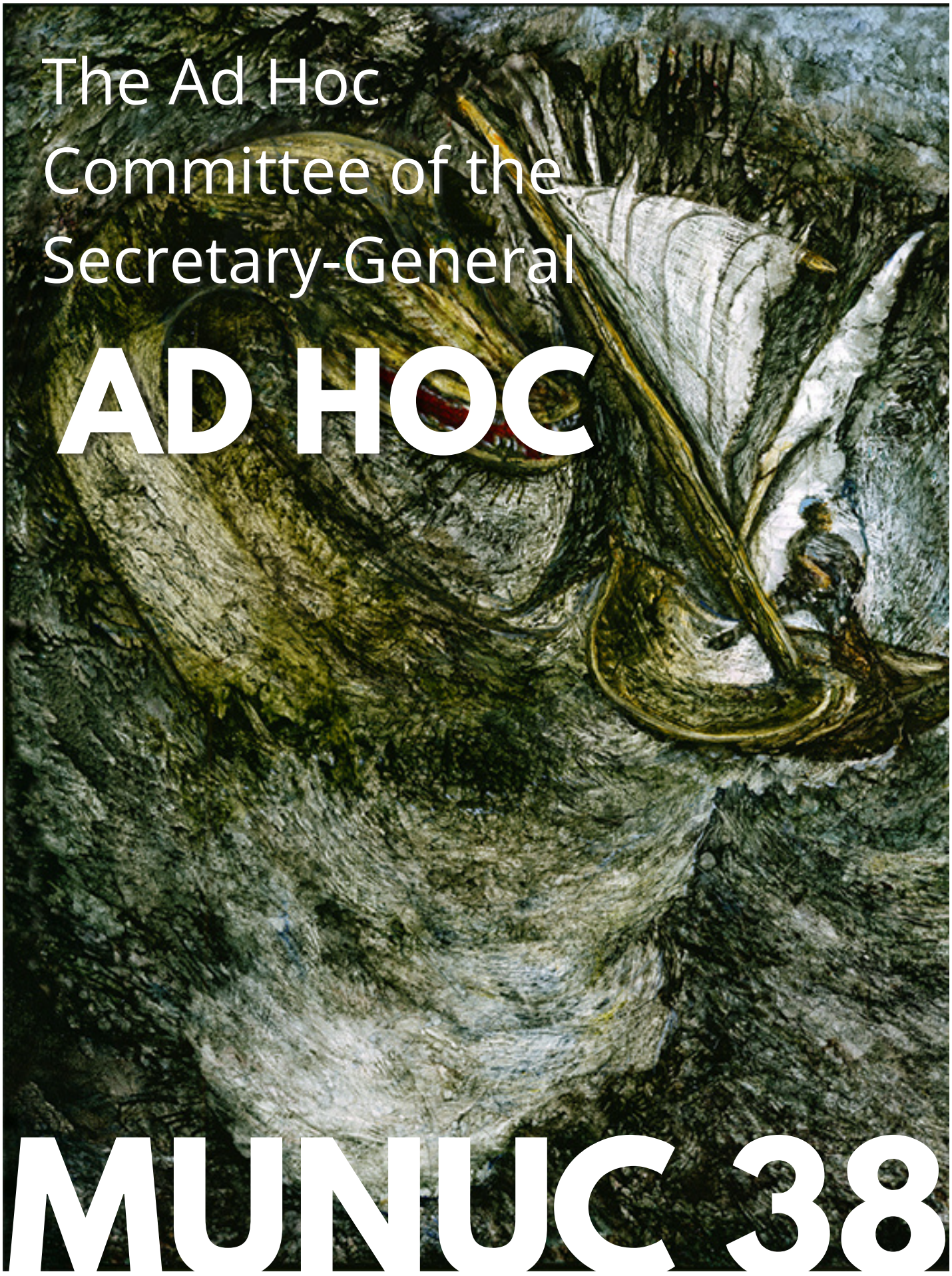
The Ad Hoc
Committee of the
Secretary-General
AD HOC
MUNUC 38
Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

Chair Letter

Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 38 and the Ad Hoc Committee of the Secretary General! My name is Ryanne Leonard, and I will be your chair for *We're Going to Need a Bigger Foot: The International Society of Cryptozoology, 1982*.

A little bit about me: I am originally from Los Angeles, California—although I have lived in the Midwest most of my life—and I am currently a fourth year at UChicago studying Political Science and Law, Letters, and Society with a minor in Democracy Studies. I am planning on attending law school after graduation, hoping to go into public defense or civil legal aid. On campus, I do design for MUNUC's collegiate counterpart, ChoMUN, and I enjoy doing set design for our various theater organizations. In my free time, you can find me crocheting or knitting while watching video essays on philosophy and popular culture.

As for committee, Daniel and I cannot wait to work with you in navigating the mysterious and expansive world of cryptozoology. We hope that you will not only get a chance to learn more about international cryptids and the cultural traditions which underlie them, but also what it means to engage in genuine fieldwork with your fellow society members. There will be challenges and setbacks, but one thing we can advise is that you keep an open mind and be prepared to adapt as you distinguish between the science and the pseudoscience. What is the future of the International Society of Cryptozoology? That is for you all to decide!

We understand the Ad Hoc can be a challenging experience, but we are excited to support you as you put your MUN skills to the test. As you read the background guide, please do not

hesitate to reach out with any questions. I am sure you will all make this an amazing committee and I look forward to meeting all of you delegates soon!

Your Chair,

Ryanne Leonard

rgleonard@uchicago.edu

Crisis Director Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 38! My name is Daniel Zhang (he/him), and I'll be your crisis director for *We're Going to Need a Bigger Foot: The International Society of Cryptozoology, 1982*. I'm super excited about this upcoming weekend, but first, a little bit about myself:

I am a fourth-year at the University of Chicago, double majoring in History and Public Policy, with a minor in English/Creative Writing. I participate in all of UChicago's MUN organizations, from ChoMUN (our college conference) to the travel team, and I'm happy to be back for this year's MUNUC! Outside of that, I love writing for fun, trying to go on regular runs with varying degrees of success, and rounding up my friends to visit random coffee shops around the city.

My interest in the wonderful and wacky world of cryptozoology probably comes from my childhood: an early interest in Bigfoot, a brief fear of Slenderman, and of course, my obsession with the Disney TV show Gravity Falls. More recently, I've been interested in studying Appalachian history and folklore, and I'm currently in the middle of writing a B.A. Thesis in History about the region! As founding members of the ISC, you'll face the daunting task of elevating the fledgling organization into one with actual influence and legitimacy, even as you chase the tiniest strands of evidence for ever-more elusive cryptids. As your operations and expeditions expand from the US and bring you around the world, you'll have to decide on the ultimate mission of the ISC—and scale up your backroom arcs accordingly. I can't wait to see the different landscapes and communities you end up hunting for cryptids in, and I expect that by

the end of the weekend, you'll know many more than Bigfoot and Nessie (classic though they may be).

Please be aware that the staff of this committee expects delegates to act respectfully and within MUNUC guidelines. We will not tolerate any inappropriate or discriminatory behavior from any delegate. Act with kindness, respect, and professionalism, and you'll make the MUNUC weekend as fun as it can be!

I hope you're as excited for this committee as I am, and I can't wait to see how you make it unfold over the weekend! In the meantime, please feel free to reach out and email with any questions.

Best,

Daniel Zhang

danielz031@uchicago.edu

Crisis Director

Sensitivity Statement

To All Delegates:

As an organization committed to pedagogy, MUNUC is all about expressing your creativity through your character's eyes. However, this comes with certain ground rules. This committee will have you interacting with a variety of different cultures and peoples from around the world, and we expect you all to be respectful to these backgrounds as well as to other delegates.

MUNUC encourages delegates to consider and maintain historical accuracy throughout committees. Creative applications of historical knowledge can be important to a strong backroom. However, there are certain actions that are unacceptable, even if they may be historically accurate to their committee. This rule applies to all committees being run at MUNUC 38: everyone is expected to adhere to twenty-first-century standards of morality and ethics in every aspect of their participation in the conference. Put plainly: delegates may not use "historical accuracy" as an excuse to engage in racist, sexist, homophobic, or other harmful and problematic actions. This principle applies both in the front room and in the backroom, and harmful behavior is intolerable in any medium, whether that be a directive, a speech, or a crisis note.

We hope that, as a relatively recent committee, we won't see any such behavior couched in the language of "historical accuracy." However, exclusionary and hurtful acts can manifest not only in writing and speechmaking, but also in the blocs that form, the people who are included or

prevented from participating, or even how delegates act towards each other pre- or post-committee sessions. This type of behavior will, similarly, not be tolerated by MUNUC.

When a delegate is reported for making someone uncomfortable, excluded, or egregiously crossing the line, the Executive Committee will be immediately informed, and there may be consequences that could affect your ability to continue to participate in the same manner in the conference.

