

BOOK REVIEW

Here's Nessie: A Monstrous Compendium from Loch Ness by Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker. CFZ Press, 2016. 274 pp. \$19.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-190948845-8.

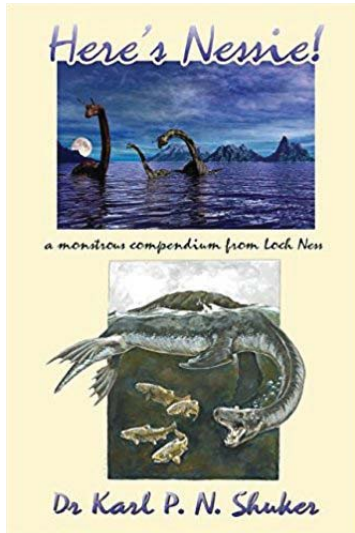
Not another book about Nessie! Even its author bemoans the “veritable ocean of Nessie-themed books” already crowding the shelves. But wait, this one is different!

Advertised up-front as a compendium, one might suspect that it could be just a rehash of the author’s earlier publications, repackaged for improved marketing. Shuker does indeed draw on his extensive work on the Loch Ness creature, much of it unpublished except as recent installments of a blog, but he brings everything up to date in an original and attractive presentation.

Here's Nessie is also different in terms of the scope of its contents. The core chapters include a brief review of some of the most compelling observations, followed by an extensive discussion on the nature of the beast. A chapter on the “relic plesiosaur hypothesis” documents the ongoing efforts by its proponents to reconcile the long-necked creature described by witnesses with what they imagine a plesiosaur could have morphed into over 65 million years of evolution. Another chapter deals in a similarly meticulous fashion with the “long-neck seal” hypothesis. Other suggested identities also receive consideration.

Beyond the fundamental zoological enquiry, where Shuker’s professional expertise clearly stands out, further chapters cover other Nessie–cryptozoological topics: early encounters with British saints; an account of the 1987 International Cryptozoology Society meeting in Edinburgh; striking hoaxes; and a couple of “Nessie-ssary” reviews (*Loch Ness Discovered*, Discovery Channel, 2005; Tony Harmsworth’s *Loch Ness: Nessie & Me*).

At this point, the presentation gets more personal. Shuker presents an extensive color photo gallery of the many faces of Nessie, wherein he also appears, smiling, in the company of Nessie models and figurines. We now also learn about his wider interests: Nessie on stamps, Nessie in music—a chapter on Loch Ness Monster–themed tunes, many accessible on YouTube—motorcycling, and even some poetry. This is what I found most appealing about his book: its candid approach, offering an opportunity



to get to know an original and passionate scientist, independent and unburdened by the fetters of academic proprieties, much in the tradition of Bernard Heuvelmans, the father of cryptozoology.

I was pleased to find an extensive bibliography, a list of current Nessie-themed websites, and an index of animal names. The book is a product of the Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ), “The World’s Weirdest Publishing Company,” as it describes itself in a short appendix. The style and presentation reflect the enthusiasm and earthiness of the CFZ as well as of its eccentric and indefatigable leader Jonathan Downes.

I would recommend *Here’s Nessie* to newcomers as an introduction to the Queen of Cryptids; I am sure veteran and knowledgeable Nessie fans will also greatly enjoy it.

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