



The Loch Ness Monster



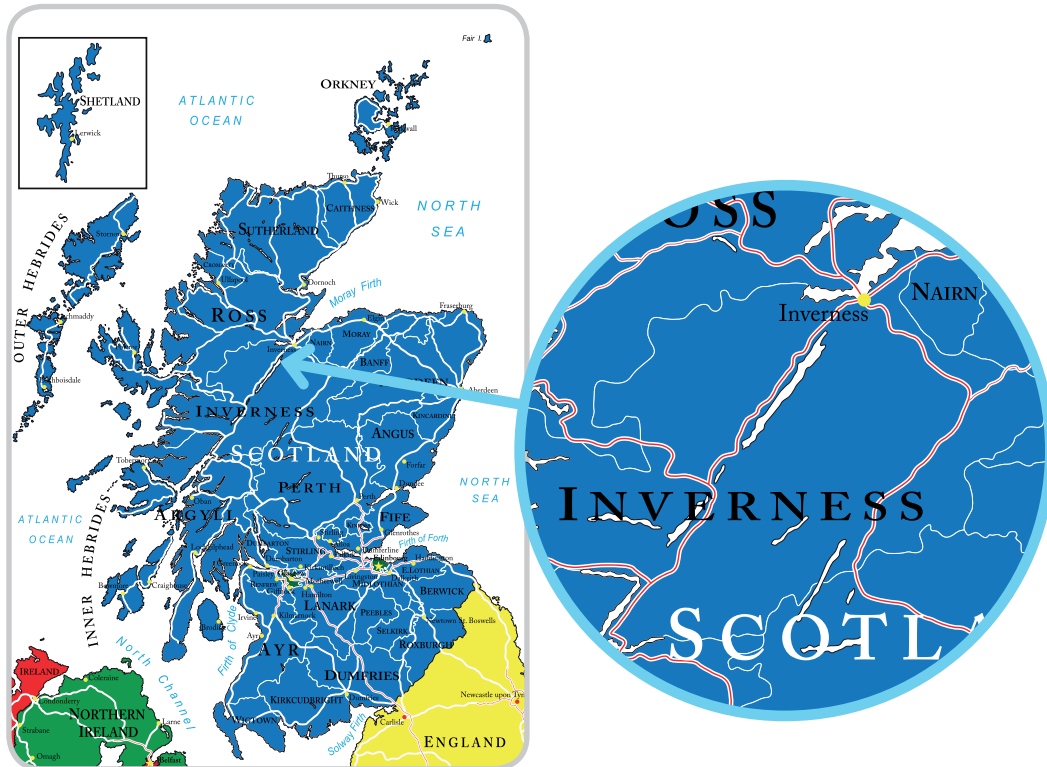
Location:	Loch Ness, Scotland
First known sighting:	565 AD

For more than a thousand years, sights have been reported of a giant sea monster lurking below the surface of Loch Ness. This creature is unlike any other on Earth. With a long neck and two or more humps protruding from the water, it is more like a plesiosaur or other dinosaur, than any other animal. For the most part, the monster is hidden and rarely glimpsed but ancient reports claim that it has attacked and even killed men.

Whilst the majority of scientists believe that there is no such thing as the Loch Ness Monster, nobody has been able to prove or disprove that the creature exists.

Who knows what waits beneath the waters of Loch Ness?





Loch Ness in Scotland

Scottish folklore

Scotland is a country with lots of ancient history and many of its lochs are said to be home to mythical creatures known as water kelpies. These creatures might have magical powers but are tainted by a streak of evil. They are said to lure children into the waters to sit on their backs as they swim. Once a child is on there, they will find their hands stuck to the kelpie's side and they are unable to leave. The kelpie then dives under the water, dragging the child to a watery death.

Legend has it that the monster lurking under Loch Ness is not a kelpie but the "Each Uisge". While kelpies will only lurk in freshwater, the Each Uisge can be found in the sea and lochs. Looking like a beautiful horse, the Each Uisge shares the kelpie's deadly habit of luring travellers to mount its back. And anyone who is unwise enough to do so will find themselves taken on a ride under the water before being drowned and then eaten by the Each Uisge.