Sincerely,

Your Committee Execs

Structure and Mechanics

We're Going to Need a Bigger Foot: The International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC), 1982 is structured as a continuous crisis committee with both frontroom and backroom mechanics, with additional special mechanics. While we will go more in-depth into crisis mechanics at conference, here we will provide an overview of both frontroom and backroom to guide your preparation for committee.

Frontroom

In frontroom, the chair serves the role of ISC President Bernard Heuvelmans, and the delegates come together as dedicated ISC members. As the committee starts when the ISC is first formed in 1982, the delegates are tasked with guiding the trajectory of the organization and establishing a public presence in the international community. Each delegate is given a character from the time period with a unique position and skill set within the field of cryptozoology. The committee is composed of a wide array of specialties: some act as biologists, anthropologists, a man with a fishing pole and a dream, or even photographers. Within each role, delegates can leverage their skills and relationships to influence the committee.

There are several frontroom mechanics that delegates can use to collaborate and promote their ideas. Passing directives is one of the major ways to move the committee forward. Directives are plans of action that respond to either an immediate crisis or the larger committee goals. They are first drafted by small groups of delegates or 'blocs' during unmoderated caucuses, and then submitted to the chair once there are enough signatories— or supporters— of the draft directive. From here, there is an opportunity for the bloc to present their directive to

committee and enter into voting procedure, where that directive can either fail or pass depending on committee support. As mentioned earlier, unmoderated caucuses are great opportunities to start writing directives with other delegates, as delegates are free to walk around the room to discuss ideas. Moderated caucuses, in contrast, are blocks of time for delegates to give short speeches on a topic—these speeches can be spent promoting a current directive being drafted, or bringing an idea or concern to the attention of committee. While these are more formal procedures to engage with committee, delegates can also pass appropriate notes to other delegates at any point.

In addition to normal crisis mechanics, frontroom will have a feature unique to this committee. At the front of the room, there will be a world map that delegates can use to visualize and decide their next expedition. Delegates may receive "evidence" in their backroom notes or from crisis breaks that can be tacked onto the map. These pieces of evidence will be on physical scraps of paper, containing elements like blurry photos and artistic recreations. Delegates can try to keep their pieces of evidence secret, or they can ask the chair to pin it up on the board. Committee can then debate the validity of these pieces of evidence and decide on the most promising expeditions for the ISC. Over the course of the weekend, this map will be filled with photos, notes, and (of course) red thread, displaying the ISC's expansive cryptid research.

Backroom

Backroom, led by the crisis director, is more individualized compared to frontroom. Delegates write notes to the backroom that detail personal actions or goals. While frontroom focuses on advancing the ISC as a whole, backroom allows delegates to pursue their own goals, even if they are not in the committee's best interest. As delegates write notes, they receive

responses from backroom on the results of their notes. Over the course of the committee, delegates create ‘arcs’ through their backroom notes, which can influence the frontroom committee through crisis breaks. The crisis director can decide whether to break backroom notes, and there are numerous factors that go into this decision, such as the trajectory of committee, directives, and the detailing of the notes. In general, a good backroom note contains a detailed plan of what the delegate hopes to achieve and how they are able to do it.

Delegates also have the opportunity to draft Joint Personal Directives (JPDs) that are sent to the backroom. These are like backroom notes, but they come from multiple delegates and must receive a signature from all delegates involved. They result in immediate action, similar to frontroom directives, but it is at the discretion of the backroom as to whether they are passed.

Reiterating the standards of MUNUC 38 and this committee, all frontroom and backroom work (directives, notes, backroom notes, and JPDs) should be kept appropriate and respectful towards fellow delegates and peoples and cultures interacted with during committee. Any instances of racism, sexism, homophobia, or religious discrimination will not be tolerated.

History of the Problem

"The very definition of cryptozoology implies a quest, an adventurous search for something not yet realized or hidden."[1]

Overview of Cryptozoology: Beginnings to Contemporary

Cryptozoology, defined as the study of unconfirmed species,[2] has been a subject of public fascination across eras. Cryptids, the subjects of cryptozoologists' study, are not just scientific wonders, but reflections of society and its outlook towards the natural world.

A Historical Practice

A belief in hidden species and development of lore around them goes back to antiquity. In 15th Century BCE, under the rule of pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut, Egyptian travelers documented encounters with creatures unknown to Egypt as they fared across the Red Sea.[3] One of these creatures—today known as the Okapi—would not be discovered by Western zoologists until the 20th century. In South and Southeast Asia, Sanskrit poets would write about supposed humanoid, ape-like figures called Vanaras, as coined in the Ramayana around 4th-2nd century BCE. Variations of the same figures could be found in the history and literature of other Asian countries such as China, Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

[1] Mark Bessire, *Cryptozoology: Out of Time Place Scale* (JRP|Editions, 2006).
[2] Dendle, Peter. "Cryptozoology in the Medieval and Modern Worlds." *Folklore* 117, no. 2 (2006): 190–206. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30035486, at 190.
[3] Davis, Leecy. "The Beginnings of Cryptozoology." ScIU (blog), 23 January, 2021, https://blogs.iu.edu/sciu/2021/01/23/the-beginnings-of-cryptozoology/.

The study of cryptids continued into the classical period. The Romans, for example, dedicated a plethora of writings based on scientific tracts and mythology around exotic species, such as in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* written in the first century CE.[4] While documenting the diversity of conventional nature, Pliny also took to recording curiosities from his own journeys across Egypt and India and from other classical—mainly Greek—writers and their travels.[5] Like we see today, classical accounts of hidden animals were met with skepticism from other writers of the time, often attributing their claims to "optical illusions and tricks of the mind."[6]

As the world gradually became more interconnected through exploration and trade during the Middle Ages, cartography also served as a place to document natural fascinations and creatures. Maps in the European Medieval period, otherwise known as *Mappaemundi*, not only displayed known geographical knowledge but also acted as a graphic encyclopedia ranging from Biblical history to classical accounts from travelers, including encounters with cryptids of their time.[7]

During the same period, zoology itself became cemented as its own study stemming from an interest in Naturalism—the belief that everything can be explained in terms of natural laws—developed in the Renaissance. Conrad Gessner famously wrote the *Historia animalium* in the mid-16th century, which accounted for all known animal species of the time in its over 4,500 pages, and even included some cryptids like unicorns and the Kraken.[8]

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[4] Dendle, at 193.
[5] Davis.
[6] Dendle, at 193.
[7] Armitrage, Anne, and Laura Beresford. "(extracts)." *Mapping the New World: Renaissance Maps from the American Museum in Britain*, 2013, pp. 6-43. Accessed 21 October 2024, at 14.
[8] Davis.

Chart of terrestrial and sea monsters.[9]

Bernard Heuvelmans' Cryptozoology

Although the study itself is steeped in historical tradition, the term cryptozoology was only first brought into academia by French-Belgian zoologist Bernard Heuvelmans in 1965.[10] Born in 1916, Heuvelmans is often considered the "Father of Cryptozoology" from his founding book in the field, *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, in 1955.[11] After earning his doctoral degree, Heuvelmans dedicated his time to finding scientific and literary evidence for undiscovered animal species, gathering material for his eventual publication of *On the Track*.

[9] Sebastian Munster, *English: Chart of Terrestrial and Sea Monsters by Sebastian Munster*, ca 1570, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ca.1570_chart_of_terrestrial_and_sea_monsters_by_Sebastian_Munster.jpg.
[10] Rossi, Lorenzo. "A Review of Cryptozoology: Towards a Scientific Approach to the Study of 'Hidden Animals,'" in *Problematic Wildlife*, ch. 26. Springer International (2015): 573-588.
[11] Ferre, Lux. "Heuvelmans, Bernard ." Occult World, January 13, 2021. https://occult-world.com/heuvelmans-bernard/.

For Heuvelmans, cryptozoology serves an important conservatory function. In revealing "hidden" species, humans have a comprehensive inventory of the Earth's biodiversity and can protect newly discovered species from endangerment or extinction.[12] There is also the thought that, if cryptozoological methods—such as taking folklore and historical accounts into consideration—had been put to use earlier in the zoological tradition, other species already known today would have also been discovered earlier.[13] However, this counterfactual also opens up the possibility that those species, if discovered by humans earlier, would also be subject to negative human interference much sooner, and perhaps become endangered or extinct before modern legal protections could be put in place.

