

BIOFORTEAN NOTES

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BIPES RUMORS IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

CHAD ARMENT

It's a fact that reptiles are often mistakenly reported well outside their range. Most species aren't readily identifiable by the general public, while other species are so "well-known" that every reptile they see must be that animal. (I once examined a freezer bag full of dead "water moccasins" that a southern Ohio farmer caught in his creek—not surprisingly identifying them as northern water snakes.) But some stories are less run-of-the-mill. Who would mistake something for an amphisbaenid? Maybe more people than we'd imagine.

Everyone has heard of snakes, lizards, and turtles, but few outside of reptile enthusiasts have heard of amphisbaenians (sometimes called worm lizards). These are fossorial reptiles, most being rather small, with *Amphisbaena alba* reaching a couple feet in length. All are limbless except for the Mexican genus *Bipes*, which retains two small forelimbs. Only one family, the Rhineuridae, is known in the United States, formerly having a large distribution throughout the North American continent, but today only found in Florida—*Rhineura floridana* is the only living species.

THE STORIES

The first story suggesting that there could be another amphisbaenid north of Mexico comes from Major S. H. Long's expedition to the Rockies, when naturalist Edwin James recorded the capture of some unusual creatures on June 27, 1820 (Campbell 1980), presumably also examined by accompanying zoologist Thomas Say.

Campbell noted the likelihood of Say examining the specimen, pointing out that he was an able taxonomist and original describer of a number of well-known species and subspecies of American reptiles.

James wrote: “We observed, in repeated instances, several individuals of a singular genus of reptiles (*chirotes*, Cuv.) which in form resemble short serpents, but are more closely allied to the lizards, by being furnished with two feet. They were so active, that it was not without some difficulty that we succeeded in obtaining a specimen. Of this (as was our uniform custom when any apparently new animal was presented) we immediately drew out a description. But as the specimen was unfortunately lost, and the description formed part of the zoological notes and observations which were carried off by our deserters, we are reduced to the necessity of merely indicating the probability of the existence of the *chirotes lumbricoides* of naturalists, within the territory of the United States.” Taylor (1938) notes that these were found in the region between what is now Ogallala, Nebraska, and Julesburg, Colorado, “possibly near the present Nebraska-Colorado line.”

Chirotes is an old name now synonymized into *Bipes*. *Bipes* consists of three recognized species endemic to Mexico: “*Bipes canaliculatus* occurs in the Balsas Depression of Guerrero and Michoacán; *B. tridactylus* in a small geographic area of coastal



Bipes biporus © Marlin Harms

Guerrero; and *B. biporus* in the Baja California peninsula” (Pappenfuss 1982). So, what Edwin James reported was a fairly distinctive member of the amphisbaenids, showing two limbs, rather than one of the more common limbless variety (which are the only ones known to have ever inhabited North America).

We'll look at objections to this report, but first I'd like to emphasize that this is not the only account of a *Bipes*-like creature in western North America. Others have been published in the herpetological literature. Taylor (1938), for example, recorded his search over several years for a *Bipes*-like animal that he believed inhabited southeastern Arizona. His details are fascinating (referred to as “a stimulating account” by Smith (1946)):

“During my collecting in southeastern Arizona during the summers of 1928-1930, and again in 1934, I have searched in vain for a species of *Bipes* which I believe inhabits southeastern Arizona. My first reason for this belief was based upon the statement of a placer-gold miner, in Ash Cañon in the Huachuca Mountains. He said that he had occasionally dug from the sand and gravel along the small creek in the cañon, ‘a small snake 10-14 inches long with two small legs near its head. They were purple or brown in color.’

“In another nearby cañon, I visited Dr. Biedermann, then nearly ninety years of age, who had lived more than thirty years in the Huachucas and had made extensive collections of Lepidoptera for the museums of the world. He told me that there was ‘a rare chirotes living in the mountains,’ and that he believed he had one preserved. However, on examination of his small collection of reptiles the specimen could not be found.

“While collecting on Mount Lemon, in the Santa Catalina Range, I stopped at a small hotel near the summit. Mrs. Westbrook, the owner, warranted that I had found no snake like one she had found and kept for a pet. ‘It had a pair of legs coming out where its ears should be.’ It was found in the garden in the evening during a rainstorm. She had kept it for three months and it had escaped. Others vouched for the story, having seen the captive specimen.

“The forest guard at the outlook station on Mount Lemon, told me that he had found in the Huachucas a specimen of a snake with

'two legs on its neck. It was lavender and white below. The legs were so short that it didn't use them to walk on.' Although a collector of snake skins as a hobby, he had not preserved the skin of the specimen, because it was too small.

"Mr. Doty, of the Forest Service, whom I met on Mt. Lemon in 1934, told me that some months previously, his workers had killed three two-legged snakes while removing piles of rocks in order to drill post holes for telephone poles. He took me to the exact place. A day was spent in the vicinity but none was found. It was extremely dry at this time. It had been raining when they were killed.

"I do not believe that all of these reports have been fabricated, and all seem to point to the same animal. It seems almost beyond question that a species of *Bipes* occurs in southeastern Arizona, at least in the Huachucas and the Santa Catalina Mountains, a real prize for some collector who will put forth the necessary effort to discover it."

Dundee (1980) recorded an additional alleged sighting while searching for reptiles in Brady County, Nebraska, in 1951. He was on a ranch in the sandhills along the unpaved section of Route 83. Dundee quotes from his field notes the description given to him by the rancher and his children: "There is in this area a lizard with only two legs, these near the head. It is said to crawl like a snake and reaches a length of a foot or so. Grayish or silvery grayish in color. Found along fence rows or fence posts." The rancher's teenage son was able to describe other reptiles in the area accurately enough that Dundee was confident in this description. He was told that the "two-legged lizard" was most often found when they were excavating for fence posts or digging up rotten fence posts.

Smith and Holland (1981) described two sightings that were described to Dr. T. Paul Maslin, a Colorado herpetologist. The first was from a "well-educated janitor at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins, where Maslin taught at the time." The man described a *Bipes* that he had found on his farm southeast of Ft. Collins some years prior. Maslin showed the man a *Eumeces* skink, which the man dismissed quickly, noting that the *Bipes* was very different. Later, a female graduate student noted in "equally convincing

detail” her encounter with a *Bipes* found under a rock along a “hog-back” a few miles west of Loveland.

Wright and Mason (1981) noted the story from an early pioneer of central California, Jose Francisco Palomares, collected in 1877 which describes an “ajolote” which tried to enter the rectum of a sleeping man. The small snakelike animal had two small hands with “short, little claws, steel-like and as sharp as needles.” The authors noted that this behavior is also attributed to *Bipes* in folk stories in Baja California, and that while the veracity of some elements of the story are certainly questionable, it is possible that such a creature was actually found and killed.

Stebbins (1985) reported that, “In the 1870s, Kenneth Swartz found a ‘worm lizard’ in Paradise Valley near Phoenix. It was about 6 in. (15 cm) long; a bit thicker than a pencil; had pearly, slightly, translucent scales; legs about 3/16 in. (5 mm) long and 1/16 in. (2 mm) wide, tipped with tiny claws; and no trace of hind limbs. It crawled in clumsy, snakelike fashion and seemed to use its nose in digging when it was returned to its burrow. Termite tubes were present in the mud around the burrows.” (Stebbins, as will be noted, apparently changed his mind in later years about the likelihood of this mystery animal.)

In 2005, a Robert Villa posted on the Arizona Herpetological Association webforum in a *Bipes* debate thread that his grandmother had described to him a *Bipes*-like animal, seen first in the Santa Catalinas, and then near Sedona. In the same forum thread, Ted Pappenfuss noted that Stebbins had once collected a report from a forest ranger in the Ruby area, but provided no further detail. What inspired this discussion and debate on the AHA website was a newspaper column (Thompson 2005) in which someone in Camp Verde wrote in asking for help identifying a “fast-moving lizard that seems to have no legs,” “about 8 to 10 inches long,” that wiggled like a snake. The columnist first suggested it was an alligator lizard, but then mistakenly stated that legless lizards were present in Arizona. If there’s anything that inspires heated indignation in a herp enthusiast, it’s a newspaper columnist who gets his reptile facts wrong.

Beyond the scope of this article, being outside the U.S., the presence of *Bipes* in the Mexican state of Chiapas has been suggested, but not confirmed (Pappenfuss 1982).

THE OBJECTIONS

For as many stories of *Bipes*-like animals in western states, there are just as many objections from both herpetologists and herp enthusiasts. Some, like Taylor (1938), critique earlier accounts (as Taylor wondered whether Edwin James' report was fictitious) while offering their own material as credible. Others simply find the idea of a western amphisbaenid untenable.

The most common complaint is that if *Bipes* existed in western North America, some herp collector somewhere would have acquired a specimen by now (Hammerson 1999; AHA 2005). Certainly, the lack of specimens is problematic. But, just as odd, is the lack of misidentified specimens. We have circumstantial evidence of specimens being collected and lost (as with the Edwin James account), or kept as a pet (Taylor 1938) only to escape. But just as with other misidentified animals, we should certainly have accounts of collected specimens which turned out to be something more ordinary. So far, I haven't seen any such accounts in print, just speculation that misidentifications are occurring.

Gans and Pappenfuss (1980) presented several objections to Edwin James' 1820 observation. First, they noted that James stated, "they were so active, that it was not without some difficulty that we succeeded in obtaining a specimen." Their own observations in collecting and handling a number of amphisbaenids were that these animals are not difficult to catch once "disclosed," with *Bipes* being very slow-moving. They noted other species with escape behavior are not hard to acquire. In their field studies, collecting over 3000 *Bipes*, only three were not caught underground. Those three were moving slowly on the surface at night. Thus, they conclude, "Whatever the animal observed by James, it is most unlikely to have been an amphisbaenian." This is their strongest argument (and one that is reiterated by Smith and Holland (1981)), but I do wonder if there isn't some "reading into" the original report by

James as to what he meant. We aren't given details, for example, on the circumstances of the expedition sightings (though perhaps the original 1823 text provides them)—rain, for example, is known to bring Florida worm lizards to the surface, where they would otherwise remain hidden. I don't have a lot of direct experience with amphisbaenids, but earlier in 2014 I had opportunity to briefly handle a Florida worm lizard at a reptile expo. I was very surprised when first attempting to dig the small creature out from the soil in a small container, that it truly didn't want to emerge and somehow managed to actively resist my efforts despite not having anything to grasp (there being only soil in the box). Less persuasive is the next argument Gans and Pappenfuss made, that the name *Chirotes* in 1820 was in a state of flux, and may have confused James or Say. James specifically noted that the animal was “furnished with two feet.” There are no other two-footed reptiles in North America to confuse the issue. Finally, Gans and Pappenfuss noted: “As there is no other direct observation, and all ‘reports’ of *Bipes* from the central U.S. followed rather than preceded local inquiries for such animals, it seems best to delete such ‘records’ from future field guides.” This, I'm afraid, just doesn't work, as we have several accounts on record which were given prior to inquiry. (And frankly, I'm not sure that that truly counts as problematic anyway. Ethnozoological inquiries are a valid methodology for fieldwork and shouldn't be dismissed so cavalierly.)

There have been several objectors to the idea of a North American *Bipes* on the grounds of climate tolerance. Amphisbaenids as a lot are warm climate animals. Colorado and Nebraska see very cold weather during the winter, and even the mountains of southern Arizona (where the sightings occur) see snow. So, there would appear to be a climatic barrier that North American amphisbaenids must hurdle (AHA 2005; Smith and Holland 1981). But, this is the sort of objection that falls away once a new species is discovered. At most, we can say it's unlikely, but not impossible. Similarly, the objection that there are no nearby populations of known *Bipes* (the closest being Baja California) also can't rule out the possibility of disjunct populations with absolute certainty (Hammerson 1999).

Assuming that there could have been an ongoing series of mistaken identities, what would have been seen that could cause the error? Two different lizards have been suggested as possible culprits. Smith and Holland (1981) suggested that the many-lined skink *Eumeces multivirgatus* might have been seen by the Long Expedition party, and as the account of the *Bipes*-like animal was written from memory (as the notes and specimen were lost), perhaps some confusion resulted. The main problem with this idea is that skinks in general are well known North American lizards, and (as Smith and Holland admit) it is highly unlikely that knowledgeable biologists like James and Say (the latter of whom Dundee (1996) referred to as “meticulous in his observations”) would make such a gross misstep in identification, even working from memory.

Pappenfuss had discussed outlier *Bipes* reports with Dr. Robert C. Stebbins (best known for his field guide to western herpetofauna), noting (Pappenfuss 1982) Stebbins’ theory, based on his own observation, that reports might be generated by people seeing an alligator lizard, *Gerrhonotus*, “crawling slowly on the ground



A female five-lined skink (*Eumeces*) sunning itself with legs tucked up close to its body. © Chad Arment

using only its forelimbs while its hind limbs are folded against the body.” This might be a possibility with cases where the eyewitness only saw the animal for a short period on the surface. It doesn’t seem likely, however, for those reports where the animals were dug up from out of the ground (skinks are very quick and unlikely to be captured that way), nor for cases where the animal was in hand.

I have seen a suggestion that Taylor’s Arizona tales might have been spun wholesale simply for the alleged eyewitness’ amusement. This doesn’t seem a likely scenario, however, as there was nothing particularly out of the ordinary about the sightings, beyond being in a new locality. This is not to say that tall tales can’t occur. Merritt S. Keasey III, a curator at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, offered this brief tale (Keasey 1973): “Museum people were quite excited once when a gentleman called in to say that he had captured a rare, two-legged lizard for them. These strange creatures are known to occur only in Baja California, although there have been reports of them from the mountains of southern Arizona. Here would be the first living proof!

“The museum director returned the call personally and asked about the strange lizard. The person insisted that, yes, he had it, but that it had died and had been preserved in a bottle of whiskey. The director was disappointed, for he had wanted it alive, but at least the record still would be valid if the preserved beast could be obtained.

“He made an appointment to go to the mountain cabin to pick it up the next day.

“There are still no records of the two-legged lizard in Arizona, for when he got there the contents of the bottle had been drained—orally, it would seem—and the lizard was no where to be found.”

BIPES AS A CRYPTID

As every cryptozoology enthusiast should know, a cryptid is simply an ethnoknown animal, as yet unconfirmed to exist, whether a new or “lost” species. If *Bipes* exists in the U.S., it is almost certain to be a distinct species, making it a legitimate cryptid. As a cryptid, it is an ethnozoological target for species discovery

methodologies, but this has no bearing on whether or not it actually exists. These stories may simply be an example of scientific folklore, i.e., speculation by qualified scientists.

For a cryptozoological researcher, it is a little frustrating to watch scientists without any cryptozoological background struggle with decades of fruitless searching. For example, Smith and Holland (1981) inform us that for several decades naturalists in Colorado, including graduate students at the University of Colorado, have sought the “Chirotes” of the Long Expedition. “Considerable publicity resulted, at intervals, the most notable being an article that appeared in one of the local papers. All these efforts yielded only more anecdotes and speculation, hence were not recorded.” Obviously, they had no concept of the usefulness of anecdotal evidence, or the importance of documenting such sightings for future research.

Instead we see argument that there is “no evidence” (Gans and Pappenfuss 1980), which is patently untrue. There is no *confirmative* evidence, no proof of existence. But there is *circumstantial* evidence, which shouldn’t be used to engender fallacious conclusions, but can be used in a discovery methodology such as cryptozoology to finally locate confirmative evidence, if such exists.

Dundee (1980) pointed out the error of thinking we know everything: “The discovery of fossorial creatures can crush our egos when we think that the herpetofauna of a given area is well known—e.g. the finding of the remarkable salamander, *Phaeognathus hubrichti*, in Alabama in 1960!”

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CRYPTOFICTION: A RENAISSANCE

MATT BILLE

Cryptozoological fiction has a long history. There's no doubt tales of monsters predate the written word. Early humans hardly needed to make up tales as they tangled with cave bears, cave lions, sabertooths, and the other predators of their day, but dragons and great serpents and sea monsters became staples of the storyteller's art. History and myth became hopelessly interwoven as the ancient creatures of Japan and China and Africa were talked about while Native Americans spoke of the thunderbird and Norsemen traded tales of kraken.

I used to be able to keep up with all the cryptozoology novels: in the indie age, I couldn't hope to do so, so I have to pick the ones that look intriguing. Some of these are pretty good, some are dreadful. There are also some good novels from established publishers: indeed, the last two years have been very good for cryptozoology-themed fiction. We've had high-octane thrillers like Hawthorne's *Kronos Rising*, atmospheric novels like Willis' *The Daedalus and the Deep*, chillers like *Below*, a crypto subplot in a Dan Simmons epic and a major plot point in a Preston/Childs scientific thriller, and the scariest crypto-novel ever, Joseph Wallace's *Invasive Species*. The genre has never been healthier, in quantity or quality.

That is, assuming we can define cryptofiction. I suggest that, if the novel makes an attempt to depict a believable creature with a believable origin, it qualifies, even if those attempts might fall short. The line between cryptozoology and monster-themed horror

is a fuzzy one, and perhaps we shouldn't try too hard to pin it down. If the creature is central to the novel and is alleged to exist, or could exist, in the real world, it probably qualifies. For example, my own novel *The Dolmen* (Wolfsinger, 2014) discusses a scientific origin for creatures from folklore: some may class it as cryptofiction though I think of it more as horror. Also on the borders of cryptofiction are novels like C.J. Waker's *Predator X* (Severed Press, 2014) in which the cryptozoological creature is an obstacle to the heroes but the novel is about something else entirely (alien contact, in Walker's case). Outside cryptofiction, I think, are the novels about creating new creatures, like Scott Sigler's very good 2011 thriller *Ancestor*. (One other trend, cryptozoology-themed pornography, is beyond my powers to even form a coherent thought about.)

One thing I need to mention in the new age of publishing is that some readers, such as myself, are put off by writing that does not display a mastery of English grammar. It's all right to break the rules when warranted in accordance with your particular style (especially in dialogue), but unless the novel is mainly written in accordance with proper English, the flourishes won't be memorable. *The Elements of Style* and *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* should be on everyone's bookshelf. I do wish that every author intending to write direct via e-publishing would hire an editor or make themselves into one. One might say I shouldn't be giving advice, given that my own books are hardly bestsellers, but I've been reading cryptofiction for over 40 years and have a good idea of what works, and I'm hardly the only reader who demands authors show mastery of the language in which they write.

A good guide for those wanting to stick to well-written novels is to look at the synopsis on the author's website or the online seller's site: if the author couldn't get the language right in this paragraph, it won't be good in the novel. (I speak here, of course, only of material written by/for readers of English.) It's necessary to do a bit of reading and not just rely on reviews to pick a promising read, given that it's become a common practice (and I don't really see how it could be stamped out) to have close friends and relatives put up five-star reviews about even the worst novels.

A dominant theme in cryptofiction is the first contact between a stunned human and a cryptid. An example is J.M. Bailey's novel about finding Sasquatch—or, rather, being found by Sasquatch. *Eve* (CreateSpace, 2012) is a well-written bit of speculation by an author who knows the wilderness and her Sasquatch lore (the old Albert Ostman tall tale of being kidnapped by a Sasquatch family is an obvious influence.) Bailey also makes a brave and successful decision as a writer by making her first-person narrator a profane and not entirely likable woman. The narrator's descriptions of her feelings about the hominid Sasquatch she meets are sometimes a little hyperbolic, but, to be fair, she is describing an event that would pretty much blow the fuses in the human brain. Bailey has moved on to the sequel, *Iron Mountain Ridge*.

Eve leads us to the point that all good fiction is about characters, whether human or nonhuman. A continuing character some readers will know is Lee Murphy's George Kodiak. Murphy is on his game in his latest, *The Road to Loch Ness* (Defining Moments Press, 2014), where his tough-guy cryptozoologist heads to Scotland, where he finds adversaries old and new as well as the creature. (I won't say what it is Kodiak finds. The solution seems a little less plausible to me than the giant eels of Steve Alten's *The Loch*, but it's fun.) This is the first of the Kodiak novels to show the character really growing: Kodiak is a three-dimensional human with foibles and limitations, and the unexpected romance he finds in this novel is genuinely touching. In another common theme, Murphy loves the latest in technology, and there are cool gadgets to go with the cool creatures. (I'll nitpick only one here: the X-Ray mode on his high-tech diving helmet couldn't really work with X-rays, although there is some promising research into a "see through walls" capability using radio waves.) This is one of those books where grammar traditionalists like myself will frown on occasion, but the plotting and pacing are good, and the reader will find plenty of surprises.

I personally, as a reader, can do without psychic or mystical elements in cryptid stories: however, it's fiction, and every author will go in a different direction. *Eve* and *The Road to Loch Ness* are examples where such elements exist but never overwhelm the story.

Some cryptofiction hops or combines genres. Greig Beck's *The First Bird* (Momentum, 2013), for example, is a lost world thriller which segues into a doomsday disease thriller. The lost world section is original and well researched, even if the laws of biology concerning giant arthropods are bent out of shape. Beck's characters are three-dimensional people you can believe in—and fear for. It's a better book than his *Beneath the Dark Ice* (St. Martin's, 2010), which is an example of mixing cryptozoology with military adventure. (*Dark Ice* also an example of a common problem with “lost ecosystem” novels—readers may wonder whether the system could support so many big predators).

A heavyweight in recent cryptofiction is Max Hawthorne's 542-page *Kronos Rising* (Far From the Tree Press, 2013), which is also interesting in that the author has put on a Master's class in how to promote your small-press or self-published book using social media, contests, etc. Novels about very large, scary predators often hand-wave the science and feed us expendable cardboard characters. (I thought Steve Alten's original *Meg* exemplified this, but Alten has gotten a lot better: his Megalodon protagonist Jonas has gotten more believable and vulnerable with age, and his Loch Ness novel is one of the high points in all of cryptofiction.) Hawthorne does a great job on the second point with interesting characters and human drama. Everyone has an interesting backstory, which helps us cheer on the heroes and slightly humanizes the villains. The science can be nitpicked (rorquals do not echolocate), but Hawthorne, a champion angler, knows the sea and ships, which helps enormously. Finally, there's good plotting and pacing to make everything else hum along.

