

## The Lake Iliamna Monster

Lake Iliamna, the largest lake in Alaska, is home to a cryptid commonly referred to as “Illie.” Illie gained fame in the 1940s when pilots began seeing extremely large fish, up to an incredible 30 feet in length, from the air.<sup>1</sup> The thought that a large cryptid may inhabit Lake Iliamna predates the 1940s however, as the Aleuts and other tribes indigenous to the area have legends of something strange in the waters.

The Aleuts preferred not to hunt on the lake. They feared creatures that were dangerous to men while traveling in small boats.<sup>2</sup> The Tanaina Indians, who gave the lake its name, believed that a giant blackfish inhabited the lake’s waters. The giant fish they believed, was capable of biting holes into canoes.<sup>3</sup> As white settlers began to migrate to the area, their experiences corroborated the legends of the indigenous peoples as they too began to have sightings of strange, monster-like fish in the lake.<sup>4</sup>

Lake Iliamna is located in southwestern Alaska on the northern end of the Alaskan Peninsula. It is a massive, glacial lake with a surface area of 1,012 square miles. The lake is approximately 80 miles long and 25 miles wide. The average depth of Lake Iliamna is 144 feet, and it reaches a maximum depth of over 900 feet. Lake Iliamna sits at 46 feet above sea level in a very sparsely populated region. Only about 600 residents live in scattered communities surrounding the lake. Lake Iliamna, nestled in a pristine wilderness, is so remote that it can only be reached by air or by boat.<sup>5</sup>

### Natural Wonders

Lake Iliamna is a place of natural beauty and wonder. The lake is well known for its trophy fishing; several species of trout, arctic grayling, sockeye and Coho salmon, and northern pike thrive in the lake’s frigid, pristine waters. Lake Iliamna is the home of the largest sockeye salmon run in the world. Naturally, the salmon draw hungry brown bears to the area in search of an easy meal. Thus, the region boasts the largest brown bear population in the world.<sup>6</sup>

One could go on all day, speaking at length on the beauty and natural wonders of Lake Iliamna and the surrounding area. In addition to the great diversity of the fish and wildlife of the lake, the area has several other points of interest. Lake Iliamna is sandwiched between two national parks. To the north is the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. South of Lake Iliamna is the Katmai National Park and Preserve. Both national parks are known for their wildlife populations—particularly bears—and also for their majestic volcanic landscapes.

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve is home to over 900 square miles of glaciers and two stratovolcanoes, Redoubt Volcano and Iliamna Volcano. Reaching 10,197 feet, Redoubt Volcano is very young in geological terms, having formed less than 900,000 years ago. Redoubt commonly emits plumes of steam, and has erupted four times in the last century. Unlike Redoubt, Iliamna Volcano has not had an eruption in recorded history. However, Iliamna is an active volcano and emits plumes of steam on a regular basis.<sup>7</sup>

To the south of Lake Iliamna is Katmai National Park and Preserve, which contains nearly 6,400 square miles of pristine wilderness. Katmai is world renowned for its brown bear population. Tourists hoping to see the spectacular bears in their natural habitat flock to the national park each year.

In 1912, Novarupta Volcano, which lies within Katmai National Park, experienced a massive eruption. Not since the eruption on the Greek island of Santorini in 1500 BC, has more volcanic ash been misplaced.<sup>8</sup> The massive ash flow from the eruption is anywhere from 100-700 feet deep and covers an incredible 40 miles<sup>9</sup>—the distance between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland!

### Freshwater Seals

Being the natural wonder that it is, it should not be surprising that Lake Iliamna is also home to quite an unusual natural phenomenon. The Lake has a population of seals, which inhabit the lake year-round, and live exclusively in freshwater. The Lake Iliamna seals are only one of five seal populations that live completely in freshwater in the Northern Hemisphere.<sup>10</sup> They are mysterious; very little is known about the

seals, such as their origins or where they spend their winters. Recent evidence now suggests that they are a distinct group of Pacific harbor seals.

The region's native inhabitants have hunted the seals for centuries. They are prized for their meat, which is oilier and richer than that of saltwater seals. The Lake Iliamna seal also has fur with a very unique, distinctive pattern.<sup>11</sup>

The rare freshwater seals that inhabit Lake Iliamna feed off of the lake's large salmon population. This diet, rich in salmon, is thought to account for the oiliness and richness of the meat of the seals.<sup>12</sup>

There are many folks who believe that the salmon and the seals of Lake Iliamna may be in grave danger. Only 15 miles from Lake Iliamna lay North America's largest deposits of gold and copper. Known as the Pebble Deposit, the vast quantities of precious metals are highly sought after by companies wishing to mine the area. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources is responsible for making decisions regarding the commercial use of the land, as the property is state-controlled.<sup>13</sup> Opponents of mining fear that pollution and run-off will be detrimental to salmon populations, in turn adversely affecting the seals.<sup>14</sup> The situation is a delicate one—balancing economic interests with environmental concerns is akin to walking a tightrope. Although the coveted precious metal deposits are unique to the area around Lake Iliamna, the problems associated with them are not. The same struggle, a balancing act, pitting nature versus the economy is being played out in other locations throughout North America.

### “Illie” Sightings

As mysterious and wondrous as Lake Iliamna is, with its majestic landscapes, diversity of wildlife and natural resources, maybe the greatest wonder of all is Illie, the Lake Iliamna Monster. Illie is described by witnesses as being a very long, slender fish, up to 30 feet in length. The massive fish is often said to have a body that is “aluminum-colored.”<sup>15</sup>

As stated earlier, Illie gained fame when pilots started noticing enormous fish from the air during the 1940s. Babe Alsworth, was one such pilot. Alsworth saw *something* in Lake Iliamna while flying over it in 1942. According to Alsworth, he spotted several animals in a shallow part of the lake. Each animal was over 10 feet in length, with fish-like tails, and they were dull, aluminum colored.