The first encounter

The first record of a monster in Loch Ness came in 565 AD. Saint Columbia had been staying in the land of the Picts with some of his companions. One day, they came across a party of locals burying a man. The locals explained that the man had met his end swimming in the waters of Loch Ness. As he swam, a great monster had erupted from the water and attacked him. Although they tried to save him by boat it was too late – the man was mauled and killed by the creature.

Columbia understood the locals' anger and fears. Despite the danger, he instructed one of his followers to swim across the lake. Moments after the follower entered the water, the monster surfaced with jaws open, ready to devour him.

At that moment, Columbia made the sign of the cross and called out to the monster: "You will go no further and won't touch this man; go back at once."

The monster is said to have fled at the sound of the saint's voice, "more quickly than if it was pulled by ropes," it is recorded.



Important reported sightings

565 AD	Saint Columbia banishes the creature beneath the waves.
October 1871 or 1872	D. Mackenzie spies an unexplained object moving through the loch.
22 July 1933	A photograph is taken of the monster's head.
5 January 1934	Arthur Grant reports encountering the monster.
21 April 1934	The first reported photograph of the monster's head and neck is published.
December 1954	The first sonar sighting of the Loch Ness Monster.





Modern interest

The modern legend of the Loch Ness Monster can be said to have grown from a reported sighting on July 22nd, 1933.

George Spicer and his wife were driving past the loch when a massive creature crossed the road in front of them.

Spicer described the creature as “a most extraordinary form of animal.” The monster was said to have a large body about 4 feet high and 25 feet long. Its long, wavy, narrow neck was thicker than an elephant’s trunk and wider than the road.

The creature disappeared into the loch, leaving a trail of broken undergrowth behind.

Why was this sighting of the creature made so long after the encounter with Saint Columba? Many have claimed that sightings would be rare prior to 1933 as the loch was an isolated and rarely visited place. It was the construction of the nearby road that brought tourists to the loch and increased the chance of sightings.

As the legend of the monster grew, so did interest in it. Visitors came from far away for a chance to spot the beast.

In 1938, William Fraser, the chief constable for Inverness-shire, wrote a letter expressing concern about a hunting party which had arrived armed with a harpoon gun. Fraser was doubtful that he would be able to protect the monster from the trophy hunters.

October 1871 or 1872

In October of 1871 or 1872, D Mackenzie of Balnain was near the loch and saw something he could not explain. What looked like a log or overturned boat was “wriggling and churning up the water” moving slowly at first, but then disappearing at faster speed. Mackenzie did not report his story at the time but, after reports of the monster began to appear in the newspapers, he told Rupert Gould of his tale in 1934.





The photograph

On November 12th 1933, a photograph was taken, appearing to show the head of the monster emerging from the loch. The photograph was very blurred and there has been much debate about what it showed. According to some, the image is that of a dog – and Grant had taken his dog with him to the water. Another suspicion is that the picture actually shows an otter.

In 1962, Maurice Burton looked at lantern slides taken from a negative of the photograph. When these slides were projected onto a larger screen, they were said to reveal “an otter rolling at the surface in characteristic fashion.”

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Arthur Grant

Driving past the loch at 1 am on a moonlit night, motorcyclist Arthur Grant claimed to have seen the monster on January 5th 1934. According to Grant’s description, the creature had a long neck and, when it spied him, it crossed the road and disappeared into the loch. He followed it to the loch but saw only ripples.

