



Fig. I: Surfacing near Bulwagga Bay. House-style plate.

CRYPTID № 1
CHAMP

Two centuries, one enormous lake, and a photograph nobody has ever quite explained. Here is its legend, and two ways to loose it on your table.

“Something enormous already lived here once. Champ would just be the one that stayed.”

THE LEGEND

The lake didn't get its monster from a sighting. It got its monster from a mistranslation.

Samuel de Champlain kept a journal of everything he saw on his 1609 voyage down the water that would eventually take his name, including a large fish his Indigenous guides pointed out to him: long-bodied, armor-scaled, a snout full of teeth. What he described was almost certainly a longnose gar, a fish that still cruises the lake today. Two centuries of retelling turned that fish into a sea serpent, and turned Champlain into the “first witness” of a monster he never actually claimed to see.

By the time newspapers got hold of the story, it didn't need him anymore. On July 22, 1819, a scow captain named Crum reported something moving through Bulwagga Bay that he sized at 187 feet, with three crooked teeth, a white star on its forehead, a belt of red at its throat, and eyes the color of peeled onions. A description too specific to be nothing and too strange to verify. Railroad crews on the far shore filed a similar report that same season, and in 1873 the *New York Times* ran an account from another rail crew: a silver-scaled serpent, better than thirty feet, moving under its own power. P.T. Barnum smelled a paying attraction and put up a reward for the hide (twice, in 1873 and again in 1887) and collected neither time.

The 20th century gave the legend its one piece of hard evidence, or at least its one photograph nobody has fully explained away. On July 5, 1977, Sandra Mansi was picnicking near St. Albans when a dark head and neck broke the surface less than a hundred feet from shore. She got a single frame off with a Kodak before it went back under, then sat on the photo for four years before showing anyone. FBI photo analysts have measured it, argued about it, and landed on neither "real" nor "fake": the leading skeptical read puts the object at roughly seven feet, with a floating log the next most likely explanation after an actual animal.

The lake has kept handing over half-answers since. A 2003 hydrophone survey picked up echolocation-like clicks with no visible source, structurally close enough to a beluga's that the researchers flagged them and moved on. That's a strange thing to find in fresh water four hundred miles from open ocean, until you remember an actual beluga whale skeleton came out of the ground eleven miles from the lake in 1849, during railroad construction, and was nearly written off as a dead horse before a local naturalist worked out what a whale was doing in Vermont: the Champlain Sea, an arm of the Atlantic that flooded this whole basin for twenty-five hundred years after the last ice age, before the land rebounded and sealed the ocean back out. Something that size lived here once, for real. A lake monster is a small ask by comparison.

Port Henry has never let the question drop. The town runs an annual Champ Day, keeps a public board in Bulwagga Bay where visitors add their own name to the sighting list, and treats the whole affair less like an unsolved mystery than a shared civic joke everyone’s agreed to keep playing straight.

For D&D 5E

STAT BLOCK

Champ

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (14d12 + 56)
Speed 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20	14	18	4	13	8
(+5)	(+2)	(+4)	(−3)	(+1)	(−1)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **PB** +3

Amphibious. Champ can breathe air and water.

Wake Sense. Champ can pinpoint, by vibration, any creature in the water within 60 feet, even without seeing it.

Elusive Surfacers. Whenever a creature not grappled by or in melee with Champ would get a clear look at it, Champ can use its reaction to submerge and become heavily obscured. A creature tracking it must succeed on a

For Every Other Game

CREATURE CARD

Champ

No stat lines. Just what it is and how to point it at your players, whatever system you run. It’s a mystery first, a monster second.

HOW IT BEHAVES

- **A mystery, not a predator.** It surfaces, it’s seen, it’s gone. Solve it, don’t slay it.
- **Avoids confrontation.** Boats and noise make it vanish faster. Aggression should feel unusual.
- **Circumstantial evidence only.** A wake with no boat behind it. Let players argue about what they saw.

WAYS TO USE IT

- **The rival-towns hook.** Two factions racing to “prove” it’s real, sabotaging each other.
- **The storm omen.** A sighting right before the party needs the lake calm.

Wisdom (Perception) check contested by Champ's Stealth check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Champ makes one Bite attack and one Tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft. *Hit:* 18 (3d8 + 5) piercing.

Tail. *Melee Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength save or be knocked prone.

Swamp. If Champ moves through a space occupied by a Small or smaller vessel, the vessel must succeed on a DC 16 Strength save or capsize.

- **The guardian angle.** Its presence tracks with the lake's health: disturb it at a cost.
- **The proof expedition.** Out-clever its elusiveness rather than out-fight it.
- **Just a leviathan.** Forget Lake Champlain. A huge serpent fits any deep water. Drop it into your world's lake or sea as a real monster to face, no history required.

DIFFICULTY DIAL

- **Scarier:** something huge under the boat, never seen whole.
- **Safer:** a real but elusive animal the party can finally document, drive off, or corner. A payoff, not an eternal question mark.

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