

On the Methods of Preserving and Dissecting Ichthyo Sapiens

An essay by Dr. Stephen Mackle, as provided by Carrie Cuinn



Lab Notes, April 23, 1931.

The subject has four limbs, but while its skin appears crocodilian, the limbs are not fixed under the body. Instead they appear to be jointed much as a man's are, with longer back legs and a wide range of motion in the shorter front legs.

Water is everywhere. It is, always, since the earliest memories of my life. I feel it as a warm pressure on every part of my skin. It is an ever-moving source of air for my lungs and food for my belly. When the currents are strong it becomes thick enough to sit on, to grab a hold of and ride. The water is never still because it is never empty. I can taste the time of day.

Though it has a mouth and front facing eyes, it does not appear to breathe air, and instead has several gills hidden under heavy scales on its neck which are easy to miss. Kudos to Johnson for noticing them, or the thing might have drowned before we got its head and neck into a bucket of water.

I was born there, where the river flows into the deep lake. I have traveled upriver to mate, have seen water muddied by great hippos and in places a river lowered by heat and summer sun. I have crawled along the nearly empty river bed, me, who was born in a place so deep no light can penetrate it! I have seen all manner of fish and monsters and men. Everything has a place in the world, everything fits into each other and makes sense, except the men.

They shipped it to us in a crate filled with salt water and ice. Like a lobster, it became sluggish in water, almost paralyzed. Could it have other crustaceous qualities? Regardless, keeping the lab near-freezing was a stroke of genius on Kitteredge's part, since it means we can open the creature up without having to euthanize it first. The boys are anxious to see its innards while the creature's blood and bile systems are still active.

I bring her eggs back with me when I return to my lake. She is perfect in her beauty, with strong limbs and bright eyes and her children will be safe with me. She chose me from other suitors who swam out to meet her in the sea. I was the fastest, the most agile, the best. She saw the colors on my head fins and was delighted. She allowed me, and not the others, to catch her as she swam away from us. She wriggled in my grasp but was not disappointed when I held her tight and refused to let her go.

How strange! The veins along the creature's underbelly look to be a dark green, but the discoloration is caused by the pigment of the skin. Exposed to the air, the veins are blue, and the blood within them is bright red.

I clutched three lovely eggs to my chest as I made my way back to the lake. Their membranes

were cloudy, but when we neared the place where the water becomes shallow and the sunlight is almost too bright to bear, I could see the shapes of my children. They still have their tails, and tiny buds where their limbs will sprout. I smell them carefully, tasting their scent on my tongue and across my gills. A female! I have done this! I have mated and produced a female. My joy is boundless.

Its air sacks expand and deflate quickly, and its heart beats very fast for an animal of its size. Johnson has calculated it at 210 beats per minute. Based on its height and weight, we would expect its heartbeat to be closer to the human range, and our original estimate put it at about 130 beats per minute! In a human these physiological symptoms would imply extreme agitation, though of course it is not human. Kitteredge noted that the creature barely stirs, even when surgical procedures are being performed upon it, and suggested that the high heart rate is to keep circulation going in the extremely cold temperature.

I am hunted by hungry beasts until I can return to my lake. They smell my children, soft and defenseless, but I will not be brought low by teeth or tusks. I lose a part of my left foot kicking out the teeth of something grabbing for us in the dark, but I do not die. In the deep water where I make my home, no predators invade. I wrap my children in long tendrils of plant, rooted and strong, and wait.

The men come, floating above us, churning the water with their machines, jumping with great splashes into my home. My children cry out, near to hatching, frightened by the noise and the smells of men. I swim upward, furious, dangerous, sharp toothed and agile. I will protect my children, my sons and my rare and precious daughter.

The lights! Struggle! Capture!

I cry out but—my children will not hear me.

Note: We became aware that the creature was expelling air from its mouth. The jaw worked slowly, opening and closing. There was some debate as to the cause, but Johnson figured it out. That girl really is too smart to be a lab assistant but I wouldn't repeat that if anyone asked.

She could hear a sharp sound when she put her head close to the creature, and grabbing a stethoscope she pressed it to the side of the metal bucket. It conducted sound well enough to make out a high pitched squeal.

Kitteredge argued that it's a sonar ping, like whales are said to make, but of course the thing was found in a freshwater lake in deepest Africa, so it's unlikely to be related to a whale. Unfortunately, during this conversation the creature expired. Plans are already in the works to mount an expedition to the area where it was captured, in case this is not merely a genetic fluke but an example of a heretofore unknown species.

Imagine the reaction from the scientific community if we capture additional live specimens!



Dr. Stephen Mackle holds a Doctor of Science degree in Aquatic Biology from Cleveland College, and a Doctor of Agronomy degree from the Yerevan Veterinary Zootechnical Institute. He briefly taught at Huron Street Hospital College before leaving to pursue other research opportunities. He considers the study of *Ichthyo Sapiens* and other aquatic cryptids to be his life's work.



Miss Carrie Cuinn is editor for hire, and technological fantasist of some repute. Educated at the University of Pennsylvania, and other fine institutions in New York State. Author of several short works, many of which have been described as “wholly unsuitable for a lady to have penned but otherwise (intriguingly) quite good”.

In another time, you might find her online at @CarrieCuinn and at <http://carriecuinn.com>.



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