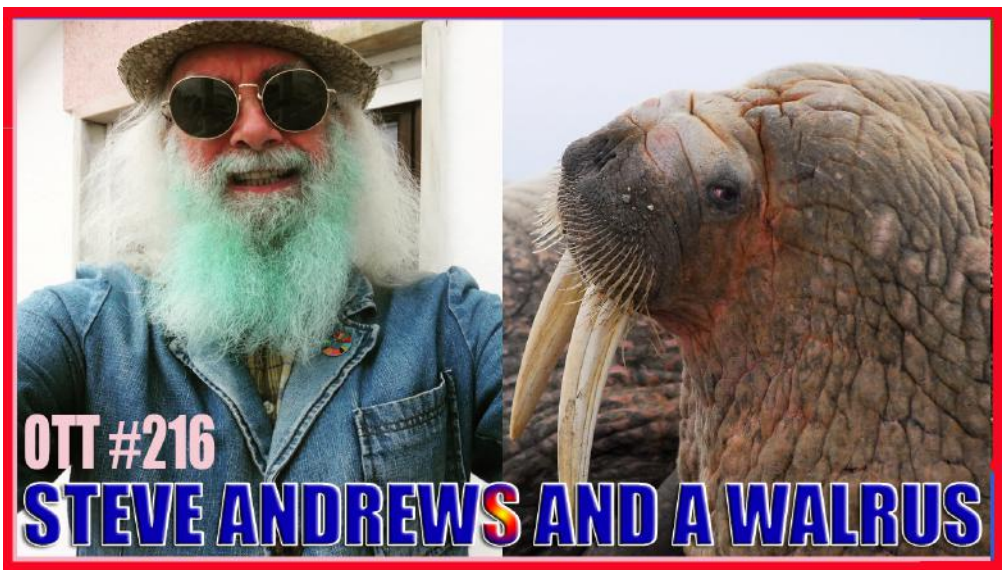
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"The Mystery Animals of the British Isles" is a major series from the publishing arm of the world's largest mystery animals research organization. The series covers Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland mostly on a county-by-county basis, describing the mystery animals of the entire island group.



ON THE TRACK
EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 6:30PM
EVERY SATURDAY AT 3:00PM

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJhcgRG8T6PzdGXnkaLQwnA



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