

'Big cat' country? New Zealand's obsession with giant feline sightings

Level: Intermediate

Article summary: Is New Zealand's mysterious big cat fact or fiction? Why do we find sightings of mythical creatures so interesting?

Time: Up to 90 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Collocations

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

To introduce the topic of well-known mythical creatures, ask the students to match the creatures with the place they are said to live. Find out how many of these creatures the students have heard of and whether they believe that any of them actually exist.

Show students online depictions or drawings of these creatures, or ask them to find them themselves. Ask students to describe the creatures.

Key:

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. a

2. Key words

- a. Have students read the words in the box and match them to the definitions.

Key:

1. *disappointing*
2. *witness*
3. *stocky*
4. *aura*
5. *feral*
6. *aerial*
7. *expert*
8. *sighting*

9. *wilderness*
10. *wholesome*
11. *exist*
12. *absurd*

- b. Before reading the article, students should use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand them and know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

1. *witness*
2. *aerial*
3. *exist*
4. *aura*
5. *absurd*
6. *expert*
7. *disappointing*
8. *feral*

3. Comprehension check

Working with a partner, have students read the statements, decide whether they are true or false according to the article and write corrections for any statements that are false.

Key:

1. *F – There are reports about one big cat that lives on New Zealand's South Island.*
2. *F – It is strong and stocky and about knee-height, so smaller than a lion.*
3. *F – They have not found any of these things.*
4. *F – There have been no reports of a big cat eating farm animals.*
5. *T*
6. *T*
7. *F – She hopes it does exist but thinks it probably doesn't.*
8. *T*

'Big cat' country? New Zealand's obsession with giant feline sightings

Level: Intermediate

4. Using key language

- a. Students first match the words in the left-hand column with the words in the right-hand column to make collocations from the text. Ask them to find the collocations in the article to check their answers and read them again in context.

Key:

1. d
2. e
3. a
4. b
5. c

- b. Students should use the collocations to complete sentences.

Key:

1. *global chaos*
2. *aerial photo*
3. *state highway(s)*
4. *border controls*
5. *security camera*

- c. Tell the students to each choose the three collocations that they would most like to be able to use well and to write a personalized sentence for each.

- b. When they have done this, ask them to share their lists with other students, giving reasons and justifications for the inclusion of each of the items. Ask for feedback – which expedition did each group choose and why, and what did they include on their lists?
- c. As a creative writing project, have students write a fictional account of a sighting of the creature on their chosen expedition. This task can be completed for homework.

5. Discussion

Pair students or form small groups to discuss questions that are directly related to the topic of the article.

6. In your own words

- a. Get students to do this task in pairs or small groups to encourage speaking. Set a time limit of approximately 15 minutes for this task. Remind them that they must be able to carry or transport the items on their list and that there must be a good reason for the inclusion of each item.