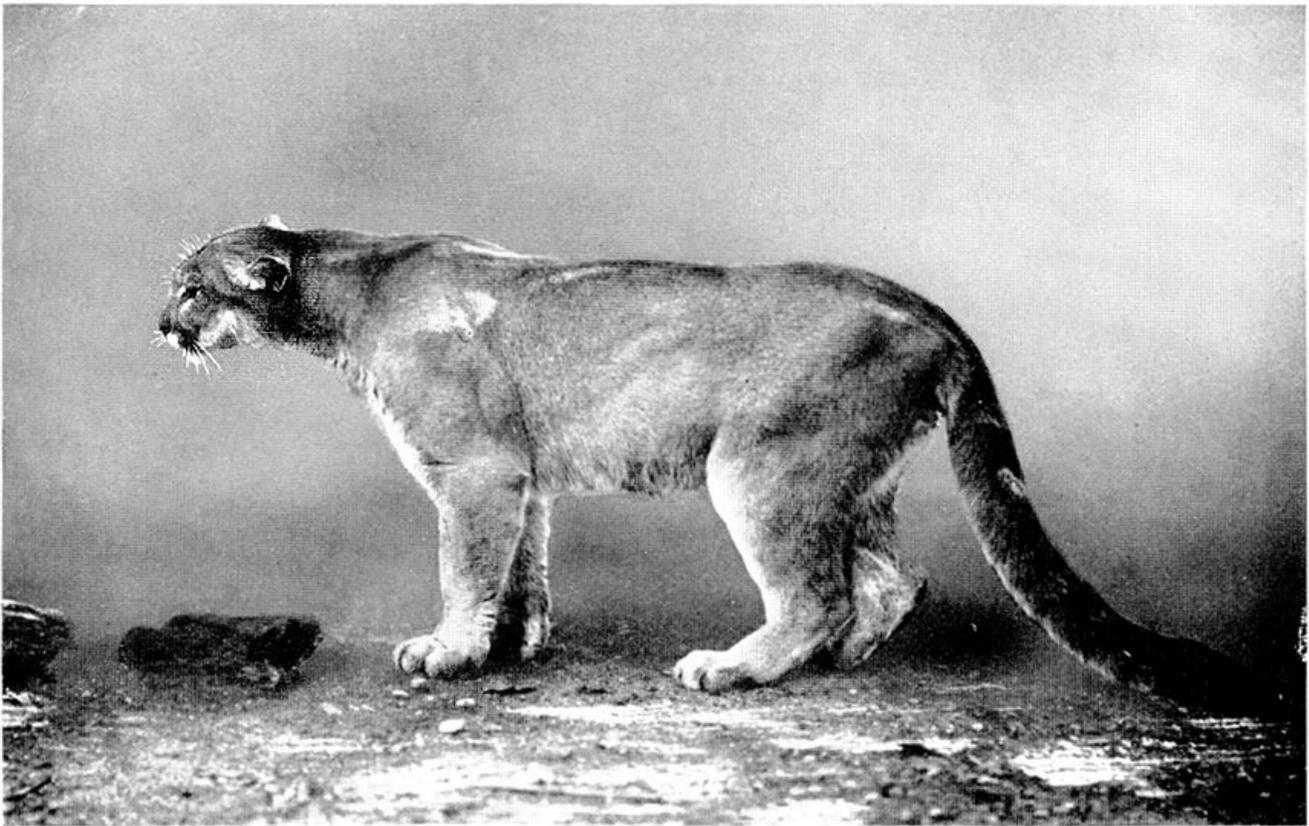


# North American BioFortean Review

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2000



One can only see what one observes,  
and one observes only things which are already in the mind.  
—Alphonse Bertillon

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## From the Editors

Just a quick note on the format for this issue. We have gone to single-column rather than the two-column approach because we were told that it was awkward to read one column and then have to move the page to view the second column. An entire page cannot be easily viewed onscreen. So, here is a single column issue; depending on response, we'll determine whether the next issues will be single-column as well—should anyone else care to comment on their preferences, please email us at [Caa1snake@aol.com](mailto:Caa1snake@aol.com) (Chad Arment) or [Ringneck2@aol.com](mailto:Ringneck2@aol.com) (Brad LaGrange).

The photo on front of an eastern cougar from Pennsylvania comes from W. J. M. McKnight's *A Pioneer Outline History of Northwestern Pennsylvania* (1905; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott).

## Letter to the Editors

To The Editors;

Winter is winding down soon and spring will be just around the corner. With the approach of spring is also the approach of the largest gathering of Bigfooters in North America. I'm talking about the 12'th Annual Bigfoot Conference/Bigfoot EXPO scheduled for April 8'th, 2000. Speakers include.....

RON SCHAFFNER (Cincinnati, OH)  
LOREN COLEMAN (Portland, ME)  
DR. JOHN BINDERNAGEL (Courtenay, BC)  
SCOTT HERRIOTT (San Francisco, CA)

All of the above with the exception of Ron Schaffner have spoke at the regular meeting or a previous conference for the Tri-State Bigfoot Study Group. The Conference in 2000 will begin @ 4 p.m. eastern time. Additional information can be gained by going to:

<http://www.angelfire.com/oh/ohiobigfoot/home.html>

and clicking on the Annual Bigfoot Conference link.

For readers without internet access, you can either write to Don Keating at P.O. Box 205, Newcomerstown, Ohio 43832-0205 or call Mr. Keating at (740) 498-9878. We hope to see YOU at the largest Bigfoot Conference anywhere on the face of the earth.... the 12'th Annual Bigfoot Conference/Bigfoot EXPO in Newcomerstown, Ohio, USA.

Don Keating

# BIGFOOT EVENT REPORT

Todd M. Neiss

**DATE:** July 21st, 1999

**TIME:** 8:30 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Detroit Lake, Oregon (Hoover Campground)

**WITNESSES:** Dana Jorgensen, Sharmayne Bettencourt, and an unidentified fisherman

**EVENT:** A powerful “roaring scream” was heard by Dana and Sharmayne while they were fishing on a dock approximately 150 meters west of the Hoover Campground (located along the south side of Detroit Lake where the Santiam River empties into the lake). The scream emanated from a point along the lake to the west of where the witnesses were fishing.

Approximately 30 - 40 seconds later, an unidentified fisherman was seen running away from where the scream had originated. Upon seeing him, the witnesses immediately joined the visibly panicked fisherman on the trail and the three of them continued running until they reached the relative safety of the campground.

Once there, they ladies asked, “Did you hear that scream?” The shaken fisherman replied, “Hear it? Whatever that thing is was right next to me!”

After their brief conversation, Dana and Sharmayne quickly struck their camp and drove back to Portland.

**INVESTIGATION:** At approximately 11:00 p.m. I received a voicemail-page and, upon retrieving it, listened to Sharmayne asking me to call her at her brother’s saying that there was an “emergency” that required that I call her back “immediately.” There was no doubt that she was still traumatized by the ordeal some three hours later.

After she relayed the story to me, I asked her if she would be willing to meet me back at the lake the next day so I could do some investigation. She said she would rendezvous with me on the condition that they were out of the area before nightfall.

The next day I loaded my car with my camping gear and assorted investigative equipment (video and still cameras, night-vision scope, parabolic microphone, plaster, etc.) and set off to my office to tie up some loose ends before heading out to the lake. I had scheduled to have lunch with Joe Beelart that day and so when he called to confirm our appointment, I relayed the events of the

evening and my plans to follow up on it. Joe asked if I would like some company and I said that I would be more than happy to have him along. We decided to forego lunch and meet at his home in West Linn. There we proceeded to transfer my gear into his truck and shortly thereafter, we were on the road.

