



FREAK-O-PEDIA FREAKY FLORA & FAUNA

A Fishy Tale in Latin

San Francisco California - Bob James (42) has been crabbing in the San Francisco Bay ever since he was a young boy. But nothing prepared him for the fish he brought up in a crab pot on January 3rd. A fish that had an inscription on it's side, written in Latin!



Bob James, who found the freaky fish.

language.

"It looked like writing to me but neither one of us knew what it was," said James. "I thought it was weird but I had to keep working so I threw it down in the boat. I showed it around to some of the chefs who buy at the pier but nobody knew what it said. We even tried rubbing it off but it was on there good. Finally somebody said I should take it down to the museum at the Cannery and see what they thought of it."

"Me and my partner Ted drop about 200 pots a night when the season starts in November," said James. "I go and check them at dawn and sell off the Dungeness (crabs) to the tourist restaurants up around pier 39 and 41. We get a fish caught in there now and then, the smell of the bait draws them into the traps same as the crabs and they get stuck. Well the sun had just broken over the hills when I found this one in my second row of pots. He was a small Sea Bass and I was about to throw him back when I noticed what was on the side of it."

What was on the side turned out to be an inscription in an unknown



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The Latin Fish

Sharon Corland is an assistant director of the City of San Francisco Museum and took charge of the fish when it was presented to the Museum.

"By the time it reached us, the fish was dead," states Corland. "I copied the inscription down and had the fish wrapped and placed in a freezer."

It took Corland only a short time to decipher the Latin writing. It is 'I Tego Arcana Dei,' which means, roughly, 'I conceal the secrets of God.' Interestingly this phrase has a significance in other Freaky happenings such as the meaning behind Nicholas Poussin's painting "The Shepherds of Arcadia" and the Mystery of Rennes-Le-Chateau

But why or how did this get on the side of a fish caught in San Francisco Bay?

"I have no idea but I'm guessing it's a prank," says Corland.

"Somebody may have painted this on the side of 100 fish and let them go, hoping somebody would catch it

and wonder what was going on, which is just what we are doing. Whoever did it used some kind of chemical that looks to have etched the phrase into the scales. At the very least they should be



A similar phrase appears on Poussin's, "The Shepherd's of Arcadia"



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arrested for animal cruelty."

The fish remains the property of the City Museum who is still considering what to do with it. It is not currently on display. No one has claimed responsibility for the writing and no other fish have been caught with Latin on them.

sources

"An Unusual Fish Story" San Francisco Herald, January 5th, 2000

phone interview with Bob James, January 9th, 2000

phone interview with Sharon Coreland January 8th, 2000

photo of fish courtesy of the San Francisco Herald

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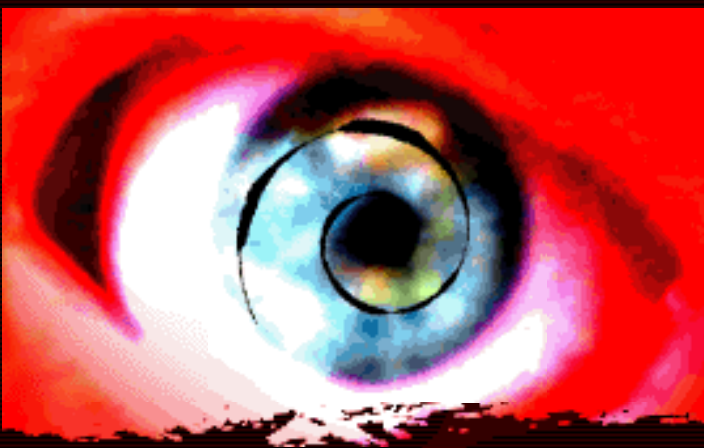
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El Perro Del Diablo

Downtown El Paso Texas looks mean. Hanging on to the edge of America, the city's economy can't compete with the desperation that oozes across the Mexican border. Pawn shops litter the main drag, competing for space with a plethora of cheap shoe stores and bus lines that promise to take you to Miami for \$50 bucks. The area is crowded with Hispanic faces that all seem hardened to the reality they're walking through. Even the children, holding on to their mother's sweaty hands, look at you with flint eyed stares, daring you to smile at them. The sidewalks are crowded with people that weave around each other, all walking to and from the main bridge that separates El Paso from Juarez, Mexico.

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The American checkpoint at the border.

