

ONLINE DATING – Are you a Victim of Catfishing?



The question everyone seems to be asking today is...Is online dating safe? The answer is, yes, it is. However, you'll have to be cautious and be sure you take time to do your research just as you would with traditional dating.

What is Catfishing?

Catfishing, according to Wikipedia - is a deceptive activity where a person creates a fictional persona or **fake** identity on a social networking service, usually targeting a specific victim.

Imposters are popping up all over. This is a problem most common to dating sites and is becoming more and more of an issue primarily because there is no personal validation process required when signing up and no geographical boundaries.

So, anyone could be behind the photo and fingers of the person you're communicating with.

During my research I've found that imposters are most often men. However, anyone could pose as someone else. I also found that this problem occurs more often in the age groups of 40 and above.

Therefore, it is advised that everyone conduct his or her own personal investigations.

Here are some tips I've drawn from my book ["The Five Star Man"](#) *Dating Guide for Women Only*.

Top 17 ways to detect an Internet Imposter aka Catfisher.

1. They're usually very polite and may use the phrase, "if you don't mind." and other similar phrases to appear gentle, non-aggressive and considerate. These phrases are usually expressed in the initial messages.
2. They immediately attempt to lure you away from the dating site or social media platform by supplying their email address or requesting yours.
3. They'll try to encourage you to communicate through Skype or some other media. This is due to the fact they're usually not even in the USA and therefore have no phone number. If they do have a number, it's only that - a number. They will not be able to call you or you them using their phone number. They most likely have hundreds of these temporary phone numbers. There is no phone company associated with these numbers.
4. They almost always have Yahoo or Hotmail - although Gmail is starting to be common.

Ask them to take a selfie.

5. Imposters usually only have one picture or a limited number of photos they have stolen from someone else's profile. A phony won't be able to produce additional photos and more often than not the original photos they posted are usually of poor quality-blurry or appear too good to be true.
6. They usually live far away, making it impossible for you to immediately confirm their identity. Some are looking to gain entry into the United States while others are simply looking to rob you.
7. Their English is broken, and their writing skills are poor. Most of them are probably using translation software.
8. Communication is also sketchy and inconsistent. This is because they have many of these scams going on at once.
9. They have no problem with revealing their occupation and income as this information is merely a script, they've rehearsed many times. They sometimes depict themselves to be people of prominence and importance such as military men or doctors etc. They'll even send pictures of military people they stole from the net.
10. They often target older women, as they feel an older woman may be a little more desperate, vulnerable and of course more established.
11. They ask you for money. This is the biggest red flag of them all. Never, ever send anyone money for any reason. The purpose of a person who is profiting from the practice of catfishing is to get in, take what they need, and get out. They will leave no trace or trail of communication or contact. These people create and delete profiles daily.
12. They may purposely withhold their photo from the site and ask permission to send it to your email in order to obtain your email address.
13. They often say they're new to the site. This statement indicates they have not yet had any contact with anyone, and you are the first.

14. They say they're "widowed" to gain your sympathy and some even say they have children to make you really feel bad for them. Just remember. An imposter always has an issue or sympathetic story designed to pull at your heartstrings.
15. While some imposters choose the gentle approach, others may be a little more aggressive and come on too strong. This type is very anxious to become familiar with you and frequently uses terms of endearment such as "honey" and "dear" and will shower you with compliments. In other words, they try to say the things they think you'd like to hear.
16. They usually note or compare similarities between themselves & you such as zodiac signs and/or place of origin or residence.
17. They will readily give their first and last names, which is an indication that the name may be stolen.

Suggestions

There are tools you can use to detect a phony. As soon as you obtain the photo of your contact run it through a website that will verify the person's identity such as www.socialcatfish.com. This site will help you find the identity behind the photo. This will save you a lot of time.

If you manage to catch someone in the practice of "Catfishing" and decide to confront this person, he may attempt to convince you that he too is a victim of identity fraud by trying to convince you that someone is fraudulently using their identity across the net, but don't fall for it.

Should you determine the person is a phony, cut the communication immediately and report it to the dating site you're using.

Use online tools

Many people aren't aware that there's a lot of *Facial Recognition software* available that is very helpful in detecting phonies. These tools will perform a facial scan and give a report on the properties of the photo.

For instance. [\(Google Cloud API\)](#)

- The software will let you know whether the photo is a selfie or taken by someone else. If the photo was taken by someone else, it could have come from anywhere.
- The best feature of this Facial Identification Tool is the "Web Entities". This tool provides links to other places on the web where the photo can be found. This is Huge!

If the person is a phony, they will be found using the photo or photos they uploaded on many other sites.

He may use the same name, or he may use various names all over the net. Either way, you'll catch him in it.

