

The Lake Hodges Monster and Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Scripps Institution of Oceanography Archives

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A longstanding website entitled “The Lake Hodges Monster” has a section on Lake Hodges Monster history [<http://www.hodgee.com/history.html> , access 30 September 2008].

Sections of text referencing Scripps Institution of Oceanography are excerpted below:

1929 - Escondido Mayor John L. Offitt formally requests that the City of San Diego look into reports of a creature in Lake Hodges. San Diego Mayor Harry C. Clark turned the project over to the University of California and their Scripps Institute of Oceanography for review.

1932 - At the behest of Scripps Institute of Oceanography's director Thomas W. Vaughan, attempts were made to capture the Lake Hodges monster. A large cage-like trap was created and a small California sea lion was secured inside as bait. Cameras held underwater in glass containers were secured to buoys nearby. While no lake creature was captured by the cage, the sea lion bait disappeared and one astonishing photograph was taken from one of the buoy cameras. Subsequent attempts to capture the creature resulted in smashed cameras and buoys, and the project was finally cancelled after an outcry ensued when it became public knowledge that sea lions were being used as bait. These research projects were not to start again for some time.

1941 - In light of protests some 9 years earlier, Scripps scientists funded by what was to become the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Research worked with students on a research project using a new approach: A large section of the lake was placed off-limits to fishermen, and a trip-wire was held 12" under the water and connected to a bank of cameras. After three months with no results, another incredible photo was taken. Shortly thereafter, all research was put on hold as San Diego prepared itself for the war effort.

1947 - Life returns to normal, and the Lake Hodges monster is forgotten by the public. Former Scripps Institute researcher Roger Revelle, now head of the Geophysics Branch of the U.S. Office of Naval Research, pumps money into Scripps. He later returns to become Associate Director and eventually Director of Scripps.

In an article published in San Diego CityBeat entitled “IN SEARCH OF ... Lake Hodges monster returns -and now it's doing PR,” [Catherine Tapia, 17 December 2003,

<http://www.sdcitybeat.com/cms/story/detail/?id=1588> , accessed 30 Sept 2008], San Dieguito River Park (SDRP) volunteer Ron Hall

...held up a laminated 8-by-10. In the black-and-white, slightly out-of-focus image, several men wearing old-fashioned clothing stood around and on a house-shaped construction of metal bars. "Scripps disowns [this photo]. They say this didn't happen," Hall said. "You can believe what you want."

The photograph in question that is purported to depict Scripps researchers with their Lake Hodges Monster cage is actually a photograph from a 1933 attempt in Scotland to capture the Loch Ness monster.

[http://www.lochnessproject.org/loch_ness_reflections_news_links/loch_ness_traps.htm]

Hoaxes take on a life of their own on the Internet, and you can believe what you want. Scripps Institution of Oceanography Archives fields infrequent queries about Scripps and its historic search for the Lake Hodges Monster. Here is a response from the Scripps Archivist to one such inquiry:

I've been here 20 years, and I've never come across any discussion of efforts to locate a monster in Lake Hodges. ... SIO studies oceans, not lakes. There was no U.S. Office of Naval Research in 1941, and navy funding for research at that time concentrated on anti-fouling research, submarine acoustics and the like. I can't imagine ONR funding a search for a monster in a small local lake in 1941. ...

Deborah Day
Archivist
Scripps Institution of Oceanography
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