But these people are the lucky ones, they made it past the polite interrogation of the customs officials legally. They have every right to be walking on these American streets. They look at you with guiltless stares, knowing they have done nothing wrong. It's a different story at the El Paso County Jail. Here in a small room over 50 illegal aliens are waiting the few hours it takes to do their paperwork before they are put on a bus and shipped back over the border. They tried to get into the US the hard way and got caught.



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The view of the El Paso River canal from the Mexican-American bridge.

The men pass the time by wolfing down the jail bologna sandwiches or smoking cigarettes. They seem jovial about their situation, many of them having been caught more than a dozen times. It's only when you look them in the eyes that you catch a hint of anxiety. They may call their nightly transgression across the border "el juego" (the game) but for some of them it's more than that, it's a way of life. And lately, they say, the game has turned more serious. Many of them claim that the United States Border Patrol have started guarding the fences that separate the countries with something new and dangerous. One prisoner who only gives his name as "Alonzo" agrees to tell me what he saw in exchange for a pack of cigarettes.



"You want to know about the hell dog?" asks Alonzo. "Yes, I have seen it. I saw it 3 nights ago when I was leading a group across the fence just east of Juarez. That is a favorite spot of mine to go over since it isn't patrolled that much. We had just crossed the river and I was cutting the fence when I heard a howl. At first I thought it was a coyote, but when it howled again I knew it wasn't. The sound coming from that animal's throat cut into my soul."

"The group crowded around me at the fence and it got very hard for me to use the clippers. I swore at them and pushed them back but just then

the dog howled again and they grew scared. One man grabbed the shears from my hands to use as a weapon and another fool turned on a flashlight he had been carrying. I cursed at them again for being idiots and went to knock the flashlight out of the man's hands. But just as I did, I looked out to the edge of the light and saw the red glowing eyes and heard the growl. It was no ordinary animal."

"At that point me and some other men began climbing the fence. Some of the women were grasping at us but we were so scared we didn't stop to help them. When the dog howled again most of them turned back and went into the river, back to the Mexican side. Myself and three other men made it over the fence but minutes later we were caught. The border guards must have heard the animal but they just laughed at me when I asked them what it was."

Several other men have crowded around Alonzo, listening to his story and they are quick to confirm the existence of the dogs. One man who refused to give his name claims to have seen two of them during the light of day.

"Yes, they are dogs, but much bigger than dogs should be," he told me. "They stand nearly to a man's chest and don't act like dog should. The two I saw were patrolling between the fences in the El Paso River canal and stood still for almost 10 minutes staring at me. Around their necks were huge black collars and a small radio antenna protruded from it, up into the air. The US government have used their laboratories to create these dogs. They are not all animal!"

When I told one officer of the US Border Patrol about these accusations he was quick to laugh them away.

"If these guys think we're using some kind of Superdog to catch them they are out of their minds," said Officer Rick Spillam. "Do you think we have the kind of budget that lets us use something like that?"



Officer Rick Spillam of the US Border Patrol says no devil dogs exist.

Nevermind the fact that the government would never let us do it. We do use dogs in our operations but they are your normal, garden variety, animals. We use them to sniff for contraband and we have several that ride with officers on patrol but they aren't any

kind of superbeast. It sounds like the smugglers are making up excuses for getting caught so they have something else to blame besides themselves."

But the claims of the devil dog have been taken seriously by the Juarez newspaper, "La Voz Libre." Reporter Anton Rodriquez has recorded over 20 sightings of the dog and recently published an article titled, "El Perro del Diablo" (The Devil Dog)



Reporter Anton Rodriquez believes genetically modified dogs roam the border.

"I do believe that there are too many reports of this animal to be made up," says Rodriquez. "Many different people have seen the animal; smugglers, farm workers, and even a priest. They all give the same story. They say that the dog or dogs are black in color, are of an abnormal size, and seem much more intelligent than a regular dog. Several people who have seen them close report that

they wear large collars around their necks which have a short, stubby antenna. They are all seen in between the Mexican and American fence system, running free and without supervision. Many times American border patrol agents will arrive in the area minutes after the dogs are sighted. Although I have spoken with no one who has been attacked, the sight of the dogs causes a severe panic, and some people have been hurt in their efforts to get away from the beasts."



Image of the Border Devil Dog drawn for the 'La Voz Libre' newspaper article.

Rodriquez even has a theory on what is behind the dog's appearance.