Larry Rost also saw something in the lake matching Alsworth's description in 1945. Rost was flying at a low altitude when he had his sighting. However, Rost estimated the length of the fish that he saw to be over 20 feet.<sup>16</sup>

*Alaska Magazine* ran an article in 1988 of an alleged sighting. An unnamed state wildlife biologist claimed to have seen a 25-30 foot creature when flying over the lake in 1963. He watched the animal for ten minutes and said that it never came up for air. In other media reports, a geologist claimed to see four fish measuring 10 feet in length while flying over the lake in 1960.<sup>17</sup>

In 1977, air taxi pilot, Tim LaPorte, saw something in the water similar to descriptions of Illie. LaPorte and his passengers saw something dark gray or brown that had an estimated length of 12-14 feet. At first, the creature was lying still, but as the plane approached it splashed and dove straight down into the water.

LaPorte had another encounter with Illie in 1968, although on this occasion, he did not actually see the creature. LaPorte was a passenger on a plane in which two passengers saw something typical of most Illie reports. LaPorte was unable to get a glimpse of the animal from where he was sitting.<sup>18</sup>

Some notable attempts to capture, or at least find Illie, were made in the 1950s and 1960s. Tom Slick, a cryptozoology enthusiast, hired Babe Alsworth to perform an aerial search of the lake. Unfortunately, the search did not yield any results.<sup>19</sup>

An expedition was launched in 1966 to search for the creatures, but again, nothing was found. Interest in the creature(s) was so great, that by 1979 the *Anchorage Daily News* offered a \$100,000 reward for anyone who could provide tangible evidence of the creature. Nothing was found, and the reward did not have to be paid out.<sup>20</sup>

In 1988, a mass sighting occurred near the village of Pedro Bay. Three people in a boat and several others on shore saw a creature similar in nature to typical Illie descriptions. However, witnesses described the animal as being black in color rather than the “dull aluminum” color common to so many other reports.

Today, the aforementioned Pedro Bay and the village of Iliamna are where most sightings occur.<sup>21</sup> However, sightings have decreased considerably since the giant fish burst onto the scene in the 1940s.

## Theories on the Identity of the Creature

Not surprisingly, when a cryptid is described as a large fish, the sturgeon tops the list of candidates to explain the identity of the creature. Sturgeons match Illie descriptions in many ways and the prehistoric fish is often mistaken for monsters in other lakes. Sturgeons have long life spans and are capable of growing to enormous sizes. With their armor-like scales and dull color, a sturgeon can appear to have the “aluminum color” so often reported with Illie.

There is another theory gaining traction that may be able to explain Illie and perhaps even many other lake monsters. Biologist Bruce Wright, who is a senior scientist with the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, believes that the mysterious, little-known sleeper shark is responsible for many lake monster sightings.<sup>22</sup> Wright believes that the sleeper shark matches descriptions of Illie in many ways, such as its size and coloring. Male sleeper sharks average about 14 and a half feet in length, and sharks measuring up to 23 feet long are not uncommon.<sup>23</sup> According to Wright, the Pacific sleeper shark can weigh as much as four tons.<sup>24</sup>

There are documented reports of Greenland sharks, a type of sleeper shark that lives in the cold waters around Iceland and Greenland, which have recently been found in the St. Lawrence Seaway. This proves that there are sharks that are able to survive in a cold, freshwater environment. According to Wright’s hypothesis, Greenland sharks could be responsible for monster sightings in Scotland’s Loch Ness. Wright believes that sleeper sharks move into lakes and rivers in search of food. Lake Iliamna and Loch Ness are both rich in salmon and other fish, making them prime feeding grounds for sleeper sharks.<sup>25</sup>

Little is known about the mysterious sleeper shark, many people have never even heard of them. The sleeper shark prefers deep water, and scavenges along the bottom. They are found in small groups, and being scavengers, they rarely hunt. The deep-water, bottom feeding shark has little interaction with humans, and are rarely seen by people.<sup>26</sup> The rarity of encounters with humans make them mysterious and very hard to observe—it is difficult to gain an understanding of their behavior.

According to Bruce Wright, not knowing a lot about the sleeper sharks and their behavior leaves questions when trying to determine if they are responsible for the Lake Iliamna Monster reports. Questions such as:

- How long can they live in freshwater?
- Are there instances of them spending entire winters in freshwater?
- How long can they spend in rivers and lakes?

Additionally, Wright would like to have more information on the timing of the movement of sleeper sharks in and out of freshwater.<sup>27</sup>

If certain legends are true, some of Wright’s questions about sleeper sharks and their ability to live in freshwater may not need to be answered in Lake Iliamna. Legend holds that the bottom depths of Lake Iliamna are filled with saltwater. If this is true, the bottom-dwelling sharks would find these pockets of saltwater to be quite hospitable. Further, there is speculation that perhaps a connection exists between Lake Iliamna and Cook Inlet.<sup>28</sup>

Another question Wright has about the behavior of sleeper sharks is whether or not they break the surface of the water. In many eyewitness reports, Illie is seen breaking the surface. In an interview with the *Huffington Post* Wright said, “What confuses me is this breaking the surface. I don’t know if sleeper sharks do that.”<sup>29</sup>

Wright’s question about sleeper sharks breaking the surface may have been answered. In an article that Wright authored for the *Alaska Dispatch News*, Wright tells the readers of a video posted on YouTube of a sleeper shark rolling and thrashing in shallow water. Chris Babcock saw the shark in the shallow, brackish waters of King Cove Lagoon and was able to record its unusual movements.<sup>30</sup> The incredible video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24QCOegcZ0E>.