To evidence the existence of these hidden species, cryptozoologists under Heuvelmans' school of thought examine various sources of indirect evidence—that is, evidence based on circumstantial leads (such as inconclusive physical evidence) or witness testimonies—including archaeology, history, and local folklore, to name a few.[14] With this methodology, Heuvelmans hoped to de-mythify hidden species, bringing it out of scientific heresy or "snares of mythification,"[15] and into reality.[16]

This capability of de-mythification is what defines a cryptid for Heuvelmans. In being a hidden animal, they are forced to be mythified to some extent by the human imagination to fill the gaps of the unknown.[17]

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[12] Heuvelmans, Bernard. "What is Cryptozoology?" *Cryptozoology: Interdisciplinary Journal of the International Society of Cryptozoology* 1 (1982): pp. 1-12, at 8.
[13] Rossi, at 576.
[14] Id.
[15] Heuvelmans, at 8.
[16] Bessire, Mark, Raechell Smith, Bates College. Museum of Art, and Kansas City Art Institute. *Cryptozoology: Out of Time Place Scale*. Lewiston, Me. : Zurich, Switzerland: Bates College Museum of Art ; JRP, Ringier, 2006, at 10.
[17] Heuvelmans, at 10.

Historical Development of Environmental & Anthropological Societies

The process of scientific inquiry that we know today, centered on academia and the research university, was not always how the pursuit of knowledge was structured in society. Largely beginning in the seventeenth century, science as a field was professionalized, codified, and structured into the Western academic tradition we are familiar with today. Part of that process was the rise of the scientific academy, going hand in hand with the proliferation of "learned societies," or scientific societies, dedicated to the advancement of scientific knowledge.[18] These were organized groups of scientists, starting off informally but quickly becoming centralized and patronized by royal governments. Learned societies were able to conduct the work of scientific discovery in an organized, systematic, and efficient manner, benefitting from the advantages in communication and collaboration that they created.

Early societies like the Royal Society in England, or the Royal Academy in France, were valuable platforms for an early class of professional scientists and academics. Such societies began to publish early academic journals, facilitating the spread of new knowledge, and offered monetary prizes for new discoveries.[19] Most similar to the International Society of Cryptozoology, however, was probably the zoological society, many of which spread throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Zoological societies studied wildlife, animal biology, and conservation, often collecting different species and specimens in zoos, aquariums, and museums.

[18] Joseph Spradley, "Rise of Scientific Societies | EBSCO," EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com, 2022, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/rise-scientific-societies.
[19] Ibid.

A cartoonish meeting of zoologists.[20]

It's important to note that many of these societies, and even the field of anthropology itself, went hand in hand with colonial projects in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many Western social scientists applied broad brushstrokes to global societies, subscribing to a reductionist, linear view of societal evolution.[21] By the 1980s, however, contemporary anthropology had become a more formalized discipline, and most anthropologists were more conscious about following specific ethical principles. Western ethnocentrism was, for the most part, replaced by new ideas of cultural relativism, and new codes of conduct—with principles like "Do No Harm" and "Obtain Informed Consent" becoming widespread, accepted parts of anthropological methodology.[22]

[20] "File:Punchzool.jpg - Wikimedia Commons," Wikimedia.org, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Punchzool.jpg.
[21] Heather Long and Kelly Chakov, "Social Evolutionism," Anthropology, April 21, 2017, https://anthropology.ua.edu/theory/social-evolutionism/.
[22] American Anthropological Association, "Anthropological Ethics," The American Anthropological Association, 2024, https://americananthro.org/about/anthropological-ethics/.

And just as anthropology changed in the latter part of the twentieth century, so too did the place of the learned society also change. As societies became distinct from universities, the role of direct research was left more and more to the latter, and societies became associations of university-based academics with new functions: exchanging ideas, granting research funding, publishing journals, and recognizing merit.[23] The Zoological Society of London, for example, took on the management of both the London Zoo and the Whipsnade Zoo, and started publishing the Journal of Zoology.

In particular, contemporary learned societies (especially those that deal with zoology and biology) have seen increasing overlap with conservation groups and environmental associations, and have correspondingly shifted more of their focus to wildlife conservation, as well as environmental conservation.[24] That has seemed to be the trend: such societies (like the ISC, even) may start off small and uninfluential, but as they grow, they branch out into everything from research to zoo management to conservation and activism.

Regional Close-Ups

Categorizing Cryptids

Cryptids occupy a somewhat ambiguous place when it comes to the wide world of fantastical creatures, one that is somewhat defined by intuition over hard and clear rules. Unlike mythological creatures and magical beasts, cryptids are at least somewhat grounded in reality; the entire point, of course, is that cryptids could *plausibly* exist as simply another species of

[23] Alicia Wise and Lorraine Estelle, "Learned Societies, the Key to Realising an Open Access Future?," Impact of Social Sciences, June 24, 2019, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2019/06/24/learned-societies-the-key-to-realising-an-open-access-future/.
[24] Tatiana Jourdan, "Conservation Grants | Zoological Association of America," Zooassociation.org, 2025, https://zooassociation.org/conservation-grants.

undiscovered animal. And unlike the occult and paranormal, cryptids are usually physical, not spiritual or alien.

Perhaps the biggest defining characteristic of a cryptid is that it is contemporary. Cryptids are animals thought to live in the present day, simply occluded from view. In a similar vein, cryptids are usually based on verbal reports, sightings, memories, and folklore; they are anecdotal, and thrive on convincing eyewitness testimony.[25] Perhaps that is why so many cryptids tend to converge toward the same patterns and stories—it would be a reasonable pattern, if we assume that humans tend to interpret unexplained phenomena in similar ways.

Oceanic Cryptids

Most cryptids that we immediately think of are tied to a specific culture, and so we usually associate them with specific biomes or landscapes. Ever since the first sailor set out into the deep ocean, though, we have heard reports of legendary animal sightings beneath the waves. Some of these—mythological sea creatures, dragons, krakens, and the like—don't usually fall under the typically accepted classification of cryptid.

Sea serpents, however, bring us closer to cryptozoology. They are ubiquitous in popular culture, found in books, movies, video games, and the corners of maps. And people still report sightings of them today: Paul LeBlond writes, "Sea serpents remain a persistent and unsolved Pacific Northwest mystery. Reports continue to trickle in of sightings of large, unknown marine animals in coastal waters and some large inland lakes."[26]

[25] Michael Shermer, "Show Me the Body," *Scientific American* 288, no. 5 (May 1, 2003): 37–37, https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0503-37.
[26] Paul H. LeBlond, "Sea Serpents of the Pacific Northwest." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 43, no. 4 (1993): 44–51. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4519621.

The image of the reptilian, long-necked, sauropod-like creature is a compelling one, and not just limited to the ocean. But though it may come as a bit of a surprise, there are other oceanic cryptids. Some are of whales and dolphins: double-finned whales like Giglioli's Whale, or a reported Rhinoceros Dolphin.[27] One of the oldest cryptids we are aware of, however, is Steller's Sea Ape, which was reportedly a marine animal with a furry, dog-like head, but with an aquatic body and a tail fin, similar to that of a shark.[28]

Lake Monsters

Lakes and rivers are more well-tread environments when it comes to cryptozoology.

A sighting of Nahuelito, a lake monster said to live in Nahuel Huapi Lake, Argentina.[29]

Serpentine river and lake monsters have been described as recurring motifs in folklore from different parts of the world, from Loch Ness' "Nessie" in Scotland to Lake Champlain's

[27] Robbie Mitchell, "Monsters of the Deep? The Truth about Cryptid Whales," Historic Mysteries, May 26, 2023, https://www.historicmysteries.com/unexplained-mysteries/cryptid-whales/33573/.
[28] Andrew Thaler, "Our Favorite Sea Monsters – Steller's Sea Ape (#7)," Southern Fried Science, September 6, 2010, https://www.southernfriedscience.com/our-favorite-sea-monsters-7-stellers-sea-ape/.
[29] Wikipedia Contributors, "File:Nahuelito Sighting in Nahuel Huapi Lake.jpg," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, September 10, 2022), https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/d6/Nahuelito_sighting_in_Nahuel_Huapi_Lake.jpg.

"Champ" in New York to Ostersund's "Storsjöodjuret" in Sweden.[30] Lakes and rivers provide credible cover for what typically is a lack of concrete evidence, as convinced eyewitnesses can point to the possibility of cryptids hiding in the depths. Explanations vary; some groups of otters can look remarkably similar to sea monsters, for example. And today, of course, many of these cryptids have been thoroughly leveraged into tourist attractions.

Terrestrial Cryptids

On the firmer footing of dry land, we can finally look at perhaps the most well-known type of cryptid: hominid cryptids, which walk upright like a human, consistently drawing comparisons to the great apes. These cryptids once again span the globe, from the United States' Bigfoot to Australia's Yowie to the Himalayan Yeti to the Chinese Yeren and Japanese Hibagon. All of these creatures are particular to their own contexts, and not straight analogies for one another, but it is interesting to see the prevalence of similar tropes across different geographies.

Of course, we also see plenty of non-hominid, beastlike cryptids on land as well. Some can go between land and water, from the central African Mokele-mbembe to the Australian bunyip. Some are more grounded, like the chupacabra, or the jackalope. And some cryptids, though being spotted on land, are believed to be able to fly, such as West Virginia's Mothman, or the titular state's Jersey Devil.