"There has recently been a desire by the state of Texas to tighten their border with my country and I think that the dogs are a new way for the American police to patrol the border. The size and nature of the dogs seem to indicate that they are under some kind of human guidance even though there is not a human nearby. This makes me think that the antenna that is seen may be a way for a human controller to guide the animals without direct contact. It's well known that Americans are on the forefront of genetic research. Possibly the dogs have been genetically bred to receive some sort of computer implant which makes them able to understand commands received by radio signal. The possibility exists and has not been disproved."

Are the devil dogs real? Until further proof is brought forward it's hard to say. The influx of illegal immigrants has been a hot topic with the state of Texas in recent years and steps have been taken to tighten the security that exists between the two countries. One border patrol guard who didn't wish to be named summed it up this way. "It doesn't matter if we have the dogs or not. All that matters is that they think we have them."

sources

Interviews with El Paso County Jail prisoners, July 25th, 2000

Phone interview with Anton Rodriquez July 27th, 2000

La Voz Libre, Juarez Mexico newspaper June 20th, 2000

All Photos by Derek Barnes

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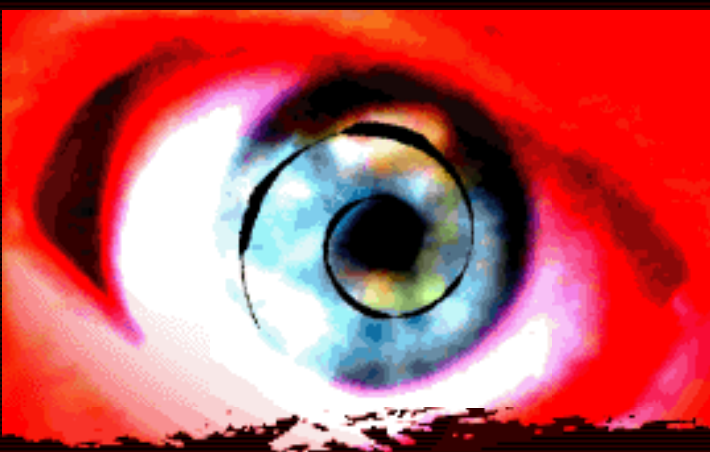
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Sacred Slaw



Be At One With The Cabbage: Ming's Divine Veggie

Buddha in a head of cabbage. The small town, located on the Khum Suphon river boasts a large number of followers of Buddhism, and at least twenty altars where believers can stop on their way to work and say a quick prayer and burn some incense.

Ming, 36, who runs the Chinese restaurant with her Malaysian husband Ong, 42, was checking a small shipment of vegetables when something caught her eye. She pulled a few leaves of the cabbage apart, and a pattern of discoloration seemed to form the shape of Buddha, with arms extended upward.

"He looks happy, like he's smiling," said Ming.

Rather than risk being overrun with followers and media,

In Suphonburi, Thailand (about one hundred miles northwest of Bangkok), a religious furor has exploded around Ming Su Hahn's Chinese-Style restaurant over what appears to be the image of



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Ming took the vegetable to a local monastery and presented it to the monks. "They were very appreciative, and believed it without a moments hesitation," says Ming.

Followers then began trekking to the monastery, giving the monks money and food, receiving blessings by touching the "sacred cabbage."

One man, Su-Sip Buck, claimed to have had his vision improved vastly by his contact with the cabbage. Another man claims that it helped his ailing pet cat eat once more.

As for Ming Su Hahn, she's noticed no changes in herself or her business. "If I helped these people, then I am grateful," she says.



sources

"Divine Vegetation," Esoterica magazine, April 1998, Volume 15 issue 143.

Photo courtesy of Ong Su Hahn and Esoterica magazine

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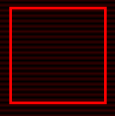
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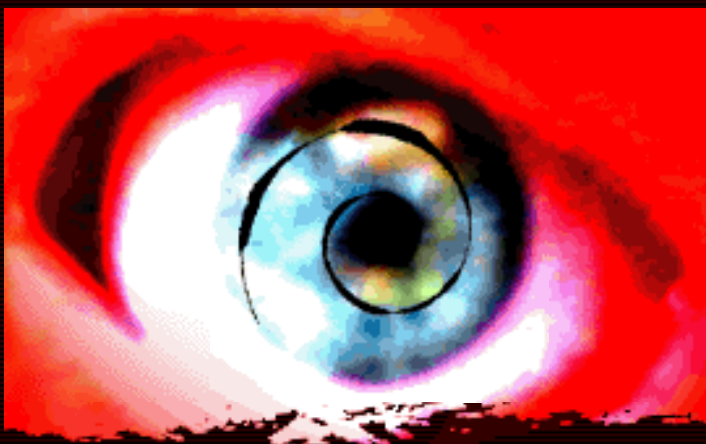
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The Belgian and the Snake Staff