After watching the video, I became convinced that sleeper sharks can indeed be responsible for many lake monster sightings. The shark rolls in the water and at first glance looks snake-like or eel-like in appearance. As different parts of its body rise out of the water, it has a “multi-humped” look. Not until seeing its fins and tail, does it look anything at all like a fish or shark. The video footage is shot from very close range. I can’t help but think that if the shark were 100 yards further out, it would resemble the typical Ogopogo, Nessie, or Champ sighting.

## Conclusion

What is Illie? The sleeper shark hypothesis certainly makes sense and could explain a great deal of sightings. A sturgeon makes sense as well, especially when people report seeing a long, slender, aluminum colored fish. Maybe both theories are correct. Why couldn’t such a massive lake hold populations of enormous sturgeons and also have sleeper sharks lurking in its depths? The enigmatic lake, with its natural wonders and its many mysteries is certainly capable of being home to both creatures—both of which could cause people to think they have seen monsters.

Whatever Illie may be, it seems that it is probably an animal that is known rather than something undiscovered. However, we just do not know and much more research and investigation is needed before any firm conclusions can be reached.

## Cadborosaurus willsi

There is a serpentine, multi-humped creature roaming North America's Pacific Northwestern coast. Spotted as far north as Alaska, and as far south as San Francisco, there are over 300 documented sightings of the sea serpent. The creature is called *Cadborosaurus willsi*; its name is a combination of Cadboro Bay, its home in British Columbia, and the Greek word *sauros*, which means reptile or lizard. The animal is also referred to as "Caddy," a shortened nickname, and has also been called Amy.

Eyewitnesses describe Caddy as a large, snake-like creature with many humps. Caddy is also a vocal creature that hisses and emits whale-like sounds. A noteworthy difference between Caddy and other similar creatures, is that when swimming it does not appear to have an undulating body. It is said that Caddy is a fast swimmer, capable of reaching speeds of 40 knots,<sup>1</sup> the equivalent of 46 miles per hour.

With over 300 reported sightings, it is not surprising that descriptions of the creature are very complete and detailed; accounts do vary from witness to witness, and some reports exhibit subtle differences. Take for instance the size of the animal; depending on the report, Caddy is anywhere from 16 to 100 feet in length and its body measures between 2 and 8 feet in diameter. The creature's neck is 3-12 feet long, and some people have reported seeing a mane or possibly even fur. Some claim that Caddy has a serrated back, while others report smooth skin. A flat, fluked tail is often reported by those claiming to have seen Caddy,<sup>2</sup> while others make no mention of the animal's tail.

Caddy is said to have a small head; folks have said that its head resembles a number of animals including a camel, horse, giraffe, and sheep. The animal has two rows of teeth and a pointy tongue and some witnesses declare that the animal even has small, stubby horns.<sup>3</sup>

### Early Sightings of the Sea Monster

The first known sighting that can be attributed to Caddy occurred in 1791 when a crewman aboard the *Columbia* saw a creature matching descriptions of the beast. A little over a century later, Osmond Fergusson claimed to see an animal 25 feet in length with a long neck near Queen Charlotte Island, British Columbia.<sup>4</sup>

The Native people dwelling along the coastline of the Pacific Northwest have a history of *seeing something* in the ocean. Their stories and legends predate the arrival of white settlers to the region. The First Nations people that lived on British Columbia's coast called the sea monster "Hiyitlik." Alaskan natives also had a name for the creature, "Pal-Rai-Yuk."<sup>5</sup> There are petroglyphs, or rock art, depicting creatures that appear to be sea serpents on various rock outcrops in British Columbia.

### Sightings Intensify

The 1930s were a busy time for the *Cadborosaurus*, as sightings of the animal would become a frequent occurrence. In 1932, an animal with a mane, estimated to be 80 feet long, was spotted off of Chatham Island Beach, British Columbia by F.W. Kemp and his family. In 1933, Charles F. Eagles drew a picture of a creature that he had seen in Oak Bay. The animal was 60 feet in length and had a neck with spines, similar to that of a crocodile. Also in 1933, Dorothy Hooper and a neighbor saw a serpentine creature with a serrated back in Cadboro Bay.<sup>6</sup>

The sea serpent sightings that were taking place in British Columbia in the early 1930s began receiving media attention. There was even speculation going around that the sea serpent, who was also called Amy at the time, could in fact be the Ogotogo—the fabled water monster from Okanagan Lake. The *Ellensburg Daily Record* ran a story on the phenomenon in their October 21, 1933 issue. It was reported that many people widely dismissed the notion that the Ogotogo was behind the recent rash of sightings. Folks reasoned that Okanagan Lake is about 175 miles from the sea, too great of a distance for the Ogotogo to overcome; and that the Ogotogo is only about 40 feet long—half the size of Amy. It was also claimed that Amy had the face of a camel, whereas the Ogotogo had a sheep-like face.<sup>7</sup>

On February 13, 1934, the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reported on a rash of sea serpent sightings occurring all over the globe. The article was titled, "Sea Monsters Swim through Headlines." Around the time of the report, the Loch Ness Monster had started to gain notoriety in addition to other sea serpents such as the

Cadborosaurus. The article recounts that Caddy had been very active in British Columbia over the last three months and had even been recognized by a Canadian court.<sup>8</sup>