[30] Hasan M El-Shamy and Jane Garry, *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature : A Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 78, 212

Psychology of Conspiracy Theories

"In the contemporary world, however, bigfoot has been read as a reflection of ourselves: we perpetuate bigfoot beliefs from an apparent psychological need to crystallise fascination with primitivism and animalism into a concrete symbol."[31]

A good portion of the serious academic commentary on cryptozoology is concerned with the psychology behind it rather than scientific study of the cryptids themselves. This is because cryptozoology and its line of thinking has a lot of overlap with conspiracy theories as a whole, and understanding the appeal of cryptozoology involves understanding the appeal behind conspiracies.

Intellectual Contrarianism

Cryptozoology is, by definition, contrarian to mainstream science, and it proudly positions itself that way. The goal of cryptozoologists is not to confirm what we already know—like some evidence-backed hypothesis—but to disprove conventional understanding by introducing a case of something paradoxical or unexpected.[32]

However, it should be noted that Heuvelmans' approach to cryptozoology still emphasizes the need for evidence. While cryptozoology may be contrarian in its investigation of mythified species, it nonetheless aims to bring these species into the scientific mainstream through gathering all available information on the species and presenting it publicly. Heuvelmans' cryptozoology questions what leads or theories scientists are willing to give consideration to, but it does not disregard the importance of facts, as Heuvelmans writes,

[31] Dendle, at 197.
[32] Coffey, Clare, Brian Regal, Frank J. Esposito, and Rob Brotherton. "The Joy of Cryptozoology." *The New Atlantis*, no. 55 (2018): 123–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26487788, at 128.

"Cryptozoology aspires to a true skepticism, that which opposes both an a priori incredulity, and a naive willingness to believe."[33]

Populism

Conspiracy theories are also inviting to the common onlooker. Rather than deferring to experts in the field, conspiracy encourages the potential theorist to arrive at their own conclusions—to put the pieces together themselves. Cryptozoology, by leaning into indirect evidence like witness accounts and local lore, invites that same involvement from the public.

The skepticism placed on the traditional scientific community and how they determine truth also draws on a populist appeal. To Heuvelmans, truth, as determined by the scientific community, is "as fluctuating as the measure of popularity of a politician as determined by the opinion polls."[34] By presenting truth as much more subjective, this framing encourages an average reader or armchair cryptozoologist not to immediately defer to mainstream science, but to form their own idea of what is true. Regardless of their expertise, they are invited to participate in a dialogue with the evidence that is presented. As the seventh-century *Liber monstrorum* opens with the line: "may each person sift for himself from among the narrative that follows."[35]

"World-Loving"

Both cryptozoology and conspiracy theories engage in a sort of "world-loving," or a desire to know the world in its entirety, if even possible.[36] Conspiracy insists it is possible to

[33] Heuvelmans, at 12.
[34] Id. at 7.
[35] Dendle, at 196.
[36] Coffey, at 131.

paint a full picture of human history that is not just incidental, but rather orchestrated in a way that makes sense—where every event can be explained and connected with other events in history. There is this sort of beauty and pattern behind the world that conspiracy theorists aim to uncover.

Likewise, cryptozoology also engages in a sort of "world-loving," but directed towards fully understanding the natural world in all its unexpected oddities. To a cryptozoologist, there is a full compendium of wildlife waiting to be filled, and mainstream science's methods have been insufficient to discover it.

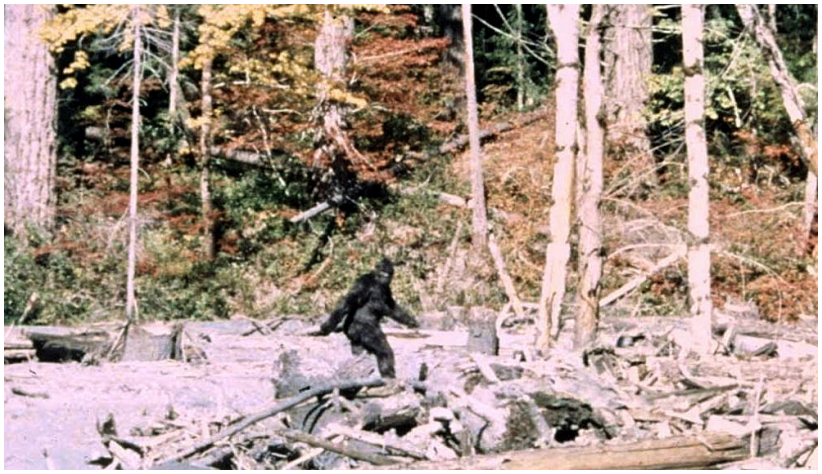
Dangers

Although conspiracism provides psychological fulfillment in many ways, it can also be misdirected or used to obfuscate harm towards the environment and peoples. When a conspiracy or investigation is reaching obstacles, these appeals of conspiracism—like contrarianism, populism, and "world-loving"—can be leveraged to justify continued belief and resources into the theory.

Cryptid Case Studies

Bigfoot

There is perhaps no cryptid as well-known, well-studied, or well-loved as Bigfoot.



Perhaps the most famous image of Bigfoot, from the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film.[37]

It has become a ubiquitous symbol and cultural touchstone, found everywhere from "literary nonfiction of the natural world, where he is the object of serious imaginative consideration," to those narratives "most popularly and accessibly found in the slightly seedy world of the tabloids."[38] From pop culture references to museum merchandise, Bigfoot is absolutely everywhere. Its ubiquitousness in the popular imagination is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that there are Bigfoot reports and local variants from locations and ecosystems all across the United States, from Washington to Texas to Pennsylvania, with the plurality of sightings coming from the Pacific Northwest.[39]

The hunt for large, hairy, hominid cryptids is one that stretches back at least a century. In 1920, for example, a Swiss geologist claimed to have seen and killed a group of upright, apelike animals on the border of Venezuela and Colombia.[40] Much further back, before the solidification

[37] "File:Patterson Gimlin Bigfoot.jpg - Wikimedia Commons," Wikimedia.org, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Patterson_Gimlin_Bigfoot.jpg.
[38] Gregory L. Morris, "Imagining Bigfoot." *Western American Literature* 42, no. 3 (2007): 276–92. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43022568.
[39] "BFRO Geograpical Database of Bigfoot Sightings & Reports," Archive.org, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20080819051923/http://bfro.net/GDB/.
[40] George Gaylord Simpson. "Mammals and Cryptozoology." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128, no. 1 (1984): 1–19. http://www.jstor.org/stable/986487.

of "Bigfoot" as a well-known cryptid, many indigenous cultures of North America had analogous stories of large, hairy creatures, particularly in the Pacific Northwest region.[41] More recently, the modern moniker of "Bigfoot" was started in 1958, after a series of large footprints were discovered in California.[42] The 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film, of course, was also a reinvigorating moment for Bigfoot hunters, and was held up by many as important evidence. Nevertheless, many explanations for Bigfoot have continued to abound, from stray black bears to escaped zoo animals to simple hoaxes.

Chupacabra

The chupacabra is an interesting cryptid because the two dominant conceptions of it in popular imagination vary dramatically, depending on the cultural context you find yourself in. Though the first stories of random livestock deaths through blood-draining circulated in 1975, the term Chupacabra—first reported as *chupacabras*, or goat-sucker—only originated in 1995, after another wave of 150 irregular animal deaths in the Puerto Rican town of Canóvanas.[43] Reports coming from Puerto Rico and other parts of Latin America tend to have varied descriptions of the monster, but it is usually alien-like, with "gray skin, a long snake-like tongue, fangs, and long spinal quills."[44]

Interestingly enough, though the chupacabra also exists as an American cryptid, reports from Mexico and the southwest United States can sometimes differ from these original physical traits, first reported in Puerto Rico. Such reports claim that the chupacabra is more canine than

[41] David J Daegling, *Bigfoot Exposed : An Anthropologist Examines America's Enduring Legend* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).
[42] Eric Bailey, "Bigfoot's Big Feat: New Life," Los Angeles Times, April 19, 2003, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-apr-19-me-bigfoot19-story.html.
[43] Stephen Wagner, "On the Trail of the Chupacabra," web.archive.org, September 19, 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20050919215215/http://paranormal.about.com/library/weekly/aa051898.htm.
[44] Ibid.

reptilian resembling a dog or coyote that is more feral and aggressive. Such reports are possibly explained by coyotes affected by mange, a fur-based disease caused by microscopic mites that can make the host animal appear gaunt and emaciated.[45]

Loch Ness Monster

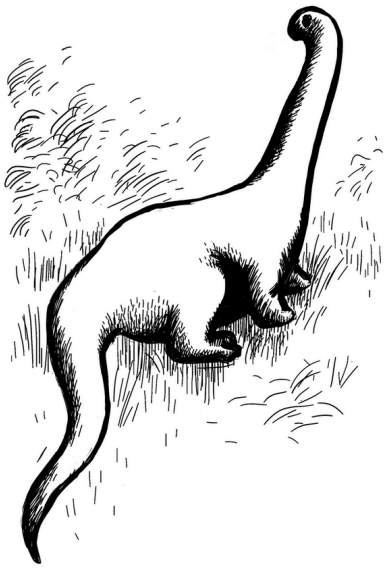
The origins of the Loch Ness Monster, or "Nessie," as it is commonly referred to, have their roots in Scottish folklore, especially the Celtic water-beasts commonly recounted in myth and legend. However, our contemporary understanding of it, as a reptilian, vaguely plesiosaur-like beast, comes from a series of sightings starting in the 1930s. After a road was completed, multiple motorists and motorcyclists made claims of running into a "dragon or prehistoric monster," either in the water or crossing the road.[46] Some searches have been launched, but all have come up inconclusive, and one famous photo—taken in 1934—has since been proven to be a fake.