In 1934 Dr. Frederick Vedolinte, a Belgian professor working in Rwanda, heard a rumor that a local chief had a war staff that he could turn into a snake. For the next 2 months Vedolinte tried to find out the truth. In the end it may have cost him his life. What was the mystery behind the Hutu warrior and his snake staff?

Vedolinte had come to Rwanda in 1934 at the request of the Catholic Church who had urged him to help start a center for higher learning in Butare. Vedolinte agreed to help the Church but when he got to the country he became more interested in the local culture and less interested in doing the job he was brought to do. By 1935 the beginnings of the school was still in the starting stages and Vedolinte was spending more and more time among the local tribes of Hutu's and Tutsi learning of their culture. This caused Sister Monianne, a Catholic nun who had been sent to help Vedolinte, to write a letter of complaint to the head diocese.

"Prof. Vedolinte chooses to use his time in efforts to find out the particulars of every cultural rift and point of contention between the two tribes.

Meanwhile the plans for enlarging the buildings for school use are getting further behind since there is no firm hand to help guide it along. I have tried to gather the workmen on several occasions but because I am a woman I am unable to command their respect. I fear that the school may not be finished on time and I ask for your help in this matter."

Sister Monianne's letter must have provoked a strong reaction from the church and Vedolinte soon was back to overseeing the building of the University. For the next several months



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reports indicate that construction was going as planned. Then in February of 1936 Vedolinte sent the following letter to his brother back in Belgium.

Dearest Jonas,

I apologize for not writing as often as I should but events here have been taxing of my time and I have little strength left at the end of the day to put pen to paper. Building a school in the wilds of Africa is harder than I supposed when I agreed to take this job.

I felt the need to write you now because of a rumor I heard floating amongst the workers I employ here. They say that a local war chief named Mudegombo has in his power to ability to turn his staff into a snake! (Now you can see why I didn't tell this to the hen-pecking Sister that acts as my assistant) This may be hard for you to believe sitting where you are in a comfortable chair with electricity and running water but the facts are that I have seen strange things while I have been traipsing out in the wilds of this country.

For example last year I went to a nearby village to talk with a chief about using some of his men as laborers. While there I was invited to witness a ceremony performed by what I guess is their "witchdoctor" (if such a term can be used outside a movie set) This man took one look at me and then started telling me facts about myself that he should not have known! He knew our mother's name, where I was born and all other sorts of personal details that I won't go into. Suffice to say I was convinced of his power. If this can be true then can other powers also be in their grasp? Sadly I'm no longer able to go as freely as I once was but I intend to search out the truth behind this latest tale and I promise to fill you in with the details when I know them. Give Sandra and your little daughter my love and affection and I hope to see you all again very soon

Your brother
Frederick

In mid March of 1936 Sister Monianne once again wrote a letter to the local diocese asking for more assistance. But this time their letter back to her provoked little commitment to the building by Vedolinte. This is evident in another letter sent to his brother Jonas dated April 2nd, 1936

Jonas,

I hope all is well with you and the family. I am fine physically but recent events have surely stirred my mental facilities to their up most!



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Do you remember of the war chief I spoke of that claimed the ability to turn his staff into a snake? Well I have met the man! Enclosed is a photograph I took of him during our meeting. I have questioned him on his ability and he assures me that it is the truth. He claims that he has the power to take his enemies soul and put it into his war staff where it lives and gives him power. It is this soul that transforms the staff into a snake and since it is a Hutu war chief he claims that it is a Tutsi (another tribe of the area) that has been placed inside the wood.



Only known photo of the Hutu Chief Muddegombo.