Upon reaching the lake, we found Sharmayne and Dana waiting for us in the campground as promised. Once introductions were made, we set out to the fishing dock where the event took place a mere 19 hours prior. Once there, the ladies recounted their experience and pointed to where the vocalization had come from.

Joe and I began a methodically canvassing the vicinity; Joe choosing to retrace the trail that the fisherman used as an escape route, while I paralleled him some 50 - 75 feet inland. As we scoured the lakeside forest, my attention was drawn to a large disturbance on the ground ahead of me. Upon closer inspection, there appeared what looked to be a spot where the grass was stripped clean as if something very heavy had skidded or pivoted in the trail leaving a fairly fresh divot measuring over a foot across.

Glancing to my left, my eye caught what looked like a fecal stool about five feet from the trail. The stool appeared quite fresh and resembled some of the photos I had seen of other purported bigfoot scat. To the untrained eye, it would have been dismissed as a dark splotch of mud. Using a stick, I carefully dug a sample from it and set it on a boulder for later analysis.

Returning to the trail, I almost immediately encountered what was obviously an animal bed in a patch of ferns (less than 15 feet from the scat). The bed was very impressive as the ferns were literally crushed flat to the ground. Unlike a deer or elk bed, this bed had the unique dimensions of approximately nine feet in length and four feet in width.

Almost simultaneously, Joe was investigating a point along the shoreline which seemed the most likely location of the hapless unidentified fisherman. His rod-holder was still in place where he had abandoned it the night before. Ironically, the bed was located a mere fifty feet from where he was fishing (dove-tailing nicely with the account given earlier... "Whatever that thing is was right next to me!")

I motioned for Joe to join me so he could observe the bed for himself. What impressed us both was the fact that something lying in the four foot tall ferns would be virtually undetectable from just feet away. There also appeared to be a hastily beaten path leading west from the bed and eventually looping south up a steep rocky slope.

Joe and I decided we should return to camp to retrieve the cameras and a Zip-Loc baggie to collect the fecal specimen in for later analysis. With the imprint, scat, bed and surrounding area thoroughly documented on both video and still camera formats, we decided to return to camp for the night as daylight was quickly retreating.

Once at camp, we fixed dinner and prepared to settle in for the night. We had visited for several hours when I decided to retire around 2 a.m. The night sky was exceptionally clear, so Joe decided to stay up and stargaze for another hour eventually turning in around 3 a.m.

At around 3:15 a.m., Joe was jolted awake by a distinct sound of a “pretty startling” series of screams off in the distance. He recalled three powerful screams that started fairly low and ended in a crescendo. The first two were approximately 15 seconds in duration followed by a final scream that tapered off in about five seconds. Joe informed me that he attempted to wake me to no avail. Unfortunately, we didn’t have a recording device in place before the “show” was over.

The next morning, we packed up and prepared to head back to Portland. As we were pulling out of the campground, we decided to drive to a point along the road which seemed the most likely place where the creature would have crossed after ascending the slope above it’s bed. We discovered a well used animal trail which I traversed until it intersected a fairly new gravel road some 100 feet above the main roadway. Unable to locate any further evidence of tracks, I decided to walk the gravel road out to where it met the main road.

I had almost reached the gated intersection when my attention fell upon a rather deep impression approximately six feet up in the soft bank that ran along side the gravel road. Making use of a sturdy branch, I ascended the bank for a closer inspection. Upon reaching the impression, it became obvious that what ever had put them down was bipedal and extremely heavy. Glancing left and right, I became aware that it was only one of a series of tracks which were very deep set into the hillside paralleling the road below. I counted (and filmed) at least a dozen such tracks, each having over a 50" stride between them. Although they fell short of presenting the quintessential perfect human shaped print, it appeared as if they had been planted by an elephant...the downhill edge of each track buckling and cracking the earth. Unfortunately, the steep incline of the embankment was not conducive for casting purposes. Suffice to say, I know of no recognized animal that could have made such imprints.

**CONCLUSION:** This investigation was ideal in that we were able to get on scene within less than 24 hours. My long-standing personal association with both witnesses made their credibility a non-issue. The location of the “evidence” fit well with the details given in the debriefing. The combination of the bed, scat, vocalization and tracks gives this incident an extremely high probability.

**HISTORY:** This area falls within the known habitat of these creatures (the Cascade Mountain Range) and has a history of bigfoot events.

**FOLLOW UP:** The fecal specimen was stored on ice and transported in a cooler. It is currently undergoing scientific analysis at an appropriate local facility. Those who have analyzed it so far seem quite impressed with it’s condition and abundant parasitic activity. It will be inspected for content (i.e. diet), potential host cells (which can slough off of the intestinal walls) and unique parasites.

## ADDENDUM "A"

Dr. Wolfe Henner Farenbach

The feces were found 10 feet from the apparent bedding site. They consisted of a shapeless mass, about eight to ten inches in diameter, black to dark brown in color with very little odor. Microscopic examination showed the contents to consist primarily of **plant remains**, some aquatic, with incidental **insect parts**. No hair, bones or muscle fragments were evident. The mass was rich in *nematode fauna*. These consisted primarily of **pinworms** and their eggs (*Enterobius*), **threadworms** and their eggs (*Strongyloides*), a few **roundworm** eggs (*Ascaris*), and many **hookworm larvae** and one adult, identifiable as *Ancylostoma*, probably of the species *caninum*. The human hookworm species is *Necator* and can be clearly differentiated. This rich assemblage of worms can be expected to exist in any **omnivorous forest species** and cannot be used to identify the species of origin of the feces.

**NOTE:** It might have been a diarrhetic stool, left under emotional duress such as gorillas do.

My best, Henner.

### Primate Communication: Bibliography

Just a few citations to show the range of communication noted in various primates, as there seems to be a growing interest in collecting possible Bigfoot vocalizations.

- Hauser, M.D. 1993. The evolution of nonhuman primate vocalizations: effects of phylogeny, body weight, and social context. *American Naturalist* 142(3): 528-542.
- Arcadi, A.C., Robert, D., and C. Boesch. 1998. Buttress drumming by wild chimpanzees: temporal patterning, phrase integration into loud calls, and preliminary evidence for individual distinctiveness. *Primates* 39(4): 505-518.
- Drubbel, R.V., and J.-P. Gautier. 1993. On the occurrence of nocturnal and diurnal loud calls, differing in structure and duration in red howlers (*Alouatta seniculus*) of French Guyana. *Folio Primatologica* 60(4): 195-209.
- Zuberbuehler, K., Jenny, D., and R. Bshary. 1999. The predator deterrance function of primate alarm calls. *Ethology* 105(6): 477-490.
- Zuberbuehler, K., Noe, R., and R. Seyfarth. 1997. Diana monkey long-distance calls: messages for conspecifics and predators. *Animal Behavior* 53(3): 589-604.
- Elowson, A.M., Snowdon, C.T., and C. Lazaro-Perea. 1998. Infant 'babbling' in a nonhuman primate: complex vocal sequences with repeated call types. *Behavior* 135(5): 643-664.

## **BioFortean Notes**

**Chad Arment & Brad LaGrange**

Since the last issue of NABR, we've run across or have received information on a number of odd animal topics. Rather than try to create numerous small articles or blurbs for each, we'll just set the information out here. Some of these are just unusual wildlife notes, others may be of some cryptozoological interest. (Email may have minor editing.)

### **Cougar in southern Ohio**

In July, 1999, we received the following email from Paul S. who had seen a large feline in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area.

“Great site! although, I was surprised that there was no mention to the documented cougar sightings from the “Wildlife Corridor” that runs along the Ohio River. My Fiancee and myself witnessed a cougar cross in front of my car (windows were up, it was a winter evening) and glide away into the night. I thought that maybe someone's pet got loose and was a danger, so I told a Park Ranger what we had seen. The Ranger seemed interested and referred me to a Mr. Bill Reichling. He asked a bunch of questions then decided to take a report for the Eastern Puma Society, I think he said it was a government tracking thing. We were advised not to talk much about it as there is no reason to stir up a panic. Our report was in Saylor Park (Cincinnati suburb along the Ohio river) going up the hill (big wooded river hills with cliff and oodles of deer) to Delhi, Ohio (home).”