This brings up a couple of issues with “prehistoric survival” novels: one is how the species survived to the present, and the other (less critical but always interesting) is how much it's evolved. A universal tendency with millions of years of evolution (see Hawthorne, Alten, Charles Wilson's *Extinct*, etc.) is making the creatures bigger and smarter. Hawthorne's marine reptiles have evolved that way, plus adding echolocation, but all that is permissible in fiction as long as it's not pushed beyond plausibility.

Survival is a tougher story: the animals need an ecosystem that keeps them alive without too many encounters with humans. Alten's latest crypto novel, *Meg: Hell's Aquarium* (Tor edition, 2010) spends considerable time explaining how this worked, and he gets credit for the effort even if there are still nitpicks. Hawthorne tries hard with a story that traps two kronosaurs in a volcanic cone after the K-T asteroid impact, though he leaves the intervening millennia a little fuzzy. This won't bother anyone looking for a fun cryptofiction thriller, though, because *Kronos Rising* delivers in so many other ways that you can overlook imperfections.

Matt Willis' *The Daedalus and the Deep* (Cotero Publishing, 2012) goes in a different direction, Willis takes one of the most famous reported encounters in cryptozoology and asks what might have happened if the corvette had not merely reported a sea serpent but chased it hell-bent, determined to secure it for the honor of England, its Navy, and the ship's captain. While trying not to spoil the plot too much, there is a science fiction element: it's not by accident that the *Daedalus* and the creature came together, and their running fight over many days and thousands of miles is driven by the creature as much, or more than, by the obsessed captain. It's entertaining and original, and it helps that Willis has studied the days of sail and gives us a thorough introduction to the *Daedalus*' world in the course of telling his story. Dean Koontz once said that you can make a reader swallow one huge improbability if every other detail is nailed down in fact, and that's a good rule.

Other authors go deep into the science of their creatures. Joseph Wallace's *Invasive Species* (Berkley, 2013) does everything right: good characters, a killer premise, well-researched locations, and gruesomely scary details to complement very good science. Wallace's "thieves" are several evolutionary steps beyond any known insect, but you can work out why they would have evolved this way, and the result is terrifyingly plausible. The hive-mind intelligence gets a little far out, but even here Joseph grounds the thieves' capabilities in what we know about hive minds and mentions genuine scientific questions. His concepts of how

parasitic hosts exploit and control their prey have real analogues in nature, including those hellishly alien fungi that control the minds of ants. On the writing side, Wallace also creates characters we care about—but is never afraid to kill anyone in the service of the story. Suspense is always heightened when we the readers know no character is safe.

An example where the cryptid stirs the drink instead of being the main course is Dan Simmons' *The Abominable* (Little, Brown & Company, 2013). As with most Simmons books, the detail in this epic is astonishing. The history of mountaineering is told in the buildup to a deadly cat and mouse game in a realm where humans need every bit of stamina and grit just to stay alive, and yet must also fight for their lives. Those wanting to learn about the yeti will not find a lot of detail, but the subject is pivotal at two points. To keep from spoiling it, I won't say whether Simmons' novel presents the metohkangmi as real animals, but it's a novel well worth reading despite its 672 pages. A cryptid is more important in the latest Douglas Preston / Lincoln Childs scientific thriller, *Lost Island*. I doubt their human-related cryptid would have evolved the way it did, but these guys always do their darndest to put real science behind their work, and they usually have other interesting angles: here they speculate that the most famous of fictional journeys in Greek literature is a report of a real voyage, "monster" and all.

Another novel that gives us good creatures and good human characters is Ryan Lockwood's *Below* (Pinnacle, 2013). Lockwood's details of the sea and diving are very interesting, the science behind the animals involved is stretched only a little, and he takes his time introducing a believable story about believable people. In this case, it's not cryptofiction in the sense of discovering a new species, but he makes the Humboldt squid into a great threat: a little too smart and too emotional, but otherwise believably scary.

One way to divide cryptofiction is into novels concerned with one species that's undiscovered or presumed extinct vs. novels about entire ecosystems. The most elaborate of the ecosystem novels is Warren Fahy's *Pandemonium*. In this sequel to *Fragment*,

which created a new ecosystem on an isolated island, *Pandemonium* moves the action to an underground sea in the former USSR and brings back creatures from his first ecosystem to collide with an entirely new one. The work involved in Fahy's research is a little dizzying. I thought the *Fragment* ecosystem was a bit short on underlying nutrient sources and a bit heavy on big (or very numerous) predators, but it was thoroughly enjoyable anyway: *Pandemonium* has a bit of the same weakness but is so overwhelmingly entertaining that it didn't even slow me down.

The common threads in this discussion are, I think, that science and creature biology are getting better (at least in the fiction I read), and that successful cryptofiction authors are doing better at the "other" creatures—the humans. There have been novels, even from major publishers (Dave Freedman's *Natural Selection* (2006) comes to mind) where the science is awful and the human characters evoke no emotional reaction except "glad another one got eaten."

I've deliberately avoided naming the really terrible self-published work I've read, because self-published work has always included some good stuff (Eric Penz' *Cryptid* (2006) is one of the all-time best cryptonovels) and the likelihood of first-rate cryptofiction from the biggest publishers may decline with their increasing bottom-line focus on sure-thing bestsellers from established names. The new world of electronic publishing, self-publishing, and very small publishers that may focus mainly on e-books means it takes only a very small outlay to get one's book published in the sense of being available on Amazon or other hubs of commerce. There are still advantages to working with big publishers, including marketing (for some books), but mostly in distribution to physical stores and getting reviews from newspapers and other media that still don't cater to anything self-published. Prepare, though, for a lot of rejections and a lot of work. You'll need an agent for any of the Big Six publishers: for other publishing approaches, agents are helpful but not mandatory.

One final bit of advice for self-publishers: a lot of self-published covers shout "amateur." It's worth hiring someone who can create

a cover that will look professional in full size but still be readable and eye-catching as a tiny thumb on a website. Cryptozoology artist Bill Rebsamen's cover for *The Dolmen* is, I think, superb on both counts.

Essentially, good cryptofiction is good fiction. The best cryptonovels are done by people who not only understand their zoology and/or cryptozoology, but who put in the time and effort to hone their ability to write and the many component skills of writing: plot, character, conflict, and so on.

I have to come back one more time to editing. A self-published Bigfoot novel I won't name says on its Amazon page that it was put out before being professionally edited, and the author asks you to pardon her mistakes. That's the wrong approach. If you want people to buy it, and especially if you want them to buy any sequels, the first product you put out has to be as good as it can possibly be. Be patient!

Is there room for more cryptofiction? Absolutely. There is sort of a glut around Loch Ness and Sasquatch, though the best novels will always find audiences. Sharks are still hot (a special award for Best Title should go to Briar Lee Mitchell, whose debut, which I've bought but have not yet read, is called simply *Big Ass Shark*). Past those two, there are many creatures of fact and legend to work with. Some authors have already probed new ground, as Lee Murphy did with his surprise solution to the Honey Island swamp monster in 2012's *Heretofore: Unknown*. There have only been a couple of novels probing the rich history of sea serpent sightings/mythology: interesting creatures like the buru, the Kamchatka giant bear, the various amphibious or saber-toothed cats, and many other denizens of cryptozoology remain unvisited.

So if you want to be a cryptonovelist, the publishing revolution has made it easier than ever. Start thinking about what would happen if your favorite creature was discovered, how such a discovery might be made, and what might happen to the people involved. If you think about these and conclude that, yes, you really do have something original and thought-provoking to say, then start honing your writing skills. (No one is born a writer: it's a

craft that demands and rewards serious effort. So is marketing, for that matter.) Happy Reading, and Happy Writing!

Matt Bille (mattwriter@earthlink.net) is a naturalist, author, and historian in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is the author of two well-regarded cryptozoology books, *Rumors of Existence* (Hancock, 1995) and *Shadows of Existence* (Hancock, 2006). His first novel, *The Dolmen*, is just out from Wolfsinger Publications, and his book on marine life, *Seas, Sharks, and Serpents*, is planned for 2015. He blogs on science and technology news, especially new species, at <http://mattbille.blogspot.com>. His website is www.mattwriter.com.

MINIATURE HORSES OF THE GRAND CANYON:
POSTCARDS FOR A FOLKLORIC ANIMAL
CHAD ARMENT

Last year I had opportunity to look through a box of photos and mementos that my late grandmother had preserved, and ran across an RPPC (real photo postcard) that she had apparently purchased on a trip out west in 1943. What intrigued me was that it showed “Little Wild Horses” from the Grand Canyon, which were apparently being shown in California at the time. I’ve previously noted the “Little Wild Horses” folklore in issues #9 and #11 of the *North American BioForteian Review*. (See StrangeArk.com/nabr.html). This postcard was a souvenir from this traveling animal show, and my grandmother even made notes on the show’s story on the back of the card. She wrote: “They had these horses here in town yesterday. They were found deep down in the Grand Canyon only a short time ago (few yrs. I believe). An old Indian reported they were there twenty years ago but no one ever got down at that time. They attribute their size to breeding and starvation. Had to be drawn out of the Canyon with ropes. Captured these three. Two jumped over cliffs.” It’s safe to say that these particular horses aren’t Grand Canyon horses, but probably miniature horses which played their part for the tourist trade. Several different RPPCs are available, and I located a few on Ebay that are included here.

San Luis Obispo, Calif.



San Luis Obispo

Five wild horses from Grand Canyon

8/31/43

They had a cable to the small one. It was
the cut. They are lame now.

POST OFFICE

CORRESPONDENCE

ADDRESS



They had these horses here in town
yesterday. They were found deep down
in the Grand Canyon only a short time ago
(you may believe). An old Indian reported
they were there twenty years ago but no one
ever got down at that time. They attribute
their size to breeding & observation. Had to be
brought out of the Canyon with ropes. Captured
here this. Saw tumbled over cliffs.





The Wild Horse from Spandau



Life wild horses from Grand Canyon

© E. M. Ritter

POLISH EXPLORATIONS ACROSS ASIAN BORDERS
TOMASZ PIETRZAK

[Editor's Note: Exploration is almost a foreign concept today, but it wasn't that long ago that scientists were traveling to all corners of the world in search of new species. Tomasz brings us vignettes of explorations from Polish science that are often unfamiliar to English-reading audiences. It is a good reminder that there may be interesting tales of unfamiliar creatures yet to uncover in journals of explorers from non-English-speaking nations.]

Exploration is humanity tempted towards the unknown. It is extensive analysis targeted to searching out unrecognized aspects to the mind's information. We of course know plenty of regions that are outside of full human knowledge, the existence of areas unexplored. Fauna of these areas are known as shadows of existence. Many gardens and valleys in Central Asia are among the forgotten temperate regions, especially concerning natural history studies. There are plenty of habitats not yet seen by civilized humans.

This region and surrounding areas are a place of unfolding spectacle that about a hundred year ago included exploration by Europeans, who were interested in geography and faunal and floral collections. (One explorer mentioned in his monumental work *Susymara*, the source of the Central Asian river Syr Darya in a *pamir*, or high, grassed, non-forested plateau.) There were many out-of-the-way regions that mostly remain intact to the present

day. There are also places affected by human strife and those which have been forgotten. These explorations tested the borders of human endurance as well.

RECORDS FROM EXTENSIVE REGIONS AND HUNTER REPORTS

I am aware of the weakness of eyewitnesses to exaggerate creatures, both freshwater and terrestrial, though some stories do not appear to be solely human inventions. Creatures known by natives come from nature, but are inseparable from their beliefs and cultural knowledge, as well as the human tendency to create fiction. Central Asian regions are inhabited by groups known in Polish as "Krajowcy". These are tribal people, many of them highlanders living at present under primitive conditions. First are the Uyghurs. They possessed knowledge on animals not yet identified by zoologists. Their land is now within the People's Republic of China in the area known as the Tarim Basin, mostly occupied by the great sand desert, Taklamahan (or Taklamakan). In ancient times there were fertile lands with crops and plantations of old trees, but the lands were forgotten and believed to be a place of rare animal and plant diversity. Some species bordering on extinction remained through the last centuries and may living there now inside unexplored valleys. On the southern slopes of Perijoch-Tau, explorer Bronislaw Grabczewski found plenty of grasslands where nomads wandered from Bokhara. Wild animals lived there with no fear of humans, due to lack of humans during the wintertime there. Mulberry orchards surrounded Wachji villages and the Darwaz mountains.

A few times, explorer Bronislaw Grabczewski met mountain tribes, Toglics. These highlanders were shepherders. These tribes spoken the Kashgarian language with Jerkend dialect. During his explorations, Grabczewski met Hunze people in Kandzhut in southern Pamir, an area covered by western Karakorum. Finally, he sought an isolated ethnic group known as Kalasha, a peaceful, Caucasian group with its own culture, different from surrounding inhabitants. This ancient indigenous population live now in a Hindu Kush land locally known as Kafiristan, the "Land of the

Non-Believers.” Actually, the Kalasha people possess various haplotypes within. In the region of the north exist other not-so-clearly classified populations related to Kalasha. One problem of the conservation paradigm is to save the naturally-living Kalasha peoples and their culture. Humans (*Homo sapiens*) are diverse, migrating in the past a few times in various directions. Plenty of other ethnic groups are now fragmented in space. The main task is conservation of the distinct cultures of local human populations.

Records of encounters with uncommon animals were provided by this Polish explorer. He fought with Caspian tigers and met one persistent Russian tiger hunter. Grabczewski observed great herds of wild bovids, or yaks, in the north of the Raskem desert. He hunted large red antelopes in Hindu Kush that are called by the native people *Jurga*. It seems to have been one of the rarest creatures of that region. I suppose *Jurga* could be a folk name for the local markhor (*Capra falconeri ssp.*), currently an endangered species, though this is uncertain. Grabczewski reported also three kinds of bear in the Pamir region (supposedly known in Tibet as the Yeti). These were “*Ursus isabellinus*,” a primitive kind of brown bear, “*Ursus leuconyx*,” a brown bear originated from Tien Shan, and the “Tibetan bear” or Asiatic black bear. These creatures, I think, are different ursid populations. The explorer noted bear tracks that reminded him greatly of human tracks, except they were larger. Interestingly, his expedition encountered one bear in the far mountains that at first was mistakenly identified as a human, before it muttered and shook his head.

Another time, the expedition shot a great caprid, or *Nahur*, at the foot of Himalayas near Ming-teke creek. Grabczewski killed a great *Hystrix* porcupine in Gunta Valley, Tajikistan, on 3567 m.a.s.l., a place where it was not previously recorded. They reported a hare “*Lepus lachmani*,” a small abundant creature, near Chargusz Pass 4344 m.a.s.l. I think that it is nothing more than one of the pikas. Grabczewski recorded raptors and other birds of various kinds. He mentioned white-meat chukar, or mountain partridge (*Caccabis chuckar*). Rarely seen were great bustards (*Otis tarda*), birds that were “flying as aeroplanes.” It seems to be that

he means as large as an aeroplane, because Grabczewski knew that bustards in these regions were believed to be the largest flying bird. It seems that some specimens could be really large as some stories were provided by the author. One bustard was wounded by a hunter and was not able to fly, but it proved to be quite a fast runner. Grabczewski chased the bird and killed it finally. The bustard was huge, fat, and weighed about 30 pounds. I believe that *aeroplane* is a bit overestimated, but in flight larger specimens can look quite big. Regarding other avifauna there were crows with red heads ("*Freligus graculus*," probably red-billed chough) in the Karategin region (Tajik areas).

In the mountains of Khujand near the Syr Darya rim, the author was warned about a great fish ("*Silurus*"), that took a swimming soldier. It is no surprise that the Polish military did not believe natives in previous reports of aggressive catfish toward bathing people. This case showed that an animal resembling a huge fish actually existed. Big lake Kara-Kul is associated with various tales about explorers who spent the night on the lake and were grabbed by a "monster" living in the deep. The "dragon" could be some big fish (e.g. wels catfish *Silurus glanis*) or another aquatic animal undescribed.

Fish were not used by some ethnic groups. Kyrgyz people did not recognize fish species (calling them all *balyk*), as they did not catch these creatures. Kyrgyz people believed that fish meat, especially the head of trout, is deadly. In opposite to them, Sarts of Fergana knew two forms of trout: *sultan* and *maryn*.

Grabczewski was legendary among Turkestan peoples, known as *Uzun-ajak-tiura*, which means leggy. This was related to his riding English style on horseback. During one of the trips, the Kyrgyz Bek called him the prevaricator. According to their legend, Grabczewski rode on two camels. He sat on one, and on the second one he put his legs, that carried over the front. It explains very clearly the way in which indigenous peoples are able to assign a description and name to entities normal or uncommon.

"We are moving forward with extraordinary difficulties," testified the explorer. It was through regions not yet observed before.

We know that such regions are places where cryptozoological animals are sought as well. The story of Grabczewski shares many distinct memories of travels with the military service of the Imperial forces, through hazardous meetings with native peoples and treacherous mountains and passes. It is a story of astonishing efforts.

REMINESCENCES IN EXPLORING THE NATURAL WORLD

Going Deep into Siberian Zoology and Baikal Biodiversity

Throughout this early time there was plenty of researchers going deep into Siberian lands. It was a time for explorations. One of the political exiles was faunal investigator Benedikt Dybowski who set off to these large spaces with only his own perseverance and knowledge. He was not discouraged by adversity and embarked on a long journey. This researcher was the cofounder of limnology. His anthropological, ethnographical, and natural history research filled museums. He was not only able to work past exhaustion but returned to his country as a prominent zoological explorer from parts of the world that were almost unstudied before. He was responsible for providing data on the Ainu peoples of Sachalin (or Sakhalin). The Ainu people were called a primitive, mystery tribe of hairy humans with red-brown hair. They lived in huts of brushwood. Anthropologists saw a connection between them and “pre-human” (“the others”). They celebrated the bear feast, as Neanderthals/Denisovans did. Modern genetics confirm their uniqueness, as they are more closely related to Australasians than to other Caucasians, and possess in their genes Denisovan ancestry, although their primitiveness or hairy bodies is simply folklore.

He sacrificed much for science. As a zoologist, he described the biodiversity of Lake Baikal fauna, discovering plenty of unrecognized invertebrates, such as gastrotrichs, mollusks, crustaceans, and arachnids. One of those described by him was a black daphnia that was quite different from its European counterparts. *Comephorus baikalensis*, an oilfish, was studied intensively by him. Countering previous views, he discovered that this kind of fish was viviparous. He authored a monograph, “On the Baikal phoca (*Phoca baikalensis*)” about the Lake Baikal seal. One of his most exciting

trips was in the “Pachabiczka” river where he shot a wolverine, *Gulo gulo*, a bloodthirsty creature thought to attack large ruminants, such as cows or moose. During a three-week expedition to Chamar-Daban in the Taiga, they encountered mystery riders, that turned out to be a Chekanowski troop. In the Chamar-Daban mountains researchers confirmed the diversity of pikas, though the area lacked any other charismatic fauna. Furthermore, they explored other areas. During a trip from Czyta to Darasun they stayed in a haunted house. Dybowski and his assistants extensively studied wildlife in a region known as the Dauria steppes, where researchers collected plenty of bird and mammal skins.

They travelled further east towards Amur, in regions where the Arguni river bordered Chinese lands. They lived primitively in folding tents, spending evenings near campfires and eating what nature yielded them. In Ussuri country they described another ruminant. Except for a few contributions in forms of letters about Siberian and Kamtchatkan mammals, Dybowski authored few monographs on those vertebrates, but published a checklist of mammal fauna from Yenisey to the Pacific coast. He collected with unusual ferocity the birds in the Kultuk territory. He searched on the coasts for a complete skeleton of the Steller’s sea cow, but found only fragments of that extinct “lazy and greasy beast.” On Bering Island he collected ethnodata on that sirenian. According to some reports this creature was extant until the 1830s. Dybowski spent much of his time in Kamtchatka doctoring leprosy.

Best informed of the Zarewszan region and Bukhara

Leon Barszczewski resided in Samarkanda and tried to study extensively other lands that waited discovery. Leon showed a passion for the natural world from childhood. He never wavered in his engagement to explore the mysterious in nature. He joined the Russian Imperial army. Well known is his demarcation of the borders of Imperial Russia with Chinese and Afghan borders. Barszczewski’s main task as an officer was researching the area and laying out new roads. He published works in Central Asiatic glaciology as well. During one of his expedition he and his horse tumbled

into an abyss, where he lost a few teeth and was forced into long convalescence. We still have today plenty of his photographs of locals and landscapes along those mountain routes.

He was deeply interested in the life of local natives. Sometimes with humor he demonstrated his magical tricks. As he wrote, "My continuous life with 'wild' humans showed I had falsely judged them. I couldn't find any so-called bestiality in these half-wild inhabitants. I endeared myself among them gaining many wonderful friends." He discovered the ancient city, Samarkanda. He participated in more than twenty expeditions. P. Siemionow called him "the most tireless and enthusiastic explorer of the mountainous areas of Turkestan." Natural deposits of minerals, precious stones, asbestos, coal and so on was sought during these expeditions. Great flora and fauna collections were deposited in Moscow and Petersburg. He didn't want to become Orthodox, so because of his refusal, he was expelled. But he returned yet again to Asia as a member of expedition to searching for the monolith of the sarcophagus of Alexander III.