I asked him for a demonstration of the staff and he agreed but first he wanted to break bread with me so I spent the day with him in an elaborate ceremony where I became his "brother" (So in a way he is your kin as well!) Then at night he started a long ritual that ended with him throwing the staff upon the ground. Jonas I swear to you that the wood moved and became a snake before my very eyes! Muddegombo even went so far as to pick up the snake and place it around his neck! He then offered to place it around my neck but I became a little frightened and refused. The chief became angry at this refusal and made it plain that his hospitality was ended at this point. He had me ushered from the area and sent back to the camp where the Sister and I are staying. I'm sure the sister made sure she was awake so she could note down my return time for her weekly reports to the Priesthood.

I plan on going back to Muddegombo's camp and

try to make amends. Hopefully he will be forgiving. I also plan on getting some proof of this on film. I completely forgot about my camera during the ceremony and did not think to take a picture of the occurrence. Wish me luck, brother and I shall write to you soon again.

Your brother,
Frederick

But that was the last letter Jonas was to receive from his brother. Sister Monianne notes Vedolinte's disappearance in another letter to the diocese.

It is my sad duty to report that Dr. Frederick Vedolinte has gone missing as is presumed to be dead. As I have noted in earlier letters, Vedolinte was very inquisitive about the local tribes in the area and spent much time with them. This may have been the cause of his problem since one local group of Hutu's have left the area and the workers from that tribe are no longer coming to the site of the school to work. Because local tribal customs do not allow a woman to be in charge of such a project I ask that another man be sent out to oversee the building. I await your response.

sources

"The Disappearance of Doctor Vedolinte" vol. 2 issue 14
Strange Fates magazine written by Christopher Culpen

Photo courtesy of Strange Fates magazine

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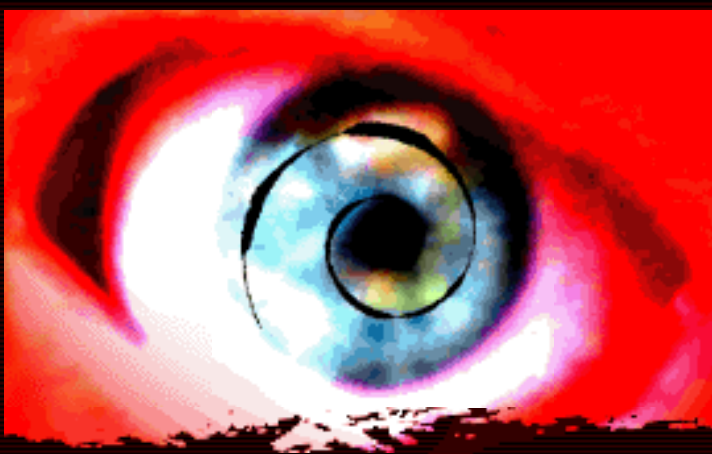
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What would Freud say?

Flagstaff, Arizona was the most recent occurrence of "transubstantiation" of the body of Christ, as this time his body took the shape of a banana. On April 22 Felix Rodriguez, 43 (pictured, with said banana), who runs a kiosk at the Flagstaff Farmer's Market every Saturday and Sunday, was separating the good fruit from the bad just before opening when he felt as if hit by a bolt of lightning.



Turn the Other Peel: Rodriguez and his Mythical Banana

what I believe to be the face of Jesus on the banana..." Rodriguez chuckles at the absurdity of his claim. "I don't care what anyone says. I am sure it's Jesus."

Having never been an avid churchgoer himself, Rodriguez drew a sizable crowd of the pious and nonbelievers alike, all debating the veracity of his claim. "I don't know if I should be opening my kiosk on Sundays!" Rodriguez jokes. "It sure helped my business that day, and it has been booming ever

"Everything went away. It was only for a second, then I was back." Said Rodriguez. "I was holding this piece of fruit and I looked down at it and saw



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since! I bought myself a new TV set last week with the proceeds."

Church parishioners, as usual, find the appearance of Christ to be, well, fruity.

"I don't pretend to know the ways of Christ," says Catholic Priest Eduardo Velazquez. "But I do not personally believe he came down to that farmer's market to make Mr. Rodriguez rich. I can't complain, thought, because church attendance went up once this story got around. I guess sometimes it takes something like this to up attendance. Still, I have to contact the Vatican about this kind of thing, which is a lot of red tape. I don't think the banana will last that long."



