In Search Of...
Loren Coleman
If you’re looking for Bigfoot, then Loren Coleman is your man. No, he’s not Bigfoot (sure, he’s got a bit of facial hair . . . but that’s where the comparison ends). But he has been in pursuit of the legendary ape-man – as well as numerous other ‘cryptids’ (unidentified animals) such as the Loch Ness monster, the African ‘dinosaur’ Mokele-mbembe, and ‘Mothman’ – for more than four decades, and has conducted his almost life-long search as a genuine scientific enquiry. He is arguably the most well-known and respected cryptozoologist in the world today. Even skeptics recognize his position: “Among monster hunters, Loren’s one of the more reputable,” says Benjamin Radford, who is the managing editor of Skeptical Inquirer magazine, the mouthpiece of the ultra-skeptical organization CSICOP.

Born in 1947, Coleman found his lifelong vocation at an early age:

At 12, in 1960, I was reading the books of Charles Fort, which gave me an “open-mind” and “question authority” attitude when I saw a Japanese movie about the Yeti, entitled “Half Human.” I went to school and asked my teachers what they knew about the Abominable Snowmen. The answers I got were very unsatisfactory, so I began reading and researching all I could on Yeti, Bigfoot, Sasquatch, lake monsters, and more. It has become a lifelong pursuit, passion, and part of my life.

Coleman’s interest in cryptozoology led him to study anthropology and zoology at Southern Illinois University – specifically aimed at furthering his ability in his chosen field – before moving on to post-masters work in anthropology at Brandeis University. His first cryptozoological article, “Mystery Animals in Illinois”, was published in 1969. In 1975 he co-authored his first book, The Unidentified, with Jerome Clark. Creatures of the Outer Edge, again with Clark, followed this in 1978 (both have just been republished in 2006 as a double-edition book, with a new introduction, by Anomalist Books.)

Loren Coleman has since authored more than 25 books and over 500 articles, with his 1983 classic Mysterious America being one of the most popular books ever on the subject of cryptozoology and Fortean topics. What makes Loren Coleman stand out from the field – longevity withstanding – is his rigorous application of scientific principles to the hunt for cryptids. When asked in an interview whether he had a firm belief in the existence of any particular cryptid, Coleman replied:

“Belief,” per se, is the realm of religion and other faith-based systems. As a cryptozoologist, I accept or deny evidence based on an examination and investigation of the data. If a pattern of credible, good evidence exists, I begin to accept the possible reality of a cryptid. If it does not, I reject it, and move on... I have always worked with the formula that 80% of what I study is misidentifications, mistakes, hoaxes, pranks, jokes, and the mundane. The hardcore 20% is the “unknowns” which get my most attention.

Great interest has accompanied Coleman’s research right from the beginning. In his teens, he was shocked to find that television stations...
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– VALUM VOTAN (aka Jose Argüelles), author of Time and the Technosphere
were extremely interested in his fieldwork and often requested interviews. His close ties to the media have persisted throughout his career: he has served as a consultant for various television features including “Unsolved Mysteries,” “Ancient Mysteries,” Animal Planet’s “Twisted Tales,” and Discovery Channel’s “In the Unknown.” Coleman was asked by Sony to assist in the publicity for their 2002 movie *The Mothman Prophecies* (directed by Mark Pellington, and based on the book by John Keel), which ended up involving numerous press conferences, and over three hundred radio interviews discussing the factual background to the 1966-1967 events in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. The studio also had Coleman and author John Keel appear in their documentary, *Search for the Mothman*. He has also written columns for various publications such as *The Anomalist* and *Fortean Times*, and is the “go-to” man for the press whenever there is news about anomalous animal sightings or discoveries.

However, Coleman is quick to dispel any talk of him being the focal point for cryptozoology. Instead he sees himself purely as the investigator; the collator of evidence: “The world of Bigfoot studies does not revolve around me; it is about the people out there and what they are finding,” he told Henry May in a recent interview. “As an investigative journalist, as a field cryptozoologist, and as a scientist interested in cryptozoology, it is more significant to me to have interviewed hundreds, if not thousands of eyewitnesses who have shown me tracks they found, casts they have poured, and photos they have taken.”

Beyond his interest in cryptozoology, Coleman also has an interest in sociology and the impact of the media upon public psychology. As well as his anthropological studies he also studied sociology at the University of New Hampshire and received a graduate degree in psychiatric social work from Simmons College in Boston in 1978. In his 2004 book *The Copycat Effect*, Coleman explored how the media’s hyped coverage of murders, suicides, and tragedies (“If it bleeds, it leads”, is how Coleman describes news coverage of such events) has a negative impact on our society. Investigating a phenomenon which he calls ‘the copycat effect’, Coleman found startling similarities between numerous violent events, and in his book showed how widespread coverage of this violence spawns more violence of the same type. Coleman considers this a tragic flaw of the information age – and that the media must address this problem in order to stop the perpetuation of more violent acts.

His experience in sociology also crosses over into his cryptozoology fieldwork – when conducting an investigation Coleman doesn’t just interview a witness. He talks to their spouse, their co-workers and friends, to get a read on the person’s state of mind. “When I interview witnesses, I have to evaluate their credibility,” Coleman has said. “You have to put yourself in these people’s shoes . . . how they’re feeling.”

