

Caraboo-boo?

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 16 Jun 1998

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William H. Ansley — 16 Jun 1998, 00:06

Robert Borski wrote:

[There is a parallel to this with the-thing Marsch shoots, but which doesn't die right away, prolonging its mortal coil shuffling until mid-morph; hence its double-pupiled eyes, the surmised nictitating effect speculated upon by Marsch being totally bogus.]

I really don't agree with the "morphing carabao" theory. What is it morphing to? Are any four-eyed forms of life on St. Anne (or St. Croix) mentioned? If it isn't turning into a four-eyed form of life (hey! four eyes!) then why would it have an even partially four-eyed intermediate form.

Marsch says nothing about any "nictitating effect". The passage goes:

Even there the skull was so massive that the bullet had failed to penetrate completely; so that the animal had probably been alive for a good part of the time while I was pacing off the distance to it; there seemed to have been a heavy flow of lachrymal fluid that left broad wet steaks in the dust beneath each eye. I lifted one of the eyelids with my finger after I had looked at the wound and noticed that the eyes were double-pupiled, like those of certain Terrestrial fish; the lower segment of one eye moved slightly when I touched it with my finger, indicating that the animal may have been hanging on even then. The double pupils don't seem characteristic of most life here; so I suppose they must be an adaptation induced by the creature's largely aquatic habits.

The "Terrestrial fish" Marsch mentions exist. I can't remember either their common or scientific name at the moment, unfortunately. They have eyes segmented horizontally, with two pupils. They float partly out of the water, the dividing line between their eye segments aligned with the dividing line between water and air. This way they can see above (in the air) and below (in the water) at the same time. This is handy as they can hunt for prey and avoid predators simultaneously. This explains Marsch's final remarks.

If the thing *is* a shape shifter I think the best evidence for this is that it is weeping while dying. The "heavy flow of lachrymal fluid" is tears. I don't think this is definitive; our eyes water for many reasons when we are not sad, so the fact that an animal seems to be crying is no proof that it is experiencing sadness.

What I find most striking here is Marsch's offhand cruelty and "scientific" coldness. He goes up to an animal that seems to have been in tears which he takes as evidence that it died slowly (and quite possibly painfully, although he doesn't seem to consider this). And what does he do? Pulls up its eyelid and pokes it in the eye! The fact that its eye moves, even slightly, doesn't seem to bother him, either.

His behavior also seems rather stupid and dangerous. If *I* thought a large, powerful animal that I had just shot might not be quite dead, I would avoid poking it in the eye for fear that might provoke it into kicking me in the head, if it still could. Of course, this can certainly be ascribed to Marsch's lack of training for living in the wild.

It does seem as if there is some deeper meaning to this episode, but I don't think that providing evidence of shape shifting is it.

William Ansley