In response to some questions, Paul replied:

“We saw the cat around Oct-Nov of '97 (it was cold and we had the car windows up). The cat was about 5 - 5 & 1/2 feet long including the tail, stood about 2 & 1/2 feet high—it seemed to be crouched, and the color was a tan-gray. It was a very graceful and imposing animal, unfortunately we didn't get to see it very long as it slipped back unhurried into the shadows of the night and through someone's back yard. The whole area is very wooded; I guess that's why they call it the Wildlife/Nature/Green Corridor. Also, I think Mr. Reichling said ours was the 54th report in the area. He also said that there have been dead deer found that match the cougar's method of killing (strangulation) and I think he said that has taken bite prints. The whole cougar thing seems to be very secretive as we were asked not to talk about it; you would have thought we'd seen Bigfoot or something, either way people look at you like you're half baked when you tell them.”

Now, it is a little bothersome to find that a researcher is telling witnesses to remain quiet about an incident. How much of that occurs? But, hopefully at some point the data on these southern

Ohio reports will become available in some form or another. When this info was forwarded to Ron Schaffner, he was able to get information on the Cincinnati investigators and learned that about 500 sightings of cougar-like animals have been reported to them from a 100 mile radius of Cincinnati (which would include quite a bit of forested areas in Kentucky, Indiana, and southern Ohio) since 1985.

### **Giant White Wolves in Canada**

From Paul W. in Ontario, Canada:

“I am interested in more information about sightings or reports of the waheela—Great white wolf. I had not heard of anyone else having reported such a creature before finding it on your web site. I work in the outdoors industry, and have on a couple of occasions heard stories of gigantic wolves from Ontario, Canada. While these may not be the same as listed on your site due to location, they were always stated to be white, or very light in color. A good friend of mine has a hunting lodge in Ontario, near the town of Hearst, and has seen numerous wolves. He said that last year he saw one far larger than any he has seen before, it was feeding on a moose carcass, and he estimated that it was at least 200 lbs. He said that it appeared to have a larger and broader than normal head, and that the front legs were quite long as compared to the rear legs. As he put it, “it just looked real different than any wolf I have seen before, much larger, and more robust than even a big male should be.” I found this interesting, as I have seen “wolf” tracks in that same area that were just plain weird because of how large they were. I have pictures of a track I found at a beaver dam that were 8 inches across, but otherwise looked like normal wolf tracks. The normal wolf tracks, which are common, are around 4 or at the largest 5 inches across. I have often wondered just how large a wolf had to be to make an 8 inch track!”

When queried, Paul stated:

“My friend who owns the camp said that this wolf, or at least one just as large, was one of a pack of such animals that frequents the area near his bear zone (in Ontario, an outfitter has exclusive rights to a certain geographic area for the purpose of non-resident bear hunting). He said that all were very large, and had the unusual broad heads and large front ends. He has seen them clearly just the one time, but has heard that they have been seen on a couple of other occasions. You must remember that this is true wilderness, and it is not likely that they would be seen very often.

“Who know, they are likely just unusually large examples of timber wolves, but the largest example I could come up with was 175 lbs, and he swears this was much larger. You also wonder about the different physical aspects of the thing.

“Thanks for the interest, and anything you can dig up would be appreciated. I am visiting there in mid January, and I think the season on wolves runs through the spring. I may take up a rifle and stake out a winter-kill moose, just in case!”

## **Spider bites**

Just what we need, another dangerous spider. From a discussion on Venom-L comes this reference:

Vetter, R. S. 1998. Envenomation by a spider *Agelenopsis aperta* (Family: Agelenidae) previously considered harmless. *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 32:739-741.

## **Flying Critter**

Not too long ago, information was posted to a newsgroup in response to some discussion of the "Mothman" section of Ron Schaffner's website. The information detailed a sighting of a large bird-like animal in Oklahoma.

The individual who posted the note stated that she had friends in Oklahoma; the husband worked at a military base, while the wife managed an apartment complex. One evening, they were floating in the apartment's pool with another tenant, when they saw a large shadow pass over them. They looked up to see a "giant bird" land on the chain-link fence on the opposite side of the pool. The bird frightened them because it was large enough to rattle a new 8-foot tall fence, being about as tall as a man, "brown and leathery looking," with "reptilian features." It was silent, and just sat on the fence looking at them for a while before flying off. The witnesses asked at the base whether anyone knew what it was, and were told that "there were a few reports of the thing each year but no one knew what it was. The best explanation they could offer was that its something that comes out of the desert."

Attempts to get more information on this from the individual who posted it have been unsuccessful. Based on other information, this doesn't appear to be a hoax by the individual who posted. (Whether it was a hoax played on her is another question altogether.) Based on the geography, I suspect that this incident occurred in the area of the Altus Air Force Base. Might be a good area for some investigators to check out. This sort of folklore is uncommon, but I've seen more than a few similar reports from the southwest; some widely publicized, others less so.

## **Marine "Platypus"**

Investigator Bobbie Short forwarded an interesting report to a cryptozoology discussion list concerning an aquatic animal seen off the coast of Alaska. Rob Alley confirmed this report for us. He had talked to a successful Ketchikan businessman who told him that he saw an animal approximately six feet in length which was dark in color, had a "bill" and webbed feet, looking very much like a platypus. (He did not mention seeing a tail.) He watched the animal at very close range for about a minute in shallow water along a rocky shoreline near Mountain Point south of

Ketchikan. The sighting took place sometime in the late 1950's or the 1960's. Rob stated that "this man is an experienced commercial fisherman and stated categorically that it was not a known species of seal."

### **Tennessee Ratite**

Interesting reports were received from Stan in Tennessee concerning three-toed tracks he came across while fishing in the eastern part of the state. The tracks are about six inches long. While we agree with Stan that these are almost certainly ratite tracks (most likely an emu, but I'd be interested in someone comparing the tracks to other ratites), these do go to show that it isn't difficult for anyone to pick up and start do some local investigations. Here are a few of the notes from Stan:

"The print was made the night before of early that morning, we got there @11:00 am. There was the one clear track and a smudge/slip near-by but that was it. Most of the area is good old red clay, but around the lake there is some sandy soil, which is where the good track was. I went back the next day and the track had deteriorated to the point I wouldn't have noticed it. The "whatever it was" was moving fairly fast as dirt was pushed up on the outside of the track. The "slip" was on harder ground. It mainly showed up in the pine needles. From the back of the "slip" to the front of the track was 7' 5", a little farther than I could reach at 5'10". Despite the large stride (if it was two-legged) there were overhead branches that got in my way. This a high use area on the weekend so there were people and dog tracks in the area. Farther back in the cove I found raccoon, deer, and waterbird tracks."

"I don't think you are seeing things—I think "it" has claws. As far as I know there is no folklore associated with the area. I have heard of two different cougar sightings in the area, but nothing three-toed. I talked to several people ( a lot of first timers) up there. No one had seen anything. I have seen the same Maroon Chevy 4x4 up there several times, so it might not be just my secret.

"If it was a hoax, it wasn't meant for me. We had originally planned to go to a different spot. That didn't work out so we drove to another spot my friend knew of, which is where I found the track. (He's a good friend who lives in my house, so I know he wasn't up at the lake making tracks). This place is public (TVA) land on the lake and gets a lot of traffic on the weekend.