From the Causasian memories

One day, Ludwik Mlokosiewicz encountered a Russian Army Caucasian regiment which initiated his interest in studying this least known land (the Caucasian Mountains), with its diversity of physical conditions, soils, and climate. He became a keen naturalist of that region of west Asia. Once the botanist Hryniewiecki travelled to see this strange "Czudak" naturalist living in the woods. He said that in the mountains, we should never be in a hurry. From the beginning Mlokosiewicz researched the natural history of that region, setting up his home and family there, living in a truly undisturbed region for his passion.

Mlokosiewicz helped sociologists on an ethnographic study of the Lezgin locals in the northern Caucasus. This "undefatigable naturalist" travelled to the Dagestan region with little scientific help. He was a good hunter and ate what his gun brought down. Famous were the scientific collecting trips of Mlokosiewicz with his family. Forward went the cows, following them the helpers and

the rest of his caravan. From far expeditions he brought the natural fibers known as "ramie." Młokosiewicz was a pioneer of faunal and floral surveys in the Caucasus region. His research eventually led to the preservation of the Lagodekhi Nature Reserve. In various seasons throughout the region he travelled much, visiting areas like the Borzemeski Gorge and the coast of the Black Sea. But he became famous not for his plant cultivation or difficult journeys but his discovery of almost 60 new species for science. Plenty of insects are in his collections. He corresponded with the Varsavia (Warsaw) zoological museum for providing bird skins, including the Caucasian blackcock.

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NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FROG TO IRELAND
RICHARD MUIRHEAD

The following are two articles discussing the introduction of frogs to Ireland. Comments in square brackets by myself.

The Tatler, No. 236

12 October 1710

(reproduced in *The Tatler and The Guardian*, 1855)

To Isaac Bickerstaff, Esquire,
at his house in Great Britain

Sir,

Finding by several passages in your Tatler that you are a person curious in natural knowledge, I thought it would not be unacceptable to you to give you the following history of the migration of frogs into this country. There is an ancient tradition among the wild philosophers of this kingdom, that the whole island was once as much infested by frogs, as that wherein Whittington made his fortune, was by mice. Insomuch that it is said, Macdonald the First, could no more sleep, by reason of those Dutch nightingales, as they are called at Paris, than Pharaoh could when they croaked in his bed chamber. It was in the reign of this great monarch, that St Patrick arrived

in Ireland, being as famous for destroying vermin as any rat catcher of our times. If we may believe the tradition, he killed more in one day than a flock of storks have done in a twelvemonth. From that time, for about five hundred years, [*this would take the date up to about 910 A.D.*] there was not a frog to be heard in Ireland, notwithstanding the bogs still remained, which in former ages had been so plentifully stocked with these inhabitants.

When the arts began to flourish in the reign of King Charles II, [*b. 1630 – d. 1685*] and that great monarch had placed himself at the head of the Royal Society, to lead them forward into the discoveries of nature, it is said, that several proposals were laid before his majesty, for the importing of frogs into Ireland. In order to (do) it, a virtuoso of known abilities was unanimously elected by the society, and instructed with the whole management of that affair. For this end he took along with him a sound able bodied frog, of a strong hale constitution, that had given proofs of his vigour by several leaps that he made before that learned body. They took ship, and sailed together until they came within sight of the hill of Howth [*now a suburb of Dublin*], before the frog discovered any symptoms of being indisposed by his voyage, but as the wind chopped about, and began to blow from the Irish coast, he grew sea sick, or rather land-sick; for his learned companion ascribed it to the particles of the soil with which the wind was impregnated. He was confirmed in his conjecture, when, upon the winds turning about, his fellow-traveller sensibly recovered, and continued in good health until his arrival upon the shore, where he suddenly relapsed, and expired upon a Ring's end car in his way to Dublin. The same experiment was repeated several times in that reign, but to no

purpose. A frog was never known to take three leaps upon Irish turf, before he stretched himself out, and dies.

Whether it were that the philosophers on this side of the water despaired of stocking the island with this useful animal, or whether, in the following reign, it was not thought proper to undo the miracle of a popish saint; I do not hear of any further progress made in the affair until about two years after the battle of the Boyne.

It was then that an ingenious physician, (for) the honour as well as improvement of his native country, performed what the English had been so long attempting in vain. This learned man, with the hazard of his life, made a voyage to Liverpool, where he filled several barrels with the choicest spawn of frogs that could be found in those parts. This cargo he brought over very carefully, and afterward disposed of it in several warm beds, that he thought most capable of bringing it to life. The doctor was a very ingenious physician and a very good protestant; for which reason to show his zeal against popery, he placed some of the most promising spawn in the very fountain that is dedicated to the saint, and known by the name of Saint Patrick's well, where these animals had the impudence to make their first appearance. They have, since that time, very much increased and multiplied in all the neighbourhood of this city. We have here some curious enquirers into natural history, who observe their motions with a design to compute in how many years they will be able to hop from Dublin to Wexford; though, as I am informed, not one of them has yet passed the mountains of Wicklow.

I am further informed that several graziers of the county of Cork have entered into a project of planting

a colony in those parts, at the instance of the French protestants; and I know not but the same design may be on foot in other parts of the kingdom, if the wisdom of the British nation do not think fit to prohibit the further importation of English frogs,

I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant

T. B.

The Dublin Journal of Medical and Chemical Science
1834, pages 480-81

Introduction of frogs into Ireland—It is not generally known that the introduction of frogs into Ireland is of comparatively recent date. In the seventeenth number of the Dublin University Magazine, there is a quotation from the writings of Donat, who was himself an Irishman, and the Bishop of Fesulæ, near Florence, and who, about the (year) 820, wrote a brief description of Ireland, in which the following passage occurs:

“Nulla venena nocent, nec serpens serpit in herba
Nec conquesta canit garrula rana luca.”

“At this very hour”, says our respected contemporary “we have neither snakes nor venomous reptiles in this island, and we know that for the first time *frog spawn* was brought to England, in 1696, by one of the Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin, and placed in a ditch in the University park or pleasure ground, from which these very prolific colonists sent out their croaking detachments through the adjacent country, whose progeny spread from field to field throughout the whole kingdom. No statue has yet

been erected to the memory of the natural philosopher who enriched our island with so very valuable an importation of so melodious and beautiful creatures.”

We may state however, that we have learned from good authority, that a recent importation of snakes has been made, and that they are at present multiplying rapidly within a few miles of the tomb of St Patrick.

Ireland’s National Biodiversity Data Centre has an online map showing distribution of the common frog (*Rana temporaria*) in Ireland as of January 2013 with records since 1845. http://records.biodiversityireland.ie/species_in_focus/index.php

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SEEKING NEW TURTLES IN NORTH AMERICA
CHAD ARMENT

On the face of it, you'd think turtle (and tortoise) species would be fairly easy to locate and describe, and that in such a well-explored continent as North America, we should have found most of them in the early years of scientific exploration. After all, most are large enough to visually locate from a distance, and they certainly aren't difficult to handle. But, the facts show that turtle systematics is an active field and new species are still being recognized. As Lovich and Gibbons noted (1997), "In the United States and Canada, the number of recognized species of turtles has increased by 48% in less than 45 years. . . . The number of subspecies has also increased." Not all species were previously unrecognized, of course. Many times, a turtle occupied subspecific status before being elevated to full species. But, sometimes the description offers a bit of a surprise.

Several cases over the last couple decades are worth pointing out.

1) Joseph T. Collins wrote a paper in 1991 proposing 55 hypothetical North American reptile and amphibian species, arguing that application of the evolutionary species concept allowed for distinctive lineages to be hypothesized, and thus tested, as species. Four of these were turtles. (Crother 2014) a) *Kinosternon arizonense*, the Arizona mud turtle was originally described as a fossil species, then became

a subspecies of *K. flavescens* (Ernst and Lovich 2009). It was elevated to full species. b) *Kinosternon spooneri* was falsified, and it is still considered a subspecies of *K. flavescens*. c) *Pseudemys gorzugi*, the Rio Grande cooter was formerly considered a subspecies of the river cooter, *P. concinna*, but is now considered a distinct species (Ernst and Lovich 2009). d) *Pseudemys suwanniensis* was falsified, and is still a subspecies of *P. concinna*.

2) *Graptemys pulchra* was split into several species as lineages were distinguished in different river drainage systems (Lovich and McCoy 1992). Even then, *Graptemys gibbonsi* was thought to inhabit both the Pearl River and Pascagoula River, until the Pearl River map turtle was determined to be a new species, *Graptemys pearlensis* (Ennen et al 2010).

3) *Graptemys ouachitensis sabinensis* was elevated to full species status (*Graptemys sabinensis*) based on its allopatric distribution along with recognizable physical and genetic differentiation (Lindeman 2013).

4) CNAH (2013b) noted two different papers recently published that elevated the Florida mud turtle *Kinosternon subrubrum steindachneri* to full species status (*K. steindachneri*).

5) In one paper Spinks and Shaffer (2005) showed that the two recognized subspecies of the western pond turtle *Emys marmorata* did not show a complete picture of the species, that there were in fact four different phylogenetic clades within the species. Three had been previously described as the two subspecies along with a zone of intergradation, but it

was suggested that these four clades could each be phylogenetic species, though further research was warranted. Spinks, Thomson, and Shaffer (2014) then went on to show that there was a species-level distinction, leading to both *Emys marmorata* and *E. pallida*. A third clade in Baja California was left undescribed, but is possibly a separate species.

6) Thomas et al (2014) used morphological and genetic differentiation to split the alligator snapping turtle into three species occupying different river drainages. *Macrochelys temminckii* remains the western lineage, *M. apalachicola* (Apalachicola alligator snapping turtle) is the central lineage, and *M. suwanniensis* (Suwannee alligator snapping turtle) is the Florida endemic eastern lineage. Genetically distinguishable populations in the alligator snapping turtle were recognized as early as Roman et al (1999), who sampled twelve river systems and distinguished eleven haplotypes (eight of which were river-specific). The Suwannee population was specifically noted as also being morphologically divergent at that time. Additional research supports the three main lineages described (Murray et al 2014).

7) Martin et al (2013) suggested placing three box turtle subspecies of *Terrapene carolina* into their own clade, to become *T. mexicana triunguis*, *T. m. mexicana*, and *T. c. yucatan*. CNAH (2013) pointed out that as these three subspecies are “morphologically and molecularly distinct allopatric populations,” they should each be elevated to full species status.

8) The recently described Morafka’s desert tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*) is distinguishable from other

Gopherus species genetically and morphologically, though in captive tortoises this may not be possible due to extensive hybridization (Murphy et al 2011).

So, seeing that it is still possible to find a new species, surely it is a simple matter to spend a little time in the field and find something distinctive, right? After all, they're just turtles . . . Well, not so much.

For one thing, collecting is not always a simple proposition. For many years, certain families, like map turtles, were not as common in collections, because many are very wary in the wild or live in habitats (fast or deep rivers) that make collecting difficult (Cagle 1952). New techniques had to be developed to adequately survey some rivers.

Beyond that, there's a reason that so many species hide "in plain sight" as undifferentiated members of a known species complex. Some turtle species complexes have caused a great deal of taxonomic confusion, as some phenotypic traits are quite variable and may or may not be consistent among all members of a group (Lamb and Lovich 1990; Leary et al 2008). Seidel (1981) noted that "pigmentation in cooters has little systematic value," as pigmentation and facial markings can be influenced by environmental factors. Map turtle head markings, for example, are known to change by varying egg incubation temperatures (Seidel 1981). Some variations (including differences in the shell) can be clinal (Ennen et al 2014), or due to local environments (e.g. turbulent waters can reduce shell height (Lovich and McCoy 1992)).

Hybridization is well known for causing taxonomic confusion in turtles (Ford and Shi 2001), and certain families (as with *Pseudemys*) require careful attention to ascertain the influence of hybrid swarms (Jackson, Nelson, and Morris 2012) on unusual-looking populations. Out-of-place populations are also known, as turtles are often transported and released in new habitats by people who don't know any better. One such population is a group of Florida red-bellied cooters at *Pseudemys nelsoni* in the manmade Spring Lake of San Marcos, Texas. Rose et al (1998) considered

the possibility that this population represented a new species, but noted, “There appears to be no external morphological character(s) that distinguish individuals from Spring Lake from those found in Florida.” Further research was planned, but apparently found nothing unusual.

Despite these issues, herpetologists understand the necessity for continually examining the evidence for new species. They recognize that “covert” species (Lovich and Gibbons 1997) “are those that (1) are hidden by faulty taxonomy, (2) possess significant intraspecific genetic variation, (3) have sibling species with poorly known distributions, or (4) are undescribed.” If valid species are hidden because current taxonomy doesn’t recognize them as distinctive from larger-ranging species, the smaller unrecognized populations are more vulnerable to habitat loss or loss from outside sources (Murphy et al 2011; Thomas et al 2014). Biological studies based on one species can be mistakenly applied to a covert species as Ennen et al (2010) point out: “The phenomenon of cryptic or unrecognized species has been identified as a major concern in conservation biology. . . . Compounding management concerns is that, even after the recognition of cryptic taxa, there usually is a lack of basic ecological knowledge for newly described species because earlier work on a group with broad-ranging taxa was typically assumed to be applicable to the rest of its range. These scenarios are especially relevant to the southeastern United States where researchers are still describing new species from taxa previously believed widespread.”

So, where might we see new turtle species being located?

1) I ran across this notation in a USFWS paper: “The early record of the Alabama red-bellied turtle from the Tchoutacabuoffa River in Mississippi and four specimens captured more recently in the Pascagoula River in Mississippi are believed to be an undescribed member of the *P. rubriventris*-*P. nelsoni*-*P. alabamensis* complex. This suspected new taxon is currently being studied by Dr. James Dobie” (Dobie

and Bagley 1990). Years later, this status of this population was still undetermined. “The southeastern Mississippi population differs slightly morphologically but is not recognized as a distinct taxon; genetic phylogeographic analysis is needed” (Leary et al 2008).

2) Kevin Stewart instigated this article by mentioning to me that herpetologist James Butler thought there might be a covert species of mud turtle in Florida, based on research published years ago (Ernst et al 1974). As we saw previously, the Florida mud turtle is now considered a distinct species, *K. steindachneri*.

3) Map turtles seem a good bet when looking at groups with potential new species. There are several smaller independent Gulf river systems with unconfirmed reports of *Graptemys* (e.g. Biloxi River, Tickfaw River) (Ennen et al 2010). These may simply be known species, but would certainly be worth chasing down.

4) Chris Lechowicz (2004) noted he often found two different map turtle species living side by side in southeastern rivers, one a narrow-headed species and the other having a broader head. “By example of *G. nigrinoda*/*G. pulchra* and *G. flavimaculata*/*G. gibbonsi* and *G. oculifera*/*G. gibbonsi*, there should be another narrow-head species in the Escambia drainage. I set out to look for that species with no luck. I heard rumors in the late 90’s about this and spent some time looking for it in the Escambia, Sepulga etc., but all that was found was *G. ernsti*.”

5) Paul Krusling has been investigating map turtles in Ohio. I heard him speak at the 2014 Ohio Reptiles conference co-sponsored by ODNR and the Ohio Biological Survey, where he mentioned seeing a possible new map turtle. When I followed up, he noted (pers. comm.) that he believed Ohio had four different map turtles. The known species are the northern map (*Graptemys geographica*), the Ouachita map (*Graptemys ouachitensis*), and the false map turtle (*Graptemys pseudogeographica pseudogeographica*). (The latter is a Species of Concern in Ohio.) “My program at the recent Ohio Reptiles meeting was to point out that at least two additional forms of *Graptemys pseudogeographica*, (*pseudogeographica* and *kohnii*?) occur in the lower Great Miami River. I am not an expert on turtle taxonomy. That being said, there are definitely *G. p. pseudogeographica* based on typical head patterns and medium-sized heads on the females, and *G. p. kohnii* [Mississippi map turtle], based on large-headed females with post orbital crescents. The large-headed *kohnii* type, however do not conform to more typical *kohnii* of say eastern Arkansas or Reelfoot Lake, and may be distinct. Some of the differences include dark eyes, while the southern forms have white irises; they also frequently have incomplete crescents while this is unusual in southern *kohnii*. Both typical *G. p. kohnii* and *G. p. pseudogeographica* occur in Reelfoot Lake which says to me they are a distinct species. The *G. p. 'kohnii'* of the Great Miami River may be another new member of this confusing group. There could be other explanations, such as both forms are/were present and the large-headed forms with incomplete crescents are interspecific hybrids of recent origin. In any case this is also newsworthy.”

6) It's probably unlikely that any further alligator snapping turtle species will be described, but there is always the possibility for smaller river drainages with isolated populations to be further differentiated. Murray et al (2014) note the lack of conformity to the main lineages with specimens from the Perdido River, for example.

7) There is still a possible cryptic taxon within *Gopherus morafkai* populations (e.g. "a potentially new Sinaloan thornscrub tortoise") (Murphy et al 2011).

Any of these (or others) might be in the process of description, particularly where specimens have already been obtained. There is always a lack of funding, sometimes a lack of personnel, in the investigation of new species, and as Lovich and Gibbons (1997) state, "Some new species are known by individual investigators who have not published the formal descriptions." There are however possible directions for the amateur herpetologist, so long as any collecting follows state and Federal guidelines. There are herpetologists who are willing to work with non-professionals (though there are, admittedly, a few who aren't as keen). The main thing they don't want to see are amateurs re-arranging herps systematically or describing new taxa on poor evidence without qualified peer-review (Kaiser et al 2013).

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EXORCISING THE PHANTOM KANGAROO
CHAD ARMENT

Phantom kangaroos and wandering wallabies (sometimes called UHOs, or Unidentified Hopping Objects (Anonymous 1975)) are a staple of Fortean zoology, though their mysterious reputation has taken a hit in recent decades. Authors of weird phenomena traditionally emphasized the strangeness of encountering an Australian native in the good old USA (and Canada), while downplaying mundane explanations:

“Ohio produced a flurry of phantom cat reports in 1965. Three years later, police were chasing a phantom kangaroo from one end of the state to the other. It, too, got clean away.” (Keel 1970)

“The first explanation in every case is that it must have escaped from some circus or zoo. The problem is that in all the cases, no kangaroos were reported missing and kangaroos do not act as these vicious meat eating creatures, nor do they have the ability to suddenly appear and vanish.” (Straub 2004)

“Too often the escapee theory has been used without any basis in fact, and we run across it many times in the kangaroo stories.” (Coleman 2001)

Online articles describe details like glowing eyes or animal mutilations, though if you closely examine the overall data, there's very little mention of such. That's not to say that there aren't interesting questions left to answer, but much of what has been published shows a significant bias that engages in a lot of hand-waving when reasonable objections are raised. The point of this article is to provide a more transparent examination of the subject of free-roaming kangaroos in North America. As I've noted elsewhere (Arment 2004), the rise of digital newspaper archives makes it far easier than it was decades ago to evaluate phenomenon over the breadth of this continent, for wider range of time, and hopefully come to sounder conclusions. First we'll start with the data.

The following accounts include a) known captives that escaped and were recaptured, b) known captives that escaped and were not recaptured (at least at the time of the last article found), c) captured animals with no known origin, d) uncaptured animals with no known origin, e) misidentifications of "kangaroo-like" animals, f) hoaxes, g) and the occasional vaguely kangaroo-like Whatsit. This allows us to see sighting reports in a proper cultural context, rather than just cherry-picking those stories that might fit a researcher's particular theory. (One thing to note, "kangaroo" might refer to a kangaroo, wallaroo, or wallaby, as size doesn't necessarily indicate species. A reported 3-foot-tall macropod might be an adult wallaby, or it might be a young kangaroo.)