Throughout the back half of the twentieth century, the Loch Ness Monster has also become a cultural icon—especially in Scotland's tourism industry.[47] Enthusiasts, however, did not give up the search, and multiple methods of detection were tried, from sonar scanning to setting up a constant watch. As new technologies have been developed, more sophisticated techniques for surveying the depths of Loch Ness have also been created, if the funding and manpower can be mobilized to utilize them.

[45] Sarah Fuller, "From Spooky Lore to Science Fact: Unmasking the 'Chupacabra' - AgriLife Today," AgriLife Today, October 15, 2024, https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2024/10/15/unmasking-the-chupacabra/.
[46] Amy Tikkanen, "Loch Ness Monster | History, Sightings, & Facts," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, April 19, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Loch-Ness-monster-legendary-creature.
[47] Inverness Loch Ness, "The Loch Ness Monster | Visit Inverness Loch Ness," www.visitinvernesslochness.com, n.d., https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/the-lochness-monster.

Mokele-Mbembe

The mokele-mbembe is another reptilian cryptid, located in the Congo River Basin. Counted among the "living dinosaurs," this cryptid is interesting because of the fact that it was largely invented and popularized by European explorers and reporters.[48] In the early twentieth century, when the first reports were coming in, paleontology and dinosaur speculation was widespread in popular culture, and public interest paved the way for multiple expeditions. In that same vein, we can recognize that the association of lost dinosaurs with central Africa was very much due to racially-tinted "implications of ignorance and primitiveness," providing a further justification for colonization and garnering "public support to colonize the region."[49]



A crude rendition of the Mokele-mbembe.[50]

[48] Steven Mason, "The Mokele-Mbembe and Other Congo Dinosaurs - JPT," JPT, February 8, 2024, https://jurassicparkterror.com/mokele-mbembe/.
[49] Ibid.
[50] "File:Mokele-Mbembe Ill Artlibre Jnl.png - Wikimedia Commons," Wikimedia.org, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mokele-mbembe_ill_artlibre_jnl.png.

Shortly before the founding of the ISC, two expeditions were organized to the Congo River Basin to search for the Mokele-mbembe, to no avail.[51] Locals were evidently unfamiliar with the idea of the creature, sometimes to the "astonishment" of the explorers. Ultimately, like with most other expeditions, only inconclusive evidence—some unconvincing footprints—was secured.[52]

[51] Maureen Searcy, "Roy Mackal's Wild Speculation," The University of Chicago Magazine, 2021, https://mag.uchicago.edu/science-medicine/roy-mackals-wild-speculation.
[52] Ibid.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Past Attempts to Locate Cryptids

The sustained interest in hidden species across eras and increased government funding for research in the 20th century allowed for more concerted efforts in locating cryptids. This section will provide a few examples of those long-term investigations, highlighting some techniques used by researchers.

Investigating the "Abominable Snowman"

In the late 1950s, researchers in the Chinese Academy of Sciences and biology professors from Peking University set out on an expedition in the southern Himalayas in search of the supposed "abominable snowman" or Yeti, which originated from Tibetan folklore.[53] During this expedition, there was no affirmative proof of the Yeti's existence, but researchers did find a long hair that could not be identified with any known species.

This investigation came after a heightened interest in foreigners scaling Mt. Everest, which resulted in more eyewitness accounts with a large, furry, humanoid-like figure in the mountains. Outside of the hair found by the Peking University team, the strongest evidence other investigators have found has only been footprints, although some have claimed to retrieve preserved body parts of the Yeti.[54]

[53] Guoxing, Zhou. "The Status of Wildman Research in China" *Cryptozoology: Interdisciplinary Journal of the International Society of Cryptozoology* 1 (1982): pp. 13-23, at 15.
[54] Wilkes, Jonny. "The hunt for the Abominable Snowman: what's the history of the Yeti legend?" History Extra, *BBC History Magazine*, July 3, 2023. https://www.historyextra.com/period/general-history/yeti-real-history-legend-abominable-snowman/.

Underwater Search for the Loch Ness

A search was conducted for the Loch Ness Monster by Dr. Hugh Braithwaite and Professor D. Gordon Tucker in 1968 using sonar technology.[55] They detected echoes that pointed to there being some large animal under the surface of the water due to its fast ascent and descent. While this sparked an excitement in the researchers that they had found the Loch Ness monster, their sonar findings were not that conclusive. Because of uncertainty with the technology, the reading they got could have just as easily been caused by a shoal of fish rather than a large, unknown creature.[56]

While this first attempt at sonar detection of the Loch Ness may have been inconclusive, there were later attempts with improved technology. In the 1970s, researchers Tim Dinsdale, Robert H. Rines, and sonar designer Martin Klein used a combination of modern sonar and strobe photography to capture more scientifically significant images in support of Loch Ness's existence.[57] These methods produced images of what appeared to be flippers, which coincided with the sonar readings Hines and his team received.

However, the photos were conveniently not timestamped, so it is difficult to confirm whether these images were actually connected with the sonar reading. Moreover, the images were heavily "enhanced," and the original images are more inconclusive and less distinctly fin-shaped than the ones published.[58]

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[55] "Monsters By Sonar." *Nature* 220 (1968): pp. 1272. https://doi.org/10.1038/2201272b0.
[56] Id.
[57] Rines, Robert H. "Summarizing a Decade of Underwater Studies at Loch Ness." *Cryptozoology: Interdisciplinary Journal of the International Society of Cryptozoology* 1 (1982): pp. 24-32, at 24, 28.
[58] "The 1972 Loch Ness Monster Flipper Photos." TetZoo (blog), August 18, 2020, https://tetzoo.com/blog/2020/8/17/loch-ness-monster-flipper-photos.

The Search for Mokele-Mbembe

In multiple expeditions jointly led by Roy Mackal and explorer James Powell, researchers have been enamored with the possibility of a "living dinosaur" in the Congo and Gabon: the Mokele-Mbembe. The Mackal-Powell expeditions took place in 1980 and 1981, partly funded by the National Geographic Society.[59] Like other aquatic cryptids, the researchers primarily relied on sonar readings—specifically on Lake Tele in Congo—to look for any visual evidence of the creature.

Mackal and the team also sought information from people in the area, conducting field interviews. It is important to note, however, the unethical approach researchers took when retrieving this information that the ISC does not want to replicate in future expeditions. The interview strategies Mackal and others employed often produced unreliable and coerced answers; accompanying the team was both a pastor ministering in the area and a member of the Congolese government who would pressure locals to cooperate with researchers (and also to convert to Christianity). Any research the ISC conducts, in finding the Mokele-Mbembe or otherwise, ought to take lessons from these past expeditions and use good faith ethnographic methods.

Efforts Beyond Cryptozoology

As of its founding, the International Society of Cryptozoology is a relatively lean institution, which is a more respectable way of saying that it is small, non-influential, and deeply lacking in funds. Its central, defining responsibility, of course, is the scientific field of cryptozoology—but beyond actually hunting down rumors, analyzing vague pieces of evidence, and sending out expeditions into the field, there are other potential avenues that the Society can (and perhaps should) venture into. These are the different facets that many other modern learned

[59] Searcy, Maureen. "Roy Mackal's Wild Speculation." UChicago Magazine (Summer 2021). https://mag.uchicago.edu/science-medicine/roy-mackals-wild-speculation.

societies lean into, whether that's publishing new research, hosting conferences, training budding new cryptozoologists, or pursuing conservation efforts.[60]

Publishing

A scholarly journal, or academic journal, is a publication that publishes new and original scientific research for an academic audience, complete with footnotes, bibliographies, and very often some sort of peer-review process.[61] The ISC proudly publishes its own journal: the aptly-named *Cryptozoology*, perhaps the world's first peer-reviewed journal on the topic. The typical issue might contain articles on paleontology, anthropology, and folklore, as well as field reports from ongoing expeditions and literature reviews on new work that has been published.[62] Some of the members of the committee are even on a board of editors. Yet for all that the ISC likes to uphold the journal as a mark of serious scientific accreditation, the truth is murkier: as a journal specific to a single organization, *Cryptozoology* is hardly a prestigious publication, and does not hold much sway in the larger scientific community at all.