The story reported that a man from British Columbia had recently signed an affidavit in the presence of the Justice of the Peace describing an encounter that he and a group of friends had with Caddy. The man claimed that he and the party saw a sea serpent raise its head out of the water and swallow a duck with one gulp. Incredibly, the incident occurred within ten feet of the group! The creature was 40 feet long and three feet in diameter and had a body that tapered from head to tail.<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to note that other people have also observed Caddy devouring prey. People have reported seeing all types of waterfowl and seagulls being eaten by the beast, oftentimes being swallowed whole. Not surprisingly, Caddy has also been seen feeding on schools of fish.<sup>10</sup>

In 1943, the *Eugene Register-Guard* reported that the usual springtime Caddy sighting had occurred. Apparently, Caddy sightings were a regular occurrence with the change of season. The latest person to have a sighting and report it was Dorothy Kynnersley, who had been seeing Caddy on a regular basis. She claimed to have watched the sea serpent through binoculars on at least seven occasions. During her latest encounter, in the spring of 1943, she was close enough to see the animal without the aid of binoculars. She claimed that Caddy had a long, tapering neck and a body that was nearly 30 inches in diameter. Parts of Kynnersley's testimony seems a little off—for instance, she said that Caddy had intelligent, kind eyes and that he was playful. She even remarked that Caddy tried to climb over a cliff to become better acquainted with her.<sup>11</sup> Whatever one believes regarding Kynnersley's story, the *Eugene Register-Guard* reported on the springtime phenomenon for a reason, even if the article was meant to be in jest. The reason—*people were seeing something* and they were seeing it with regularity.

### Sightings into the Present Day

The 1930s were a time in which Caddy received a lot of media attention and perhaps even cemented its legacy as a world renowned sea serpent. However, sightings and reports did not stop or even slow down; quite the contrary, sightings continued and still occur to this day.

A mass sighting worthy of mention took place on February 13, 1953. For a period of about five minutes, three men, R.D. Cockburn, C.P. Crawford, and Ron Loach watched a creature with three humps near Qualicum Beach, British Columbia. Two other men who were nearby boarded a rowboat and headed toward the animal. The pair were able to get within 20 feet of the creature before it sank back into the water, resurfacing 100 yards away. Those who saw the animal that day described it as having a dog-like head with horns.<sup>12</sup>

Once again Caddy was described as being a horned animal; this time in a report from January 1984. Jim M. Thompson saw a creature with a giraffe-like head, floppy ears, and stubby horns while fishing in Vancouver. According to Thompson, the creature had body that was serpentine appearance, and was an estimated 18–22 feet in length.<sup>13</sup>

A very unusual tale comes from Phyllis Harsh, a resident of Washington's San Juan Islands. Harsh has had some very interesting experiences at her home on Johns Island. She claims to have seen Caddy in 1990; she also found skeletal remains of what she called a small dinosaur underneath the nest of a bald eagle. Probably the strangest of Harsh's experiences occurred in July 1991. According to Harsh, a baby dinosaur, about two feet in length, was stranded on the beach. She was able to help the creature back into the water using a stick.<sup>14,15</sup>

Some have argued (perhaps unfairly) that Phyllis Harsh's stories of her Caddy sighting and baby dinosaur rescue are nothing more than fanciful tales. It has been suggested that Harsh's account of a baby dinosaur may have been inspired by the alleged capture of a small cadborosaurus in 1968.

Four years before Harsh's encounter with a baby dinosaur, Captain William Hagelund's memoirs were published in his book, *Whalers No More*. In the book, Hagelund recounts capturing what could be described as a juvenile cadborosaurus. The strange reptile was only 16 inches in length and had armor-like scales and an elongated snout. The captain's intentions were to take the creature to a British Columbia Fisheries station where it could be identified. However, the animal had been placed in a bucket of seawater and Hagelund

feared that the animal might not survive the night. He drew a sketch of the creature and released it back into the ocean.

The possibility exists that commercial fisherman may have unwittingly captured a juvenile cadborosaurus in 1998. The fishermen were in British Columbia's Ganges Harbor when they noticed that something very strange—something they had never seen before—had made its way into their catch. Not wanting to contaminate the rest of the catch, the unusual animal was tossed overboard. Puzzled by the weird creature, two of the fishermen decided to try and learn the identity of what they had thrown overboard. After going through many books, they happened upon Captain Hagelund's sketch—they realized then that they had thrown a cadborosaurus overboard.<sup>16</sup>

### The Naden Harbour Carcass

Several carcasses have been discovered over the years that have been attributed to the cadborosaurus. In most cases, the badly decomposed corpses can be adequately explained. Rotting basking sharks and beaked whales are oftentimes misidentified as sea serpents. But with that being said, there is an incident, which occurred in 1937, that warrants some attention—a cadborosaurus may have been discovered in the stomach contents of a harvested sperm whale at a British Columbia whaling station.

When the body was discovered, the manager of the Naden Harbour Whaling Station, F. S. Huband, and medical officer G. V. Boorman took photographs of the strange corpse. Additionally, they took tissue samples from the carcass which were sent away for analysis. One of the samples, sent to the Fisheries station in Nanaimo, was lost; the other sample, sent to the Provincial Museum in Victoria, was identified as a fetal baleen whale.<sup>17</sup>

Although the tissue sample from the carcass was identified as a whale, this could have been a mistake. Technology in 1937 did not allow for the accuracy of testing that we have today. Whatever was discovered in the stomach of the whale was different and unusual; it was strange enough to photograph and take tissue samples; it also created quite a stir among whalers around the station. The corpse was described as being 10 feet in length with an elongated, serpentine body. It also had a camel-like head and unusual fins.<sup>18</sup> It seems unlikely that seasoned whalers would have been so puzzled by a fetal baleen whale. Whatever this was had not been seen before.