"I don't think the track was faked for several reasons. I thought this over carefully while studying the track. First: why make only one good track?? I think a "Joke-ster" would have make a bunch of tracks all around the mud by the lake. Second: The track was in the back of the cove; most everybody goes to the front on a small point. Third: It was made the night before— odd time to play a joke. Forth: The track had dirt bunched/piled up behind the "toes" and behind the heel. That meant it was a flexible foot that made the track. There was also dirt pushed up on the outside of the tracks, so it was moving faster than a walk. Fifth: the tracks were where they "should" be. They were near cover and in the back of the cove. This was the only place near cover would you could find a track— but I would give this one to a smart hoaxer. I don't think you would find

someone who would put on custom made flexible 3-toed shoes 6" long, go up to the lake and make two (1 1/2) tracks 7' apart. It's not that boring, even in Anderson county. I found the track on Norris lake. I want to go up there a few more times before I give the location. My feeling is that this was a creature passing through, rather than a home territory. There just isn't enough room right there, but there are a lot of places nearby."

"The "heel pad" looked to be an oval; the bottom part of a Y-shaped track. Here is a comparison of the two pictures with the lesser picture enhanced as best I can. Right now I am scannerless and my terrible artistic rendering would not be much help.

"The best answer I have gotten on the track was from Bobby Hamilton of the GCBRO. He said it could be an ostrich, emu, or rhea. Could be, but I have no idea what one of their track looks like. I guess I'll have to go to the zoo to rule that one out. The only thing I have to compare it to would be a turkey, and this track does not look like a large turkey track."

"I have been up where I found the track and found no new evidence. Raccoon, deer, ducks, people, — all sorts of tracks that I'm not looking for. I talked to a guy who lives up there. He hadn't seen or heard anything strange up there. He assured me it was a print from a stork. That stork could probably handle a 100 lb. baby!!"



Stan also asked around about local raptors, and was told of one near I-75, and another about an hour from the location, on the other side of the lake.

### **Big Vulture-like Bird**

From an email from Miles in New Jersey is a report from his father about a large bird:

“One night when he was driving through the suburbs of Rome, NY, he saw something out of the corner of his eye just above the treeline. He pulled over and looked above the trees... he saw two huge birds, twice the size of the common turkey vultures around where we lived. He said they then dove down into the trees after a few seconds. We ruled out hawks, eagles, and falcons because of the vulture shaped wings, and we ruled out a turkey vulture (the ONLY local vulture to that area) because of its sheer size! When I heard his report, I estimated the birds at about 1.5 metres tall and with a wingspan of 3 metres!”

Now, size is extremely difficult to estimate in many cases—especially when dealing with reports of reptiles, birds, and felines. But, these sort of reports do come in on occasion.

### **Nighthawk Sounds**

In response to a previous article concerning some mystery sounds in Indiana, Jan Williams noted that nighthawks might be responsible.

“Regarding Richard L King’s unexplained sound in Indiana in NABR1, has anyone suggested the Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) as a possible explanation? The Audubon Society Guide describes its behaviour as follows:

<<At the start of the mating season, male nighthawks flutter over the rooftops, giving their buzzy bzeerp or brrrrrp call; then they dive straight down, and as they plummet, the air whistling through their wings creates a sudden explosive boom.>>

“I’ve never heard this myself, but on paper it does seem to be a close match for the noises described by Richard. Location, habitat, and nocturnal calling would all fit, though whether February is the mating season for Nighthawks in Indiana is beyond me!”

This is an interesting idea that needs to be explored.

## Great Bugs in Onondaga (Classic Reprint)

Stephen Crane

A wild-eyed man in overalls told a Standard reporter yesterday a story of the strangest character. The fellow was from the sand hills. He acted as well as talked strangely, and was evidently suffering from alcoholism. He gave his name as William Davis. This is in substance the story he told, frequently interrupting himself to insist that what he related was an actual fact:

“Southeast of Brighton Corners, between here and Jamesville, on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, are extensive limestone quarries, which have been in operation for many years and have penetrated deeply into the rock. Through the cut thus made and into the quarries a branch track has been laid from the Lackawanna road for the accommodation of the hewn stone. Night work being necessary a large part of the time an arc light has been placed high over the track at the darkest part of the cut. Several cars were loaded with stone for shipment on Friday and left on the switch pending the observance of Memorial Day. Last night in preparation for drawing the cars out the electric light was cut in, and an engine with the necessary crew left the city for the quarries. What was the surprise of all hands upon reaching the scene of operations to find the track beneath the electric light completely thronged with strange insects of immense proportions, some of them lying perfectly still, huddled in bunches, and some of them playing a sort of leapfrog over their fellows’ backs. They covered a space of not less than sixty feet along the tracks, though toward either boundary of the occupied territory they grew fewer as the rays of the light began to grow dimmer. These pickets or skirmishers were one and all of a most lively disposition and scudded over the ground with that lightning-like rapidity which characterized the movements of the electric-light bugs which made their appearance all over the country soon after the system of electric lighting became of general adoption. The locomotive continued on its way, and as the drivers rolled over the insects the things gave up the ghost with a crackling sound like the successive explosions of toy torpedoes. But this was at the beginning of the swarm; as the iron monster ploughed its way along the bugs became more numerous and the crackling grew to a monotonous din, as though some fire cracker storehouse had been touched off in an hundred places, until in the thick of the multitudinous swarm the engine was brought to a stop, the drivers refusing to catch on the now slippery rails, greased by the crushed vitals of the slaughtered bugs. An examination of the insects showed a resemblance to the electric-light bug though they are somewhat larger than those bugs, the outer shell of the back being about the size and shape of half a shanghai-egg shell. It was this turtle-like armor with which the insects are equipped that made the crackling sound as the wheels passed over them. The shell is black and partakes of the nature of stone, having a slaty structure and being brittle. This property of the shell set the more thoughtful people to thinking and observing, and after a time search along the sides of the cut revealed innumerable small holes in the rock, which seemed to have been bored into it by some agency not that of man, and in them were traces of a peculiar ovula, some hatched and some apparently

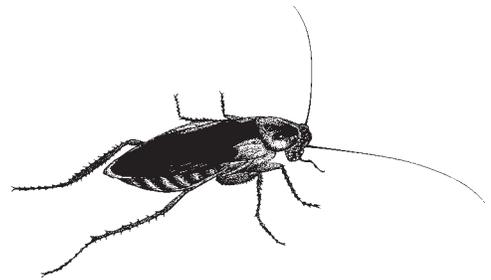
blighted. An erudite recluse whose abode is in the neighborhood of the quarries had by this time appeared, for news of the strange occurrence had spread rapidly. His opinion was that the bugs that had blocked the track were the issue of a rare species of lithodome—a rock-boring mollusk—crossed with some kind of predatory insect. To secure the shipment of the freight to-night it became necessary to let the loaded train from above in the quarry come down the grade of the cut. Gathering momentum all the time, its impetus when it came to the obstruction carried it by the bugs.”

The story, of course, is too improbable for belief and could not be verified. Davis had perhaps in his sober moments read or heard the reports of caterpillars and other insects stopping trains in Minnesota and South Carolina and in his unfortunate mental condition yesterday believed that he had actually witnessed a spectacle of a similar nature.

From: Bowers, F., ed. 1973. Stephen Crane: Tales, Sketches, and Reports. Charlottesville, VA: Univ. Press of VA.

## Firefly Synchronicity

The southeast Asian fireflies that alight on specific trees and engage in synchronous flashing are well-known and not uncommonly presented on nature documentaries.



A few species of fireflies are also known to do this in North America. The displays may not be as spectacular as those of the Asian species, but they are interesting nonetheless. Here are a few citations for those interested in learning more about this fascinating phenomenon.

Buck, J. 1988. Synchronous rhythmic flashing of fireflies. *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 63: 265-289.

Copeland, J., and A. Moiseff. 1995. The occurrence of synchrony in the North American firefly *Photinus carolinus*. *Journal of Insect Behavior* 8(3): 381-394.