SIGHTINGS AND CAPTURES

1843: North Dakota (pre-statehood). "How about that extraordinary animal the newspapers talked so much about, which made such a horrid noise, and took such amazing leaps, and looked like a kangaroo, and all that? Was there really such an animal found, or was it a hoax. Do tell." (Anonymous 1843b) This description refers to a newspaper hoax involving a strange new species that Audubon supposedly discovered about 10 miles north of Fort Union, a giant horned kangaroo-like creature. (Anonymous 1843)

- 1882: Pennsylvania. "A kangaroo is running loose in the wilds of Butler county." (Anonymous 1882)
- 1882: Indiana. "For some weeks Smith Jolly has been missing his chickens and he concluded to 'lay' for the intruder whatever it was and kill it. His wife saw what she supposed was a pet coon with a chain attached to its neck, in the yard, and Smith got his revolver and went into the yard to kill it. To his surprise something came skipping through the weeds which attracted his attention. When it approached to within a few yards of him, it arose erect upon its hind feet and appeared to him to be two or three feet high. He fired, but killed nothing, and the animal disappeared. He declares that it was a kangaroo or some animal of that specie." (Anonymous 1882b)
- 1889: California. A kangaroo escaped from a Golden Gate Park corral, uncaptured at the time of the article. (Anonymous 1889).
- 1889: Missouri. "A strange animal is roaming around in Carter County, Mo., which, from description, is supposed to be a kangaroo that has escaped from some circus." (Anonymous 1889b)
- 1891: Pennsylvania. "An animal of a dark gray color and about five feet high, which leaps about on its hind feet, is scaring the people of Amwell township, Washington county. It has been seen by a number of people, and the general opinion is that it is a kangaroo escaped from some traveling menagerie." (Anonymous 1891)
- 1893: Pennsylvania. The Walter L. Main Circus train's infamous wreck near Tyrone, in Blair County, PA, killed 5 men and a number of animals. Several wild animals escaped, some quickly recaptured, but others roamed the area until they were killed by locals (like one "black panther") or just disappeared. "Perhaps the most unusual story of escaped animals came from Huntingdon county, when early in June numerous travelers who crossed Warrior Ridge between Huntingdon and Alexandria scarcely believed their eyes upon seeing a kangaroo hopping through the woods. How this animal managed to get so far away from its habitat in the antipodes was believed solved by the Main disaster. It later disappeared from this section and was

reported as being seen in Mifflin County. However, five years later, in the summer of 1898, John P. Swoope, among the last of old Pennsylvania trappers, reported seeing a new species of animal on Warrior Ridge, while making his rounds in gathering pelts. The aged trapper described this animal: ‘Of the kangaroo order, with nose like a sheep, large eyes, short fore legs and long hind legs. When startled, stands upright on hind legs.’” (Rung 1943)

1894: North Carolina. “An escaped kangaroo created lots of fun and excitement at the fair grounds today. His mode of navigation was entirely new to these regions.” (Anonymous 1894)

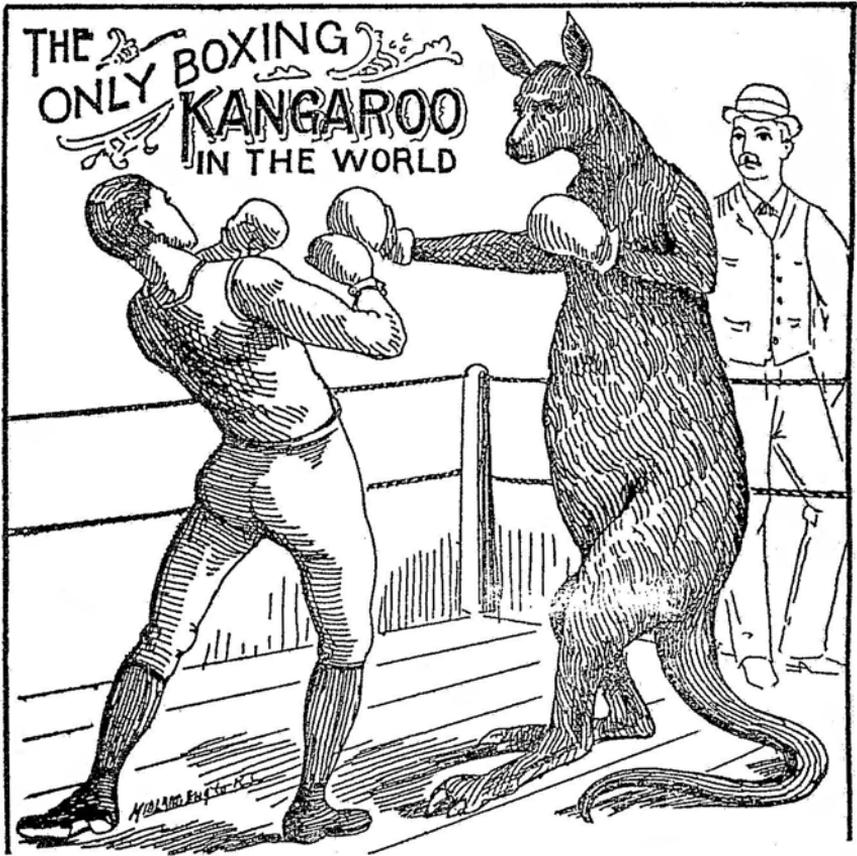
1897: New York. A Central Park Zoo kangaroo escaped its cage briefly before being recaptured. (Anonymous 1897)

1899: Wisconsin. A Mrs. Glover saw a kangaroo run through a neighbor’s yard in New Richmond. This was noted in Robert Gollmar’s book, *My Father Owned a Circus*, with Gollmar stating he didn’t think the “kangaroo” was a circus escapee. (Coleman 2001; Rath 2005)

1900: New Jersey. A kangaroo-like creature “about the size of a small calf” and with a horrific scream was seen near Mays Landing. This may have more relevance to “Jersey Devil” folklore than to “phantom kangaroos,” but there’s little detail given. (Coleman 2001)

1901: Pennsylvania. “The statement that there is loose and running at large in the woods in the vicinity of Fay, a large animal resembling a kangaroo, is vouched for by S. M. Minner and Grant Redmon, residents of that vicinity. They passed the animal in the road but had no inclination to attempt to make it captive. It hopped about them and saluted them with its fore feet in a manner suggestive to them of a pugilist. They watched the antics of the animal from a safe distance for a while and then it became too dark to discern the direction it pursued in passing from the vicinity.

“Redmon and Minner had been spending the day at work at a saw mill in the vicinity and were walking home after the day’s work. It was at a point on the road in the vicinity of Fay



Boxing Kangaroo! The only Boxing Kangaroo in the world! As the world grows older and wiser science teaches man the true nature of beasts. The above cut shows the exact position of **FIGHTING TOM**, (the Boxing Kangaroo), who was secured by Lemen Bros'. Foreign Agent at a cost of \$10,000.00. He will positively appear in the ring daily with his Trainer.

An 1894 advertisement for a "boxing kangaroo."

between the homes of Brooks Broadbent and Robert Clark, near an old watering trough to which it is supposed the kangaroo had stopped to refresh itself. At first the men were frightened at the animal and were particularly active in keeping a safe distance from it.

"Later on, however, it demonstrated by its antics that it was not dangerous at all and its capers were watched with interest. From the description given by the men it is safe to state that the kangaroo is one that has recently escaped from captivity."

(Anonymous 1901)

1904: California. A kangaroo at the park in San Francisco escaped its paddock, and led police on a two-hour chase before disappearing into the trees. (Anonymous 1904)

1905: Maryland. A kangaroo and two deer were reported to have escaped from the Frank J. Robbins circus train at Edgemont when the cages hit the protruding roof of the station and were knocked off. Circus employees were unable to recapture the animals. (Anonymous 1905; Anonymous 1905b) A "Thirty Years Ago" note (Anonymous 1935) states: "A kangaroo escaped from a circus near Edgemont but was captured near Pen Mar by Samuel Wastler," so apparently a local man captured it.

1909: New Hampshire. "Fearing that a wild kangaroo which escaped from the battleship Wisconsin at the navy yard here [Portsmouth] yesterday, would kill some one, posses of sailors from the ship and citizens are today searching the woods about Dover and South Eliot, Me., for the animal.

"The animal escaped last night, and was seen about 6 o'clock going through South Eliot by E. F. Staples, a merchant. It is thought that the kangaroo is in the woods outside of Dover, and to-day City Marshal Adams has officers searching the woods." (Anonymous 1909)

1910: Pennsylvania. A boxing kangaroo named Jeff Fitz escaped from the Casino, leading to a "brisk chase" through the streets before he was recaptured. (Anonymous 1910)

1910: Michigan. A religious commune, the House of David, in Benton Harbor maintained a zoo, from which one of their kangaroos escaped. A three and one-half mile chase down the railroad tracks finally led to its recapture. (Anonymous 1960)

1911: Illinois. A young kangaroo escaped from a cage that was being transferred from one circus train car to another. "It covered considerable territory in the yards before it was captured." (Anonymous 1941)

1912: New York. Melba, Barnum & Bailey's kangaroo escaped from Madison Square Garden before being captured with a "football tackle." (Anonymous 1912)

FELIX AND FINK
The Kangaroo Is Still Loose on the Town.



“Kangaroo on the loose” as a folkloric motif. (1912 comic strip)

1913: Kansas. The zoo at Riverside Park, Hutchinson, thought an 8-foot high fence would be sufficient for their newly arrived kangaroos. They were wrong, and ended up chasing one around the river front. It was recaptured and new fences were built. (Anonymous 1913)

1915: Pennsylvania. A Perkiomenville man had a wagon accident when his horse shied away from “an animal that looked like a kangaroo” that was “grazing by the side of the road, and seemed to leap at the horse as the wagon went by.” (Anonymous 1965d)

1916: California. “Kangaroo hunting in the snow-covered hills back of Lake Chabot will attract many bay city hunters to the

Australian bush rangers' sport since a mysterious marsupial was shot and wounded by A. Tamalier, Castro valley rancher, as it hopped in bewilderment in the snow.

"How the kangaroo came to be on the San Leandro hills and where it came from is a mystery. Tamalier noticed it as he went into the hills to attend his stock and at a distance took it for a coyote. When the kangaroo, alarmed at his approach, reared up and watched him intently and then went off bounding and leaping at top speed Tamalier could only gaze in astonishment.

"He returned home for his gun and following the trail of the mystery kangaroo came upon it again as it stood outlined against the snow at the top of a hill, resembling from a distance, Tamalier said, a picture of a chamois in the Swiss Alps.

"Far from its native haunts and plains the kangaroo was plainly at a loss and when followed, hopped about in one direction and then another. Tamalier succeeded in getting close enough to get in a shot, slightly wounding the kangaroo, which, however, was able to outdistance the hunter.

"Although still at large, it is believed the kangaroo may not long survive if exposed to the storm on the wind-swept hills. Tamalier believes it to be some pet animal which had escaped from its owner's home and had wandered into the hills."
(Anonymous 1916)

1916: California. A kangaroo brought for the exposition got loose in Mill Valley, delaying commuters before disappearing.
(Anonymous 1916b)

1916: Hawaii. "Kangaroos are roaming the hills back of Honolulu where none was ever seen before 1916. In that year a male and female kangaroo escaped from a private menagerie here and the other day they were seen in the Oahu foothills with a family of three little kangaroo in their train. So far no effort has been made to capture the animals." (Anonymous 1920)

1919: California. "Ten kangaroos escaping from bounds in Golden Gate park, San Francisco, played havoc with lawns and tennis courts." (Anonymous 1919)

CAPTURED BY KINDNESS



This is Mrs. Alice J. Farrell and her kangaroo. The kangaroo was hers only temporarily. Both were on the liner Sonoma, bound from Sydney for San Francisco, when two kangaroos in the cargo escaped. One was caught; the other all but bounded into the sea in a rage, before Mrs. Farrell smiled and coaxed it back into captivity.

That was after the kangaroo had sent one sailor flying with a left swing of the tail.

From the Bismarck (ND)
Tribune, Sept. 12, 1921.

1921: Washington. "Kangaroos are roaming the hills near the Yakima Indian reservation, where none ever was seen before.

"As circuses are rare in the northwest, Indians who have seen the queer creatures are frightened and superstitious lest some new power has invaded their domain.

"It is believed the kangaroos are from a private menagerie once kept in Yakima, from which a mated pair escaped.

"Every one expecting the animals to be recaptured or killed by dogs or coyotes, people forgot the incident.

"Now reports are made here frequently and in towns nearby of seeing the two adult animals crossing the hills with three little kangaroos in their train. It is not certain whether these five are the only ones.

“The nature of the vegetation along the valley of the Columbia river and the semiarid climate make this region a suitable habitat for kangaroos.

“As they are harmless and live on forage of little use to man and disdained by other beasts, it is the hope here that no one will molest them.

“At present the kangaroos are inhabiting one of the remotest and wildest regions of the sandhill country east of the Indian reservation.” (Anonymous 1921)

Noting that there is just a bit of language repetition (“three little kangaroos in their train”) in this and the 1916 article, I’m uncertain whether this is a newspaper writer’s fanciful take on that earlier story (which was based on a true event; the brush-tailed wallabies of Oahu are well documented (Hawaii News Now 2009; KITV 2013)), or if someone simply lifted that turn of phrase for a new story.

1923: Tennessee. “Scores of golfers and picnickers were put to flight when a big kangaroo got loose from the zoo at Memphis, Tenn., and romped through the city’s largest park here. Thirty-five men captured him.” (Anonymous 1923)

1926: Washington. A retired army officer’s pet kangaroo escaped for “three days and three nights of liberty” in Seattle. “One evening it hopped off a bank into the glare of an automobile headlight. The driver almost had a fit, but on opening his eyes the big ‘jack rabbit’ had disappeared into the night.” (Anonymous 1926)

1927: New York. Two kangaroos, reportedly escaped from the Bronx Zoo, were at large in Westchester County. The station agent for the New York Central Railroad saw them, claiming they “sneered and galloped” before departing into the woods, “they were galloping like mad up the railroad track in the moonlight,” stopping in front of the station. “I knocked on the window, and they looked at me and sneered.” Hunting posses were in pursuit, without success. (United Press 1927)

A few weeks after, two theatrical press agents claimed responsibility for the sightings, stating they had rented kangaroo

outfits for a publicity stunt, intending to allow themselves to be captured but finding the thrill of the chase too exhilarating. (Anonymous 1927)

1928: Minnesota. A kangaroo escaped from the Milwaukee Zoo, but was accidentally killed by a motorist during the chase. (AP 1928)

1931: Michigan. A “kangaroo” caught by a State Hunter turned out to be a lame coyote that had had its front legs amputated to stubs at the knee joints, evidently by a trap. (Anonymous 1931)

1934: Tennessee. “A mysterious animal described as ‘fast as lightning’ and like a ‘giant kangaroo’ is spreading terror through the Hamburg community.

“The creature first appeared Saturday night. It killed and partially devoured several German Police dogs. The next night it killed other dogs and a number of geese and ducks.

“Farmers in the community now carry their shotguns to the fields for fear of the beast and Negroes stay at home after night-fall. Others in the community are going about their daily work armed with pistols.

“The Rev. W. J. Hancock, negro minister, saw the animal. He said, ‘it was fast as lightning and looked like a giant kangaroo running and leaping across the field.’ It had just killed a large police dog and had left nothing but the head and shoulders of the victim in the owner’s yard.

“Frank Coxx also saw the thing. He said it was unlike anything he had ever seen but that it resembled a kangaroo more than anything else.” (AP 1934)

A “large long-legged mountain lynx” was killed by hunters on Signal Mountain, which they believed was responsible for the “kangaroo” sightings in Hamburg. (AP 1934b) Others, however, believed the “kangaroo” was still at large. “A farmer in the Battle Creek section of the county reported that several sheep were killed by the animal several days after the lynx was slain.” (AP 1934c)

Apparently, some local rival newspaper writers suggested the 1934 events were a newspaper hoax by Horace N. Minnis;

Loren Coleman (2001; 2010) pointed out that Minnis was not a correspondent for the Chattanooga Times in 1934. Coleman (2010) also noted a theory had been proposed that the animal killings were the work of a lone wolf in the area.

1935: Two Zanesville residents claimed to see a kangaroo “hopping out of a woods bordering Dresden road.” (Anonymous 1970)

1936: “A mysterious What’s-It is reported to be running around loose in the fields of P. E. Collier and Harold Hulbregtse about one-half mile east of this village [Hingham], but the strange and outlandish creature allows no one to get near enough to it to find out just what kind of animal it is.

“It was see for the first time early this week and has been sighted several times since. Some describe it as a kangaroo-like animal, and others have expressed the opinion that it might be a deer.

“At any rate, it hops instead of walking or running and when approached by a human being, it hops speedily away into the underbrush or woods.

“Just when the mystery will be solved no one knows, for the What’s-It is a very wary and nimble creature. Attempts, however, will be made to corner it.” (Anonymous 1961)

1937: Pennsylvania. “A ferocious monster or ‘devil’ that looked like a kangaroo with a pair of prehistoric red eyes turned out to be a small silver fox. Chaney Ladley, who startled the surrounding rural area with a graphic description of the menacing critter, sheepishly identified the fox. It had escaped from a farm.” (AP 1937)

1939: New York. A small kangaroo escaped unnoticed from Prospect Park Zoo into the Brooklyn streets, where it was recaptured. (Anonymous 1939)

1940: Ohio. Louis Staub, a Greyhound bus driver, described an animal he saw in the bus headlights near Grove City that January: “It’s about 5 ½ feet high, hairy, and brownish in color. It has a long pointed head. It leaped a barbed wire fence and disappeared. It resembled a kangaroo, but it appeared to jump on all fours. I’m certain it wasn’t a deer.” (Coleman 2001)

1942: Ontario. "If the kangaroo reported seen near Georgetown, Ont., is the same one that escaped from a train here [Montreal] Tuesday, he must have been mighty mad at somebody. . . .

"The Australian airmen who first reported that their pet had jumped from a train at nearby St. Lambert appeared greatly heartened by news a kangaroo had been sighted near Georgetown. Their feeling seemed to be that it just might happen to be the one they were looking for.

"They can travel 60 miles an hour if they're mad,' commented one.

"On that basis, they figured it possible that the kangaroo they lost had covered the 400-mile stretch to Georgetown—if it stayed mad long enough.

"Available airmen were not sure, however, about the pet's ability to swim a long distance. . . .

"Maybe he hopped a fast freight." (Anonymous 1942)

1942: Wisconsin. "A full-grown kangaroo is loose in the Big Creek country, north of here, according to Frank Steffens, who lives just over the Sauk county line in Juneau county.

"Steffens reported that Mrs. Steffens and their son, Albert, noticed the animal in the pasture of a neighbor, Fred Sussex. The son first thought it was a fox and got his gun, but when he got within 20 rods of the animal it jumped over a fence and was last seen going through a grain field. It has not been reported by any other farmers.

"Steffens believes the animal escaped from a zoo or circus menagerie." (Anonymous 1942b)

1943: Connecticut. An Australian shop-owner's pet kangaroo escaped, but Hartford police recaptured it with a lasso and a "flying tackle." (UP 1943)

1950: Texas. Columnist J. H. McLean recounted a recent trip to the shore of Lake Buchanan. A camp visitor stayed until after dark, and McLean was walking him back to his camp with a flashlight: "We were approaching a big clump of prickly pear when a large creature, like nothing we had ever seen loose in America, bounded across our course. By the time I had flashed

the light it had disappeared in the cedar about 100 yards from the lake, positive, it was not a coon. It was much too large for an armadillo. We couldn't figure out what it was and finally you exclaimed:

“It looked like one of those Australian animals—a kangaroo.’
“So it appeared to me.”

The next morning, McLean found tracks of a large raccoon at the spot where they saw the creature and suggested that that might be the culprit. (McLean 1950)

1950: Pennsylvania. “Scores of excited folks” joined a two-hour chase after a loose kangaroo, which was finally cornered by a policeman. (AP 1950)

1950: Texas. Not an escape, but the kangaroo mascot of the Austin College football team was kidnapped by some Austin College students hoping to spur rivalry with Abilene Christian College. Katy the kangaroo was returned. (Parris 1950)

1952: Wisconsin. “Madison police late Monday were checking a report from a woman near Vilas park zoo that a kangaroo escaped from its pen and was on the island in the lagoon.

“The woman told police she saw the animal hopping around the island, but police were unable to locate the kangaroo.” (Anonymous 1952)

1955: California. A 14-month-old kangaroo on loan to a television station from the San Diego zoo escaped, but was recaptured the next day. (AP 1955)

1955: Maryland. A kangaroo escaped from its zoo handlers for an hour after a television appearance in Baltimore. “Once she cleared the hood of an automobile with a beautiful leap.” After a five mile chase, she was finally cornered. “Arthur Moore of the Baltimore Zoo was kicked in the stomach and his colleague, Ben Geary, was bitten on the arm.” (AP 1955b)

1955: Oklahoma. “I just saw a kangaroo on Northeast 234d,’ the caller, vocally shaken, telephoned police. Dispatcher C. D. Scott hopped to his duties, setting off a fullscale East Side safari of patrolmen headed by Julian Frazier, Lincoln Park zoo director. Frazier and his men spotted their quarry, hiding in the

brush, and jumped it. The animal turned out to be stuffed, apparently planted by a prankster.” (AP 1955c)

1956: New York. The Clark Moon farm in Petersburg, NY, was becoming an unofficial tourist attraction by people wanting a glimpse of “three animals claimed to be kangaroos, which have made their home in that area since spring.” The State Conservation Department was not investigating, as kangaroos were not in their “bailiwick.” “The three animals which have been sighted on various occasions since spring were last seen yesterday morning in a meadow near the Clark Moon residence.” (Anonymous 1956)

1957: New Hampshire. Several people in Walpole reported seeing a kangaroo-like animal. “Police say most of the reports are from housewives who say they’ve seen the strange-looking animal bounding through pastures and munching on roadside shrubbery.

“One housewife said he was hopping like a large rabbit with his ears ‘all a-twitching.’

“And a motorist who’d encountered the animal, cavorting through the countryside, said:

“‘I’m not saying it was a kangaroo, but it sure looked like a kangaroo.’

“State Trooper Louis G. Rogeau said he too saw the animal but was unable to overtake it.

“‘It hopped like a kangaroo. It sure wasn’t a deer or a dog. I spotted it in the Prospect Hill section. It was making long, loping jumps. It was like nothing I ever saw before around here.’

“Benson’s Animal Farm at Hudson reported they had no missing kangaroo but maybe it had escaped from some other animal farm.” (Anonymous 1957)

1957: Wisconsin. Two young boys in Coon Rapids claimed to see a pair of five-foot-tall kangaroos hopping through the woods off Highway 10. Additional sightings of “big rabbits” were collected from 1958 and 1967. (Coleman 2001)

1958: Nebraska. A 13-year-old Endicott boy, Max Troxel, reported seeing a kangaroo. “He speaks of the animal which gave his year-old coon hound a badly mangled ear.

“Max and his dog came upon the creature when they went to get the cows. The animals had it out, with the stranger standing on its hind legs to give battle.

“Then the creature took off, with the dog in pursuit.

“Max says the animal had a large tail and short light brown hair. It departed with great leaps and bounds.

“The boy and his father searched the property. The elder Troxel says they found tracks nearly a foot long, somewhat like a dog’s but with longer and wider spread toe prints.

“He said it appeared the animal traveled in leaps of 12 to 15 feet, and at one place cleared a creek with a jump of about 25 feet.” (AP 1958)

A similar animal was spotted the following week near Grand Island. “The strange, kangaroo-like animal reported seen near Endicott, Neb., last week was spotted Monday eight miles east of here along the Platte River.

“Charles G. Wetzel said he saw the animal as he was leaving his cabin and at first thought it was a deer.