### Concluding Thoughts

Sightings of the Cadborosaurus continue into the present day. Many supposed photographs have been taken of the creature as well. Though the quality leaves much to be desired, a convincing video exists of the animal. Taken by Alaska fisherman Kelly Nash in 2009, the video shows what appears to be a classic sea serpent swimming in Nushagak Bay. Nash's footage aired on the Discovery Channel program, *Alaskan Monster Hunt: Hillstranded* in 2011. In the episode, the Hillstrand brothers made an unsuccessful attempt to locate a cadborosaurus.

There can be no doubt that *people are seeing something* unusual in the waters of the Pacific Northwest. The question is, what? Naysayers are unconvinced that Caddy is anything other than a known species. They will remain unswayed until indisputable evidence is presented to prove otherwise. Believers will continue to point to the seemingly endless list of documented sightings—proof that something is out there. Theories will continue to be put forward; Caddy is a plesiosaur, a basilosaurus, or something entirely different. What is the truth? Only time will tell.

## The Lake Chelan Monster

Long ago, long before Lake Chelan was formed, the landscape of northwestern Washington was much different. There were no mountains; instead, a grassy plain teeming with wildlife covered the land. The Native Americans living here had an abundance of food and resources; life was easy on the gentle plain.

The time of ease and abundance would be short-lived—a dreadful monster would appear and it began to terrorize the people and the animals of the area. Having a voracious appetite, the monster killed and ate so much of the wildlife that food became scarce for the Indians. The animals that weren't devoured by the monster began to flee.

The desperate people petitioned the Great Spirit to intervene—to rid them of the beast so that they would have food again. Hearing their prayers, the Great Spirit came down to earth and killed the monster. Now free from the clutches of the evil beast, the people were able to return to a pleasant life of abundance as the wildlife returned.

Once again, the good life was only temporary for the Indians. The monster came back to life and resumed his terrible rampage. Again the people cried out to the Great Spirit, and once more he listened. The Great Spirit returned to the earth and killed the monster yet again. This time though, the Great Spirit cut the monster into pieces to ensure that it would remain deceased.

Incredibly, being cut into pieces did not prevent the resilient monster from resurrecting itself. Alive once more, the terrible beast brought famine and suffering to the people again. Turning to the Great Spirit for a third time, the people pleaded for deliverance from the monster. The Great Spirit heard their supplications and was merciful; he returned to the earth to do battle with the beast once more. Enraged at the defiance of the monster, the Great Spirit angrily smote the earth with his stone knife after killing the beast.

The landscape was forever altered by the blow from Great Spirit's mighty stone knife. Mountains were raised all around and a deep impression was left in the ground. This would become the beast's watery tomb; the Great Spirit tossed the monster's corpse into the gorge and then poured water over it. This, according to Indian legend, is the genesis of Lake Chelan and the Lake Chelan Monster.

This fascinating tale is recounted in the book *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* by author Ella Elizabeth Clark. Frank Hubbard shared this story with the author; he listened to the story from one of Chief Wapato's grandsons through an interpreter.

### Lake Chelan

Lake Chelan is a fjord lake; a lengthy, narrow, deep body of water that was carved by glaciers in the remote past. An aerial view of the lake lends credence in a strange way to the legend of the Great Spirit striking the earth with his stone knife. Lake Chelan looks like a gouge or a jagged cut from some sort of giant knife.

As stated earlier, Lake Chelan is very long and narrow. At its widest, Lake Chelan does not exceed a mile and a half, while it over is over 50 miles in length; the lake has a surface area of about 52 square miles. Lake Chelan is the third deepest lake in the United States; it reaches a maximum depth of 1,486 feet, and maintains an average depth of 474 feet.

Like numerous other lakes which are thought to have resident lake monsters, Lake Chelan is rumored to have a system of underwater caverns. Some claim that these caves not only exist, but link Lake Chelan with the Pacific Ocean.

### The Monster's Tail

Chelan Indian elders suggest that their ancestors were uneasy around the lake. Perhaps with good cause. There is one last piece to the tale of the Great Spirit killing the monster—a remnant of the monster remained alive—its tail. Legend holds that the tail remains alive to this day, occasionally thrashing and causing large waves and disturbances on the water. This part of the legend probably originated as a way of explaining seiche related occurrences on the lake. Like other lakes with long and narrow profiles, Lake Chelan is susceptible to seiches. A seiche is a standing wave that oscillates in a body of water that is at least partially

enclosed. Winds can cause seiches to occur on lakes; downward pressure from wind causes the water in the lake to be forced toward the opposite end. As the wind subsides and the water returns back to the other end, a wave under water is created as the water moves back and forth from one end to the other.

### A Dragon in the Lake

One of the widest circulated tales of a monster in the lake comes from the year 1892. The story is told in the book *Ladies of the Lake: Tales of Transportation, Tragedy, and Triumph on Lake Chelan* by Tom Hackenmiller. In the fall of 1892, the *Wilbur Register* reported that an unsuspecting camper was attacked by a dragon. The bizarre tale begins with three men camped near the Devil's Slide area of the lake. One of the men went into the water to clean his feet. Suddenly, he screamed out that some kind of monster had hold of his leg. His partners rushed over and pulled the man ashore; astonishingly, the monster did not let go of his leg. The creature had sunk its teeth into the unfortunate man's leg and would not release its grip.

From here the story really gets weird. In an attempt to free their friend from the monster, the pair built a large fire. They took hold of the creature and dragged its neck into the flames, being careful not to burn their friend. Eventually, the monster reacted to the flames—but not in the way that they had expected. The stubborn animal still kept a hold on its victim. Instead of letting go as expected, the monster continued clenching the man's leg in its mouth and spread its wings and took off in flight. Still holding the victim in its mouth, the beast reached a height of 200 feet and then dove headfirst into the water not to be seen again—nor was the victim.