Moiseff, A., and J. Copeland. 1995. Mechanisms of synchrony in the North American firefly *Photinus carolinus*. *Journal of Insect Behavior* 8(3): 395-407.

Milius, S. 1999. U.S. fireflies flashing in unison. *Science News* 155(11): 168-170.

# Introduction to the Folklore of Henry W. Shoemaker

Chad Arment

The following three articles are reprints from the various works of the early Pennsylvania folklorist Henry W. Shoemaker. Shoemaker collected and published a wide variety of tales, songs, memories, and craftways from around the state. He was very interested in the wildlife of Pennsylvania, especially those species which have been (apparently) extirpated from the state.

The reprinted articles deal with anomalies, but not necessarily as factual accounts. As one university librarian I spoke with noted, she enjoyed Shoemaker's publications but was always frustrated by having to explain to students that there is a distinction between fact and folklore. Folklore may certainly deal with facts, but it is concerned with presenting information as it is expressed, not with the accuracy of the information itself.

The first tale, from Shoemaker's (1922) Allegheny Episodes, is a fanciful explanation for "gorilla" reports in Snyder County, Pennsylvania, during 1920-1921. Obviously, it is not meant to be taken as fact. The reports on which the tale is based, however, are certainly of interest to Bigfoot researchers. I intend to do a little bibliographic investigation this year if possible in Snyder County, and perhaps the newspaper accounts of that period will shed some light on what may be some early Bigfoot sightings.

The second tale involves a panther (mountain lion) hunt, a very common story-type in early American folklore (Shoemaker 1912). The interesting aspect of this tale is that the male mountain lion has a short "raggedy" mane. One suggested explanation for the occasional "maned lion" reports in North America is a relict population of the American lion, *Panthera atrox*. This explanation has its roots in Shoemaker's writings. After the story, I have inserted a short piece from another of Shoemaker's books (Shoemaker 1917) in which he makes this connection. More plausible, however, is the suggestion that he makes in this panther tale, that this is just an aberrant feature. It certainly isn't improbable that an uncommon genetic mutation was responsible for this peculiar feature.

The third article is not a story. It is a reprint of a small pamphlet that Shoemaker produced, in which he collected several newspaper accounts of an intriguing animal shot in a Bucks County swamp. Unfortunately, we are unable to publish the photographs that accompanied the text. The feline looks almost like a long-tailed bobcat, certainly not very dissimilar from the European wildcat. There are numerous possible explanations for such an animal: hybrids (bobcat-domestic cat crosses), localized phenotypes of feral domestic cats, etc. But the thought that an unknown species could remain unrecognized due to a resemblance to an introduced species is intriguing. If the specimen was preserved in a Pennsylvania museum, genetic testing might prove interesting.

Shoemaker, H. W. 1912. *More Pennsylvania Mountain Stories*. Reading, PA: Bright Publishing Co.

Shoemaker, H. W. 1917. *Extinct Pennsylvania Animals, Part I*. Altoona, PA: Altoona Tribune Co.

Shoemaker, H. W. 1922. *Allegheny Episodes*. Altoona, PA: Altoona Tribune Co.

Shoemaker, H. W. 1922. *Felis Catus in Pennsylvania?* Altoona, PA: Times Tribune Co.

# The Gorilla

Henry W. Shoemaker

If Sir Rider Haggard was a Pennsylvanian he would doubtless lay the scenes of his wonderful mystery stories in Snyder County. It is in that ruggedly picturesque mountainous county where romance has taken its last stand, where the old touches the new, and ghosts, goblins and witches and memories of panthers, wolves and Indians linger in cycle after cycle of imaginative reminiscences. Every now and then, even in this dull, unsympathetic age, when the world, as Artist Shearer puts it, "is aesthetically dead", Snyder County is thrilled by some new ghost, witch, panther, or mystery story. The latest of these in the last days of 1920 and the first of 1921—the giant gorilla—has thrilled the entire Commonwealth by its unique horror.

The papers have told us how a gigantic man-ape escaped from a carnival train near Williamsport, and seeking the South, fled over the mountains to Snyder County, where it attacked a small boy, breaking his arm, held up automobiles, rifled smoke houses and the like, and then appeared in Snyder Township, Blair County, still further South, his nocturnal ramblings in that region proving an effective curfew for the young folks of a half-dozen rural communities.

This story sounds thrillingly interesting, but as gorillas live on fruit, and do not eat flesh, the animal in question would have starved or frozen to death at the outset of his career in the Alleghenies, and there the "X", unknown quantity of the real story begins. The newspapers have only printed the most popular versions of the gorilla mystery, only a fraction of the romance and folk-lore that sprang up mushroom-like around the presence of such an alien monster in our highlands. Already enough has been whispered about to fill a good sized volume, most of it absolutely untrue, yet some of the tales, if they have not hit the real facts, have come dangerously close to it.

Let the readers judge for themselves probably one of the most widely circulated versions among the Snyder County mountaineers, the hardy dwellers in the fastnesses of the Shade, Jack's and White Mountains, is the one about to be related. It is too personal to warrant promiscuous newspapers publication, and even now all names have been changed and localities altered, but to a Snyder County Mountaineer "all things are plain". This is the "authoritative", confidential Snyder County version, unabridged:

To begin with, all the mountain people know Hornbostl Pfatteicher, whose log cabin is situated near the heading of Lost Creek, on the borders of Snyder and Juniata Counties. He has never been much of a worker, living mostly by hunting and fishing, prospering greatly during the days when the State raised the bounty on foxes and wild cats to an outrageously extravagant figure—but no one cares; let the hunter's license fund be plundered and the taxpayers be jammed.

He was also very noticeable during the Spring and Fall forest fires, which never failed to burn

some part of his mountain bailiwick annually. He was opposed to Forester Bartschat, regarding him as too alert and intuitive, and made valiant efforts through his political bosses to have him transferred or removed. He was regular in his politics, could always have a hearing at Harrisburg, and though an ardent fisherman, saw no harm in the dynamiting or liming of streams, and upheld the right of “the interests” to pollute the waterways with vile filth from paper mills and tanneries. In other words he was, and probably is, typical of the professional mountaineer that the politicians, through the nefarious bounty laws, have maintained in the forests, to the detriment of reforestation and wild life.

Hornbostl, about 1915, was in love with a comely mountain girl, Beulah Fuchspuhr, the belle of Lost Creek Valley, but he was away from home so much, and so indifferent, and so much in his cups when in the neighborhood that she found time to become enamored of a tie-jobber named Heinie Beery, and ran away with him to Pittsburg.

During the flu epidemic, about the time of the Armistice, she was seized with the dreaded malady, and passed away, aged twenty-eight years.

Hornbostl was in the last draft, but the Armistice was signed before he was called to the colors, much to the regret of the better element, for he was the sole pro-German in the mountains—a snake in a brood of eaglets—and all allowed he should have been given a chance to fight his beloved Kaiser. Though his name had a Teutonic flavor, he was only remotely of German ancestry, and should have known better than to root for a despotism—he, above all others, whose sole creed was personal liberty when it came to interfering with his “vested rights” of hunting and fishing out of season, and all other privileges of a lawless backwoodsman.

After attending the funeral of his wife in Pittsburg, he took the train to Philadelphia, and while there the news of the Armistice was received, consequently his grief was assuaged by this very satisfying information. He boarded on one of the back streets in the southern part of the Quaker City, in a rear room, which looked out on an alley where there were still a number of private stables or mews, occupied for the most part by the horses and carriages of the aristocracy.

Hornbostl liked to sit at the window after his day’s work at Hog Island, smoking his stogie and watching the handsome equipages coming and going, the liveried colored coachmen, the long-tailed horses, with their showy brass mounted harness with jingling trappings, the animated groups of grooms, stable boys and hangers-on. Some of the darkies kept game roosters, and these occasionally strutted out into the alley and crowed when there was bright sunshine and the wind came from the “Summer Islands”.

