

# Stalking legendary creatures

**I**N 1912, a pilot crash-lands on a rugged Indonesian island. He hears loud rustling in the bushes. He sees the flash of a huge tail and hears a ferocious hissing. Frightened and alone in a strange land, he wonders: Could it be a dragon? It disappears before he can get a good look.

Later, he talks with Indonesian pearl divers. He learns that stories abound of a giant reptile 12 feet long living on Komodo Island. Finally in 1926, an expedition brings two live specimens back to New York City. At 10 feet long, they turn out to be the world's largest known lizards. Now everyone knows they really exist. They don't fly or breathe fire, but they were named Komodo dragons, thanks to all the rumors they sparked about dragons on the island.

These "dragons" also serve as an example of the purpose of cryptozoology. "Crypto" (KRIP-toh) means "hidden," and "zoology" (zoh-OHL-uh-jee) is the study of animals.

Cryptozoologists try to find animals that are rumored to exist, but have not yet been proved to be real.

Roy Mackal has been a biologist and biochemist at the University of Chicago, but since 1950 he has also been interested in finding mysterious animals. Dr. Mackal has traveled all over the world to try to prove that rumored creatures exist. He also helps to show that some mysterious creatures are not terrible monsters.

Recently, a "sea monster" 50 feet long was reported and videotaped in a lake in Papua, New Guinea. Mackal was able to determine that the "monster" was actually three large salt-water crocodiles. A male was holding onto a female's tail, and another male had the second one by the tail. When only portions of their bodies appeared above the water, it looked like one giant creature.

"There are no monsters," Mackal says, "just unidentified animals." And he believes there are still many unidentified animals to discover.

He was recently researching in Central West Africa, in an area of 55,000 square miles of unexplored jungle and swamp. "There are large areas on the earth and in the oceans that have never been explored," he says. "Who knows what might be living there?"

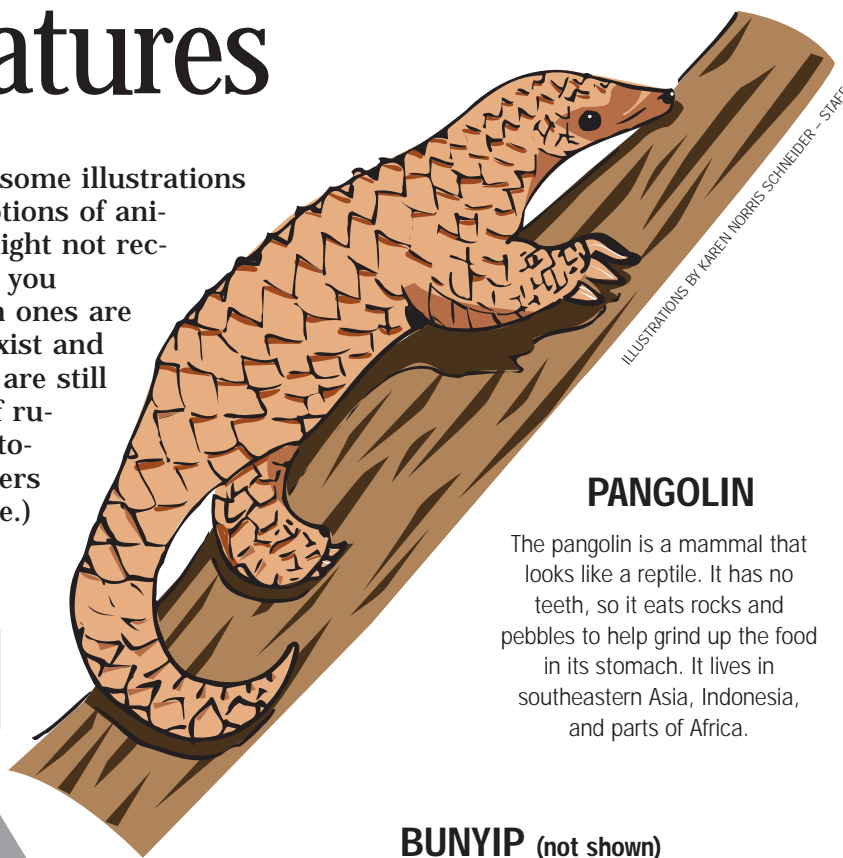
**N**ATIVES of the Congo in Africa for years told European visitors of an animal that looked like a cross between a giraffe and a zebra. The visitors assumed the stories were just folk tales. But in 1901, Sir Harry Johnston obtained skins that proved the creature, which we now call the okapi, was real.