The description of the monster is as strange as the story of its attack. The animal was described as having the legs and body of an alligator and a snake-like head. The monster had ribbed, leathery wings and a scaled tail. The creature's skin was said to be “beautiful white” and as “soft as velvet.”

This story seems to be a tall tale—of epic proportions. At first glance, it looks as if a crime was committed. It appears as if two of the campers came up with a bizarre narrative to cover up the truth—the reality is probably closer to this: the third man was actually a victim of foul play.

Reportedly, locals did not believe the account; although it was said that there were local Indians who were excited by the story, believing that the appearance of the “great white dragon” signified that the end of the world was at hand.

Whatever your thoughts regarding this strange story may be, it has clearly stood the test of time. To this day it is repeated often, and the legend is sure to grow in the decades to come.

### Other Strange Legends

There are more strange Lake Chelan stories, and they have in common a legendary Scottish seaman—Captain Chelan. According to legend, Captain Chelan arrived in Washington in 1812 with very unusual cargo aboard his ship.

Supposedly, the Captain grew up in Fort Augustus, Scotland where his father was a soldier. As a young man, Chelan obtained an egg—a dragon egg—thought to be related to the Loch Ness Monster. The myth states that Nessie is a female, and the Lake Chelan Monster is male. The egg ended up in the lake upon Captain Chelan's arrival.

The appearance of Captain Chelan and his crew in Lake Chelan is another weird tale in and of itself. Legend has it that the Captain set sail with a treasure chest taken from Fort Augustus. Captain Chelan and his crew hit bad weather and raging storms off of the coast of Washington. Mysteriously, perhaps magically, the vessel was transported to Lake Chelan.

The weather at Lake Chelan was no better; the storm raged and the treasure chest was washed overboard. In an ill-conceived move, Captain Chelan dove into the water after his treasure. He was able to grab onto the chest, and began sinking, plummeting into the depths of the lake.

The story gets ever stranger. Unbeknown to the captain and crew, there were two females aboard the ship who covertly kept watch over the treasure chest. Upon the captain diving into the raging water after the treasure, the women jumped in as well. After hitting the water the women were transformed into mermaids.

The mission of the mermaids was twofold: save the captain, and save the treasure. One of the mermaids rescued Captain Chelan, taking him ashore, while the other mermaid took the chest and stashed it in an underwater cave. The chest contained an egg, which hatched, and the Lake Chelan Monster was born.

## Conclusion

Today, there are reports from time to time of something being spotted in the lake that is attributed to the Lake Chelan Monster. Also noteworthy, reports of Sasquatch sightings have occurred around the lake as well. Obviously, Lake Chelan is a special and mysterious place.

There certainly could be some kind of strange, unexplained creature in the lake—this would not be surprising in the least. However, the Lake Chelan Monster, at least as told by the legends, seems to be the stuff of myths and tall tales; it is interesting and fun to read about, but lacking in substance.

## Paddler

Lake Pend Oreille (pronounced: pond-ə-ray), located in Idaho's panhandle region, is thought to be the home of a lake monster dubbed the Paddler. Lake Pend Oreille is Idaho's largest lake; it is immense in its area and reaches incredible depths. The lake, formed by the glacial activity of the last ice age, is about 148 square miles in surface area, and over 40 miles long. Lake Pend Oreille reaches depths of 1,150 feet, making it the 5<sup>th</sup> deepest lake in the United States.

## Naval Presence

Many folks would be surprised to learn that the United States Navy has a presence in the landlocked state of Idaho. However, this is exactly the case; Lake Pend Oreille is an invaluable resource for the Navy's submarine fleet.

Shortly after the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy set up operations on Lake Pend Oreille. Farragut Naval Training Station was established in Bayview in 1942, and over 30,000 recruits went through their basic training there. During its height, Farragut was the Navy's second largest training facility. This would be short-lived; Farragut Naval Training Station was decommissioned at the conclusion of the war. However, the Navy maintained a remnant of the facility for its Acoustic Research Detachment.<sup>1</sup>

At this time, the Navy maintains a fleet of 71 submarines. Obviously, stealth—the ability to avoid detection—is among the most important assets for a submarine. Submarines must go through a multitude of tests and studies to ensure their sound signature allows for optimum stealth. This is where the Acoustic Research Attachment in Bayview, Idaho comes in; it is the Navy's premiere acoustic laboratory, where large-scale model submarines (1/5 size and greater) are tested in every conceivable way. The use of large scale models enables the Navy to refine and fine-tune the designs of its submarines at a fraction of the cost of testing on full-scale vessels.<sup>2</sup>

Lake Pend Oreille offers the Navy an ideal location to conduct its testing. At depths exceeding 300 feet, the lake maintains a constant temperature of about 39.5 degrees year round. The consistent water temperature ensures that tests are repeatable and not affected by fluctuating temperatures. In addition, the lake also has a flat, muddy bottom which significantly reduces the reflection of sound waves. To be as large as it is, Lake Pend Oreille is very calm, another asset that helps produce repeatable test results.<sup>3</sup> In short, the environment that the lake provides closely mimics that of the open sea, giving the Navy an excellent location to conduct its experiments.

