
Callum: Hello I'm Callum Robertson and with me today for 6 Minute English is Jackie Dalton – hello Jackie.

Jackie: Hello Callum.

Callum: Now in the programme today we're going to be talking about mysterious and mythical creatures and dipping our toes into the cold water of cryptozoology.

Jackie: Cryptozoology? Well that's a new word to me!

Callum: And to me Jackie! Cryptozoology is the study of animals that don't fit into any normal categories – so for example looking for living examples of animals which are thought to be extinct

Jackie: So basically dinosaurs living in modern times?

Callum: Yes, yes And also the study of creatures for which there is no solid evidence but which exist in legends and folklore.

Jackie: Like the Loch Ness Monster?

Callum: Exactly. And we'll talk a little more about the Loch Ness monster later but first, a question for you Jackie. A few weeks ago you asked me a question about an English word which was based on a Latin verb. Well today I have a Greek challenge for you. The prefix 'crypto' in cryptozoology originally comes from Greek, but what does it mean? Does crypto mean:
a: unknown

b: hidden, or
c: mysterious

Jackie: Oh, I don't know. I'm going to take a guess at 'unknown'.

Callum: OK we'll find out at the end of the programme if you are right. Now if I say to you the Abominable Snowman – what does that mean to you?

Jackie: Er, to me that means a large scary monster that might come from the mountains or something like that.

Callum: Exactly, now that's one word for a creature that is believed to exist in many parts of the world. In North America it's known as Bigfoot or Sasquatch, we know it as the Abominable Snowman and in Tibet and some other countries it's the Yeti. Now in each case the descriptions of this creature are quite similar. In a recent edition of the BBC series From Our Own Correspondent journalist Alastair Lawson reported on his meeting with a man in (meg Ha lair) northeast India who had spent 10 years looking for their Yeti. Let's have a listen to the description from Alastair.

Alastair Lawson

Let me start with the Yeti. It's reputed to be an ape-like animal which stands and weighs nearly two times more than the average man. An artist's impression of the animal - drawn from descriptions provided by eye witnesses - also shows it to be surprisingly hairy. Its two-tone, thick black and grey coat seems incongruous in a part of India where the humidity is so intense that an afternoon's walk often results in a soaking wet shirt.

Callum: He describes there an animal, about twice the size of a man which is very hairy. But some of the language he uses suggests that he is not sure that the creature exists. Jackie, Alastair says that the Yeti is 'reputed to be' an ape-like animal. What does he mean by reputed-to be?

Jackie: This means something is believed to be true or said to be true but there isn't actually any proof that it is.

Callum: Yes, and he describes the animal as being 'surprisingly' hairy. Being hairy is a typical feature of many of these creatures, so why is it surprising?

Jackie: Well it's 'surprisingly' hairy because this particular Yeti is believed to inhabit jungles which are hot and humid – so as he also says the thick coat seems incongruous, incongruous – or to put it another way, out of place – it doesn't seem quite right that a creature living in that particular area would have such a thick coat.

Callum: So he uses the phrase 'reputed to be', he describes the Yeti as 'surprisingly hairy' and comments that this feature seems 'incongruous'. Let's listen again.

So what do you think of all this Jackie – do you think there are wild, unknown ape-like creatures wondering around forests and mountains?

Jackie: Well I'd like to think that 'cos it makes it seem rather exciting, but I don't think in these parts there are many signs of that.

Callum: No I mean, certainly in Great Britain we don't have a Yeti, but we do have a creature that is 'studied' by cryptozoologists, and that is, of course, Nessie!

Jackie: Ah yes, the Loch Ness monster.

Callum: Now Loch Ness is a very large lake in Scotland and there is reputed to be some kind of large creature living in it. Perhaps a dinosaur-like water creature. There have been some photos and some films which claim to show Nessie, but there's still no clear evidence.

Jackie: So have you ever seen it Callum?

Callum: I have been to Loch Ness a few times but the only monster I've seen is my own reflection when looking at the water!

Jackie: Yes, I can see how you might think that. But do you think there is something there? Do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster.

Callum: I'd like to say yes, but my head says no. I think it's great for tourism and the souvenir industry but I'm not convinced really by any of the evidence I've seen.

Well Jackie, it's the time now to find out if you were right or wrong. What does 'crypto' in the word 'cryptozoology' mean, from the original Greek. And you said it meant:

Jackie: 'Unknown'

Callum: And the answer is, it means 'hidden'. So hard luck a good guess – but better luck next time.

That's all from this edition of 6 Minute English – bye for now. Goodbye

Jackie: Goodbye