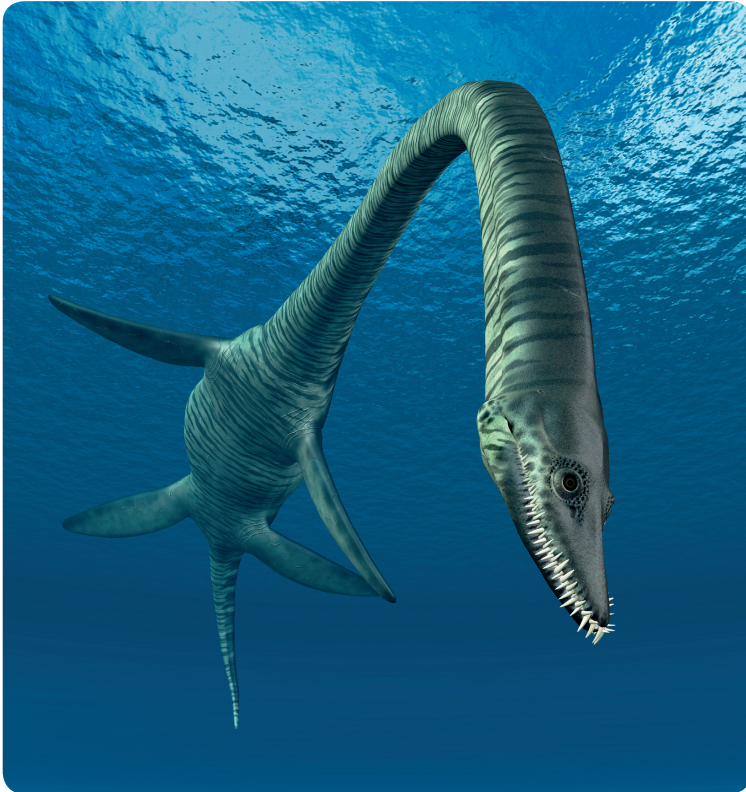


Arthur Grant encounters something next to the loch

Grant was a veterinary student and described the creature as being a cross between a seal and a plesiosaur – an extinct, water dwelling dinosaur.

Zoologist Maurice Burton studied Arthur Grant’s sketch of the creature and declared that the creature looked and acted like an otter. A paleontologist by the name of Darren Nash agreed, suggesting that Grant saw an otter or seal and that, in the poor light, he was mistaken about what he saw.





An artist's impression of a plesiosaur.

The surgeon's photograph

On the 21st of April 1934, a photograph of the Loch Ness Monster's head and neck was published in a national newspaper. The picture in the *Daily Mail* was taken by Robert Kenneth Wilson. Wilson's reluctance to be connected to the picture led to the image becoming known as "The surgeon's photograph".

Wilson reported sitting and looking at the loch when the creature appeared. He only had time to snatch his camera and snap four photographs before the monster was gone. Only two photographs came out clearly and one of those was so blurry that it was not referred to as much.

Sceptics argued that the picture did not show the monster; driftwood, an otter, a bird, even an elephant were offered as explanations. However, for 60 years the photographs were offered as evidence that Loch Ness really was home to an unknown monster.





Since the 1990s and closer analysis of the photograph, most believe that it is a hoax. It is thought that the monster is actually a submarine built by Christian Spurling, the son-in-law of Marmaduke Wetherell. Earlier Wetherell had been fooled by some hoax footprints he believed were the monster's. He had been ridiculed by his employers, the *Daily Mail* and was keen to get his revenge by having them publish pictures of a false monster.

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Further sightings

In the years which followed, further sightings of the monster, often affectionately referred to as Nessie, were reported. However, none of these managed to convince sceptics that there really was a monster in the loch.

On May 29th 1938, G.E. Taylor, a tourist, had taken colour pictures of the loch waters which appeared to show something. A frame of this appeared in his 1961 book, *The elusive monster* but analysis has decided that it was a floating object, not an animal.

Many further photographs and films which followed were later proved to be elaborate hoaxes or nothing more than other animals of the loch.

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Sonar readings

In December 1954, the crew of a fishing boat *Rival III* noted something unusual on the boat's sonar readings. A large object was appearing to follow the vessel at a depth of 479 feet. It was detected for 800 metres before vanishing.



Sonar readings can detect objects under the surface of the water



Another sonar sighting followed on August 24th 2011 when Marcus Atkinson, a Loch Ness boat captain photographed a sonar image of an unidentified object under the water following his boat. The object was 4.9 feet wide and swimming at a depth of 75 feet.

In April 2012, a scientist from the National Oceanography Centre declared the image to show a bloom of algae or zooplankton.

The legacy of The Loch Ness Monster

Since the sighting of 1933, arguments have raged over whether or not there truly is a monster in Loch Ness. So far, any evidence of the creature has been discredited but nobody has been able to disprove the creature's existence and there are hundreds who believe that something is out there. It may be that unless a monster finally emerges from the loch's waters, we will never know for certain one way or the other.

