

Loch Ness Monster



The Loch Ness Monster is a mythical animal that allegedly lives in Loch Ness, a large freshwater lake near Inverness, Scotland. Although accounts of an aquatic beast living in the lake date back 1,500 years, all efforts to find any credible evidence of the animal have failed. ☐

Loch Ness, located in the Scottish Highlands, has the largest volume of fresh water in Great Britain; the body of water reaches a depth of nearly 800 feet and a length of about 23 miles.

Scholars of the Loch Ness Monster find a dozen references to "Nessie" in Scottish history, dating back to around 500 A.D., when local Picts carved a strange aquatic creature into standing stones near Loch Ness.

St. Columba

The earliest written reference to a monster in Loch Ness is a 7th-century biography of Saint Columba, the Irish missionary who introduced Christianity to Scotland. In 565 A.D., according to the biographer, St. Columba was on his way to visit the king of the northern Picts near Inverness when he stopped at Loch Ness to confront a beast that had been killing people in the lake.

Seeing a large beast about to attack another man, St. Columba intervened, invoking the name of God and commanding the creature to "go back with all speed." ☐

Loch Ness Monster Sightings

In 1933, a new road was completed along Loch Ness' shore, affording drivers a clear view of the loch. On May 2, 1933, the *Inverness Courier* reported that a local couple claimed to have seen "an enormous animal rolling and plunging on the surface."

The story of the Loch Ness Monster became a media phenomenon, with London newspapers sending correspondents to Scotland and a circus offering a 20,000 pound reward for capture of the beast.

☐ Several British newspapers sent reporters to Scotland, including London's *Daily Mail*, which hired big-game hunter Marmaduke Wetherell to capture the beast.

After a few days searching the loch, Wetherell reported finding footprints of a large four-legged animal. In response, the *Daily Mail* carried the dramatic headline: "MONSTER OF LOCH NESS IS NOT LEGEND BUT A FACT."

Nessie

Scores of tourists descended on Loch Ness and sat in boats or decks chairs waiting for an appearance by the beast. Plaster casts of the footprints were sent to the British Natural History Museum, which reported that the tracks were that of a hippopotamus, specifically one hippopotamus foot, probably stuffed. ☐

A famous 1934 photograph seemed to show a dinosaur-like creature with a long neck emerging out of the murky waters, leading some to speculate that "Nessie" was a solitary survivor of the long-extinct plesiosaurs. ☐

Loch Ness was frozen solid during recent ice ages, however, so this creature would have had to have made its way up the River Ness from the sea in the past 10,000 years. ☐

More likely, others suggested, it was an archeocyte, a primitive whale with a serpentine neck that is thought to have been extinct for 18 million years. Skeptics argued that what people were seeing in Loch Ness were "seiches"—oscillations in the water surface caused by the inflow of cold river water into the slightly warmer loch.

The Search Continues

Amateur investigators kept an almost constant vigil, and in the 1960s several British universities launched expeditions to Loch Ness, using sonar to search the deep. ☐

In 1975, Boston's Academy of Applied Science combined sonar and underwater photography in an expedition to Loch Ness. A photo resulted that, after enhancement, appeared to show the giant flipper of a plesiosaur-like creature. ☐

Revelations in 1994 that the famous 1934 photo was a hoax hardly dampened the enthusiasm of tourists and professional and amateur investigators to the legend of the Loch Ness Monster.

Glossary

- Allegedly: supposedly, apparently.
- Dampen: check or diminish the activity or vigor of.
- Retreat: move back or away.
- Plunge: enter quickly.
- Game: wild animals hunted for sport or food.
- Plaster: a pasty composition (as of lime, water, and sand) that hardens on drying and is used for coating walls, ceilings, etc.
- Cast: an impression taken from an object with a liquid or plastic substance.
- Hoax: an act intended to trick, deceive.
- Deflate: reduce in size, importance, or effectiveness.
- Murky: characterized by obscurity.
- Enhancement: improvement.
- Tantalizing: possessing a quality that arouses or stimulates desire or interest.

Some sentences have been removed from the text. Write the number in the corresponding box.

1. And the plesiosaurs, believed to be cold-blooded, would not long survive in the frigid waters of Loch Ness.
2. Further sonar expeditions in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in more tantalizing, if inconclusive, readings.
3. That hasn't dampened the public's enthusiasm, however, for any news about "Nessie."
4. The monster retreated and never harmed another man.
5. After the 1933 sighting, interest steadily grew, especially after another couple claimed to have seen the beast on land, crossing the shore road.
6. Nothing conclusive was found, but in each expedition the sonar operators detected large, moving underwater objects they could not explain.
7. The hoax temporarily deflated Loch Ness Monster mania, but stories of sightings continued.
8. The aquatic plesiosaurs were thought to have died off with the rest of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

Mark these sentences as T (True) or F (False)

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| ☐ | • There are carvings of an animal in the waters of Loch Ness that date back to 500 A.D. |
| ☐ | • St Columba was a biographer. |
| ☐ | • He saw a huge creature killing a man. |
| ☐ | • When a local newspaper reported a sighting, London newspapers sent correspondents to the site. |
| ☐ | • A circus was interested in the animal being captured. |
| ☐ | • Footprints of a large four-legged animal were found near the loch. |
| ☐ | • The British Natural History Museum examined the samples and concluded they were of just one foot. |
| ☐ | • Taking a 1934 photograph as evidence, experts affirmed that "Nessie" was a solitary survivor of the long-extinct plesiosaurs. |
| ☐ | • Others refuted that the animal could not have survived in the freezing waters of the loch. |
| ☐ | • Expeditions were carried out using underwater equipment. |
| ☐ | • Without any successful results, interest in the legendary monster has fallen. |