Identity Verification Software:

If you have the first and last name of an individual, you may use one of the sites below. Some of the best websites to verify an identity are:

beenverified.com intellius.com truthfinder.com peoplefinder.com spokeo.com mylife.com

Advice

If you've been communicating with someone on the net for a while and feel it's time to meet face to face, please consider taking someone with you; or, at least, let someone be aware of where you're going, and always meet in a public place.

There are too many people missing today. You certainly don't want your name to be added to the list.

The greatest benefit to online dating is the ability to carefully screen the person of interest in advance. I urge you to fully use this benefit to your advantage.

Many people have had success with online dating and have shared their stories. Unfortunately, there have been equally as many, if not more, nightmare stories. With that in mind, my advice is to proceed with caution.

I'll conclude by showing you an example of identity theft.

There's no doubt this is a real person whose identity is being used by an imposter. This person reached out to me through Twitter. He gave himself away by doing many of the things I mentioned. So, I began an investigation and uncovered this fraud by using [Google recognition software](#).

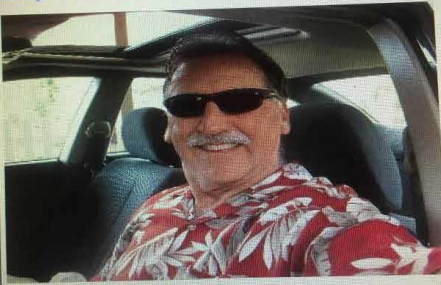
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The attached pictures are being used by several scam artists in Accra Ghana. I would appreciate anything you can do to catch these scammers. I took out because I believed his story and he was so compelling and it was so compelling. These scammers are using are drowngg@yahoo, kimg @yahoo, melvin @ yahoo. All of these scammers are using this same man's pictures.

This image was also posted here:

Dating scammer Eric Wilson
 Dating scammer Larry Wolfe, William Moor, David Scott, Melvin_Holms,



Keywords: I've been contacted by him several times on DateHookup. See

2012-04-29, 18:09:53 (updated: 2012-04-29, 18:14:16)

[hidden] from United States


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CROCHET DIVORCE EFTPS FLUTE FRAMES HEALTH

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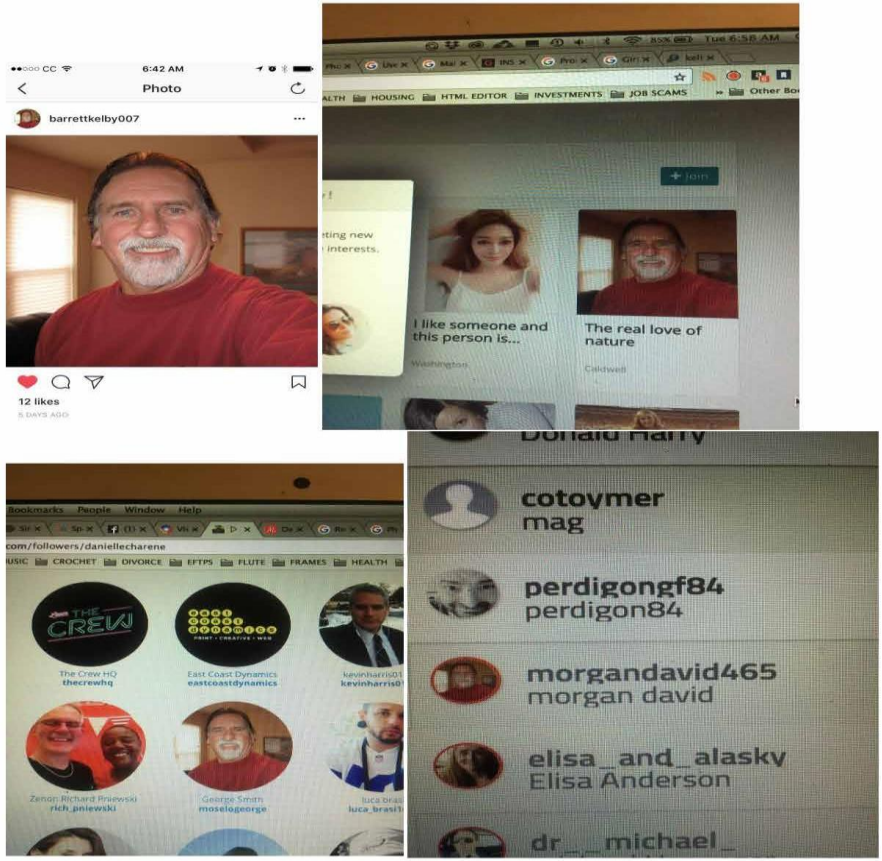


kendrick213

61, Men, Single
Washington Park, United States

Looks for:
Woman
52 - 66years
Within 100 kms
Long-term dating, Short-term dating, Frensh1p

duction Photos



As you can see in each photo the person has a different name. The man in the photo probably has no clue his photo is being blasted all over the net.