One afternoon he saw a strange spectacle enacted at the stable opposite his window. A large collection of moth-eaten and dusty stuffed animals and birds were unloaded from a dray—stuffed elks, horns and all, several buffalo heads, four timber wolves, with a red bear like they used to have in Snyder County, a golden eagle, with tattered flopping wings and a great black beast that

stood upright like a man were the most conspicuous objects. A crowd of mostly Negro children congregated as the half a hundred mangy specimens of this "silent zoo" became too much for Hornbostl, and putting his stogie between his teeth, sallied out the back door, hatless and in his shirt sleeves, a brawny rural giant who towered above the puny civilized crowd.

He was greatly interested in that huge black beast which stood upright, and could not quite classify it, though its hair was like that of a black bear in its summer pelage. He sought out the tall Negro coachman who was in charge of the stable, and asked why a museum was being unloaded at that particular moment.

"Yer see its jest dis way" said the darkey, confidentially, "old Major Ourry have died an' 'is heirs dey didn't want de stuff about, so dey sent 'em down to de stable fer me to put in de empty box stalls".

As the conversation progressed the Negro intimated that the aforementioned heirs would be glad to sell any or all of the specimens at a reasonable figure.

"I'll give you ten dollars for that big animal that looks like a cross between a Snyder County black bear and a prize fighter", said Hornbostl.

"The *gorilla*, you mean", interposed the darkey.

"Yes, I mean the gorilla", answered the backwoodsman.

"It's yours", said the Negro with a grin, for he was to get half of the proceeds of all sales. He wondered why the uncouth stranger wanted a stuffed gorilla, but of all the animals in the collection, he was most pleased to get rid of that hideous effigy, the man-ape that might come to life some dark cold night and raise ructions with the horses.

Hornbostl offered five dollars more if the Negro would box the monster, and they finally arranged to box it together and keep it in the stable until he would be let out at Hog Island. Eventually they got it to the freight station, billed to Meiserville.

At the time of the purchase it is doubtful if Hornbostl had any definite idea of what he was going to do with his "find", all that came later. Hornbostl was glad to return to his mountain home, and sank complacently back in his seat till the 11.30 A. M. train for Selins Grove Junction. It was an uneventful trip, for he was an unimaginative person, taking everything as a matter of course, though he did notice an unusually pretty high school girl with a wonderfully refined face and carriage, who got off the train at Dauphin, and followed her with his eyes as she walked along the street back of the station and across the bridge that spans Stony Creek, until the moving train shut her from view behind Fasig's Tavern. He thought that he had never seen anything quite so lovely before; if his late sweetheart who had run away had been one quarter as beautiful and elegant she would be worth worrying about.

He reached Meiserville well after dark, for it was almost the shortest day of the year, and put up there for the night. In the morning he inquired at the freight office for his consignment, but hardly expected it that soon. He had to wait three days before it arrived, but when it did, he secured a team which hauled it to his mountain retreat, depositing the crate in front of his door. After the teamster with his pair of heavy horses, decked out with jingling bells, departed, Hornbostl unpacked his treasure, and the huge, grinning man-ape stood before him, seven feet tall. It was set up on a platform with castors, so he ran it into the house, leaving it beside the old-fashioned open fireplace, where he used to sit opposite his mother while they both smoked their pipes in the old days.

That night after supper, when the raftered room was dark, save for one small glass kerosene lamp, and the fitful light of the embers, the mountaineer sat and smoked, trying to conjure up the history of the hideous monster facing him across the inglenook. Instead of evolving anything interesting or definite, the evil genius of the man-ape, as the evening progressed, seemed to take complete possession of him. He became filled with vicious, revengeful thoughts; all the hate in his nature was drawn to the surface as the firelight flashed on the glass eyes and grinning teeth of the monstrous jungle king. All at once the maelstrom of nasty thoughts assumed coherent form, and he realized why he had brought the gorilla to Snyder County.

He had heard since going to Philadelphia that the hated Heinie Beery had taken a tie contract on the Blue Knob, the second highest mountain in Pennsylvania, somewhere on the line between Blair and Bedford Counties. He wanted to kill his rival, and now would be a chance to do it and escape detection. He would dress himself up in the hide, and proceed overland to Snyder Township, reconnoitre there, find his victim and choke him to death, which the Negro coachman had told him was the chief pastime of live gorillas in the African wilds.

Suiting the action to the word, he drew his long knife and began cutting the heavy threads which sewed the hide over the manikin. He soon had the hide lying on the deal floor, and a huge white statue of lath and plaster of Paris stood before him, like an archaic ghost. He did not like the looks of the manikin, so pounded it to a pulp with an axe to lime his kitchen garden. The hide was as stiff as a board, but between the heat of the fire and bear's grease he had it fairly pliable by morning. By the next night it was in still better shape, so he donned it and sewed himself in. Physically he was not unlike the man-ape, being gross about the abdomen, sloping shouldered and long-armed, while his prognathous jaw and retreating forehead were perfect counterparts of the gorilla's physiognomy.

Arming himself with a long ironwood staff, he started on his journey towards the Blue Knob country. He had to cross the Christunn Valley in order to get into Jack's Mountain, which he would follow along the summits to Mount Union. It was a dark, starless night, and all went well until he suddenly came upon the scene of a nocturnal wood chopping operation. The wood-cutter, a railroader, had no other chance to lay in his winter's fuel supply than after dark, and by the light of a lantern placed on a large stump had already stacked up a goodly lot of cordwood. His son, a boy

of fourteen, was ranking the wood. At the moment of the gorilla-man's appearance in the clearing the man had gone to the house for a cup of hot coffee, leaving the lad alone at his work. The boy heard the heavy footfalls on the chips, and thinking his father was returning, looked up and beheld the most hideous thing that his eyes had ever looked upon. He uttered a shriek of terror, but before he could open his lips a second time the "gorilla" was upon him, slapping his mouth until the blood flowed, with one brawny paw, while he wrenched his arm so severely with the other that he left it limp and broken, hanging by his side. Then the monster, looking back over his shoulder, loped off into the deep forest at the foot of Jack's Mountain.

The boy, more dead than alive from fright, was found a few minutes later by his father, to whom he described his terrible assailant.

After that the man-ape was more careful when he traveled, although he was seen by half a dozen persons until he got safely to the vicinity of "the Monarch of Mountains".

Blue Knob is a weird and impressive eminence around which many legends cluster, some of them dating back to Indian days. Its altitude at the new steel forest fire tower is 3,165 feet above tide. "The Lost Children of the Alleghenies" is a beautiful word picture of the disappearance of two little tots on the slopes of Blue Knob, from the gifted pen of Rev. James A. Sell, of Hollidaysburg.

Heinie Beery was living alone in a small shack on Poplar Run, a stream which has its heading on the slopes of Blue Knob, not far from the home of the mighty hunter, Peter Leighty. Since the loss of his wife he was gloomy and taciturn, and refused to live with his choppers and teamsters in their big camp further down in the hollow.

While searching for Beery, the man-gorilla was seen by several of the woodsmen, and the lonely camp was almost in a panic by this savage visitation. The man-ape was glad that his outlandish appearance struck terror to all who saw him, else he might have been captured long before. He watched his chance to get Beery where he wanted him and in the course of several days was rewarded. Meanwhile he had to live somehow, and at dead of night broke into smoke-houses and cellars, eating raw eggs and butter when hunger pressed him hard. In some ways it was no fun playing gorilla on an empty stomach.