## Rumors

It should come as a surprise to no one that rumors have swirled around the Navy's presence on Lake Pend Oreille since they first began operations on the lake. It has been suggested that in the 1940s the Navy secretly harbored German prisoners of war at the facility. Some have accused the Navy of using the POWs to train American submariners to fight against the Japanese—a clear violation of the Geneva Convention.<sup>4</sup>

Rumors of the United States Navy engaging in nefarious activity stretches beyond the concealment and misuse of POWs. The Navy has been accused of the operation of manned submersible watercraft, and even demolition tests. At one point there were even concerns that the Navy was operating nuclear submarines and had vessels armed with nuclear torpedoes in the lake.<sup>5</sup> Lake Pend Oreille, at its southern end, drains into an aquifer which provides water to Spokane, Washington and Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. Obviously, explosives testing and nuclear weaponry in the lake would be a huge concern for residents who rely on the lake for their drinking water.

Though conspiracies abound, evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the Navy is lacking. However, as always, secrecy fuels rumors and speculation. One of the strangest rumors coming from Lake Pend Oreille is that the Navy might be using a lake monster story as cover for its operations.

## A Brilliant Cover Story?

Interestingly enough, Lake Pend Oreille does not have a very long history of lake monster sightings. Cryptid sightings were unheard of on the lake—that is, not until 1944,<sup>6</sup> after the Navy had established its presence there. Coincidence? Perhaps, but probably not. There are two schools of thought: what people are seeing in Lake Pend Oreille are a product of the Navy's operations; or, the Navy planted the lake monster story as a diversion.

James McLeod, who has researched the Lake Pend Oreille phenomenon extensively, believes that the Navy started the lake monster stories, and then ridiculed them as a cover for their activities. The thought is, that by doing this, anyone who sees anything peculiar on the lake and reports it will be “regarded as a little nuts.”<sup>7</sup>

## Sightings

The first reports of something strange in Lake Pend Oreille occurred in 1944, but after the initial activity, things were quiet until August 1949 when the *Spokane Chronicle* reported that three people in Bayview observed a “sea serpent” through binoculars for a period of about 15 minutes. The animal had a light head and dark green body. It left a wake about 15 feet long.<sup>8</sup>

There was another documented sighting in 1950. This time, two fisherman claimed to see a dark, scaly creature that was an estimated 20-30 feet in length. It leaped in and out of the water, and moved with the speed of a medium-sized outboard motor.<sup>9</sup>

The creature was spotted several times in the 1970s and very weird things were reported on the lake. Large shadows were being observed underwater and large objects were being picked up on radar. There were instances of boats being mysteriously “pulled” and heavy fishing lines being snapped. Fish and Game officials began noticing large blips on their sonar equipment. The blips were at depths of 500-600 feet—far deeper than the range of trout and other species of gamefish in the lake.<sup>10</sup>

Paddler sightings continued into the 1980s. In June of 1981, two fisherman observed an undulating body 15-20 feet in length. It was described as serpentine in appearance and grayish-silver in color.<sup>11</sup> In May 1985, Julie Green was boating with friends when they noticed a v-shaped wake caused by an object moving faster than their boat. Whatever they saw was dark gray in color.<sup>12</sup>

In the late 1990s, researcher Patrick Huyghe interviewed George Guedel, the civilian director of the Acoustic Research Detachment. Huyghe wanted to know if during the Navy's activities on the lake, if they had seen Paddler. Guedel said, “We wouldn't pay much attention unless it was noisy.” By “noisy” Guedel was referring to sound signatures, the types of sounds that the navy monitors during submarine testing. Interestingly, Guedel went on to say that there had been occurrences of noises interfering with equipment that could not be explained.<sup>13</sup> Could Paddler be responsible for those noises?

## Conclusion

It would seem that Paddler is more likely than not a product of naval operations on the lake—either a cover story to help disguise activity that some would deem suspect, or Paddler sightings are simply test vessels, usually in the form of large scale submarine models and torpedo models.

It has also been suggested that Paddler sightings can be attributed to sturgeons, the massive prehistoric-looking fish with armor-like scales. The problem with this hypothesis though, is that sturgeons do not inhabit the lake, at least not officially. However, it would not be outside the realm of possibility for a small population of sturgeons to have been placed in the lake—probably by fisherman.<sup>14</sup>

Between the possibility of sturgeons in the lake and the naval testing, we have a good explanation for the Paddler. This doesn't mean though, that a serpentine creature couldn't exist in the vast lake. Admittedly though, if a cryptid did exist in the lake, it is quite a coincidence that it was not seen until the 1940s.

### **The Lake Iliamna Monster**

1. Lee Spiegel. "Alaska Lake Monster May Be Giant Sleeper Shark, Biologist Claims." The Huffington Post. May 8, 2012. Accessed March 8, 2015. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/08/alaska-lake-monster\\_n\\_1475626.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/08/alaska-lake-monster_n_1475626.html).

