

## **BRITISH SCIENTISTS HUNT LIVING CAVEMEN IN RUSSIAN MOUNTAINS - AND IT ALL BEGINS ON SATURDAY!**

By Nick Redfern

A group of scientists from the British-based Center for Fortean Zoology, the world's largest mystery animal research organization, are to travel to the Caucasus Mountains of the Southwest Russian republic of Karbadino Balkaria on Saturday 21 June in search of what may be mankind's closest living relative; a hominid known as the Almasty.

The three week expedition is being filmed by October Films for UK Channel 4 television, and by the team themselves for a feature length documentary to be broadcast, for free, on the CFZtv multimedia website, the only dedicated cryptozoological web based TV station in the world.

Ukrainian biologist Grigory Panchenko, who has been on the track of the ape-like man for over 14 years, will join the five-man team. Panchenko has seen the creature on four occasions, including a hair rising encounter on a remote farm, when he got to within ten feet of the creature.

Zoological director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology, Richard Freeman, 38, believes the creatures to be large, primitive descendants of our own ancestor Homo erectus:

"Homo erectus was the ancestor of not only modern man but the Neanderthal and the tiny, recently discovered Homo floresiensis. There is no reason why it should not have had other descendants. The Almasty is described as large, hairy and powerful. It is smaller and more human in appearance than the better-known yeti of the Himalayas. It has no fire and only rudimentary, ape-like tool use. Grigory Panchenko believes that it is on the increase in the Karbadino Balkaria area of the Caucasus. There are many more reports here than in other areas and also reports of family groups."

The team are also working with Professor Bryan Sykes, Professor of Human Genetics at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Wolfson College. Sykes is best known outside the community of geneticists for his bestselling books "The Seven Daughters of Eve," and "Blood of the Isles: Exploring the Genetic Roots of Our Tribal History" which describe the investigation of human history and prehistory through studies of mitochondrial DNA.

As all the stories of the Almasty insist that these creatures can, and do, interbreed with humans, the team will be taking DNA samples from a wide range of people in Karbadino Balkaria, and Professor Sykes hopes that through mitochondrial DNA analysis the true identity of the Almasty will be discovered.

The three week expedition leaves the UK on June 21 and will be employing camera traps in the hope of photographing one of these creatures as well as interviewing witnesses and exploring the areas where the Almasty has been sighted.

They will also be investigating reports of a huge species of snake, some thirty feet long, said to inhabit the mountains. The size of a large python, it is far bigger than any species known to inhabit the area.

The Center for Fortean Zoology is the largest full time organization dedicated to investigating reports of unknown animals. They have searched for anomalous creatures all around the world, as well as publishing many books on the subject.

More information can be found on their dedicated websites [www.cfz.org.uk](http://www.cfz.org.uk) and <http://almasty.blogspot.com>

Richard Freeman, and CFZ Director Jonathan Downes are available for interview. Images are also available. Please telephone Jon or Corinna on +44 (0)1237 431413 for details.

Notes for Editors:

The Center for Fortean Zoology [CFZ] is the world's largest mystery animal research organization. It was founded in 1992 by British author Jonathan Downes, 48, and is a non-profit making (not for profit) organization registered with H.M. Stamp Office.

Life-president of the CFZ is Colonel John Blashford-Snell OBE, best known for his groundbreaking youth work organizing the 'Operation Drake' and 'Operation Raleigh' expeditions in the 1970s and 1980s.

CFZ Director Jonathan Downes is the author and/or editor of over 20 books. "Island of Paradise," his first hand account of his expedition (with Nick Redfern) to the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico in search of the grotesque vampiric Chupacabras in the summer of 2004, will be published in the next few weeks.

The CFZ have carried out expeditions across the world including Sumatra, Mongolia, Guyana, Gambia, Texas, Mexico, Thailand, Puerto Rico, Illinois, Loch Ness, and Loch Morar.

CFZ Press is the world's largest publisher of books on mystery animals. The CFZ also publish "Animals & Men," the world's only cryptozoology magazine, and "Exotic Pets," Britain's only dedicated magazine on the subject.

The CFZ produce their own full-length documentaries through their media division called CFZtv ([www.cfz.tv](http://www.cfz.tv)).

One of their films, "Lair of the Red Worm," which was released in early 2007 and documents their 2005 Mongolia expedition has now been seen by nearly 40,000 people.

The CFZ is based in Jon Downes' old family home in rural North Devon which he shares with his wife Corinna, 51. It is also home to various members of the CFZ's permanent directorate and a collection of exotic animals.

Corinna and Jonathan Downes are shareholders in Tropiquaria - a small zoo in North Somerset ([www.tropiquaria.co.uk](http://www.tropiquaria.co.uk)).

Jonathan Downes presents a monthly web TV show called On the Track (<http://cfzmonthly.blogspot.com/>) which covers cryptozoology and work of the CFZ.

The CFZ are currently building a Visitor Center and Museum in Woolsery, North Devon.

Each year the CFZ presents an annual conference [www.weirdweekend.org](http://www.weirdweekend.org).

This year's event will be held in August, and will feature the first public appearance by the Russian Expedition team.

Following their successful partnership with Capcom [www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com) on the 2007 Guyana expedition, the CFZ are looking for more commercial sponsors.