



The Loch Ness Monster

May 2, 2003 marked the 70th anniversary of what is considered the world's formal introduction to the Loch Ness Monster. On May 2, 1933, an Inverness newspaper ran an article called "A Strange Spectacle on Loch Ness" that described how Mrs. Mackay encountered the creature on the Scottish lake ("Loch" is Scottish for "lake"). This was not the first sighting of the Loch Ness creature, but it was in that year that it was dubbed a monster and the report was widely circulated.

Over the last 70 years, "Nessie" has become probably the most well-known "real" monster in the world. Since 1933, Nessie's fame has endured and grown in part because of continual if sporadic sightings, scientific expeditions to find it, and in large part because of marketing: the Loch Ness Monster has become a money-making icon and tourist attraction for the towns surrounding the deep, cold lake.

Although Nessie is not taken seriously by skeptics and many mainstream scientists, there is some evidence that a large, unknown creature really does live in Loch Ness.

There have been numerous sightings by reliable witnesses, photographs (both above and below the water's surface), film and video footage, and interesting sonar readings. Unfortunately, none of the evidence has been conclusive, and the definitive proof of Nessie's existence has been frustratingly elusive.

Environment:

Location: Loch Ness is located in Northern Scotland, running southwest to northeast.

Size: It is 23 miles long and about 1 mile wide; it is 786 feet at its deepest point; it is the deepest and one of the largest bodies of fresh water in Britain.

Occupants: The loch is home to Atlantic salmon, charr, eels, minnows, large pike, sticklebacks, sturgeon, trout and various other fish. Seals and otters also live in Loch Ness, but are rarely seen.

Description of the Monster:

Shape: long neck; horse-like head; humped back (one or two humps).

Color: dark or elephant gray.

Weight: estimated 2,500 pounds.

Length: 15 to 40 feet.

Famous Sightings:

The Loch Ness Monster may have been sighted as early as the 6th century, but Nessie as we know it today is largely a product of the 20th century.

April, 1933 - Mrs. Aldie Mackay reports seeing a whale-like creature in the loch near Aldourie Castle (where Nessie has been sighted on other occasions). The account was written up for the Inverness Courier by water bailiff Alex Campbell and the excitement about a monster in the loch was born.

July 22, 1933 - Mr. and Mrs. Spicer saw Nessie on land! While passing the loch on their way to London from Northern Scotland, the couple saw the large creature crossing the road in front of them. Mr. Spicer told the newspaper that it looked like a large prehistoric creature and was carrying a small lamb or some other animal in its mouth. He described it as being about 25 feet long with a long neck. He believed it disappeared into the loch.

November, 1933 - The first photo of the alleged monster was taken by Hugh Gray.

1934 - Brother Richard Horan saw the neck and head protruding from the water at only 30 yards away. He said it reached about 3-1/2 feet above the surface, and the creature was looking at him.

1963 - Mr. Hugh Ayton claimed to have seen the creature from shore. He and three friends jumped into a motor boat and followed it for about a mile. He said he could never forget its large oval-shaped eye looking at him from its horse-like head.

1972 - A monk at the Fort Augustus Abbey, Father Gregory Brusey, was walking with an organist when they both saw the neck and head of the creature protruding about 6 feet above the loch's surface. They said it moved through the water, turned on its side and submerged.

Hoaxes:

As with any phenomenon of this type, there have been numerous hoaxes associated with the creature:

December, 1933 - Marmaduke Wetherell finds footprints on the shores of the loch. It turns out he made them himself with a hippopotamus foot ashtray.

April 19, 1934 - Dr. Robert Kenneth Wilson claims to photograph Nessie while on a hunting trip. It circulated for years as being authentic and became one of the most famous photos of Nessie. It was later revealed that this so-called "surgeon's photo" was made using children's toys.

Theories:

What is it that people are seeing in the loch?

Skeptics say sightings are actually of groups of large fish, seals, otters or ducks. It's also been shown that waves on the surface of the lake can look like the oft-seen humped back of Nessie. The favorite theory of believers and many witnesses is that Nessie is a dinosaur known as a plesiosaur - a large aquatic creature with flippers and a long neck that is thought to have gone extinct 90 million years ago. Somehow, it is thought, plesiosaurs survived in Loch Ness (and perhaps some other lakes around the world). There must be enough of them in the loch to constitute a breeding population.

On Art Bell's erstwhile radio show, he once asked remote viewer Ed Dames to remote view what the Loch Ness Monster is. Dames' conclusion: it is the ghost of an aquatic dinosaur.