“He said the animal, brown, about six feet tall, with large hind legs and small forelegs, bounded along the ground with its forelegs barely touching the earth.

“Tracks showed the hind feet to be six inches across at the widest part and it traveled in leaps of about 10 feet.” (UP 1958)

Loren Coleman (2001) had opportunity to speak with Wetzel about his sighting in the early 1980s. Wetzel initially saw the animal he thought was a deer chasing some dogs, but coming up to within ten yards of it, saw it was kangaroo-like, taking ten-foot leaps. It hung around his cabin for several minutes before taking off into an alfalfa field. Wetzel operated a brewery, and named one of his brands “Wetzel Kangaroo Beer,” a collectible that the International Cryptozoology Museum is still seeking.

1959: Kansas. “A Flint hills kangaroo is fast becoming as much talked about in the Sedan city lake area as was the monster at Scotland’s Loch Ness.

“The animal has been spotted by six persons in the last two weeks.

“The latest to see the kangaroo is Mark Griffith, caretaker at the lake, who said he sighted the animal bounding across a pasture west of his home.

“It was in the same area where three Sedan women, Mrs. Earl Gray, Mrs. John Warring and Mrs. Dale Carpenter, and Mrs. Carpenter’s two sons, had seen the animal earlier.

“Clem Gillespie, state game warden, said he is no authority on kangaroos and has no plans to try to capture this one. He said he has been in the lake area several times in the last two weeks trying to get a glimpse of the animal, but has not seen it.

“Residents of the area theorize the kangaroo escaped from a circus that passed through here about two weeks earlier.

“Gillespie said he feels sure the kangaroo can survive in this area, as it is a browser in the same manner as deer, of which there are several in the section between K99 highway and the lake.” (Anonymous 1959)

Two Sedan men arranged for a kangaroo hunt (without guns or dogs) to look for the animal and establish if it did in fact exist. (Anonymous 1959b) The search failed to come up with anything, though Clem Gillespie noted pranksters had set up a couple cardboard kangaroo silhouettes near the area where the hunt was to begin. (Anonymous 1959c)

1960: Maryland. A kangaroo escaped from its cage at the Hagerstown shopping center. When captured in a cornfield she was found to have given birth to a Joey. (AP 1960)

1960: Virginia. A woman saw what she thought was a kangaroo hopping through a field and jumping over some fences. A 1962 outdoors column suggested that it may have been a deer with one or both legs shot off at the knees, as a dead deer had recently been found with one leg with such a wound. “It had healed over nicely, but the deer must have become mired in the mud of the pond and was unable to get out.” (Slaven 1962)

1961: Florida. A kangaroo escaped from its cage at the Miami airport, but was eventually recovered. (UP 1961)

1962: Ohio. A Portsmouth woman was the victim of a series of mean-spirited practical jokes, threatening calls, and a vandalized car; one prank involving an unidentified woman flagging

down a fire vehicle and, claiming to be the victim, said she had lost her pet kangaroo. (Bennett 1962)

1962: Michigan. A three-foot-tall, six-month-old kangaroo went missing from a children's zoo on Belle Isle, only to reappear in an appliance store in Southgate 13 miles away the next day. Detroit police suspect the animal was kidnapped and abandoned. (AP 1962)

1963: California. Weldon, the San Francisco Zoo's wallaroo was still wandering a week after his escape. There were plenty of sightings, but he was too fast for officials. (UP 1963)

1964: California. A call to the San Diego Zoo reported a kangaroo loose in the city, but the animal turned out to be a whitetail deer that had escaped from its zoo enclosure. (Anonymous 1964)

1964: Kansas. "A kangaroo escaped from a Kansas animal farm and is currently hopping about the prairie, which will probably lead to stories of how big the jackrabbits are if the hopper is spied by a visitor to the Sunflower state." (Fairbanks 1964)

1964: New Mexico. "A Hobbs mother and son reported seeing a kangaroo hopping across the road. That could have been one of those Pecos Valley jackrabbits that average about the size of a small kangaroo." (Burrows 1964) Mrs. Robert Hammond, actually of Oil City, near Hobbs, said the animal was light tan, had a sharp nose, and a huge tail. It held itself up off the ground as it hopped in "an odd, loping manner." It was about 4 ½ feet tall. (AP 1964)

1965: Indiana. A kangaroo at Fort Wayne's Franke Park Zoo escaped for a six-day romp until flushed out from a swampy area north of the zoo by a television crew. (AP 1965)

1965: Kansas. "An Abilene woman reported seeing a kangaroo on I-70 early Monday as she was on her way to work in Junction City.

"She said at first it looked like a large dog sitting on its hind legs near the ditch, then it leaped away.

"The Abilene Reflector-Chronicle received the report from Mrs. Robert Rader. Speculation is the animal may have escaped

from a small circus which has been traveling in the vicinity in recent days. (Anonymous 1965)

The kangaroo next showed up near Minneapolis, Kansas, when a Colorado couple reported seeing it. "They said they were driving near Minneapolis when they spotted what appeared to be a cow. As they approached, it hopped off the highway." (Anonymous 1965b) Two Kansas State students saw it "sitting on the edge of K82 highway east of Wakefield" as they were driving home from Manhattan one evening. (Anonymous 1965c)

1966: Texas. Floodwaters at the Gainesville Zoo led to attempted rescue of the animals; in the confusion two kangaroos escaped.

One was recaptured by a group of high school boys. (AP 1966)

1967: California. Two Pasadena policemen separately witnessed a three-foot-tall kangaroo one early morning. (Anonymous 1967)

1967: Washington. William Shearer reported a kangaroo in Puyallup. (Coleman 2001)

1968: Ohio. Highway Patrol officers north of Hamilton responded to a motorist reporting a kangaroo along I-75. They confirmed this when, on the way, the kangaroo hopped across the road in front of them. It was reported to have escaped from a traveling circus that had played at SR 122 and 63. The kangaroo went on its merry way north towards Lebanon. (AP 1968; UP 1968) This is apparently the "phantom kangaroo" that Keel (1970) claimed was chased by police from one side of the state to the other, but as can be seen, it really wasn't much of a flap.

1968: Michigan. One of the wallabies kept at the Michigan State University School of Veterinary Medicine escaped. (AP 1968b) This is probably the same account mentioned in Coleman (2001) about a kangaroo seen hopping around the MSU campus.

1968: Arkansas. A resident of the Highland Community on Hwy. 16 west of Fayetteville reported seeing a kangaroo jump a fence and head off into a neighboring yard. The Sheriff had no report of missing kangaroos. (Anonymous 1968)

1969: Maine. A "baby kangaroo" escaped from the Lewiston fairgrounds, leading to a slippery chase in the rain. The kangaroo

- got away, but a homeowner later found the marsupial resting in his garage and quickly shut the door on it. (AP 1969)
- 1970: Pennsylvania. A motorist stopped at the State Police substation in Clearfield to report seeing a kangaroo along I-80. (Keller 1970)
- 1971: Illinois. One of six wallabies at Hume's Scientific Small Animal Laboratory and Farm in Arlington Heights escaped for six days before being captured in Mount Prospect. Charles Hume stated, "I didn't realize it could run so fast because it had been so easy to catch in its cage. . . . I must have chased it for five miles." (Anonymous 1971) This is probably the same animal Coleman (2001) reported as an animal seen on the grounds of Northwestern University in Evanston.
- 1971: Illinois. The Richard Elliott family of Wheeling, IL, lost one of their wallabies, but hoped it would stay in the area because its mate was still on their property. (Anonymous 1971b)
- 1971: Kansas. An Abilene woman reported seeing a kangaroo near her home. (Coleman 2001)
- 1972: Ohio. Jett's Petting Zoo lost a kangaroo at a nursing home in Lorain, OH. It was finally cornered several blocks away. (Anonymous 1972)
- 1972: Texas. A wallaby escaped from a Kermit-area rancher's private zoo, confusing a local motorist who saw it cross the road in front of him. (AP 1972)
- 1973: Maryland. A kangaroo escaped from a zoo display at the Columbia mall. (AP 1973)
- 1974: Pennsylvania. A large kangaroo was seen in Bristol Borough, Bucks County, along Route 13. Police received five or six calls from residents about it. (Pettit 1974)
- 1974: Illinois. In the initial report of the best-known "Chicago kangaroo" sighting, six people had seen the 4 ½-foot-tall animal, including two policemen who met it in an alley early one morning. They tried to put handcuffs on it, but the animal started to growl, "scream," and "get vicious." One officer was kicked "pretty bad" in the legs, at which point they started punching the kangaroo in the head. As one noted, "Too bad we didn't

have our nightsticks there. Then we really could have hammered him.” As other officers arrived at the scene, the kangaroo hopped a fence and took off down the street. The animal had a pouch, so was undoubtedly female. With the description from witnesses, a Lincoln Park Zoo employee suggested it was likely a wallaby. (AP 1974) Later sightings included area residents seeing it rummage in garbage cans (AP 1974b) and a paper boy seeing it on his route. One teenage boy said, “He was a pretty big animal. I think he must have been about six foot tall. He was taller than me and I’m 5-foot-7.” (UP 1974)

The Chicago kangaroo story spread far and wide. President Ford used it in his speech at a Republican fundraiser in Illinois: “There’s a big controversy over what to do with him when they catch him. The Chicago police want to put him in the zoo and the Chicago Bears want to put him in the backfield. And, of course, the Democrats want to register him at least once.” (Anonymous 1974) The kangaroo was in the news long enough to be named Kinky. (AP 1974c)

Des Plaines police checked out reports in that area, without luck, and decided that a small deer was the likely culprit there. (Anonymous 1974b) Sightings cropped up in the Plano area (AP 1974c; UP 1974b) John Orr, a Plano policeman, nearly hit it as it crossed the road in front of him. Three Plano youths saw it sitting in a road before jumping a fence and disappearing into the woods. A young couple saw it on the southwest side of Chicago, and later a man saw “an animal about 4 feet tall leap from a two-legged stance into the woods” at a northwest side forest preserve. A trucker on a rural road near the Fox River saw what he thought was a kangaroo hanging out with three deer. The trucker stopped and looked at prints of the animal, noting they were definitely different and not deer-like.

One newspaper writes: “If there is a kangaroo, it’s a mystery where it came from. No one has reported one missing.” (AP 1974d) Another newspaper noted that a zoo in Moline, IL, about 100 miles southeast of Chicago, had reported a missing kangaroo about three months previous. (UP 1974b) Loren

Coleman (2001) noted that there were sightings in Plano and Chicago at approximately the same time, suggesting more than one kangaroo was loose at the time.

1974: Indiana. Later in the month, after the Plano, IL, kangaroo sightings dried up, a man in Rensselaer, Indiana, reported seeing a kangaroo hopping along the street, leading to the report that the Chicago kangaroo had headed south for the winter. (UP 1974c) That animal may have been a kinkajou, which was captured. (AP 1974e) (Certainly, those two animals don't look very similar, but a strange animal seen during a flurry of kangaroo sightings might be mistaken by someone who didn't know better.) Then there were reports of a kangaroo spotted by motorists on the north side of Indianapolis. (AP 1974e)

1974: Illinois, part 2. An El Paso, IL, man reported a kangaroo sitting by the side of the road as he drove into Normal one morning. It hopped into the Illinois State University farm field. (Anonymous 1974c) One woman in Chicago called police in November, saying there was a furry creature sleeping on her doorstep. Police rushed over thinking it might be the kangaroo, but it turned out to be a squirrel monkey, captured after a brief chase. (UP 1974d)

The Chicago kangaroo returned briefly, as two motorists reported seeing a kangaroo in Deerfield. Police didn't turn up anything. (UP 1974e) The director of the Lincoln Park zoo expressed skepticism that the kangaroo ever existed. (Anonymous 1974d) Oddly, when Phillip's Park Zoo had an aoudad escape the next year, Chicago police were puzzled that they never received any calls of people sighting Gertie, who eventually returned of her own accord. (AP 1975) Loren Coleman (2001) notes several additional sightings in the 1974 Illinois-Indiana kangaroo flap.

1974: Kansas. The Rice County Sheriff's office received a report that a kangaroo was seen in a park four miles east of Lyons along US 56. An officer sent to the scene didn't find anything, and suggested the man had seen a deer. The witness claimed the animal had a two-foot tail. (Anonymous 1974e; Anonymous 1974f)

1975: Illinois. A woman driving on Illinois 128 near Dalton City one morning saw a kangaroo hop across the road in front of her. "It was light beige, about 5 ½ feet in length, with pointed ears and a long tail." (AP 1975b)

Victor Holford, 17, in Du Quoin, Perry County, was in his garage when he heard a car skidding out on the street. He ran out, and saw a dog and deer-like animal running across the road as a car drove off. Thinking the animal might be hurt, he took a flashlight with him and headed across the street. As he got close, he realized it was a kangaroo. It took off down the road. Holford had heard a couple of friends talk about seeing a kangaroo at a farm a couple weeks earlier, and had scoffed. (Marcus 1975)

1975: California. A newsboy claimed to see a kangaroo hopping down a Fresno street, and Roeding Park Zoo had an empty cage. But, the director said their wallaroo wasn't missing, but was on a breeding loan, so the search was called off. (AP 1975c)

1975: Minnesota. Fifteen days after Wally the wallaby escaped from his cage at the Goodhue County Fair in Zumbrota, a farmer north of town found a wallaby in his chicken coop and brought it in to police headquarters. (AP 1975d; AP 1975e) Oddly, it apparently wasn't the right wallaby. Como Zoo director John Fletcher said, "Don't ask me how there could be two wallabies loose in Minnesota at the same time, but the captured wallaby is an entirely different species from our Wally. . . . This one is a sand wallaby. Wally is a black-tailed wallaby." (Anonymous 1975b) Finally, Wally was baited into a dog pen with lettuce on a farm about a half mile north of the fairgrounds. The extra wallaby turned out to be one of a pair bought by Zumbrota businessmen, apparently embarrassed by the wallaby hijinks; they were donated to the zoo. (AP 1975f)

1976: Tennessee. A Kingsport area motorist claimed to see a full-grown kangaroo cross the road in front of him. "She was kangaroo color, reddish brown." He and the car behind slammed on their brakes, got out and watched it go over the hill. They both agreed it was a kangaroo. Later, after consideration, both parties decided that it was probably a female deer. (Anonymous 1976)

1976: Illinois. Harry Masterson of Rock Island was walking his dog one early April morning when he encountered a 3-foot-tall kangaroo or wallaby. Police were unable to locate it. (UP 1976) Beverly Rasmussen and her college student daughter saw a kangaroo hopping through a farmer's field in Buffalo Grove. Police were unable to locate it. A spokesman for the Lincoln Park Zoo dismissed the Illinois sightings as "wishful thinking." (Anonymous 1976b) A kangaroo was later seen in a field west of the Honeywell factory along Rte. 53. (Swickard 1976) Loren Coleman (2001) interviewed Masterson, who said he had seen kangaroos at the zoo, and was confident in his identification.

1976: Colorado. Several people, including a police officer, saw a kangaroo near Clear Creek Canyon, in Jefferson County. (UP 1976b)

1978: Wisconsin. A woman in Waukesha reported seeing a car hit one of two kangaroos crossing the road; the one that was hit was able to get up and hop off. (AP 1978) A Pewaukee school bus driver reported seeing two kangaroos hop across the road. A week later, a family was eating dinner when they saw a kangaroo hop across their backyard. (UP 1978) A couple were driving at night in southern Waukesha County when they saw a kangaroo-like animal alongside the road. "They said the animal was about three and a half or four feet tall and about the color of a deer. . . . 'it stood up on its hind legs' and then jumped over a ditch and fled." The Milwaukee County Zoo was not missing any kangaroos. (AP 1978b) Two young men photographed a kangaroo in the brush near Brookfield. At least two other Brookfield residents had seen a kangaroo in their backyards. (AP 1978c)

We now know that the photographed kangaroo was a hoax photo. Kim Poeppay (pers. comm.) was taking a class led by a man who was also a museum taxidermist. They discussed cryptozoology, and she later showed him a book with the photograph of the Waukesha kangaroo. The man laughed and told her that he and his friends, seeing the media coverage of the kangaroo back in 1978, took one of the stuffed wallabies from



The Infamous Waukesha Kangaroo Photo

Following up on Kim Poepppey's investigation, I was able to confirm, after communication with the current vertebrate curator at the Milwaukee Public Museum and a former chief taxidermist, that the photograph shows the museum's one and only wallaby specimen. The photograph was taken by one of the museum's taxidermists as a prank.

the Milwaukee Public Museum, stuck it in some bushes in the back parking lot, and photographed it. He took Kim on a tour of the museum, showing her the wallaby they used, but laughing at her for her trouble. Kim initially wrote an article up (with photo of the museum wallaby specimen) for the now defunct *INFO Journal*. Unfortunately, that material ended up lost and unpublished due to the International Fortean Organization's infamous regime change. Kim sent the information to Loren Coleman, who published it as a theory in his revised edition to *Mysterious America* (Coleman 2001). I recently contacted the vertebrate collections manager at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and she confirmed that they had a wallaby specimen that looked like the animal in the photograph.

1978: Wisconsin. In a different part of the state, a woman in Eau Claire County spotted a man-sized hopping creature crossing Hwy. 12 between Augusta and Fall Creek. (Coleman 2001)

1978: Indiana. A pet kangaroo escaped from its Brazil, IN, owner; sheriff's deputies chased it through backyards before grabbing it by the tail. (AP 1978d)

1978: New Jersey. Walter the wallaby went on the lam after escaping from the Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City. (AP 1978e)

1979: New Hampshire. A kangaroo escaped from the petting zoo at a carnival and roamed the area for three days until tackled by the director of the Nashua Humane Society. The carnival was long gone, and the director said, "The owner told me if I found the kangaroo, I could keep it." The kangaroo was sent to the Benson Animal Farm near Hudson. (Kendall 1979)

1979: Ontario. A police officer in Scarborough, near Toronto, claimed to see a kangaroo. (Coleman 2001)

1979: New Brunswick. A wallaby was seen over a 60-mile radius of Newcastle over several months time. (Anonymous 1979)

1979: Delaware. A dark-colored kangaroo was seen near Concord. (Coleman 2001)

1980: California. A wallaroo escaped from the San Francisco Zoo; officers chased in their car and tried to head it off, without success. Finally, they were able to capture it with a lasso. (AP 1980)

- 1980: Maryland. A couple spotted a wallaby near Sandy Point State Park. (Boyce 1980)
- 1981: Utah. A Cedar Fort, Utah County, rancher, Ray Ault, was checking on his sheep up a canyon when he saw kangaroo leaping six feet into the air. (Coleman 2001)
- 1981: Oklahoma. A man entered a Tulsa café and ordered coffee, telling the waitress and a couple of patrolmen he had just hit a kangaroo. They went outside and looked in his truck bed to see what appeared to be a 3 ½-foot kangaroo. The man said there had been two of them in the road, but only one was hit. He drove off with the animal and remains unidentified. An Owasso family, seeing the news, said they had had to dodge similar-sized kangaroos while delivering early morning newspapers. (Coleman 2001; UP 1981) Later, a Patagonian cavy was captured in Tulsa. Coleman stated that it frequently occurs that “an exotic animal, which could not realistically be confused for the reported creature, is captured, and officials and the media then use the alien animal to ‘explain away’ the mystery beast sighting. . . . What this particular South American rodent was doing in Tulsa, Oklahoma, no one could guess, but it fits well into the pattern of such Fortean events.” Now, a Patagonian cavy is a common exotic pet (not as common as guinea pigs, but more common than capybaras, which are also available), so there’s no real mystery about that. And, cavy do lope a bit like rabbits when they run, so they might in fact be mistaken as a small kangaroo by someone who doesn’t know better. (Unless you’ve worked with exotic animals, it really is difficult to grasp how poorly some people recognize certain species.)
- 1981: North Carolina. A kangaroo was spotted near a Biltmore motel. (Coleman 2001)
- 1981: California. A paranormal website posted this account. “Brian Joseph of northern California had sighting in 1981 in area where ‘screaming’ was heard in the woods: ‘I caught sight of something in a clearing about 200 feet away from me. I thought that it was a deer sitting down the same way a dog sits down. My dog caught sight of it the same time I did and started to run towards it. [That’s] when I realized that it was not a deer, it

took huge hops, looked like a kangaroo and let out a repeated burst of the sound that I had been hearing for months. The dog chased and the thing hop/leaped and turned. The dog followed a bit into a brush area and then came back out, the same as other times that the sound had been heard. This was in the days before the internet so trying to find out information on it was not easy. I tried to find out what type of sounds kangaroos make and anything I found never mentioned a bird like noise or anything like that. I also wondered if it was somehow associated with a UFO that myself and another person had witnessed in the area in late 1980.” (Hanks 2009)

1984: Michigan. A woman driving near the Detroit airport saw a kangaroo cross I-94. Sheriff’s deputies reported seeing it the next day. (Coleman 2001)

1984: Nova Scotia. A Bridgetown man saw what he thought was a small kangaroo, about two and a half feet tall. (Coleman 2001)

1985: Arizona. A wallaby escaped from a group of animals being transported to a zoo in Mexico, after punching one of the drivers. “It was last seen jogging north in Tucson.” (AP 1985)

1985: Kentucky. Two wallabies escaped from the Louisville Zoo. One was recaptured soon after. (AP 1985b)

1985: Maine. Hurricane Gloria caused extensive damage to the Wild Kingdom animal farm in York, allowing three wallabies to escape. After three months of freedom, two of the wallabies (“really chubby” . . . “they were living off the grass, having a grand old time”) were recaptured. (AP 1985c)

1988: North Dakota. A jogger passing the Dakota Zoo ran into a loose kangaroo and herded it back to the zoo. (AP 1988)

1988: Indiana. A wallaroo from the Indianapolis Zoo led keepers on a 20-minute chase through city streets before being captured. (AP 1988b)

