

# Theory Cards

## **Nessie is a plesiosaur that has survived from prehistory.**

While most people believe that plesiosaurs became extinct with the rest of the dinosaurs around 65 million years ago, some people say that Nessie could be a plesiosaur that has survived in the deep waters of Loch Ness. They are encouraged in this belief by the descriptions of the monster as having a long neck and flippers. Also, the discovery of a coelacanth fish, believed to have been extinct for 70 million years, shows that some creatures can remain undetected by modern people.

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## **Nessie is a kelpie from Celtic folklore**

Celtic folklore, particularly in the West of Scotland, is full of myths of water horses and kelpies. These mythical creatures appear in various forms, but often as a horse swimming in the water or close to rivers and lochs. In the local legends, the Kelpie often takes the form of a horse, extending its back to carry children into the water. Once the children are in the water it eats them!

Could it be that these supernatural creatures have their origins in a real animal that lives in Loch Ness, which attacks the people living there, just as Saint Columba found?

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## **Nessie is an unusually large native fish, such as an eel or sturgeon.**

The DNA survey of Loch Ness revealed that it is home to a large number of eels. Divers in the loch have reported seeing eels as thick as their thigh. An 18 foot long eel was also found in the water supply pipe of a power station on the banks of the loch.

Likewise, sturgeon fish, with their long scaly backs, have been caught by fishermen in rivers that feed into Loch Ness. Many people, such as marine biologist and Loch Ness expert Adrian Shine, have said they believe that a large sturgeon could be behind some of the sightings of Nessie.

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### **Natural explanations**

Some of the sightings of the Loch Ness Monster could be due to mistaken identity. Culprits could include floating logs, the wake of boats causing unusual waves or animals such as seals or deer swimming in the loch.

Most visitors to the area are not used to looking at large expanses of open water. The sheer size of the loch can confuse people, making them think objects are bigger or smaller than they really are when viewed from the shore. It is hard to judge the size of something when it is surrounded by nothing but water.

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### **A real creature unknown to science.**

Some people believe that we should not assume that we understand everything about the natural world. Scientists are still discovering new species. The loch is a large area with many possible hiding places. Sonar has uncovered trenches running along the bottom of Loch Ness. There are believed to be underwater caves beneath the foundations of Castle Urquhart.

Perhaps Nessie is a real, but elusive creature, that has never been recorded before, who lives in one of these dark caves and only emerges into the daylight infrequently.

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