2. Matt Bille. "What Lies Beneath Lake Iliamna?" Alaska Science Outreach. October 24, 2004. Accessed March 8, 2015. [http://www.alaskascienceoutreach.com/index.php/features/sis\\_parttwo/what\\_lies\\_beneath\\_lake\\_iliamna](http://www.alaskascienceoutreach.com/index.php/features/sis_parttwo/what_lies_beneath_lake_iliamna).
3. "Iliamna Lake, Alaska, USA." Lakelubbers. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://www.lakelubbers.com/iliamna-lake-270/>.
4. Bille, "What Lies Beneath Lake Iliamna?"
5. Lakelubbers, "Iliamna Lake, Alaska, USA."
6. Ibid.
7. United States. National Park Service. "Volcanoes." National Parks Service. March 5, 2015. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://www.nps.gov/lacl/learn/nature/volcanoes.htm>.
8. "Katmai National Park and Preserve." Travel Alaska. Accessed March 8, 2015. [https://www.travelalaska.com/Destinations/Parks and Public Lands/Katmai National Park and Preserve.aspx](https://www.travelalaska.com/Destinations/Parks_and_Public_Lands/Katmai_National_Park_and_Preserve.aspx)
9. Lakelubbers, "Iliamna Lake, Alaska, USA."
10. "Petition Filed to Protect Little-known Alaskan Freshwater Seals Under Endangered Species Act." Center for Biological Diversity. November 19, 2012. Accessed March 8, 2015. [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press\\_releases/2012/iliamna-lake-seal-11-19-2012.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2012/iliamna-lake-seal-11-19-2012.html).
11. "Saving the Iliamna Lake Seal." Center for Biological Diversity. Accessed March 8, 2015. [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/mammals/Iliamna\\_Lake\\_seal/index.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/mammals/Iliamna_Lake_seal/index.html).
12. Center for Biological Diversity, "Saving the Iliamna Lake Seal."
13. Lakelubbers, "Iliamna Lake, Alaska, USA."
14. Center for Biological Diversity, "Petition Filed to Protect Little-known Alaskan Freshwater Seals Under Endangered Species Act."
15. Spiegel, "Alaska Lake Monster May Be Giant Sleeper Shark, Biologist Claims."
16. Bille, "What Lies Beneath Lake Iliamna?"
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Spiegel, "Alaska Lake Monster May Be Giant Sleeper Shark, Biologist Claims."
20. Ibid.
21. Bille, "What Lies Beneath Lake Iliamna?"
22. Spiegel, "Alaska Lake Monster May Be Giant Sleeper Shark, Biologist Claims."
23. "Pacific Sleeper Sharks, Somniosus Pacificus." MarineBio.org. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://marinebio.org/species.asp?id=382>.
24. Bruce Wright. "Scientist Wonders If Nessie-like Monster in Alaska Lake Is a Sleeper Shark." Alaska Dispatch News. May 3, 2012. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://www.adn.com/article/scientist-wonders-if-nessie-monster-alaska-lake-sleeper-shark>.
25. Wright, "Scientist Wonders If Nessie-like Monster in Alaska Lake Is a Sleeper Shark."
26. "Pacific Sleeper Shark Facts & Stats." SharkSider. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://www.sharksider.com/pacific-sleeper-shark/>.
27. Wright, "Scientist Wonders If Nessie-like Monster in Alaska Lake Is a Sleeper Shark."
28. Alex DeMarban. "Lake Monster Not the Only Mystery in Alaska's Lake Iliamna." Alaska Dispatch News. May 23, 2012. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://www.adn.com/article/lake-monster-not-only-mystery-alaskas-lake-iliamna>.
29. Spiegel, "Alaska Lake Monster May Be Giant Sleeper Shark, Biologist Claims."
30. Wright, Bruce. "Fresh Evidence That Alaska's Iliamna Lake Monster Is a Pacific Sleeper Shark? ( VIDEO)." Alaska Dispatch News. June 23, 2012. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://www.adn.com/article/fresh-evidence-alaskas-iliamna-lake-monster-pacific-sleeper-shark-video>.

### **Cadborosaurus willsi**

1. George M. Eberhart, *Mysterious Creatures: A Guide to Cryptozoology*. Vol. 2. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 79.
2. Eberhart, *Mysterious Creatures: A Guide to Cryptozoology*, 79.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Adam McGinn. "Cadborosaurus." BCSCC. December 15, 2014. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://www.bcsc.ca/blog/?p=46>.
6. Eberhart, *Mysterious Creatures: A Guide to Cryptozoology*, 79.
7. Cleveland Williams. "Sea-Serpent? Zoologist Not so Sure of It." *Ellensburg Daily Record*, October 21, 1933.
8. "Sea Monsters Swim through Headlines." *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, February 13, 1934.
9. *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, "Sea Monsters Swim through Headlines."
10. McGinn, "Cadborosaurus."
11. Alex Janusitis. "Return of British Columbia Sea Serpent Comes with Spring." *Eugene Register-Guard*, April 8, 1943.
12. Eberhart, *Mysterious Creatures: A Guide to Cryptozoology*, 80.
13. Ibid.
14. Michael Newton. "From the Depths." In *Hidden Animals A Field Guide To Batsquatch, Chupacabra, And Other Elusive Creatures*. (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 76.
15. McGinn, "Cadborosaurus."
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.

### **Paddler**

1. Patrick Huyghe. "Deep Secrets: Is the Navy Telling Idaho Residents a Whopper of a Fish Story?" *The Anomalist*, Summer 1997, 11-14.
2. "Acoustic Research Detachment," YouTube video, 3:59, Posted by U.S. Navy, March 6, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf6d7NT\\_5ds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf6d7NT_5ds).
3. Fox, David M. "Small Subs Provide Big Payoffs for Submarine Stealth." Undersea Warfare. Accessed September 13, 2015. [http://www.navy.mil/navydata/cno/n87/usw/issue\\_11/submarine\\_stealth.html](http://www.navy.mil/navydata/cno/n87/usw/issue_11/submarine_stealth.html).
4. Huyghe. "Deep Secrets: Is the Navy Telling Idaho Residents a Whopper of a Fish Story?" 13-14.
5. Ibid, 17.
6. George M. Eberhart, *Mysterious Creatures: A Guide to Cryptozoology*. Vol. 2. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 415.
7. Huyghe. "Deep Secrets: Is the Navy Telling Idaho Residents a Whopper of a Fish Story?" 13-14.

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, 15.
11. Ibid, 16.
12. Eberhart, *Mysterious Creatures: A Guide to Cryptozoology*, 415.
13. Huyghe. "Deep Secrets: Is the Navy Telling Idaho Residents a Whopper of a Fish Story?" 24.
14. Ibid, 17.