One Sunday afternoon Beery, after eating dinner with his crew at their camp near the mouth of the hollow, started on a solitary ramble up the ravine which led past the small shanty where in the local vernacular, he "bached it" towards the top of the vast and mysterious Blue Knob. Little did he know that the man-ape was waiting behind his cabin, and followed him to the summit, which he reached about dusk, and sat on a flat rock on the brink of a dizzy precipice watching the lights flashing up at Altoona and Johnstown, the long trains winding their way around Horse Shoe Curve. He heard the brush crack behind him, and looking around beheld the hideous monster that he had supposed his workmen had conjured up out of brains addled by too much home-brew.

Heinie Beery was a fighting Dutchman, but on this occasion his curly black hair stood straight on end, and his dark florid face became as ashen as death. He lost his self-control for an instant, and in this fatal moment the giant “gorilla” gripped him behind the shoulders and sent him careening over the precipice “to take a short cut to Altoona”.

With a shout of glee the monster turned on his heel, his mission accomplished, to return along the mountains and through the forests to his cabin near the sources of Lost Creek. He was seen by a number of children at Hollidaysburg and Frankstown, late at night, frightening them almost out of their wits; he terrified several parties of automobilists near Yellow Springs; he had all of Snyder Township in an uproar before he had passed through it, but he eventually got to Shade Mountain safe and sound.

Once on his home mountains, overlooking Lewistown Narrows, a strange remorse overcame him; he began to regret his folly, his odd caprice. He sat on a high rock near the top of the mountain, much in the attitude of Rodin’s famous “Penseur”, and began to sob and moan. It was a still night, and the trackwalkers down in the valley heard him and called to him through their megaphones. But the more they called the worse he groaned and shrieked, as if he liked to mystify the lonely railroad men. At length he got up and started along the mountain top, wailing and screaming like a “Token”, until out of hearing of the trackwalkers and the crews of waiting freight trains. He had played a silly game, made a *monkey* of himself and was probably now a murderer in the bargain. He could hardly wait until he got to his cabin to rip off the hideous, ill-smelling gorilla’s hide, and make a bonfire of it. He hoped that, if no evil consequence befell him as a result of his mad prank, he would be a better man in the future.

However, as he neared his cabin, all his good resolves began to ooze out of his finger tips. By the time he reached the miserable cabin he decided to stick to his disguise, and continue the adventure to the end, come what may. If he would be shot down like a vile beast, it would only be retribution for Heinie Beery hurled off the crag of Blue Knob, without a chance to defend himself. The night was long; he would travel until morning and hide among the rocks until night, picking up what food he could along the way.

In his northward journey he had many thrilling experiences, such as crossing the covered bridge at Northumberland at midnight, riding on the trucks of a freight train to Jersey Shore and frightening fishermen at Hagerman’s Run. When last seen he was near the flourishing town of Woolrich, frightening old and young, so much so that a young local sportsman offered a reward of “five hundred dollars dead, one thousand dollars alive”, putting the Snyder County gorilla in the same category with the Passenger Pigeon as a natural history curiosity.

And in this terrible disguise Hornbostl Pfatteicher is expiating his sins, black as the satanic form he has assumed, and when his penance is over, to be shed for the newer and better life.

# The Courage of Peter Pentz

Henry W. Shoemaker

The best view of the big “bare place” on the Bald Eagle Mountain between McElhattan and Castanea is obtained from the new State Road on the opposite side of the river. The long, unbroken ridge stretches like a moss-green colored wall, and is so narrow in some places on the comb or summit that one can sit astride of the rocks with one leg in the West Branch Valley and the other in the Valley of the Kammerdiner.

There are two bare places on the long ridge; one, comparatively small directly above the village of McElhattan, and the other, a great lengthy space like the scalded flank of a backyard cat, and covering over fifty acres, stretching from the summit two-thirds of the way down the mountain, about midway between the small glen known as the “Little Gap” and the gap at Castanea.

Both bare places are noticeable for miles with their masses of gray-white rock; the smaller one has a large charred stump near the centre which looks at first glance like a crouching bear. The larger one is of more uneven contour and abounds with fissures, crevices and caverns.

Bears, foxes and raccoons have been taken out of the caves within the past twenty years, and to judge from the bones found in some of these hiding places, they must have abounded with animals a hundred years ago. The early settlers in the valley paid little attention to the animals which nowadays are regarded as “dangerous.” They would hardly go to the trouble of loading their muskets to shoot a bear. “They are our hogs,” the Indians would say, and the whites declared if such were the case “they were welcome to them.”

Foxes gave them some annoyance, but their real enemies were the wolves and panthers. That the panther was the most feared is evidenced by the fact that “panther stories” are the most numerous of all the hunting reminiscences of Central Pennsylvania. They figured in the witchcraft stories as well; it was much more impressive for the witch to assume the form of a panther than a wolf, a wildcat, or a domestic animal.

Lions in British East Africa are hardly more numerous than were panthers in the West Branch Valley up to the end of the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century. Even in Eastern Pennsylvania they abounded, 50 being killed in Luzerne county in 1818. Though hundreds are slain, their diminishing numbers were due principally to the killing off of their chief food supply, the buffaloes, elk and deer.

The first settlers at the foot of the Bald Eagle Mountain which contains the “bare places” attempted to raise cattle, sheep and hogs. This suited the panthers exactly, as calves, lambs and pigs were easier to capture, and gave up without the tussle common to the wild creatures. There

was one panther which gave no end of trouble for six years. Those who saw him at close range, for he was very bold, and would carry off a sheep out of a barnyard stated that he had a tawney matted mane like a lion. If he were seen today he would be classed as an “escaped lion from a circus,” but as there were no circuses in this country in those days he couldn’t have been that.

Experimental zoologists would have ticketed him as a hybrid between a panther and a shepherd dog. But he was in most probability a particularly masculine panther, a veritable *Felis Cougar Rex*. A list of the settlers who had had a shot at or hunted the elusive monster would sound like a taxpayers’ list from the Great Island to the Long Reach. The subject of destroying it had been discussed with the redoubtable Peter Pentz but he had been too busy fighting Indians to give much attention to the outlaws of the animal kingdom.

On one occasion when there was a lull in the hostilities with the Red Men he was paying a visit to Isaac Dougherty whose cabin was located where McElhattan Run empties into the Susquehanna. The evening of his arrival he was sitting with Dougherty on a bench under one of the giant linnwood trees on the river bank, discussing some of their expeditions against the Indians of ten years before, when they heard their dogs barking and a loud commotion in the barnyard. Seizing their guns with which they had been testing their old-time skill on a very alert loon in the river, they ran in the direction of the racket.

Five young steers were huddled in a mass in one corner, lowing pitifully. A full panel of the slab fence was down, and around it were several pools of blood. There was a bloody path three feet wide leading from the barn yard into the woods, looking as if every inch of the way had been contested in some fierce combat. The men were good runners and soon overtook the warring elements.

There was a level piece of ground covered with walnut trees, that had been cleared of underbrush long ago by the herds of buffaloes. In the semi-darkness they made out the prostrate form of a red and white spotted steer; on it was crouched a huge yellowish animal with a long hood of matted hair like a lion.

Nearby lay the two hounds, panting and occasionally giving vent to howls of pain. “*Felis Cougar Rex*” was clearly master of the situation. When he saw the two hunters he gritted his teeth so audibly that they heard it plainly twenty yards away. Then he buried his head in a hole he had ripped in the carcass of the steer, taking a last long drink of its blood, and turned and bounded off in the direction of the steep face of the mountain. Both men fired their muskets, but their shots went wide.

There was no time to put the suffering hounds out of their misery, so the men ran after the retreating monster, tracking him easily in the soft ground and by occasional drops of blood which dripped from his gorged mouth.