In 1938, a fishing boat off the coast of South Africa caught a 5-foot-long fish that was later identified as a coelacanth. The fish were believed to have been extinct for 65 million years. And only a few years ago, in 1994, biologists captured the first known saola, a large ox that inhabits the forests of northern Vietnam.

Cryptozoologists think there are still plenty of creatures to discover, while many of us have yet to learn about some of the strange animals that already exist. Look at the animals on these pages, for instance. How many are real?

Here are some illustrations and descriptions of animals you might not recognize. Can you guess which ones are proven to exist and which ones are still creatures of rumors and stories? (Answers on next page.)

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## PANGOLIN

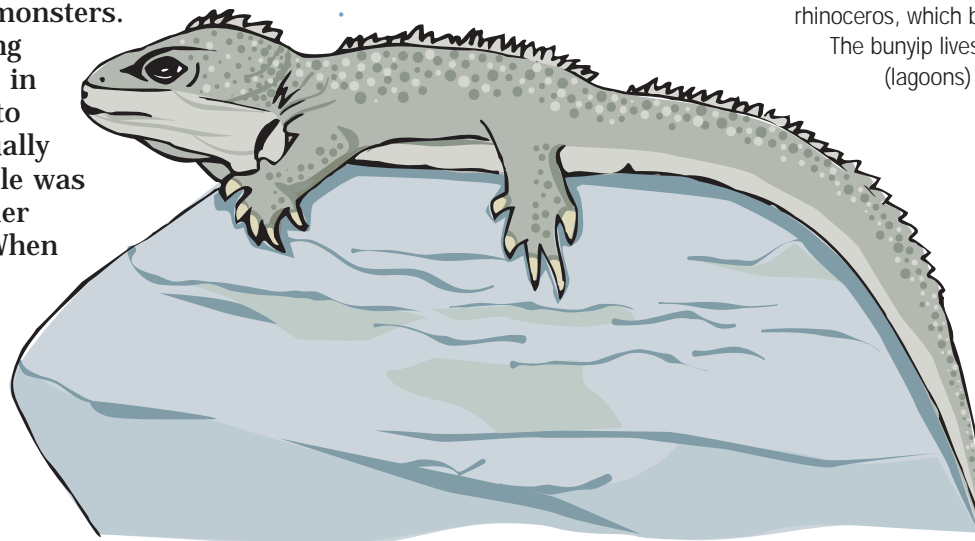
The pangolin is a mammal that looks like a reptile. It has no teeth, so it eats rocks and pebbles to help grind up the food in its stomach. It lives in southeastern Asia, Indonesia, and parts of Africa.

## BUNYIP (not shown)

The bunyip lives in Australia and is believed by many to be an ancestor of the diprotodon, a marsupial (an animal with a pouch, like the kangaroo) about the size of a rhinoceros, which became extinct thousands of years ago. The bunyip lives in creeks, swamps, and billabongs (lagoons) and has a loud, bellowing cry.

## TUATARA

The tuatara is a New Zealand reptile that grows up to two feet long. It has a spiny back and a third eye on top of its head. This eye can't see objects, but it can sense light and movement.



## SOLENODON

Solenodons live in Cuba and Haiti. They hide in hollow logs and come out only at night. They grow about two feet long and use their long claws to scratch for insects to eat. They are said to have a bad temper.