What was the fate of the banana itself? "After a couple of days, it was brown all over." Rodriguez says. "I didn't want it to go to waste. I made myself a little fruit smoothie out of it with some orange juice and some strawberries. I hope I don't go to Hell for that..."

sources

API Wire Service

Photo Courtesy of Bob Stephens, Flagstaff Times-Herald

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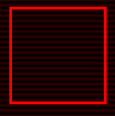
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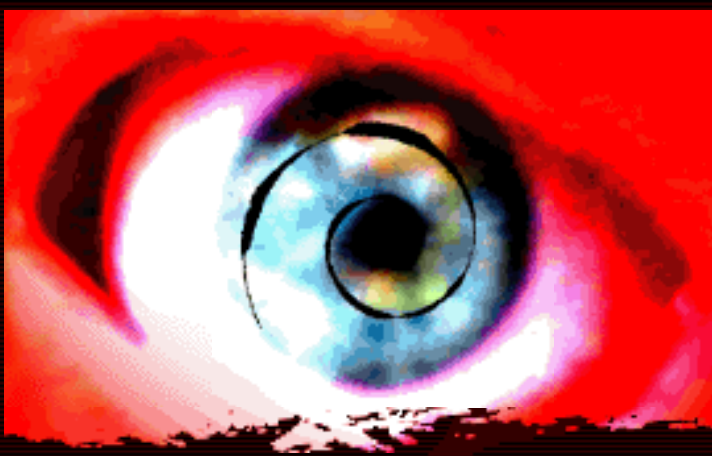
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What-ski in the Sewer-ski, Comrade?

Moscow Russia - In the Moscow suburb of Sukharevskaya, a city water supply worker recently discovered what may be the remains of a shed snake skin that measured over 6 meters (approx. 20 feet) in length. A surprising find in light of the fact that the largest snake native to Russia grows to only 6 feet in length and is dormant in the Winter.

The Public works department isn't commenting but Paulovich Vanstunka, a junior deputy director of the city's police force, says that the snake skin find is a direct result of a raid against the Ostankino gang the police department conducted in March..

"The Ostankino are one of the primary arms of the Jory Y Zakone. (which translates into thieves in law" and is a phrase used for the Russian Mafia) Since crackdowns on their extortion activities started the gang has been looking into different areas of crime that they can branch into." states Paulovich. "We have recently seen an increase in all kinds of smuggling; cigarettes, designer clothes from America and even the illegal importation of exotic pets."



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What shed this skin in the Moscow sewer system and who's brave enough to go find out?

But just how exotic? On the early hours of March 4th the elite Berkut (Eagle) Force of the Moscow police department was set to raid a warehouse near Lomonosou University known to have been used by the criminals. The gang was somehow tipped off and set the complex on fire in an effort to rid themselves of the evidence. Fire Units that responded to the blaze reported seeing a strange collection of animals including snakes, birds, and lizards trying to flee the fire. Subsequent investigations by the police force revealed a haphazard lab thrown together in the warehouse that included cages, heat lamps and food for exotic pets. Officials believe the gang had imported a wide variety of exotic animals in an effort to sell

them to the small but growing upper class of Moscow society. Police believe that a humane member of the gang set them free before starting the blaze. Neighborhood residents reported finding brightly colored bird frozen on their lawns for several days afterwards. They were parrots that could not survive the severe Russian winter.

But if the weather proved inhospitable to birds how could

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exotic reptiles survive? Stanleski Werver, a member of a Moscow club called "Diggers of the Underground Planet" who regularly explores the sewers and tunnels beneath Moscow, believes they could if they could make it into the sewer system.

"Certainly the complex tunnels beneath the city are much warmer than above ground." states Stanleski. "Beggars and the homeless often set up camp in the sewers to survive. I myself have not seen any snakes in there but I have heard from others that they have. No one, not even us, knows the entire extent of the system or what is down there. Just a few years ago a member of the group found over 250 kilograms of radioactive material beneath Moscow University. God himself only knows how long it had been sitting there. If that can stay buried beneath the streets then certainly animals can live down there without anyone knowing."

Other than the photograph which appeared in the Moscow newspaper "FreePress" last week no other collaborating evidence has been produced to substantiate the claim of exotic animals living in the Moscow sewer system. It is uncertain what became of the snakeskin that was discovered in a drainage ditch near the Moscow River. It is believed to have been destroyed.

sources

- phone interview with Stanleski Werver by Mark Davies April 10th, 2000
- article appearing in the Moscow newspaper "FreePress" April 6th, 2000
- photo courtesy of the Moscow FreePress

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