Coleman’s interest ‘outside the box’ of zoology plainly tags him as a person who thinks scientists should broaden their horizons a little. When asked why we haven’t found evidence for a Bigfoot-like creature yet, he pointed out...
that there is a certain psychological barrier to be broken through by the general public and scientists alike:

*Humans are very narcissistic, so the single species theory has really gotten in the way of Homo sapiens believing that there could be another intelligent hominid here. For instance, if you go with anthropologists and archeologists looking for bones or fossil remains, they only dig down to a certain level because they already have a pre-conceived notion, for instance in North America they only go down to the layers where they know there were Native Americans.*

In order to promote more knowledge in the community about cryptozoological research, in August 2003 Coleman opened his International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, Maine. A lifelong dream, the museum is built to share many of the items Coleman has collected during the last half a century. These include an 8-feet
tall Bigfoot representation, a full-scale model of the coelacanth, alleged footcasts of Yetis, Yowies and Bigfoot, and also cryptid-related props from Hollywood productions such as *The Mothman Prophecies* and *Magnolia*. Special art and sculpture creations by some of the leading cryptozoological artists in the world are also featured in the museum.

Loren Coleman’s high profile has meant that most people assume he has made a lot of money from his chosen ‘hobby’. Quick to dissuade such talk, he instead insists that he is actually “poverty-stricken”. In his interview with Henry May, he pointed out that financial gain was not a motivating factor for him. “Material things are unimportant if you can have fun and be on an adventure everyday, and that’s what my sons and my cryptozoology have given me,” he said. “In that way, at least, cryptozoology has made me one of the “richest” humans on earth.”

When asked for the highlights of his long career in cryptozoology, Coleman points to his examination of the ‘Dover Demon’ case of 1977, and a 1999 search of Loch Ness with his sons Malcolm and Caleb. Beyond those, he also says finding apelike tracks, and hearing the screeching sounds of an unknown animal during the 1960s were “formative searches.” There’s no doubt though that the pinnacle of his career would be to find incontrovertible evidence for an 8 feet tall ape-like creature, with very large feet, which is said to roam the forests of the United States.

For more information about Loren Coleman, visit the following links:

Loren Coleman’s official website: The Cryptozoologist (http://www.lorencoleman.com/)
Loren Coleman’s blog: Cryptomundo (http://www.cryptomundo.com/)

Note that in late March Anomalist Books will be publishing an updated version of Loren’s book with Patrick Huyghe, “The Field Guide to Bigfoot and Other Mystery Primates”. See the Anomalist Books website for more information (www.anomalistbooks.com).
Why did over 13,000 government and military computers — including the Pentagon, NASA, Southcom and Northcom — lock onto “The Q-Files” the same night Steve Quayle interviewed Tom Horn on his new book, *The Ahriman Gate*?

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*Creatures of the Outer Edge* and *The Unidentified* (2006 Edition)

Anomalist Books have brought back two of the classics of cryptozoology, in a unique double edition book. *The Unidentified* and *Creatures of the Outer Edge*, both by Loren Coleman and Jerome Clark, were originally published in the 1970s but have been republished this year with a new introduction by the authors.

*The Unidentified* finds the links that connect supernatural folklore, religious visions, cryptozoology, and modern-day UFO stories. It documents episodes from the fringes of human experience and exposes what they may tell us about ourselves and the strange world we live in, where things—whether fairies, ghosts, divine apparitions, or ostensible extraterrestrials—may be even more mysterious than they seem.

*Creatures of the Outer Edge* surveys the cryptozoologically bountiful decade of the 1970s (and more) with accounts of Mothman, Owlmen, Thunderbirds, Phantom Panthers, Devil Dogs, Texas Big Birds, and, yes, of course, Bigfoot. Some of the individually “named” local Bigfoot creatures first appeared in this book, including Momo (Missouri Monster), Lake Worth Monster, Murphysboro Mud Monster, the Enfield Thing, El Reno Chicken Man, Noxie Monster, Navajo’s Skinwalkers, and Yukon’s Bushman. The book also introduced the now-iconic Dover Demon for the first time to the general public.

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*Mothman and Other Curious Encounters* (2002)

On November 15, 1966, this huge, red-eyed creature with wings appeared over Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Thus began thirteen months of otherworldly mystery, madness,

Why do the terrible events we see in the media always seem to lead to more of the same? Noted author and cultural behaviorist Loren Coleman explores how the media’s over-saturated coverage of murders, suicides, and deadly tragedies makes an impact on our society. This is the Copycat Effect -- the phenomenon through which violent events spawn violence of the same type. From recognizing the emerging patterns of the Copycat Effect, to how we can deal with and counteract its consequences as individuals and as a culture, Loren Coleman has uncovered a tragic flaw of the information age - a flaw which must be corrected before the next ripples of violence spread.


In this fascinating and comprehensive look at the fact, fiction, and fable of the North American “Sasquatch,” Loren Coleman takes readers on a journey into America’s biggest mystery – could an unrecognized “ape” be living in our midst? Drawing on over forty years of investigations, interviews, and fieldwork on these incredible beasts, Coleman explores the modern debates about these powerful, ape-like creatures, why they have remained a mystery for so long, and what we can learn about ourselves from these animals, our nearest cousins.

Mothman and other curious encounters

But contrary to popular belief, Mothman is not unique. Here for the first time, investigator Loren Coleman looks at the precursors of Mothman, like the Flatwoods Monster of 1952, then brings the story up to date, detailing the sightings of the spawn of Mothman, some as recent as September 2001. Coleman also examines the impact on investigations into the unknown by John Keel, the newsman who spend a year in Point Pleasant looking into the Mothman story and lived to write about it.