1990: Mississippi. Dixie Farm, north of Jackson, lost two Bennett’s wallabies. They were spotted by Jackson residents, including children on a school bus. (AP 1990)

1991: Illinois. “A kangaroo-like animal was sighted in Oakbrook Terrace about seven months ago . . . but the animal either ran off too fast for police or did not exist. The mammal allegedly as

walking on Roosevelt Road from the Drury Land Theatre.”
(DeFotis 1991)

1993: Indiana. Mookie the wallaroo escaped from the Indianapolis Zoo and was chased for 20 minutes downtown before being netted. (AP 1993)

1993: Indiana. A man driving on US 24 near New Waverly hit and killed a wallaby that had escaped from Wright Way Farms a few days prior. (Anonymous 1993)

1993: Ohio. A Grafton couple saw a kangaroo one Sunday morning on their way to church. It was about 2 feet tall, had a long tail, and hopped on its large hind legs with its forepaws held up. Lorain County sheriff's deputies were unaware of any missing kangaroos. (Simmons 1993)

1994: Illinois. A wallaby escaped for five days from a petting zoo at Goebbert's Pumpkin Farm. (Krol 1994; Krol 1994b)

1994: Pennsylvania. A pet wallaby escaped in Fairview Township, York Co. (AP 1994)

1995: Minnesota. Javier Marinez's 5-month-old kangaroo escaped from a Garrison campground, roaming loose for several days before being lured and recaptured by two local women. (AP 1995)

1999: Maryland. An escaped pet wallaby in Howard County ended up hit by a car on I-70. (AP 1999)

1999: Tennessee. A wallaby from a Brentwood-area exotic animal farm escaped. (AP 1999b)

1999: Iowa. An Ottumwa couple reported a kangaroo about 16 miles south of town. Davis County sheriff's department did not have any reports of missing kangaroos, and the local Wilderness Kingdom Zoo was not missing any. Mary Stangl said, "It was bouncing from the west side of the highway toward the east side. . . . Pat turned around to make sure he saw what he thought he saw, and watched it slowly bound across the road." (AP 1999c)

1999: Iowa. A Wellman woman checking on the cattle on her farm saw a kangaroo-like animal. "It looked like a deer, but it had a bigger belly and a boxy nose. The tail was too long for a deer." (Coleman 2001)

- 1999: Kansas. A female kangaroo escaped from an animal farm near Nickerson, but was hit by a car and killed. Several other kangaroos also escaped (a gate was accidentally left open), but were safely corralled and returned. (Anonymous 1999)
- 2000: Illinois. Several residents of Moweaqua wrote in to the *Golden Prairie News* weekly paper with kangaroo sightings. Apparently, sightings had regularly occurred for several years. An educational coordinator at the Scovill Zoo in Decatur noted, "Surviving over winter would be the tricky thing. . . . But if they could find good cover, good shelter and good forage, it is possible. Wallabies, for example, eat grass, plants, vegetation." (Reid 2000)
- 2001: Pennsylvania. Two wallabies escaped from the Twin Spring Farm Day Camp & School in Ambler. The male eventually returned on its own, but the pregnant female died from stress. (Anonymous 2001; Wartenberg 2001)
- 2003: Texas. A pet Dama wallaby escaped from a New Braunfels home. It was the second time Bouncer had escaped this year. (Bowlin 2003)
- 2003: Nevada. Wayne Newton's pet wallaby escaped and led police on a two-mile chase through south Las Vegas. A local cowboy lassoed it. (AP 2003)
- 2005: Wisconsin. Iowa County Sheriff's Department received multiple sightings of a kangaroo along Hwy. 18-151 east of Dodgeville just a few days after the new year. One witness was a wallaby owner, though that one wasn't missing. (Jaeger 2005) The red kangaroo was eventually captured on a local farm, though no one had stepped forward to claim it. (Jaeger 2005b) A month later, officials still hadn't found the owner, though they had inquiries from Appleton, WI, and Connecticut from kangaroo owners who had lost their pets the previous year. But, this didn't match the current kangaroo, which appeared to have been loose for only a short time. (Jaeger 2005c) Eventually the kangaroo was adopted by the Henry Vilas Zoo. (Just Ask us 2005)

- 2005: Kentucky. Members attending a homemaker's club meeting in Poole, KY, noticed a small kangaroo hopping along at about 25 mph, going south on US 41-A. (AP 2005)
- 2005: West Virginia. For several months a small kangaroo was seen wandering near Charleston. Someone in the area did own kangaroos, but didn't want to claim this one. (AP 2005b)
- 2005: Indiana. A kangaroo was reported hopping near the South Bend airport, and an animal control officer confirmed it with a sighting. An official search was made, but without success. No missing kangaroos were reported. (AP 2005c)
- 2007: Pennsylvania. A wallaby was reported seen near Fleetwood, Berks County. Its origin was unknown. (AP 2007)
- 2007: Texas. A young red kangaroo escaped from a backyard for a little while, until recaptured. (Anonymous 2007)
- 2011: Missouri. A pet wallaby was recaptured after hopping loose around Platte City. (AP 2011)
- 2011: Alberta. A pet wallaby escaped from its owner in Onoway, in northern Alberta. (Thompson 2011)
- 2012: New York. State police were searching for a kangaroo-like animal seen along the Thruway near Syracuse. (WSYR-TV 2012)
- 2012: Washington. A Franklin County exotic animal owner lost his kangaroo, which was seen hopping near the highway until its owner chased it down. (AP 2012)
- 2012: Oklahoma. A Shawnee resident lost her young pet kangaroo, Lucy Sparkles, when it was spooked by a dog. (West 2012)
- 2013: Florida. A roaming five-foot, 200 pound kangaroo was tracked down by Sheriff's deputies after numerous calls. They hit it with a tranquilizer dart, then tried to Taser it, without seeming effect. Finally they tackled it. There was no clue as to where it came from. (WTSP 2013)
- 2013: Connecticut. A Ridgefield resident videoed a kangaroo or wallaby on his iPhone while on his way to work. It was standing in the middle of Route 116 before hopping away. (Anonymous 2013)
- 2013: Ontario. A baby kangaroo spent a day on the run in Bowmanville before being recaptured. It was part of an exotic animal therapy program for senior centers. (O'Meara 2013)

- 2013: Washington. A pet kangaroo escaped its Deer Park enclosure. (KHQ 2013)
- 2013: Texas. Sheriff's deputies helped round up an escaped kangaroo for its Midland owner. (AP 2013)
- 2013: Oklahoma. When an eastern Oklahoma hunter videoed a kangaroo in a cattle pasture, there was hope that Lucy Sparkles, lost the year before, had been seen. But, the escapee turned out to belong to another local kangaroo owner. (Anonymous 2013b)
- 2014: Florida. Animal Control chased down a kangaroo in an Orlando neighborhood. (CNN 2014)
- 2014: Quebec. A young kangaroo escaped from a zoo therapy farm in St-Lazere. (Anonymous 2014)
- 2014: Alabama. Madison County Animal Control managed to wrangle a Bennett's wallaby and return it to its Meridianville owners. (WAFF 2014)
- 2014: Utah. A LaVerkin family's pet wallaby escaped, but was rounded up in a cow pasture. (Jim 2014)
- 2014: New York. A wallaby escaped from its North Salem home. Sightings have been ongoing for eight months. (Corcoran 2014)

Now that we've got a good overall picture of roaming kangaroos, let's ask some questions.

Who keeps kangaroos? Traveling menageries as early as the 1800s (1700s in the UK) had kangaroos. One 1833 Boston *Morning Post* advertisement for Bailey, Brown & Co's "Grand Menagerie of Living Animals" included lions, a jaguar, a hyena, a hunting leopard (cheetah), a cougar, a mongoose, an alpaca, a llama, various primates, and a kangaroo. They were very popular exhibit animals with zoos (including petting zoos), as well as circuses and smaller roadshows (e.g. "boxing" kangaroos). But they have also been very popular exotic pets, and there were many small exotic game farms keeping and breeding them. They still do today—last year I attended an exotic animal auction in northeastern Ohio where a number of kangaroos and wallabies were auctioned off, from "bottle babies" to full-grown adults. (There's nothing quite

like watching an Amish man dragging a full grown kangaroo around a floor by its tail.) The idea that “mystery kangaroos” have no reasonable origin explanation is just false.

Are escapes uncommon? If this list shows anything, it is that not only are kangaroos widely kept, and have been for a long time—but escapees are fairly common. Sometimes those escapees are recaptured, sometimes they aren’t. And it isn’t at all unlikely that an embarrassed animal owner might prefer to remain unknown once they see that an escaped pet has hit the newspapers. This is particularly true if they live in an area where they technically may not be allowed to keep a macropod. Many jurisdictions, particularly cities, have exotic animal ordinances. And, of course, they might be worried about being sent a bill for public services rendered in the capture of the animal. But there’s another reason an owner might remain quiet. In reviewing these newspaper cases, one common element comes up time and again: owners don’t want people chasing after the escapees, because that could easily send the kangaroo flying off into the woods (and possibly stress the animal out, which could be dangerous to the animal). Owners often take a wait-and-see attitude, hoping the animal will eventually return on its own (particularly if there is a mate still in the enclosure).

Can someone really misidentify another animal as a kangaroo? Of course. There was a time in the eastern US when whitetail deer were almost extirpated from some states, so were unfamiliar to a lot of people. Because they share similar coloration and are about the same size as an adult kangaroo, a loping deer was sometimes mistaken for a kangaroo. As seen in the list, a few other animals with unusual gaits could be mistaken for macropods. Which leads to another question: *What about the cryptozoological angle?* Some cryptozoology researchers have speculated that many kangaroo sightings (when not proven to be a true kangaroo) could be of an unknown leaping primate with kangaroo-like features (i.e. Devil Monkeys). At this point, I have seen only poorly developed speculation with little good evidence for such. There are a few “leaping primate” sightings that are certainly interesting, but

until better evidence arises, I don't think that a "kangaroo-like" morphology is part of that folklore. For example, the 1934 Tennessee "killer kangaroo" account doesn't appear to be kangaroo related. There's nothing in those accounts that actually describes the animal, so saying it looked like a kangaroo is without any actual foundation. (The alleged eyewitness who said it looked like a "giant kangaroo" didn't actually describe it; we have no way of comparing what he thought he saw to an actual kangaroo.)

The poster child for the "phantom kangaroo" is probably the 1974 Chicago animal. One of the main reasons I've seen given that this must have been something "anomalous" is that the animal growled and put up a fight when cornered by the two policemen. But I've never seen anyone advocating for a non-kangaroo explanation asking the simple question: *Can kangaroos growl?* Why, yes, they can, and you can go to YouTube and hear an "angry kangaroo" growling at a videographer. (Fullard 2008)

This casual dismissal of reasonable explanations by Forteans is a form of hyper-skepticism that we also see in pop skeptic communities today. It's a little ironic that the 1974 Chicago kangaroo was dismissed as an imaginary animal by the Lincoln Park zoo director (Anonymous 1974d), apparently ignoring the close encounter by two Chicago cops, while the same animal is implied to be something extraordinarily strange by some Fortean writers. The facts themselves point to a different conclusion. If it looked like a kangaroo, leaped like a kangaroo, growled like a kangaroo, and fought like a kangaroo—it was probably a kangaroo. We don't need skepticism so much as we need critical thinking. (What I particularly find interesting is that only a few years prior, there were two separate cases of wallabies of known origin escaping in the Chicago area, but there's no mention of such in the 1974 newspapers or in most popular reviews of the case.)

Are there feral populations of kangaroos in North America? There is no evidence of such that I can determine. Most sightings occur for a season, then the animal disappears—it is rare to see ongoing annual sightings. This is likely due to few cases of multiple escapees, so there's little chance to colonize. The feral Oahu

wallabies descended from a single pair, and there are introduced populations in the UK (Connolly 2014; McCarthy 2013; Collins 2010; Cramb 2009), so it could be possible under the right conditions for kangaroos or wallabies to survive and breed in some parts of the US, but I've not seen anything indicating that has happened. (And there are enough hunters out there that we'd likely see mistaken kills during deer season.)

In gathering and examining the data on free-roaming kangaroos in North America, I believe the following conclusions are logical and reasonable with the data at hand:

1) It is no longer viable to claim that escaped kangaroos are relatively rare. In fact, after weeding out likely misidentifications, this is the most logical explanation and one that is well supported by data.

2) There are a number of cases where a kangaroo is claimed to be seen, but little description is given to corroborate the identification. Researchers should not force an identification or a speculative theory onto a sighting. It may be frustrating to have little to go on, but a sound theory cannot be built on poor data.

3) There are a number of early Fortean cases with "phantom kangaroos" that actually had a known escape origin or even a capture event. (As I noted before, modern digital archives allow us to find more data on many of these sighting reports.) In the absence of specifics, researchers should be careful not to overspeculate. There are probably more cases of "mysterious, disappearing" kangaroos in the Fortean literature that actually did end up with captures, but we haven't yet come across those reports (or they may not have been published at all).

4) Researchers should carefully examine the arguments of Fortean and Skeptics alike; too often there is self-rationalizing argumentation that serves only to bolster a preferred theory or an individual's past (and often limited) experience.

5) Yes, there are cases with unanswered questions. Generally, I haven't included accounts where, for example, obviously primate-like animals were seen "hopping." Those require their own analysis;

in any case, we shouldn't force those and "phantom kangaroo" sightings into the same category.

Looking to buy a kangaroo, wallaroo, or wallaby? Check out:

Tri Lakes Exotics (www.trilakesexotics.com)

Schreiner Farms (www.schreinerfarms.com)

Buffalo Hill Exotics (www.buffalohillexotics.com)

Fall City Wallaby Ranch (www.wallabyranch.org)

Deer Park Exotics (www.deerparkeletics.com)

Dave's Animal Farm (www.davesanimalfarm.com)

But don't buy one without checking your state and local regulations and making sure you have adequate resources for housing and care. (They don't make good indoor pets, folks.) Potential owners should pick up a copy of David McCauley's *Macropods: Their Care, Breeding and the Rearing of Their Young*.

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BIOFORTEAN MISCELLANY
CHAD ARMENT

Newspapers can be a fantastic source of leads for cryptozoological investigations, but they also contribute their fair share of fiction and tall tales when it comes to strange creature stories. I've noted before, newspaper stories are folkloric, true or not, and an investigator should be able to discern common folkloric attributes generated by a newspaper article's literary construction. Here are a few different stories from newspapers over the years. Thanks to Richard Muirhead and Rod Dyke for contributions.

First we'll start with stories of giant arachnids. Those are always fun . . . Recently, a *Washington Post* blog story ("On the Maine island of Islesboro, searching for a spider she wasn't sure was real," by Mimi Kirk, June 12, 2014) discussed a story the author saw online about regarding "up-island" spiders, supposedly eight inches across the spread-out legs. Just a local tale, likely misdescribing known spiders, but people have a tendency to promote such exaggerations. So we see . . .

A COLORADO SPIDER STORY
MARION, OHIO, *DAILY STAR*, MAY 8, 1880

A short distance from Buena Vista, says the Leadville (Col.) *Chronicle*, is a cave inhabited by spiders which differ from other spiders in their enormous size, and are quite useful to the needy people of that region. The cave was discovered last December by a party of sight-seers, and the spiders and their work were

witnessed. On entering the cave one is first struck by the funny-looking webs. They are worked like webs of other spiders, but every fiber is ten times as large as the ones woven by ordinary spiders. On passing further into the cave the spiders are encountered. They are about the size of small birds and make a strange sound while weaving their web. Their webs are so tough and the fibers so large that it is almost an impossibility to break down a web.

Some four weeks ago while looking at the cave a miner got to examining the webs. Their strands were about the size of a No. 12 thread, and he thought that they could be used for thread. Having a needle in his possession he broke off one of the strands and found that it fitted the needle. Sewing on a loose button to test the efficacy he found it as strong as silk thread, and that it answered his every purpose. Since then the people have flocked in and carried away hosts of the webs, but the spiders do not appear to object in the least. There is some talk among capitalists of starting a thread factory there and using the webs for thread.

No surprise, this is an early “nature faker” article, just a brief wacky story to amuse the readers. The same story was re-run in newspapers across the country in 1882 and 1891. But, this isn’t the end of it. A newspaper writer brushes off the old story and puts a new spin on it.

COLORADO’S MONSTER SPIDERS

GOSHEN, INDIANA, *DAILY DEMOCRAT*, JUNE 1, 1901

Prof. E. T. Laughton has returned to his home in New York after spending the winter in exploring the mountains near Buena Vista and investigating the habits of a species of monster spiders found in the Middle Cottonwood pass.

Little definite is known of these spiders, says the *Sun*, but around them has been gathered a mass of Indian legend and prospectors' yarns that rival those of Munchausen. Many years ago these spiders lived in a cave easily reached by tourists. It was in a valley two miles northeast from Harvard City, then a thriving mining camp eight miles west of Buena Vista.

In 1830 a man named Shultz cut his way into the spiders' den. He did not return and a week later a searching party found his body partly buried in the spiders' cave under a mass of fallen rock. As it would have required considerable timbering at an expense of several hundred dollars to recover the body, and as the man had no known relatives, it was left undisturbed. Shultz's skeleton is still in the cave, but the spiders have found another home farther back in the mountains.

Some of the tales told about these spiders are given in an old letter which has just been found in Buena Vista. It says:

"A short distance out of Buena Vista there is a cave swarming with spiders of immense size, some of them having legs four inches in length and bodies as large as that of a canary bird. The cave was discovered in 1868 and was often visited by pioneers on their way to California, who obtained their webs for use in the place of thread.

"Early and late the cave resounds with a buzzing sound emitted by the spiders as they weave their webs. The webs were tested in '71 and found to be composed of silk of the finest quality. The skins of the spiders make good gloves, as they are pliable and require no tanning.

"A number were captured and tamed, and manifested great affection for all members of the family. They were far superior to a cat in exterminating rats

and mice, following their prey into the holes in the walls and ceilings. One spider, kept as pet by a Buena Vista lady, used to stay all night at the head of her bed acting as sentinel.”

Since giant killer spiders also make a good story, they do pop up occasionally in newspaper fiction. This next one is a good example of newspaper cryptofiction.

MONSTER OF ISSOIR

BUCKS COUNTY, PA, *GAZETTE*, AUGUST 23, 1894

For many years it is undeniably stated that in the fourteenth arrondissement of Paris—called the tomb of Issoir—a number of persons living in that quarter had mysteriously and periodically disappeared. The most careful researches, the most minute inquiries, the most skillful agents of the police had failed to discover the least trace of them.

Every year successively some inhabitants of this quarter would suddenly disappear, leaving their friends overwhelmed with grief and anxiety. It is also stated that these strange, inexplicable facts always occurred in the early spring—from the 20th to the last of March—and without regard to age or sex.

First a notary disappeared. It was thought he had used his client's funds and fled to parts unknown. Then an old woman, returning late one night from market, was the next victim, then a laborer going home from work. The last victim had been a young girl—a flower maker out late delivering her goods. From that time she had as completely disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed her up. Strange to say, no children had been among the victims.

This peculiar fact was accounted for in this way. These mysterious disappearances always occurred late at night, when the children were at home asleep.

As the time was drawing near for one of these periodical mysteries the chief of police became very anxious and instituted a strict surveillance, confiding the matter to a number of the most skillful of his assistants, hoping the combined efforts of so many zealous agents would surely be crowned with success. You will now see the result.

One night—this fact can be verified by applying to the office of the prefecture—a policeman about 8 o'clock in the morning heard a distant musical song, which seemed to come from the bowels of the earth. He listened and fancied the sounds came from an opening in the center of the street, at the foot of an enormous rock called the tomb of Isoir, or the Giant's cave.

It may be interesting to state that this rock derived its name from a legend that a great giant had been buried there many years before the Christian era, and this rock had been placed there to mark the tomb.

Surprised at this strange discovery—for the opening had never been noticed before—the policeman waited, listening to this peculiar song, when he suddenly saw a young man approaching. He knew from his costume that he was a countryman lately arrived in the city. This young man also seemed to hear the subterranean sounds, first walking slowly with a peculiar wavering step, as if in cadence with this musical chant, then faster and faster as he drew near the fatal rock, until he ran with such velocity that in spite of the warning cries of the policeman he was swallowed up in this mysterious opening. Without taking a moment to consider the policeman recklessly followed, first firing his revolver and giving one or two vigorous blasts on his whistle.

At this signal several of his comrades quickly arrived. The musical chanting had ceased, but they

could hear in the dark, cavernous depths the muffled sounds of a desperate struggle.

By the aid of ropes and ladders they succeeded in entering this mysterious chasm. The light of their lamps revealed a sickening sight.

The countryman was lying on his back writhing in the grasp of an unknown monster, whose horrible aspect froze the agents of police with terror.

It was as large as a full grown terrier, covered with wartlike protuberances and bristling with coarse brownish hair. Eight jointed legs, terminated by formidable claws, were buried in the body of the unfortunate victim. The face had already disappeared. Nothing could be seen but the top of the head, and the monster was now engaged in tearing and sucking the blood from his throat.

As soon as they recovered from their horror and surprise a dozen balls struck the body of this sanguinary beast.

He raised up on his legs, a greenish, bloody liquid flowing from his wounds, and, with a frightful cry, expired.

The first policeman, who had given the alarm, was lying unconscious in one corner of the cavern, where he had fallen, a distance of 30 feet.

It was with great difficulty they succeeded in removing the two bodies and the unknown monster from the cavern. The poor countryman was dead, but the policeman was soon restored to life.

The agents immediately sent for the commissioner of police, who summoned a naturalist in great haste.