## Books on Cryptozoology

### Ever Heard of an Aardwolf?

By Madeline Moser  
Harcourt Brace & Co.  
San Diego, 1996

### Weird Animals

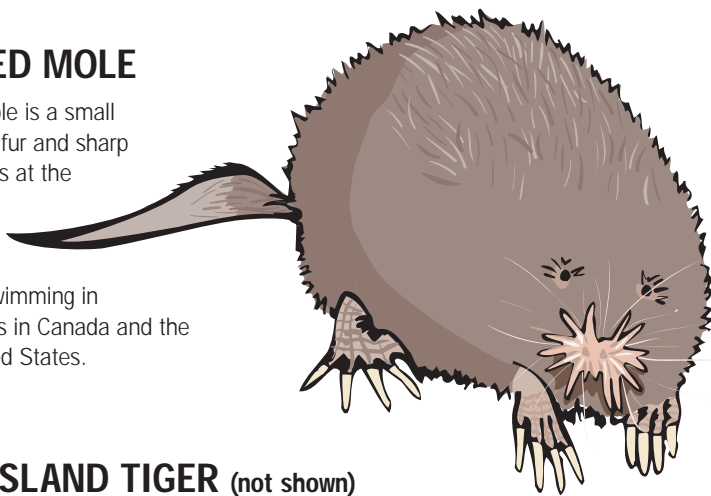
By Tammy Everts  
and Bobbie Kalman  
Crabtree Publishing Co.  
New York, 1995

### Really Weird Animals

By Tammy Everts  
and Bobbie Kalman  
Crabtree Publishing Co.  
New York, 1995

### STAR-NOSED MOLE

The star-nosed mole is a small mammal with soft fur and sharp teeth. It has feelers at the tip of its nose and uses them like fingers. It spends most of its time swimming in ponds and streams in Canada and the northeastern United States.



### QUEENSLAND TIGER (not shown)

Inhabiting the rainforests of Australia, the Queensland tiger is about the size of a German shepherd. It has stripes across its back and a cat-like head.

ANSWERS: All except the bunyip and the Queensland tiger have been proved to exist. Stories of bunyips have been told by Australian aborigines for generations, and white settlers have also reported sightings. Many believe they are just stray seals, while others think they may be an unknown animal. Aborigines have also told stories of the Queensland tiger for centuries, and many sightings were reported in the 1940s and 1950s. Expeditions have never been able to locate a specimen.

## Maybe 'Nessie' is an earthquake

YOU'VE probably heard of Nessie, the Loch Ness monster. Stories of a sea monster in northern Scotland's Loch Ness have been reported since the 600s. ("Loch" means "lake.") Sonar scans of the lake have indicated large, unidentified objects in the murky water.



FAMOUS FAKE: This 1934 photo supposedly showed a huge creature in Loch Ness. But it was really a toy submarine with a model neck and head.

Photographs supposed to show Nessie have been discounted by scientists as blurry images of seals or otters. Probably the best-known photograph was presented in 1934 by Robert Wilson. It appeared to show the head and neck of a large creature rising out of the water. The photo sparked great interest. People began taking seriously rumors of a strange creature in the lake.

It wasn't until 1992 that Christian Spurling confessed that he and his stepfather, Marmaduke Wetherell, faked the picture. They used a toy submarine with a model neck and head. Wetherell had given the photo to Dr. Wilson.

Some say Nessie is a large fish. Others think it might be an ancestor of ancient dinosaurs. They point to discoveries like the coelacanth, an ancient fish that was thought to be extinct for millions of years before living examples were found during the past century. Loch Ness is 20 miles long and more than 1,000 feet deep in places. That's plenty of room for a large creature to live.

Last year, Italian geologist Luigi Piccardi offered a new theory. He thinks the sightings may be the result of earthquakes. Loch Ness lies along an active earthquake fault.