There are several problems that the journal, and thus the society, face when confronting our position in the scientific world. To achieve true prominence, the society needs respected research and respectable scientists, which is difficult when the ISC's field of study is so unorthodox. Also necessary is simple scale: a higher degree of money, membership, and research volume to truly become a heavy-hitter. With enough growth, the academic muscle of the ISC

[60] Alicia Wise and Lorraine Estelle, "Learned Societies, the Key to Realising an Open Access Future?," Impact of Social Sciences, June 24, 2019, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2019/06/24/learned-societies-the-key-to-realising-an-open-access-future/.
[61] "EBSCO Connect," connect.ebsco.com, 2018, https://connect.ebsco.com/s/article/What-is-the-difference-between-Academic-Journals-and-Scholarly-Peer-Reviewed-Journals?language=en_US.
[62] John Ockerbloom, "Cryptozoology Archives," Upenn.edu, 2025, https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=cryptozoology.

could one day be large enough to hold some actual significance. With influence, prestige, and money, a learned society can shape public opinion and spread its message in other ways, such as by recruiting new members, holding lavish conferences for scientists from around the globe, and promoting new avenues of research through the usage of fellowships and grants.[63]

Conservation

Other learned societies, especially zoological societies, play an important role in conservation efforts. Many simply donate generously to different research efforts of conservation funds. Some of them, when they have the capacity, have also taken a more direct and active role in conservation. These societies have had the capabilities to target the conservation of specific species, setting up initiatives to guard unique habitats and ecosystems, fight against resource exploitation, develop new technologies, and guard against poaching efforts.[64]

Many contemporary zoos and museums thus have enormous networks of research and conservation efforts that span the globe, going far beyond what you might see in a pen or exhibit.[65] If the ISC can expend its efforts in a similarly productive manner, it too can create a network with great reach in the cryptid-heavy regions that it's interested in. That depends, of course, on what sort of ethos the Society brings to its interactions with the local communities and ecosystems it visits in its search for the latest cryptid. If such an institution can establish partnerships with local actors—universities, NGOs, communities, and the like—in areas of interest around the world, they can have an impact on a truly global scale.

[63] Royal Society, "Grants at the Royal Society | Royal Society," Royalsociety.org, 2025, https://royalsociety.org/grants/.
[64] Association of Zoos and Aquariums, "Conservation," www.aza.org, n.d., https://www.aza.org/conservation.
[65] Elena Gonzales, "Zoos and Aquariums: Inspiring Visitors, Inspiring Museums," American Alliance of Museums, December 11, 2019, https://www.aam-us.org/2019/12/11/zoos-and-aquariums-inspiring-visitors-inspiring-museums/.

Media Representation

In attempts to become its own sub-discipline within academia, cryptozoologists were not able to bring their research into wide circulation, confining the study to a small circle of the so-called "cryptozoological community" rather than a larger academic audience.[66]

Much of the media surrounding cryptids lies outside of mainstream academia and picked up instead by popular culture. The novelty and drama of cryptid-related shows and documentaries is seen as a prime rating and advertising opportunity for mainstream media outlets, including PBS and Fox.[67] This sort of representation has drawn criticism from those in academic science in that, by giving cryptids and cryptozoology a platform on legitimate TV networks, it contributes to an actual belief in cryptozoology and thus spreads "misinformation."[68] Moreover, academics point out that cryptozoology's presence in popular media rather than academic channels is an avoidance of peer-review, further undermining the credibility of their hypotheses.

TV representation does indeed have a statistically significant impact on public opinion and belief towards cryptids. For instance, in 2021, a survey revealed that 24% of Americans thought that Bigfoot was "definitely or probably real."[69] A research study in the International Journal of Communication further showed that consumption of paranormal TV and news (including cryptozoology) predicted such belief in cryptids.[70] While viewership of cryptid television and documentaries plays an important role in propagating research to the public, its sensationalized framing as a novelty and intrigue undermines its serious credibility among

[66] Rossi, Lorenzo. "A Review of Cryptozoology: Towards a Scientific Approach to the Study of 'Hidden Animals,'" in *Problematic Wildlife*, ch. 26. Springer International (2015): 573-588, at 573.
[67] Dawson, Wyatt et al. "Cryptid Communication: Media Messages and Public Beliefs about Cryptozoology." *International Journal of Communication* 18 (2024): pp. 470-491, at 471.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid. at 472.

academics. So, it is a task of the ICS to decide on how to properly leverage its position in popular culture while remaining a serious academic discipline.

Although still considered unconventional compared to mainstream scientific research, the 1960-1980s marks the height of cryptozoology's serious credibility in academia compared to how we view it in the twenty-first-century.

Founding of the International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC)

It was this serious curiosity into cryptozoology that inspired the creation of organizations dedicated to its study. The International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC) was formally established on January 9th, 1982 in Washington DC with the goal of providing a credible platform for scientists interested in cryptozoology to conduct research and share findings.[71] It was founded by President Bernard Heuvelmans, Vice President Roy P. Mackal from the University of Chicago, and J. Richard Greenwell from the University of Arizona.[72]

In bringing in scientists from various universities and across disciplines, the ISC also seeks to establish cryptozoology as a legitimate subdiscipline of zoology and animal biology. To this end, the ISC has started publishing annual, peer-reviewed journals documenting their research. Their first publication in 1982 opened with a defense of cryptozoology: "Before attempting to define what cryptozoology is, let us begin by making clear what it is not. Cryptozoology is not an arcane or occult zoology, as some, in an attempt to discredit it, have suggested."[73] These publications would include not only opinion articles, but also documented

[71] Rossi, at 575.
[72] Id.
[73] Heuvelmans, Bernard. "What is Cryptozoology?" *Cryptozoology: Interdisciplinary Journal of the International Society of Cryptozoology* 1 (1982): pp. 1-12, at 1.

field research, research reports, book reviews, and responses from readers on previous publications.

Structure of the ISC

Leadership

The ISC's core leadership team consists of a 15 member Board of Directors, who have diverse backgrounds in paleontology, anthropology, and zoology, among others.[74] The Executive Committee within the Board includes the President, Vice President, and Secretary. The Board as a whole leads the ISC in creating and implementing policies to grow the organization and deliver on its mission of promoting scientific inquiry around cryptids and unexpected species.

The ISC Secretariat—led by the Secretary— is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization and oversees the publishing of the ISC's journal, *Cryptozoology*.[75] This department also takes on a more archival role, housing previous journal publications and an extensive library of natural history and cryptozoology.

The journal *Cryptozoology* has an Editorial Board of its own, managed under the ISC Secretariat. Like the Board of Directors, the Editorial Board is made up of members with pedigree in various scientific and historical fields.[76]

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[74] "Board of Directors." International Society of Cryptozoology, October 13, 2004, at https://web.archive.org/web/20041013174755/http://www.internationalsocietyofcryptozoology.org/Directors/Default.aspx?Content=overview.
[75] "ISC Secretariat." International Society of Cryptozoology, October 10, 2004, at https://web.archive.org/web/20041010141030/http://www.internationalsocietyofcryptozoology.org/Society/Default.aspx?Content=secretariat.
[76] "Editorial Board." International Society of Cryptozoology, October 10, 2004, at https://web.archive.org/web/20041020013519/http://www.internationalsocietyofcryptozoology.org/Publications/Journal/Default.aspx?content=EditorialBoard.

Membership

Outside of its leadership, the general public is able to engage with the ISC through membership. By paying a subscription fee, a member gets access to all of the ISC's publications and research. The ISC would often advertise these memberships in newspapers and magazines as invitations to participate in the debate surrounding hidden species.[77] In addition to garnering more public attention to the ISC's work, memberships also provided some revenue to fund further research and expeditions.

The Board of Directors can also nominate and elect Honorary Members, who receive all the benefits of membership for life with no cost.[78] There can only be up to 10 Honorary Members at one time, and eligibility requirements include significant contributions to the furtherance of cryptozoology, and that these contributions were made in an ethical manner.

Finances

While memberships provide some financial support, the ISC mainly relies on corporate sponsorship and contributions from wealthy benefactors.[79] Because of its dedication to scientific research and status as a nonprofit, the ISC is also recognized as tax-exempt by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under 501(c)(3).

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[77] "International Society Of Cryptozoology." Gentlemen's Trade: A Survey of the World's Trade in Distilled Spirits. Economist, 22 Dec. 1984, p. 19. The Economist Historical Archive, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FGP4100169994%2FGDCS%3Fu%3Dchic_rbw%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDCS.
[78] "Honorary Members." International Society of Cryptozoology, October 10, 2004, at https://web.archive.org/web/20041010141147/http://www.internationalsocietyofcryptozoology.org/membership/Default.aspx?Content=honoraryMembers.
[79] "Sponsors." International Society of Cryptozoology, October 10, 2004, at https://web.archive.org/web/20041010141411/http://www.internationalsocietyofcryptozoology.org/sponsors/Default.aspx?Content=overview.

