



What Lies Beneath?

A monstrous mystery surfaces on the waters of Schmeckle Reserve

Some people say that recent sightings of a strange creature in Lake Joanis are the result of overactive imaginations on the part of visitors to Schmeckle Reserve. According to sources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, however, that ain't Nessie-sarily so.

Since the Spring 2017 semester, several UWSP student researchers have returned from the reserve recounting stories of a large yet “totally adorable” beast that appears to be living in the lake. The rumor around campus is that the creature is none other than the fabled Loch Ness Monster. Witnesses have pointed to the figure’s long, slender neck and serpentine swimming motion as evidence of their claim.

When reached for comment on a recent spate of sightings, Chancellor Bernie Patterson said, “What on earth are you people talking about?” Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources officials simply laughed.

A number of contentious theories have arisen to address exactly how and why Nessie, as the loch monster is known, might have taken up residence in a small, manmade lake in Central Wisconsin. Several people within the UWSP community claim that the creature is not the legendary Scottish monster at all. As proof, they point to a BBC Newsbeat report posted last November stating that 2017 was a banner year for sightings of the legendary monster in Loch Ness. Skeptics are quick to point out that concurrent sightings in Scotland and Wisconsin that year means the whatchamacallit in Lake Joanis could not possibly be Nessie.

“You know, that, and the fact that the Loch Ness Monster isn’t real,” said a source who wished to remain anonymous, fearing reprisals from the many true believers on campus.

The so-called “realists” at UWSP speculate that the mysterious being is merely a largemouth bass that has morphed into something unrecognizable, ballooning well beyond all proportion due to its spectacularly largemouthed appetite.

Leaders of the Amateur Cryptozoology Society of Portage County declare that, due to the aforementioned travel and transportation improbabilities, the critter is more likely one of Nessie’s American cousins that have been spotted across several states over the years, not the grand dame herself. They have nicknamed the Schmeckle Reserve monster “Joanie” in honor of the lake,

which itself was named after former Sentry Insurance executive John Joanis. UWSP’s chief of staff for university advancement, Julie Smith, remains unconvinced by such arguments. Smith maintains that the creature is actually one of Nessie’s offspring—which she had erroneously smuggled into the country following her 2016 tour of the British Isles.

While searching for the perfect memento of her vacation, Smith recalls, she had picked up a beautiful, speckled stone she had discovered along the banks of Loch Ness. She pocketed the object and brought it back to Stevens Point, giving it a place of honor on her office desk. Shortly after her return, she was astonished when a UWSP biology professor complimented her on the “really cool reptile-egg paperweight.”

“I had no idea,” Smith said. “I just thought it was pretty. Please don’t tell Scotland.”

Racked with guilt, she drove to Schmeckle in the dead of night and heaved the item into the lake’s chilly depths. There, she says, the egg must have grown and hatched into a quickly maturing, full-fledged monster.

Regardless of the creature’s true identity and origin story, Joanie appears to have become a fixture at Schmeckle Reserve. Accordingly, the university has incorporated her into its long-term planning. Sighting parties ringing the lake will be organized as part of annual Homecoming and Golden and Silver Iris Reunion activities. Rubbing Joanie’s belly could join touching the cupola as a tradition for first-year students at Convocation and graduates at Commencement—subject to the

monster’s willingness to appear on command and fondness for such displays of human affection. In the short term, students, faculty and alumni are invited to help tidy up Joanie’s habitat on May 1 as part of UWSP’s [Day of Giving](#) celebration.