"The most seismically active end of the loch is the north end," Piccardi says. "This corresponds to the site where many witnesses claim to have had experiences. They talk of seeing a lot of commotion on

the water and hearing loud noises." Piccardi thinks these could be the result of small earthquakes that shake the ground and make a roaring sound. They would also release bubbles of gas in the lake that would churn its surface.

It may take years before we prove or disprove that Nessie exists. But real or not, it is already well known around the world. Not a bad accomplishment for a creature that may be a fantasy.

S.J.H.

#### CORRECTION

In the "Votes for Women!" game presented in the March 26 Kidspace (pages 18-19), we did not give Wyoming its full due. The Wyoming Territory led the nation with its 1869 law giving women the vote. Wyoming became the first state allowing women to vote when it entered the Union in 1890 with its suffrage provision intact. In 1893, Colorado became the first state to adopt an amendment giving women the vote.

### TODAY'S ARTICLE ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

An article of special interest to young people

## Why happiness and alcohol don't mix

WHEN THINKING ABOUT the "feel-good" drug, ecstasy, I can't help asking myself whether feeling good is so difficult that you need a drug to get there. Then I remember my own attempts to find happiness.

When I was a teenager, my friends and I used to go out drinking together. Religion was not a part of my life, and I was not feeling any particular warmth or goodness from God. I thought that alcohol relaxed me and made me feel more comfortable socially.

One night when my friends and I were drunk, we ran into a friend of my brother's whom I saw regularly at school, although we'd never really talked to each other. That night both of us were high, and I remember that he was very friendly. I was happy about our conversation and felt such a connection with him. I figured we would probably be more open with each other now and talk when we saw each other.

That Monday I saw him at school, and our relationship was just the same as it had been before. That was a jolt, because I had thought things would be different. But I realized that the feelings that night hadn't been genuine. They had no staying power because they were a delusion created by the alcohol.

I learned a huge lesson from that experience. It was part of the launching of my spiritual journey to move away from deceptive guises of happiness. I'd been misled to believe that this guy and I had made a connection, when that had not really happened. I knew that I would never again be fooled into thinking that alcohol could cause a relationship to open up. I needed to search for a more stable happiness.

During this time, my dad suggested that I go to a Christian Science Sunday School. That was the beginning of my study of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," by Mary Baker Eddy.

I began to learn that it is possible to feel bliss, but *genuine* bliss can't be brought on by drugs or alcohol. It isn't about just feeling good or doing something to yourself to feel better, but

about recognizing your genuine spiritual and only state of being as one of happiness. This state is not a dreamy feeling where you never have problems. It's sincerely feeling your inseparability from God, Love, under every circumstance, good or bad. It involves thinking less about yourself and being willing to let God's active presence guide you.

Thinking that bliss is something outside of ourselves, found in certain substances or experiences, leaves us endlessly pursuing it because it isn't lasting or constant - or real. Science and Health explains, "Sensualism is not bliss, but bondage. For true happiness, man must harmonize with his Principle, divine Love ..." (pg. 337). It's a kind of imprisonment to be controlled by something outside of ourselves and to always be chasing it.

So how do we go about attaining real happiness? We can begin with a heartfelt asking of God in prayer to show us the joy that is already part of our identity as His creation. We can honor God moment by moment as the source of every bit of good that comes into our lives, and enjoy the peace that comes with this.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Making this idea practical little by little opened my thought to the presence of God, removing any desire to look for happiness in places it doesn't exist.

This demanded that I ask myself more regularly whether I was giving God the credit as the source of that good. On the other hand, it demanded that I also ask myself in the bad situations whether I was honoring happiness as a permanent, indestructible quality of my being which could never be taken away by bad feelings.

I keep learning more about this. I don't feel bliss every moment, but moments of joy have overcome sadness, disappointment, and discouragement. This is a promise to me that happiness does indeed come from God, and that each of us has the right to feel it more consistently.

I needed to search for a more stable happiness.

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