Delegate Positions

Roy P. Mackal, Vice President

Hailing from the great city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Roy P. Mackal earned his Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in biology and his PhD in zoology from the University of Chicago in 1953. Prior to earning his degrees, Mackal also served as a Marine during World War II. In his early academic career, he became a respected researcher in the field of biochemistry, where he focused on virology and the properties of viral DNA. Mackal became most well known, however, for his involvement in early cryptozoology research. In the mid-late 1960s, he became the scientific director for the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau's project in the Scottish Highlands, and he published the (inconclusive) findings in his 1976 book *The Monsters of Loch Ness*. Mackal also took part in multiple expeditions to find the Mokele-mbembe in the early 1980s, spearheading the effort with Richard Greenwell and Marcellin Agnagna. Well connected within the cryptozoology academic community, Mackal cofounded the International Society for Cryptozoology alongside Bernard Heuvelmans and Greenwell in 1982. A critical part in the formation of the ISC, Mackal brings his expertise in evolutionary biology and engineering to the organization's continued expeditions and research.

J. Richard Greenwell, Secretary

Another founding member of the ISC, Richard Greenwell is an explorer and researcher seasoned in the emerging field of cryptozoology. Currently overseeing the publication of the very scholarly *Cryptozoology* journal, Greenwell has always enjoyed writing about the creatures he sought after. From the Ri in New Guinea and Yeren in China to the Onza in Mexico, he has

journeyed throughout the world in hopes of unearthing the conclusive proof of these mysterious species' existence, documenting whatever he could along the way. Naturally, when he heard Heuvelmans' and Mackal's idea to start the ISC, he would continue doing just that: keeping record of the organization's expeditions and publishing those findings to the masses.

Aaron M. Bauer, Herpetologist

Did you know that some varieties of snake venom can actually work as anti-coagulants to treat heart attacks? Aaron Bauer knows that and more. As a freshly trained herpetologist right out of college, Bauer is enthusiastic to make an impression on the scientific world and get his name out there. His primary research focus is on small lizards and species extinction, but his primary interest is in geckos. Bauer really, really loves geckos. He has described over one hundred new species of gecko in his time as a herpetologist, and maybe he still has time to discover a hundred more. Who can say? Don't let him corner you about geckos, or he'll talk your ear off about their adhesive abilities or excellent night vision. Either way, Bauer will apply his encyclopedic knowledge of reptiles and amphibians to the fullest in tracking down more mythical variants.

Eric Buffetaut, Paleontologist

Eric Buffetaut has loved dinosaurs since he was a child, and that love did not fade with time, as it does for most young children. Even today, as an accomplished paleontologist at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, Buffetaut's bedroom is still decorated with dinosaur posters and models—some of which he has named himself. A true romantic, Buffetaut knows that there is nothing that stirs the soul like an incredibly awesome giant lizard, and he still hopes deep down to be able to witness one with his own eyes, even if the evidence is spotty. And

with access to the funds, technology, and collections of a government research agency, he is well-positioned to turn that dream into a reality.

Angelo P. Capparella, Ornithologist

Angelo Capparella often grumbles when thinking about the universal love that people have for dinosaurs, reptilian cryptids, and reptiles in general. There are dinosaurs still living today—as birds, which everyone should know! Having researched ornithology in universities and museums across the United States, Capparella is also involved in the American Ornithological Union and has many friends across the National Audubon Society (never underestimate the power and dedication of a cross-continental association of amateur birdwatchers, he says. Absolutely vicious). Together, they support habitat conservation efforts and nature preserves across the United States. His favorite cryptid, naturally, is Owlman—not to be confused with Mothman, which is a completely different thing, and the mixup is a common-enough occurrence that he has grown thoroughly tired of it.

Eugenie Clark, Ichthyologist

The Loch Ness Monster. The Mokele-Mbembe. Eugenie Clark often wonders why underwater cryptids have to just be oversized reptiles when they could be…fish! It doesn't weigh on her too much, though, especially when she is already such a decorated scientist well-known across the US for her popular books and publications. Clark is comfortable in the national spotlight, having received accolades from National Geographic, the Explorers Club, and the Underwater Society of America. At the same time, her academic credentials are unquestionable. Having conducted research in the Pacific and the Mediterranean, Clark is also an accomplished

scuba diver, having popularized its utilization for research purposes, especially amongst sharks; some say that she is the first scientist to have discovered a way to train sharks to respond to basic conditioned suggestions.

Colin P. Groves, Mammalogist

Hailing from the sunny shores of the land down under, Colin Groves is an accomplished mammalogist, having studied topics ranging from human evolution to primate taxonomy to the speciation of leopard-cats. Colin is an enormous cat person and is the proud owner of seven cats, who are all named after extinct mammal species. Interestingly enough, Colin is also an avowed skeptic of the entire field of cryptozoology as a whole—he looks down on paranormal and pseudoscientific claims, and seems to treat his involvement in the ISC as an academic exercise. More interested in matters of conservation, folklore, and culture than in fanciful tales, Colin has the support of Australian academics and his fellow skeptics—along with the cash prize that they continue to offer for empirical proof of supernatural powers.

David Heppell, Museum Curator

David Heppell never regretted venturing forth into the underappreciated field of conchology—the study of mollusc shells—even when he did not receive the public acclaim that other scientists got and ended up as a museum curator at the Royal Scottish Museum. In fact, curation has become an enormous passion, and Heppell is near-supernaturally talented at pulling out useful items and remembering ancient species from the miles of specimens that he has access to. As a proud Scottish skeptic, he refuses to go near Loch Ness, and has a healthy distaste for mermaids. He's more interested, perhaps, in cultivating his contacts with archivists, curators, and

collections managers in museums around the world—and in his free time, making shell castles to wow his friends and colleagues.

Christine Janis, Paleomammalogist

The dinosaur paleontologists always hog the spotlight, but Christine Janis knows that the really interesting stuff happens in the wonderful world of paleomammalogy—even if it's not exactly popular with the kids. An accomplished British researcher, Janis has spent her life devoted to the study of mammals—specifically all aspects of their anatomy, from the tooth to the hoof. An expert on the underexplored and underrated, she is also knowledgeable about biomechanics—how animals move from place to place, and the structure needed to support that motion. In her free time, Janis is an amateur triathlete, has run at least three marathons, and has many friends and contacts in the world of professional athletics.

Grover S. Krantz, Anthropologist

Grover Krantz has always been a true believer in Bigfoot. Even as he became an expert in the fields of anthropology and primatology, even as he learned how to navigate the scholarly world, he clung onto this belief—and it has cost him. One of the few scholars out there to actually advocate for the existence of Bigfoot in scholarly avenues, his articles on the matter have been shot down over and over, even as he has pushed his field forward in the field of prehistoric humanity. During the day, he thinks of grainy video footage and ever-more elaborate surveillance schemes; at night, he dreams of muddy footprints. Able to effectively bridge the divide between respectable scientists and amateur conspiracists, Krantz views the ISC as the ultimate chance to prove once and for all what he has known all along: that Bigfoot is out there.

Nikolai Spassov, Paleomammalogist

Nikolai Spassov is an accomplished paleomammalogist, specializing in the morphology of large mammals and the evolution of megafauna. He has worked at scientific institutions across Europe, and maintains connections at universities and museums from Paris to Moscow. Now working at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, he is known for his strict and professional demeanour—an attitude that has won him respect from his subordinates. In his heart, however, Nikolai is the world's biggest fan of cryptids, even if he may not be a true believer. He owns at least twelve varieties of bigfoot plushies, and he is an avid attendee of cryptid fan conventions and festivals around the world, where he can often be spotted in a poorly-made disguise of oversized sunglasses and a cartoonish moustache.

Zhou Guoxing, Archaeologist

Zhou Guoxing is an archaeologist at the Peking Museum of Natural History, and he's tired of all this Bigfoot talk. In his fieldwork around the world, he argues, he has come to realize that cryptozoology is a global phenomenon—and certainly, the ISC's efforts should reflect that. In fact, he has conducted his own cryptid hunts in China, coordinating a search for the yeren, or "Wild Man," that ended in failure. Nevertheless, his efforts have been successful in creating an enormous network of enthusiastic—if amateurish—citizen scientists across China. Zhou believes that it is only by working together with the public and bringing the message to them that the ISC can truly achieve its goals. Perhaps with new communication technologies and large-scale coordination projects, the scientists can finally bring the hunt to an end.