The first established the identity of the victim; the second declared the creature lying before him was a gigantic spider. The species had been considered extinct for centuries—ever since the days before the

deluge. It was called “Arachne gigans” and was said to have the power of enticing its victims by a peculiar musical song. None had been seen or heard of for ages, but it is now believed some of these sanguinary beasts still exist in the deepest galleries of the catacombs.

The dead body of the spider was conveyed to the Museum of Natural History, where it was carefully prepared and stuffed and is now on exhibition.

From cryptofiction, we can move directly to tall tales . . .

NOSTALGIC EX-PROSPECTOR YEARNING FOR CANYON-NAVIGATING FLYING FISH

OMAHA, NEBRASKA, *WORLD HERALD*, APRIL 6, 1946

Thermopolis, Wyo. (UP)—Now comes the flying fish. Nature lists a species of air-minded members of the finny tribe, but not the type which Albert (Bigfoot) Trumbull has in mind.

Bigfoot may be recalled as a prospector in north-central Wyoming back about 30 years ago. He is remembered chiefly for his tale of the wild hare, or Wilbur, his pet jackrabbit, which leaped a canyon from rim to rim after taking a swig of panther milk.

Now residing in Tonopah, Nev., Bigfoot got to brooding over the flying fish he used to catch around Birdseye Pass. [H]e learned that the season opened in Wyoming on April 1.

So he wrote a letter to Ken Byerly, editor of the Thermopolis Independent-Record, explaining that he'd be much obliged if Mr. Byerly would inform him whether “there are still flying fish on Copper Mountain.”

While he was prospecting out of Thermopolis Bigfoot said, he used to almost live off of “them flying fish in the summer.”

“Every night before dark, I used to go up to Birdeye Pass when the fish would be flying up through there from the headwaters of Grass Creek to the headwaters of Tough Creek on the Shoshoni side.

“I’d catch them fish with a long-handled frying pan just as they was flapping through the pass. Had my best luck if I put grease in the pan.”

Sometimes, Bigfoot recalled, it would be cloudy, with a low ceiling, and that was when he really caught them. That’s when the long-handled frying pan really got a workout.

He hasn’t seen any flying fish in Nevada, Bigfoot said. He related that he asked “one of them warden fellers” the other day what the limit was on flying fish.

The game official looked sort of startled. Finally, he addressed Bigfoot:

“Friend, as near as I can figure it, the sky is the limit on flyin’ fish in Nevada.”

So Bigfoot gave it up, convinced that there were no flying fish in Nevada. That’s when he wrote Mr. Byerly.

From fish tales, we go to “snake” stories:

*THE SYDNEY GAZETTE AND NEW SOUTH
WALES ADVERTISER, NOVEMBER 29, 1822*

An Australian Monster.—A powerful sensation has lately been created in the town of Liverpool, by a report of a dreadful monster having been seen in its vicinity, and to satisfy the mingled feelings of alarm and incredulity which had spread among the inhabitants, two men came before the Magistrates, and voluntarily made affidavit, that they had seen in the bush, about two miles and a half out of town, a

tremendous snake, which, to the best of their belief, was at least forty five feet in length, and three times the circumference of the human body!!! The man who first beheld it, thinking it might be dead, threw a stick at it when it reared its monstrous body five feet from the ground. A third person, who also had witnessed this frightful spectacle, offered to corroborate, on oath, the depositions laid before the Court; but it was judged that two affidavits formed a testimony quite sufficient. Actuated at once by curiosity and alarm, a party of respectable Gentlemen, with attendants, went in quest of this extraordinary object; but succeeded only in finding its track, which exhibited the impression of immense scales, and fully confirmed the reports concerning its tremendous dimensions. Some have conjectured that it must be a species of crocodile, from a mark in the earth fourteen inches long, which appeared to have been indented by a portion of its jaw. We are informed that every exertion is now making to find out this fearful monster, and to put an end to its horrid existence. For the satisfaction of public curiosity, we shall feel obliged by communications from any of the Gentlemen residing on the spot.

While giant reptiles are par for the course in early newspaper stories, it is a little surprising to find a precursor to the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* . . .

CLEAR LAKE MYSTERY

GRAETTINGER, IOWA, *TIMES*, JULY 16, 1914

Clear Lake, June 29.—What has been termed by the summer colony as the “Human Fish” has been discovered on the north shore of Clear Lake and is causing more excitement than has prevailed at this summer resort for a number of years. The discovery of

the strange phenomenon was brought about by cottagers who had food taken off their piers which run into the lake and the statement of a number who declare they have seen the strange creature. Several parties have gone out in an effort to catch the mysterious visitor but each effort has been, up to date without result.

A few nights ago a party of guests at the Oaks Hotel went down to the lake beach and started in an all night vigil in an effort to capture it. Just at midnight when the lights went out about the pier, a ripple in the water was seen and a human arm was extended out of the water. It grabbed some food which had been placed on the end of the pier and was again withdrawn into the water. The watchers rushed to the pier end but they saw nothing. However, a dark spot away out in the lake near 100 yards away was seen hurrying thru the water and a weird laugh was heard rippling over the water.

Some fisherman who were out in a row boat last Thursday claim to have seen what they took to be a man swimming with fish-like speed thru the water. They gave chase in their boat but as they neared the man or animal it dove and similar laughter was heard from the rushes which were about fifty yards away.

It is believed that the strange inhabitant of the lake, is either a sea monster which has by some method found a home in the lake or else it is a demented man whose love for swimming has caused him to spend most of his time in the water, getting his food from the piers and cottages and sleeping like Moses of old, in the bull rushes along the lake's shore. The proximity of the county home between Clear Lake and Mason City where a number of unfortunates are housed, led to an investigation and it was found that there are none of the inmates missing.

Instead of solving the mystery the solutions seemed farther away.

Hunting the human fish has become a pastime with the colonists. The description given by those who claim to have seen it describe it as a small sized man about fifty years of age and whose body seemed to be covered with scales like a fish, caused perhaps by the roughening of his skin by constant staying in the water. Others claim it impossible for the creature to be a man because of the long time it stays under water. However, every effort is being made to solve the mystery and motor launch loads of people can be seen daily skirting the lake looking for the strange creature whose mysterious visits have so aroused the summer colony.

Just as many historical "wild man" reports were of misidentified homeless people, this could be a possible explanation here. More strange are the "kathobs" of Texas folklore . . .

ANNUAL HUNT FOR GHOULS OF PADRE ISLAND AGAIN FAILS

SAN ANTONIO, TX, *EXPRESS*, MARCH 12, 1939

Corpus Christi, March 11.—The seventh annual "kathob" fleet sailed from Flour Bluff Sunday afternoon for a two-weeks' expedition down the Laguna Madre in search of the grave-robbing mammals who are supposed to come out of hibernation on the first fall moon before the vernal equinox each year. Only 10 men, instead of the customary 12, volunteered to make the cruise this year in search of the mysterious mammal.

Searched for by the National Geographic Society, innumerable fishermen and sportsmen, the "kathob" so named by the fisherfolk along the lagoon, is believed to be a cross-breed of the Pinnipedia group,

resembling a large seal, but having short, thick legs instead of flippers. Reported for many years by Mexican fishermen, it was not only until seven years ago that anything similar to the description of the mammal was found. Capt. B. P. Roberts, conducting a fishing party in the lagoon, brought to the surface a ferret-shaped head, resembling a seal's, while using a cast net gathering bait. The head, quite decomposed, substantiated somewhat the reports of the kathobs and a year later two scientists, accompanied by Roberts, went down the lagoon in search of the strange creature.

HEAR CROAKS

The party reported hearing the low, guttural croaks of the kathobs from the lee side of the island across the lagoon and attempted several times to get close enough to see what was making the sounds but failed to find anything except the three-toed tracks in the sands which fitted the descriptions heard for several years as being those of a "kathob." The tracks were radically unlike those of any animal, or mammal, resembling the kathob. Each report has substantiated the other in description. For years the fisherfolk along the lonely reaches of the lagoon have told of the kathobs which they say are only seen in the summer and never during the colder months. No connection has yet been made between the appearance of the kathobs and the first full moon before spring except that the waters are warmer at that time and the lagoon more plentiful with fish.

FIFTEEN IN HERD

The herd of kathobs has been reported to number about 15. No one has ever been able to get close enough to them because the herd is so difficult to

see as it lies floating in the shallow waters, heads above the water. Fishermen say the head is of a greenish-blue color and has very small eyes.

Other tales of the creatures, which have been reported both on land and water, describe them as being approximately four feet in length and resembling a big seal, except that they have short legs and have straggly fur over most of the body except the head and shoulders. Each foot has three toes, rather blunt but having very sharp claws and slightly webbed.

They live on both land and water but remain in the water most of the time, burrowing into holes in the side of a mud bank during the winter, according to the fishermen. In the warm weather they lie far out in the lagoon, and can be heard on still nights from the land side making a guttural, croaking noise.

The fishermen are indignant because so many people believe the kathob is a myth and want county officials to do something about trying to get rid of the herd. It was formerly much larger, according to older reports.

Those fishermen who are too poor to own boats and must fish by wading and using a cast net, religiously remain in their camp on still summer nights when fish are reported running on the lee side of Padre Island because of the reports of the kathobs.

According to tales heard for the past 15 years, the kathobs seldom attack anything in the water but have been known to prey on small animals and even calves on shore. Reported as an accidental death two years ago, fisherfolk still believe that the death of a Mexican fisherman near the lee side of the island was caused by an attack from one of the mysterious kathobs. They refuse to believe that the man's death was caused by falling backwards on a gilling knife

when he tripped over some net but say that the slash on his back was made by the sharp, rasp-like tongue of a kathob, similar to a mark found on the back of a calf near the spot two days previous. Examination of the calf's back, fishermen said, revealed that the wound had been made near the spinal column and the spinal fluid drawn out by the kathob's rasp-like tendril. The kathobs have never been known to eat anything but fish, according to reports along the lagoon.

Fishermen also want the county to exhume most of the bodies buried in a small graveyard near the lagoon to prove that the strange animals are the graveyard ghouls stories during the past years say they are.

In the event of a death in the small fishing colonies along the lagoon, the body is moved as soon as possible into Corpus Christi.

Approximately 17 years ago a nearly extinct cross-breed of the seal was reported in Hudson Bay that resembled the "kathobs." It is believed that the mysterious seal-like kathobs may be of a similar family and are probably on the way to extinction.

Thoroughly disgusted with previous attempts to secure public aid in securing a real specimen of the small kathob herd, fishermen discuss the tale very little but have for the past seven years sent a crew down the lagoon on each first full moon before the vernal equinox to search for the kathob herd.

The "kathob" story is interesting. Upon first reading, I thought it might simply have been created out of thin air by the journalist (which was not uncommonly done to fill space). I did contact the National Geographic archive library to see if they had anything on an expedition to Padre Island, but there was nothing in their records. However, I came across another article from April 26,

1964, in the San Antonio *Express* that again discusses this alleged creature (copyright prevents reprinting here). It appears to be local folklore of the “gravedigger” variety (an animal that burrows into graveyards), with a treasure-protection motif. There might have been an additional article published in the 1930s on “kathobs” that included a fabricated skeleton, but it doesn’t seem to have been digitized. I suspect further details could lie in historical papers of that region, worth exploring.

From one sea creature to another, though, we jump to a small carnivore once known to have existed (probably; there’s a little bit of debate, but genetic analysis suggests it was a distinct species) until hunted to extinction. Unlike certain other species (Caribbean monk seals, ivorybill woodpeckers, etc.), we don’t see many alleged sightings of sea minks in recent years, so it was interesting to run across this article.

SEA MINK MAY NOT BE EXTINCT

OLGA BURNS

HAYWARD, CA, *DAILY REVIEW*, JULY 11, 1961

A coat of sea mink is undoubtedly nearly as rare today as a necklace of hen’s teeth, but 30 years or so ago there were still one or two fur pieces that were reliably said to be made from the pelt of the giant mink.

For years now most naturalists have written off the sea mink of Maine and the Maritime Provinces as extinct, but since mink skins of a light reddish color and better than half again as large as those of the ordinary mink were still appearing on the market as late as the 1870’s, it may well be that not all of these remarkable animals were caught by trappers.

So far as is known today, the main differences between the sea mink and other kinds lay in the larger size and a coarser coat, plus a somewhat different coloration.

The habitat was not especially different from that of other varieties, or rather the ordinary mink was also found in salt marshes and along the coast just as much as his giant relatives were. Furthermore, the sea mink was also often trapped along fresh water streams well inland, although in general it was found near the coast and on the offshore islands.

And right there lies one of the better reasons why the sea mink may still be very much alive today. With the controlled trapping that has been going on in Maine for many years, and with the vast numbers of islands, plus its many bays and estuaries, it is not only probable but even likely that some of these big fellows still exist.

On several occasions in recent years various persons have reported seeing mink on the Maine coast and two or three times on the islands, many of which are uninhabited. On none of these occasions, so far as is known, have the surprised observers been able to do more than note that the animals were mink. Under the circumstances there was no chance for comparison with an animal of ordinary size.

The following story seems like a typical newspaper "sea monster" tale, but the careful reader may recognize that something else is going on:

THING THAT FLOGS WHALES

BOSTON, MA, DAILY GLOBE, NOVEMBER 28, 1904

While operating a fishery in Admiralty Island, Alaska, last summer, my attention and the attention of the fishing crew was almost daily attracted to a large marine creature that would appear in the main channel of Seymour canal and our immediate vicinity.

There are large numbers of whales of the species rorqual there and the monster seemed to be their

natural enemy. The whales generally travel in schools, and while at the surface to blow one would be singled out and attacked by the fish, and a battle was soon in order.

It is the nature of the rorqual to make three blows at intervals of from two to three minutes each, and then sound deep and stay beneath the surface for 30 or 40 minutes.

As a whale would come to the surface, there would appear, always at the whale's right side and just about where his head would connect with the body a great long tail or fin, "judged by five fishermen and a number of Indians, after seeing it about 15 times at various distances," to be about 25 feet long, 2 ½ feet wide at the end and tapering down to the water, where it seemed to be about 18 inches in diameter, looking very much like the blade of the fan of an old-fashioned Dutch windmill.

The great club was used on the back of the unfortunate whale in such a manner that it was a wonder to me that every whale attacked was not instantly killed.

Its operator seemed to have perfect control of its movements, and would bend it back until the end would touch the water, forming a horseshoe loop, then with a sweep it would be straightened and brought over and down on the back of the whale with a whack that could be heard for several miles.

If the whale was fortunate enough to submerge itself before the blows came, the spray would fly for a distance of 100 feet from the effect of the stroke, making a report as loud as a yacht's signal gun.

What seemed most remarkable to me was that, no matter which way the attacked whale went, or how fast (the usual speed is about 14 knots), that great club would follow right along by its side and

deliver those tremendous blows at intervals of about four or five seconds.

It would always get in from three to five blows at each of the three times the whale would come to the surface to blow. The whale would generally rid itself of its enemy when it took its deep sound, especially if the water was 40 fathoms or more deep, but at night the whales would be attacked in the bay and within 400 yards of the fishery.

I do not know of any whales being killed, but there were several that had great holes and sores on their backs.

Questioning the Indians about it, I was told that there was only one, that it had been there for many years, and that it once attacked an Indian canoe, and with one stroke of the great club smashed the canoe into splinters, killing and drowning several of its occupants.—Forest and Stream.

No, that's no sea monster. Rather, it's the mistaken (and exaggerated) identification of whale genitalia. This is not the only case of a "sea serpent attacking a whale" that likely involves a sexually-excited cetacean.

Finally, here is an interesting piece of zoological folklore that Richard Muirhead came across in a Google Books scan of *Narrative of the Second Arctic Expedition* (GPO: Washington, D.C., 1879), the edited journal of Charles F. Hall's expedition to King William Island in search of remnants from Sir John Franklin's lost expedition:

"A peculiar animal was described to Hall, an account of which is scarcely to be found in Arctic books. The natives speak of it as being larger than the bear, and as very ferocious and much more difficult to be killed. It has grayish hair, a long tail, and short, thick legs, its fore feet being divided into three parts like

the partridge's; its hind feet are like a man's heels. When resting, it sits upright like a man. A Neitchille Innuite, crawling into a hole for shelter in the night, had found one sound asleep and quickly dispatched it with his knife. It may be added here that Ebierbing, now residing in the United States, confirms such accounts of the 'Arc-la,' and says that the animal once inhabited his native country on Cumberland Sound."

Richard also notes that the Buryat people of Siberia have folkloric beasts/dragons called *Arakho* and *Alklha* (*Giants, Monsters and Dragons: An Encyclopaedia of Folklore, Legend and Myth* by Carol Rose, 2000), which may or may not have an etymological relationship with the *Arc-la*. It's tempting to add this to stories of alleged surviving giant ground sloths (there are other tales of such from certain northern provinces), but at present it simply is an odd but unconfirmable sketch of a folkloric beast.

**PROLONGED SURVIVAL OF A RELEASED
ALLIGATOR IN PENNSYLVANIA
A. J. BARTON**

**HERPETOLOGICA
(1955) VOL. 11, No. 3., p. 210.**

PROLONGED SURVIVAL OF A RELEASED ALLIGATOR IN PENNSYLVANIA.—The remarkable survival of a released alligator through six or seven Pennsylvania winters has been brought to my attention by David McNary, D.V.M., of Castle Shannon, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. While it is regrettable that more exact dates could not be ascertained, it is verified that a pet alligator measuring "nearly a foot and a half" was released in a local marshy area during the summer of 1942 or 1943. An alligator was frequently seen in the marsh through the next several years, and its presence there became a matter of common knowledge among local residents. During the spring of 1949, a highway construction crew was engaged in building a roadway over the marsh. Several times the men were startled by suddenly encountering an alligator, until the foreman of the crew had a local peace officer shoot the animal. Dr. McNary, who was then veterinarian at the Highland Park Zoological Gardens in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, examined the carcass, found it to measure "nearly five feet," and identified the reptile as an American alligator, *Alligator mississippiensis* Daudin. While there is no way to establish definitely that the alligator killed in 1949 was the one released in 1942 or 1943, the circumstances strongly suggest that this is the case.

Meteorological data (Rockwood, Henry. 1952. *Local Climatological Summary with Comparative data, 1951, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. U. S. Dept. Commerce, Weather Bureau. Chattanooga.) recorded by the weather station at the Allegheny County Airport, five air miles from Castle Shannon, shows that for the seven-year period from 1942 to 1949 the mean temperature (in degrees Fahrenheit) for the coldest month varied from 21.7 to 35.2 (av. 26.5); the mean temperature of the coldest four months varied from 31 to 37.9 (av. 32.9); and the days below zero from 0 to 4 (av. 2.4). Thus it is noted that the mean temperature reading for one third of each year survived by the alligator hovered around the freezing point. Since the American alligator is known to hibernate in the northern extremes of its normal range, it may be presumed that this physiological device preserved the life of the individual in question through winters of a length and severity far beyond those normally experienced by this species.—A. J. Barton, The Stony Brook School, Stony Brook, Long Island, N. Y.

ON SOME REPTILIAN FREAKS FROM INDIANA
W. S. BLATCHLEY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ACADEMY OF
NATURAL SCIENCES OF PHILADELPHIA
(1906) 58(2): 419-422

ON SOME REPTILIAN FREAKS FROM INDIANA.

BY W. S. BLATCHLEY.

Cases of deformity or malformation are seemingly much less common among wild forms of life than among mankind or his domestic animals. One often sees or hears of two-headed calves, five-legged pigs and four-legged chickens, but "freaks" among wild mammals, birds and reptiles come to notice but seldom. In the literature on herpetology at my command I can find only the following records of malformation among reptiles and batrachians in the United States.

Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill, in the early part of the nineteenth century, published an article entitled "Facts and considerations showing that the Two-Headed Snakes of North America and other parts of the World are not individuals of a distinct race, but universally Monsters,"¹ in which he recorded the finding in Genesee county, New York, of 120 of the young of a female black snake, *Bascanion constrictor* L., among which were "three monsters, one with two distinct heads; one with a double head and only three eyes; and one with a double skull, furnished with three eyes and a single lower jaw; this last had two bodies." These three specimens he figured on an accompanying plate.

Dr. Mitchill noted that records of two-headed snakes had been made up to that date from the "West Indian and Polynesian islands; in Great Britain and in Italy," and that those from the foreign countries had been supposed to "constitute a race of their own and propagate their kind in regular succession." His paper, based on the finding in New York of three individuals among one litter, was written to controvert this foolish supposition. He added that "serpents are destitute of limbs, and are consequently incapable of monstrosity in feet, legs, hands and arms, either by defect, redundancy or malformation; when it happens, therefore, monstrosity must be in the head or tail, and the head is most frequently the seat of it."

Prof. Jeffries Wyman recorded the occurrence in Massachusetts of a specimen of water snake, *Tropidonotus sipedon* (L.), with two heads and two tails.²

¹ *American Journ. Science and Arts*, X, 1826, 48.

² *Proc. Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist.*, IX, 183.

In the *American Naturalist*, Vol. XII, 1878, p. 470, Mr. H. C. Yarrow stated that there was "but one two-headed snake in the enormously large collection of reptiles in the Smithsonian Institution." This was a specimen of *Ophibolus getulus* (L.), the common chain or king snake, from Port Tobacco, Maryland.

In the same volume, page 694, Dr. J. S. Kingsley mentioned a two-headed snake, species not given, as being in the collection of Williams College, Massachusetts.

In his "Report on the Reptiles and Batrachians of Ohio,"³ Dr. W. H. Smith stated that the Museum of Michigan University contains a double-headed milk snake, *Ophibolus doliatus triangulus* (Boie). He added: "Cases of monstrosities among serpents have been observed by various parties from the time of Aristotle and Redi to the present, and they, as well as the occurrence of monsters in general, may be due to shock."