Peter A. Jaszi, Board Legal Advisor

Peter Jaszi is a bit of an outlier on the ISC board, mostly because of the fact that he doesn't actually care too much about cryptozoology. As the ISC's legal advisor, Jaszi has one job: make sure the Society doesn't step on too many toes as it gallivants about chasing dreams and fairytales. What happens when an expedition trespasses on private land, or when a Bigfoot trap injures a hiker, or when a scientist forgets how long they were allowed to have that specimen on loan? Jaszi has to clean it up. Nevertheless, he does hold some genuine affection toward the Society. If it is to be a genuine scientific force on a global scale, however, Jaszi recognizes that it needs to develop an actual administrative structure more robust than the ad-hoc system that currently dominates.

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, Collections Official

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer was a relatively unknown museum official in South Africa before her 1938 discovery of the coelacanth—thought to be extinct for millions of years—put her in the spotlight of the international scientific community. Her direct involvement in the study of cryptozoology is even more indirect—through friendships and connections with other scientists and museum officials in the Society. She is an advocate for and an example of citizen science in every measure of the word. How else can future discoveries comparable to the coelacanth be made, if not by investment in the museums, classes, and nature preserves that inspire people to pursue science? That is why she views the ISC as a forum for research, yes, but also for education—an opportunity to build up a more accessible learned society, one that can teach others of the wonders of the natural world.

Athol M. Douglas, Naturalist

Athol Douglas is, first and foremost, a naturalist, even with all of his zoological training. Growing up in the vast (and sometimes dangerous) landscapes of Australia, he fell in love with the flora and fauna of his continent's natural landscapes—some say that he wrestled a saltwater alligator into a standstill. As such, Douglas was deeply disturbed by the intrusion of mining, logging, and urban development into those landscapes. Such intrusions only serve to hurt our ecosystems and their biodiversity, and Douglas won't abide by it. That is the mindset that he has taken into the ISC; he believes that the scientists, behind their quirks and obsessions, may be united by a genuine appreciation for the earth's environments.

Richard S.R. Fitter, Author

Richard really loves birds. By proxy, he also loves ducks, and this, naturally, led to his fascination with the Loch Ness Monster. Having an extensive portfolio of bird and wildflower literature published, Fitter's resume is bolstered by his position as director of the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau. In his wildlife guides, Fitter was committed to making ecology and environmentalism accessible to the average citizen, and he carries that same commitment to popular engagement with science in his role at the ISC. Outside of being an author, Fitter dedicates his time to the conservation and naturalist movement, serving as the director on the Council For Nature and founded the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Naturalist Trust.

Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, Mountaineer, Surgeon

Born in France, Koffmann moved to the Soviet Union in 1935 to launch her aspiring career as a surgeon in Moscow. Hearing stories from her mountain-climbing patients of a strange "wildman" in the Caucasus mountains, Koffmann became intrigued by reports of the creature known as the almasty, and systematically collected vast amounts of testimonial evidence of contact with the creature. She saw the study of the almasty—and cryptozoology as a whole—as much more than a paranormal phenomena or ghost story: it was a scientific endeavour worthy of serious research and consideration. While Heuvelmans is credited as the "father of cryptozoology," Koffmann contributed extensively to the establishment of the field and setting a high standard for its field research. In addition to collecting eye-witness reports, she leveraged her medical experience in analyzing physical evidence of hominid creatures in the Caucasus mountains, and this evidence as a whole served to compose Koffmann's recreation of the almasty's physical and behavioral traits. She hopes to bring this same scientific rigor to the ISC and its research into other wildman cryptids around the world.

Robert H. Rines, Engineer, Lawyer

"Jack of all trades"? More like, Robert of all trades. Philanthropy, intellectual property law, engineer with upwards of 80 patents, an Emmy, composing for Broadway and off-Broadway musicals, and, of course, Loch Ness Monster research—what can't Robert H. Rines do? Receiving his B.S. from MIT, J.D. from Georgetown University, and Ph.D. from National Chiao Tung University in Taiwan, Rines has extensive educational pedigree. When he had his own alleged encounter with the Loch Ness Monster in 1972, he directed this full intellectual force to uncover further evidence of the cryptid's existence. Using his patented sonar photography

equipment, Rines was able to produce widely shared photos of what he thought to be the Loch Ness Monster, and overall contributed to the professionalization of the technology used in cryptozoological methods. While a member of the ISC, Rines has a lot to leverage: a reputation as a world-class researcher and professor, thorough knowledge of patent law, and a great ear for music if Old Ness is into theater.

André Capart, Marine Biologist

A longtime companion of Heuvelmans himself, André Capart brings to the ISC his expertise on all things oceanic. Capart got his start at the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in Belgium, where he rose the ranks and became its director in the 1950s. While based in Belgium, he did his fair share of exploration, from Antarctica and Africa to the Mediterranean, conducting oceanographic research and mapping on the regions. Capart also forms an academic power couple with his wife and anthropologist, Denise Jourdain. Where Capart brings his hydrobiological background, Jourdain matches with her thorough knowledge of culture and folklore, which Capart often consults when undertaking cryptozoological research. Together, they are drafting their first publication on the changing sea levels between Ice Ages and floods, linking Noah's Flood with the modern oceanography of the Black Sea.

Sir Peter Scott, Conservationist

If someone or something threatens a species of waterfowl, they will have to get through Sir Peter Scott first. A huge conservationist, Sir Scott has founded multiple environmentalist and conservation organizations, including helping establish what is today known as the World Wildlife Fund in 1961. In his free time, you could find him painting waterfowl and wildflowers

by the nearby pond, or yachting on the River Thames in London. One illustration he made depicts the Loch Ness Monster, which he gave the scientific name *Nessiteras rhombopteryx* to in 1975, listing it as an endangered species. He was drawn to the ISC's commitment to surveying existing wildlife and to preserve endangered species—known and unknown—and seeks to keep the organization to its word on its conservation efforts.

Bob Titmus, Taxidermist

"It's not much, but it's honest work" best sums up Bob Titmus' endeavors in the search for Bigfoot. Not a very public man, Titmus directed all his taxidermy talent and funds to creating a solid foundation of evidence for Bigfoot's existence, including an impressive collection of foot casts made from alleged Bigfoot tracks. Operating a taxidermy shop out of Redding, British Columbia, Titmus and his neighbor friends—who were fellow sasquatch enthusiasts—officially organized the "Pacific Northwest Expedition" from California through central British Columbia. Titmus is a natural grass roots leader and big believer in layman science, using his trade skills and community connections to forward cryptozoological field research.

Susan Cachel, Evolutionary Biologist

UChicago educated (B.A., M.A., and Ph.D.) Susan Cachel is an expert in all things primate evolution, specializing in paleoanthropology, primatology, and morphology. Currently a fresh professor at Rutgers after earning her Ph.D in 1976, Cachel has made great strides in hominization theory, most relevant to the ISC's study of hominid creatures and reported "wildmen" around the world. While not as entrenched in the cryptozoological school as others—and also as one of its younger members—Cachel hopes to hold the field's research to the

same level of scrutiny as other physical sciences, serving on the editorial board of the *Cryptozoology* journal.

John Colarusso, Linguist

Cryptozoology draws from many sources, not only from physical evidence but from the mythology and folklore surrounding cryptids. When you need to know something about the folklore or language of the Caucasus Mountains—a region rife with cryptid sightings—then John Colarusso is your guy. He has written multiple publications in anthropology on the myths and monsters of the region, in addition to being an expert on historical linguistics. Colarusso earned his Ph.D from Harvard University in 1975, and immediately after launched his professorship at McMaster University in 1976 in both anthropology and linguistics, all the while taking on his role on the editorial board of *Cryptozoology*. With a focus on the social sciences, Colarusso hopes to emphasize the importance of ethnographic approaches in the ISC's future endeavours alongside the search for physical evidence.

M. Justin Wilkinson, Geomorphologist

Some may write off cryptozoology as a product of hobby tourists, but to Dr. Justin Wilkinson it is a study of astronomical importance. Wilkinson is a savant with taking and interpreting astronaut imagery, using it towards his scientific interests in geomorphology of deserts and rivers and its implications for modeling evolution of aquatic and avian species in river-desert ecosystems. He was able to use his prowess on an expedition with Roy P. Mackal for the Mokele-Mbembe in 1981, leveraging his understanding of the evolutionary landscape in the

Congo. As a board member on the ISC, Wilkinson is excited to look at the bigger (satellite) picture when it comes to the future of cryptozoology.

Marcellin Agnagna, Zoologist

Growing up in Brazzaville, Marcellin Agnagna is a Congolese zoologist fascinated with African rainforest ecology. His main entry point into the International Society of Cryptozoology was the search for Mokele-mbembe, for which he led an expedition alongside Roy P. Mackal in 1981. Agnagna maintains strong commitments outside of cryptozoology itself, including a passion for conservation, sustainable development, and surveying of African rainforest wildlife. He has expressed this interest through involvement with government agencies and nonprofits in the region to reach sustainability goals in forestry and environmental policies. While having strong ties to the Congo, Agnagna has also received university training in Cuba and financial support for his expeditions and research from groups in the United States.

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