Concerning two-headed turtles I can find but one reference, viz., Dr. Mitchill, *loc. cit.*, says: "I have heard of a two-headed tortoise (*Testudo*) that lived to acquire a considerable size, by having taken food at both mouths."

But two notes regarding malformation among batrachians are at hand. One of these is by Dr. Kingsley, *loc. cit.*, in which he records a specimen of a five-legged frog, *Rana palustris*, from Rochester, New York. The other, by Smith, *loc. cit.*, refers to a mention by Ryder⁴ of another five-legged frog of the same species.

During the past fifteen years examples of four two-headed snakes, one two-headed turtle, one five-legged frog and one two-tailed salamander from Indiana have come to my notice. While I have seen but two of the individuals, the records of the others can be relied upon.

Two-headed Snakes. a. Of the snakes, one at hand as I write is a specimen of the spreading viper, *Heterodon platyrhinus* Latr., six and a half inches in length, taken near Manilla, Rush county, by S. C. Peck in August, 1904, and by him presented to the State Museum. It has two perfect heads, both possessing the scale formula of the species. Each head stands out at nearly right angles to the median line of the front extremity of the body, the center or keel of the two rostral plates being 22 mm. apart. The two heads unite just back of the hindmost of the inner lower labials, there being three rows of small scales between the inner upper labials. Viewed from above, the right head appears

³ *Geol. Surv. of Ohio*, IV, 1882, 690.

⁴ *Science News*, December 15, 1878, p. 69

very slightly longer than the left, but when compressed together there is no difference, each one being 13 mm. in length. The two œsophagi unite in a common gullet just back of the point of union. In all other respects the specimen is a typical young form of *H. platyrhinus*.

b. A small two-headed garter snake was taken on a farm southwest of Russellville, Putnam county, and was kept in alcohol for several years. It was reported to me by several parties who had seen it, but was thrown out on account of decay, due to loss of alcohol, several weeks before I visited the place. The heads were said to unite about two inches back of the rostral plate, each having a small portion of the body between it and the point of union.

c. In June, 1893, a friend reported to me that his son had killed a two-headed snake in a woods pasture near Terre Haute. In company with the boy I visited the spot the next day, but found that the buzzards had been ahead of me and that only a small portion of the body was left. It was a house or milk snake, *Ophibolus doliatius triangulus* (Boie), and, judging from the fragments and the account of the boy, had been about two and a half feet in length. He said that the heads forked five or six inches back from the front extremity of the body.

d. In the *Indianapolis News* of July 19, 1893, John Collett, ex-State Geologist of Indiana, mentions a "double-headed garter snake as having been taken west of the Wabash river in Vermillion county a few years previously."

Two-headed Turtle.—On May 1, 1892, John Tiley, a coal operator, found, near Waterman, in the southwest corner of Fountain county, Indiana, a two-headed turtle. It was presented to Dr. George T. De Verter, who kept it for more than a year, when by accident it was drowned. It was presented in alcohol to Prof. John Collett, of Indianapolis, and, according to the *Indianapolis News* of July 19, 1893, had "nothing to distinguish it from the ordinary little river turtle that sits with a row of fellows on a log and plunks into the water when you creep up with designs upon its freedom. Its back appears a little broader than usual to give it neck room. The heads are not joined and do not interfere with each other's independence. Each has its little sack to retreat into in time of danger. Each has two fully developed eyes, a complete and efficacious mouth and a full throat which is beautifully striped in black and yellow lines. Each has a little stripe of red retreating from each eye, and the heads are twins in size. Either head would have been good enough to serve a turtle of ordinary ambition."

The *News* published a crude drawing of the turtle, and from it and the

above description, I judge that the animal was very probably a specimen of the lady turtle, *Chrysemys marginata* (Agassiz). Dr. De Verter informed the writer that when kept in an aquarium and fed, each head acted wholly independently of the other, the two being thrust forth for different articles of food—meat, mosquito larvæ, tadpoles, etc.—at the same time or at intervals, as occasion and opportunity demanded. What finally became of the specimen on the death of Prof. Collett is not known.

Five-legged Frog.—In the spring of 1892, while teaching zoology at Terre Haute, I heard several times of a five-legged frog at a greenhouse in that city. I finally visited the place, but the specimen could not be located. The proprietor informed me that he had seen it on a number of occasions, and had caught it once and then let it go. According to his description, it was probably a specimen of the leopard frog, *Rana virescens* Kalm, with a fifth leg of the same size as each of the two front ones, which was joined to the left side about an inch back of and a little higher than the normal front leg. The specimen was not seen after my visit and probably fell a victim to some prowling cat.

Two-tailed Salamander.—On June 21, 1906, I took from an ancient shell mound which was being excavated near Shoals, Martin county, a small specimen of the ashy salamander, *Plethodon cinereus* (Green), which possesses a forked tail. The animal itself was only 38 mm. in length, the tail comprising 12 mm., or nearly one-third. At a point near the middle the tail forked, the two prongs being separated in life by an angle of about 30 degrees. The left or longer fork was 7 mm. in length, while the right or shorter one was but 5 mm. long. Instead of being cylindrical as in typical specimens, each portion was flattened, with rather sharp edges above and below.

It is very probable that cases of malformation among reptiles and batrachians are much more common than is generally supposed. It is safe to say that not more than ten per cent. of the normal individuals which are born or hatched ever come within the range of man's vision. The great majority of the malformed ones are, like those of the domestic animals, either still-born or short-lived. The number of specimens of "freaks" which come to the notice of man is, therefore, doubtless a very small per cent. of those which actually occur.

To the factor of natural variation, rather than that of "shock," is probably due the malformations which do occur. If but three specimens out of 120 of one brood of snakes were malformed on account of a shock to the pregnant mother, why did not that shock affect the others?

THE WINGED DEATH
VISCOUNT DE SOISSONS

THE WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE
(1904) 13: 435-438.



TOLD BY F. GONIN, OF BRETANIERES, FRANCE, AND SET DOWN IN ENGLISH BY THE
VISCOUNT DE SOISSONS.

"For many months vague stories had been circulating to the effect that the road from Besançon to Dole was haunted by a great bird-like creature, terrible to look upon and fierce beyond belief. Men called it the 'Winged Death.'" In this narrative the Viscount de Soissons relates a simple peasant's story of how he met this awful monster, and the weird experience that followed.



AD anybody told me, not long since, that I would be nearly done to death by a creature of the air I would have called him mad. Nevertheless, it has been fully proved to me that strange things may happen to a poor carter, without his leaving his village in the Jura and going to distant countries.

To set it down as briefly as possible, this is how it happened.

For many months vague stories had been circulating to the effect that the road from Besançon to Dole, in the Department of Doubs, France, was haunted by a great bird-like creature, terrible to look upon and fierce beyond belief. Men called



FRANÇOIS GONIN, THE FRENCH PEASANT WHO FOUGHT
THE "WINGED DEATH."
From a Photo.

it the "Winged Death," and made one another's hair rise by their tales concerning it. Nightly it was discussed in the *cabarets*, so that men went to their homes fearfully, not liking to be abroad when darkness fell.

One man, a carter like myself, told me that he had been attacked by the awful thing, which had rushed on him with open beak, shrieking horribly.

"Pierre Jacquelin," I said, "you are mad, raving mad! How big was this bird that attacked you?"

"Seven feet from wing to wing!"

"Nonsense! What did it look like?"

"Like a great buzzard, brown all over."

I began to laugh.

"Jacquelin, my boy," said

I, "tell that yarn to the old women. Your tale is improbable. For one thing, the buzzard is a dastard bird and easily beaten, not only by the raven, but also by the carrion crow; a buzzard is as likely to attack a man as the moon. For another thing, the biggest buzzard ever seen in these parts was three feet from wing to wing, not seven."

Jacquelin was not convinced. He did not actually state that the thing *was* a buzzard, he said; it might be an evil spirit in the shape of one.

ATTACKED BY A BUZZARD,

As he was driving near Dôle, in the French department of the Jura, a man named Gonin was suddenly attacked by an enormous buzzard, who tried to tear his head with beak and claws.

For ten minutes the strange combat continued, until at length the bird, which measured 5ft. 2in. across, says the "Petit Journal," was stunned by a blow from the man's whip and captured.

A CUTTING FROM THE "DAILY MAIL," REFERRING TO THE ATTACK ON GONIN BY THE ENORMOUS BUZZARD.

I was now reassured as to the strange tales of the winged monster which was supposed to haunt the road. Previously they had worried me somewhat, for they were vague and awe-inspiring, but if the "monster" was only a buzzard there was nothing to be afraid of. Knowing the cowardly nature of the bird I could not believe for a moment Jacquelin's extraordinary story, and his suggestion that the thing was an evil spirit I put down to his simple mind.

I went on my way light heartedly. It is a long and slow journey with an ox-cart from Besançon to Dole, but I got along pretty well, and was within ten miles of the latter place, which I intended to reach the same night, when the dusk came on. I hurried up my slow-footed oxen, for I wanted to get into the town early.

Suddenly from the left, over the river, I heard a shrill, melancholy, whistle-like cry that sounded distinctly in the evening stillness. As I listened it sounded again, loud and piercing. My blood seemed to run cold; it was the cry that Jacquelin had imitated in the *cabaret* as being made by the creature that attacked him.

"François," I said to

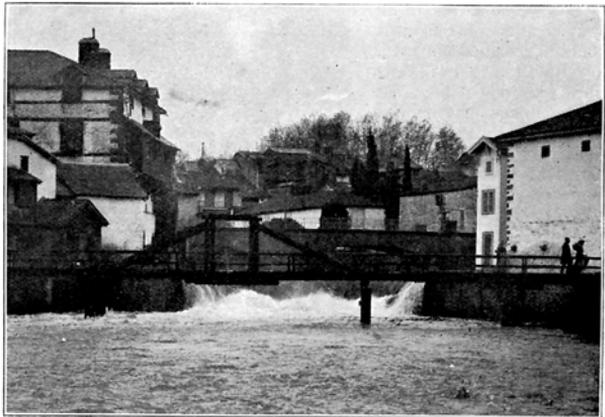
myself, "don't stand there like a gaping dolt. Do *you* believe that evil spirits go about in the shape of birds? No, of course you don't."

So I went on, though, in spite of all my attempts to keep my spirits up, I found myself glancing anxiously to right and left of the road during the next two miles. I heard the whistling twice in that time, but as nothing happened my terror wore off and I pressed on with a light heart. After another mile had been passed the rain began to fall heavily, so, seeing a convenient shelter under some thick trees, I drew up my beasts, sat on the cart, and began to smoke my pipe.

Dark clouds were now chasing each other over the heavens, and it grew very dark. The rain came down faster and faster until it was pouring in torrents.

Suddenly I heard that melancholy hooting again, now ringing clearer than ever in my ears, and the terror I had previously felt began to take hold of me again. I don't think I am a coward, but on a dark night, alone on a deserted road, to hear a sound that is associated with terrible stories of unknown terrors is surely enough to make the bravest man shudder. Remembering I had my *aves* and *paters* to say for the penance imposed on me by Father John, our priest, I took out my beads and began to run them through my fingers, but I could not concentrate my attention on them, and found myself straining my ears to hear that strange hooting again.

The storm had now increased in fury; pale flashes of lightning lit up the ink-black sky, and the dull rumbling of distant thunder was to be



THE TOWN OF DOLE, TO WHICH PLACE GONIN WAS JOURNEYING WHEN HE WAS ATTACKED.
From a Photo.

heard. Presently, above the noise of the wind and rain, the sound I listened for rang out again—this time quite close to me. The lightning flashed repeatedly, and by the glare of one of these flashes I saw not far off a great bird darting through the air towards me.

A scream of terror burst from my lips, for I recognised the "huge brown bird" of Jacquelin's story. Then I took up my whip, and, holding it with the butt extended ready to strike, I waited. I heard the whirr of great wings circling round me without being able to see anything, for the play of the lightning had ceased for a moment. May none who read my story ever be in such a position as I was then—



"I HIT AT IT AS HARD AS I COULD."

face to face with some awful creature which I could hear and yet not see. Then I felt a rush of air, and as the lightning burst forth again I saw the buzzard—for a buzzard it was—fly at me. I waited until it swooped nearer, and then hit at it as hard as I could. The blow reached its mark, as I knew by the soft thud.

Another shriek, this time of rage, rent the air, and then the great bird disappeared into the blackness again. In the brief glimpse I had caught of it I could see that, although of great size, it was not seven feet across, as Jacquelin had said. I waited expectantly for some time, but the buzzard did not reappear, and when the storm passed over and the stars peeped out I recommenced my tramp to Dole, thinking myself well out of a tight corner. Evidently there had been some truth in my friend's story after all, although he had exaggerated the size of his assailant.

Before I had gone another mile I heard the whistling again. As quickly as possible I made for my whip, but before I could reach it I felt a pain in my shoulder as if red-hot irons had pierced it, while great wings flapped wildly in my face. Desperately I struggled to reach the whip, but the pain and the continual beating confused me. At last I hit out twice with my fist, reaching my enemy each time, and the claws relaxed their hold.

I got hold of the whip just in time to evade another attack, more furious than the last. My blood was now up and all the fighting instincts which we people of the Jura have in us were roused.

Five times the great bird swooped at me, but I did not hit out, for it was just beyond my reach, and I knew that it was only waiting for me to make a false stroke in order to get another grip of me. Then it gave up these tactics and came for me boldly, unexpectedly, so that at first I was taken by surprise,

but managed to leap aside and strike hard, again and again. The horrible creature's object was accomplished, however; it had hold of me, but only by my blouse, and not by the flesh. Bending down, therefore, I slipped out of the garment, but I could not free my left arm from the button at the wrist.

The great buzzard pulled and shook at the cloth savagely, nearly wrenching my shoulder from its socket, while I dealt repeated blows at it with my whip. Some of them told and others lost themselves in the folds of the blouse.

At last I was so shaken by the bird's tugging that I put my whip in my teeth and took out a clasp-knife. I opened it against the sleeve of my shirt—cutting myself twice in the operation—then severed the arm of the blouse from the body, thus liberating myself from the garment. Then I took the knife in my left hand and the whip in the other, preparatory to facing this winged fury again.

Once more it flew at me, and I defended myself as best I could, dealing heavy blows all round me with the whip. Then an idea came to me. Not far off lay the blouse, where the bird had dropped it. I tried to reach it, but this terrible bird seemed to under-

stand my object and pressed me towards the waggon, where my oxen stood motionless, apparently paralyzed with terror. Overcome by the creature's onslaught, I was driven back against the vehicle, when by chance I felt a blanket behind me. That would be even better for my purpose than the blouse.

Seizing it, I waited for my chance; then, springing forward, in spite of the hail of blows from claws, beak, and wings, I threw the blanket over the bird's head and struck hard with the whip. The blow apparently stunned the creature, for it sank to the ground, still struggling feebly under the enveloping blanket. Picking my knife up from where I had dropped it in the road, I was about to kill my assailant when the idea came into my head that as this was an altogether extraordinary bird, both in size and

characteristics, I might be able to sell it to some menagerie.

Muffling the half-stunned creature still more securely in the blanket, I tied its formidable talons together with a piece of rope from the waggon and then lashed the bird to the back of the vehicle. This done, I removed the blanket, for my enemy had no more wish to struggle; my blows had effectually disabled it, and all its frenzied fury was gone.



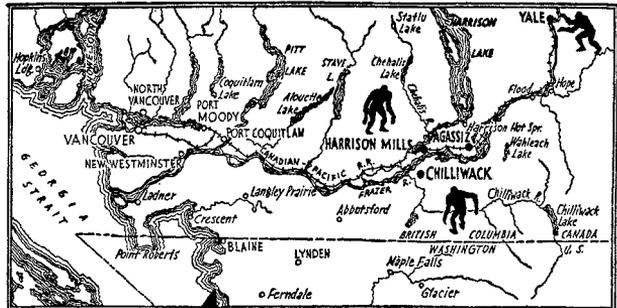
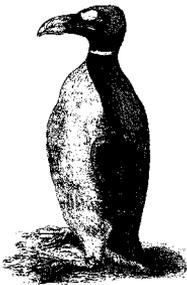
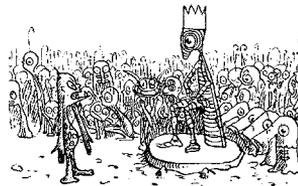
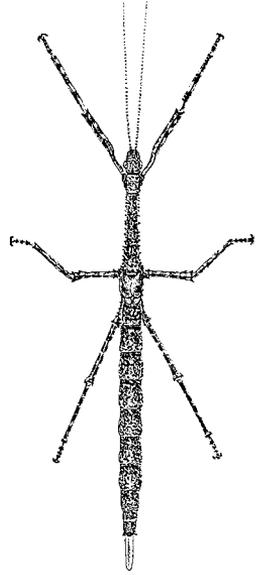
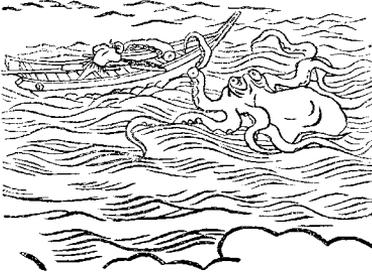
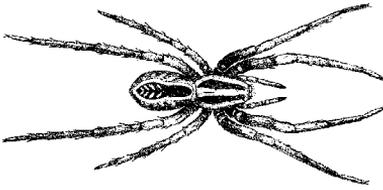
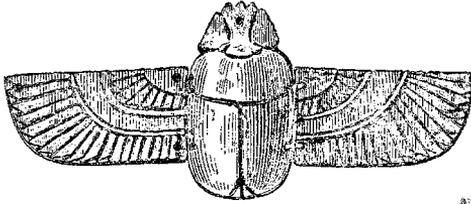
"I THREW THE BLANKET OVER THE BIRD'S HEAD AND STRUCK HARD."

I reached Dole safely and stopped outside my usual *cabaret*, where I told the story of the capture to my friends there. I showed them the torn blouse and the marks of the talons on my face and shoulder, yet they would not believe me. Then I took them down to my cart, held up the captive bird, and laughed in their faces. We found that the creature measured five feet two inches across from tip to tip of its extended wings—truly enormous for a buzzard.

Such is the tale of my fight with the "Winged Death," of which I had heard so much talk in the *cabarets*. After all, you see, it had nothing to do with evil spirits, but was only an overgrown and unnaturally ferocious buzzard. What inspired the creature to attack human beings so savagely I do not know; that point I must leave to the men who study such things.

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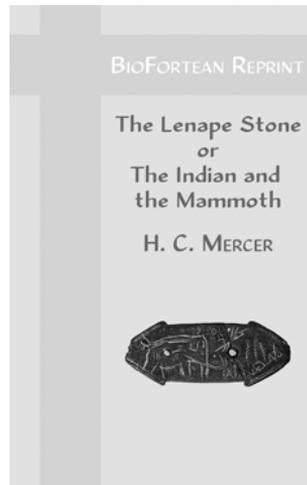
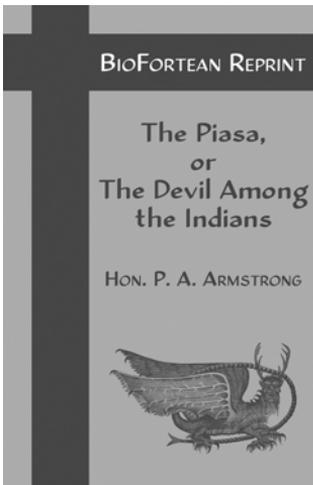
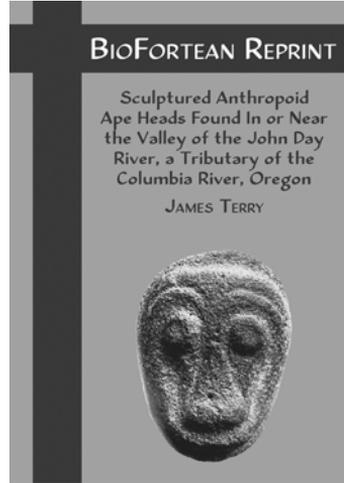
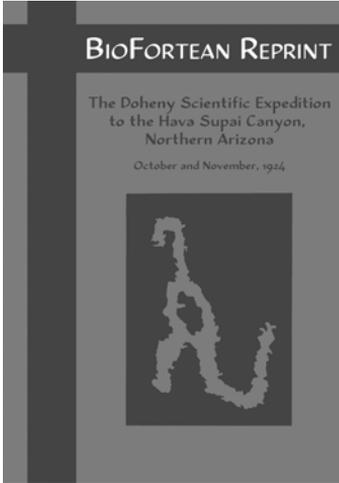
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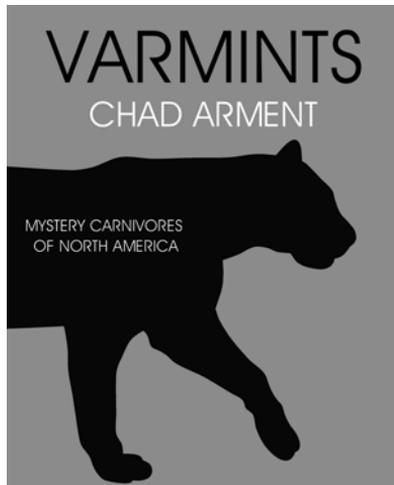
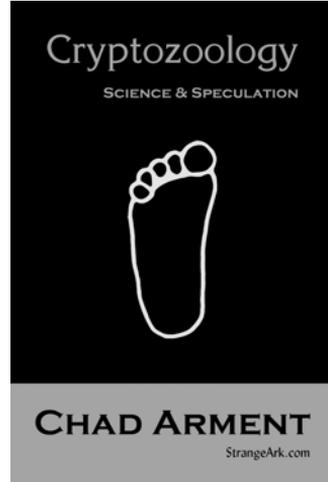
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