The climb up the mountain was steep and perilous after dark, but Peter Pentz and Isaac Dougherty had never turned back for man or beast, and this time they were thoroughly aroused. The panther was light of foot, but at times he would break a twig in his leaps, which kept his pursuers from losing him, as there was no tracking on the rocky, mountain slope, and it was too late at night to detect any drops of blood. "He's making for the bare place," whispered Pentz, who was a faster climber than Dougherty. He ran almost as fast as the animal, but stopped every few minutes to allow his companion to catch up with him.

At length they reached the lower end of the bare place just in time to see the tail of the panther disappearing into the great cavern near the middle of the stony desert. "We've got him!" shouted Peter Pentz in triumph. The two men climbed up to the mouth of the cave, which was so low, that a human being could only enter by crawling on his belly. They lit a fire from a quantity of pine cones that had blown from the forest above, and soon had a brilliant blaze started. On it they threw a couple of logs which they found in a cranny in the rocks.

When the wind blew from the west the firelight illuminated the cavern, but disclosed no signs of the panther. "There must be a bend in the passage," remarked Dougherty. Peter Pentz took the two muzzle-loading rifles and primed them carefully. Then he got down on "all fours," dragging a gun under each arm and with a lighted pine torch in his mouth he crawled into the cave. "If I don't get him the first shot, I'll get him the second," was his cheerful *au revoir*.

Dougherty had seen his friend in a good many tight places in the past, but he could not help wonder what the panther would be doing if he dodged the first charge. The animal must have had his stronghold deep in the bowels of the earth, for it seemed a good ten minutes before the muffled report of the rifle was heard. "He's got him the first shot," murmured Dougherty in thankfulness.

But when, two minutes later, another report emanated from the cavern his worst fears were awakened. Drawing his hunting knife he crawled into the opening in search of his absent friend. When he came to the bend in the passage he called "Peter, Peter, are you alive?" Immediately came the cheery answer, "Yes, yes, Isaac, but I had to kill two of them."

Dougherty hurried his "snail's pace" as best he could, until by the wavering glare of his torch he could see the outlines of Peter Pentz and his victims. They lay one behind the other in the narrow gallery, but the foremost one was *Felis Cougar Rex* with a bullet hole through his mustard colored skull. The second was a female; she, too, had been shot through the head.

Death had been instantaneous in both cases and they lay with heads resting on their paws, like huge cats fallen asleep.

"When I got within three feet of the hairy one, he rushed at me, but my bullet was speedier and he dropped. The she one tried to do the same thing, but she was easy, as the roof was low, and I finished her before she could climb over the body of her mate." This was the modest way in which

Peter Pentz described his wonderful “kill.”

“Over yonder in that bowl in the rocks are three cubs, the cutest little things you ever saw,” he continued “We’ll take them home as pets.” With the enthusiasm of a child he crawled over the two carcasses and reached into the nest and drew out the young animals, which had slept through their parents’ execution.

“We’ll leave the dead ones here,” said Dougherty, but before they left Pentz scalped the male carcass, and hung the trophy, with its matted mane, to his belt.

The morning star was sole possessor of the heavens when they emerged from the gloomy labyrinth, but it appeared a trifle droopy as it dodged among the tops of the tall pines on the comb of the Bald Eagle Mountain. Carrying the three cubs they returned to the Dougherty cabin, and after a comfortable breakfast spent the morning building an enclosure for them. Peter Pentz rounded out the balance of his visit in peace, but when he left for “down country,” he found the fame of his latest exploit had preceded him.

“We hear you killed the hairy panther in his cave,” everyone would say. In reply the big red-haired frontiersman would smile modestly and point to the scalp with its long, matted brownish-yellow hair, which hung at his belt. “That’s how a good many Indians would like to wear my scalp,” he would add, and then turn the subject of the conversation into other channels.

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From Shoemaker (1917):

“It is interesting to note that Peter Pentz, the famous Indian fighter, killed a *maned* male panther near McElhattan Run, Clinton County, in 1798. The Indians told the Dutch settlers on Manhattan Island that the hides of panthers they brought there to sell were from females, that the males had manes and were difficult to capture. Perhaps the earliest form of the panther possessed maned males. They may be a modification of the prehistoric lions which Prof. Leidy called *felis atrox*, and which ranged parts of the continent. The Indians may have repeated an old tradition, and not something made out of the whole cloth.”

Also,

“The hide of a West Virginia pantheress killed on the Greenbriar River, Pocohontas County, in 1901, three-quarters grown, owned by Hon. C. K. Sober, of Lewisburg, has long white hair on chest and belly, a fluffy, dark brown tail, culminating in a large tuft of black hair, like the tip of the tail of an African lion.”

## Felis Catus in Pennsylvania?

Henry W. Shoemaker

For years the writer has heard the persistent under-current of rumors that *Felis Catus*, or some allied type of long-tailed wild cat was an early inhabitant of the Pennsylvania forests. Frankly he did not believe these stories, thinking that the animals in question were either feral house cats or young of *Felis Couguar*. The recent capture of a specimen in Tinicum Township, Bucks County, its description and photographing, all make it seem as if, after all, there was a long tailed wild cat in Pennsylvania, along with the Panther (*Felis Couguar*), the Canada Lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*) and the Bob Cat (*Lynx Rufus*). As the heathcock, the Carolina Paroquet and the Moose Jay ("Camp Robber") were exterminated in Pennsylvania before they were generally included in our lists of wild life, and although the wolf has been extinct less than a third of a century, not a skin or bone remains, it is possible that the long-tailed wild cat or 'coon cat, never a plentiful animal, and of nocturnal habits was wiped out of existence without being recorded in our natural history. Appended hereto are the contemporary newspaper accounts of the capture of the wild cat, taken from the "Bucks County News" of Doylestown, Pa., which seem to be unusually clear and comprehensive, while for frontispiece appears photographs of the specimen, taken by State Game Warden Warren Fretz, of Doylestown.

It seems a great pity that this animal was not kept alive, but it is hoped that if the mate is ever taken, its life will be spared for the benefit of science and the joy of nature-lovers. In this connection it may be well to quote statements of some competent Pennsylvania sportsmen and naturalists on the subject of the coon-tailed wild cat in this State:

C. H. Shearer, Artist, of Tuckerton, Berks County, born in 1846, says: "When I was a boy the long-tailed wild cat inhabited the range of mountains which culminates at Mount Penn, above Reading. I have caught three of them in my time in Irish Gap, say about 1857 or 1858, two by a hind foot, and one by a front foot. I always dreaded to get them in my traps as they fought so fiercely and were hard to kill. They were larger than the biggest domestic cats, their winter coat very fluffy, their faces were broad and the tails were beautifully ringed. I was never sure if they were a native wild animal, or were brought over by early Colonists from Europe, or else were tame house cats gone wild, in the third or fourth generation. I have sketched them, and remember their appearance as clearly as if it were yesterday."

Chauncey E. Logue, State wild animal trapper, of Woolrich, Clinton County, born on First Fork of Sinnemahoning Creek, in 1870, and probably the leading bob cat hunter of his generation says: "The older people where I was brought up, it was a wild region up to twenty years ago, always gave me to understand there was a fourth species of the cat family in Pennsylvania, a long-tailed wild cat. As a small boy I saw the carcasses of several that had been killed by hunters, and my recollection is clearly that they were not like house cats that took to the woods." Emmanuel

Harman, hunter, of Mt. Zion, Clinton County, born in 1832, who died several years ago said: "Young panthers were sometimes found in the woods by the early settlers and because of their long tails, called 'wild cats', but there was also a true wild cat in the Pennsylvania mountains, with a long tail, clearly marked and barred; these I have seen and helped to kill several times when I was a boy." George A. Betzer, State Game Protector, of White Deer Mountain, Lycoming County, born in 1862, says: "As a boy in Snyder County, in the mountains I always heard the old hunters say that there were still a few long-tailed wild cats left, of a race fairly plentiful when the first settlers came in, but quickly killed off or driven away. Once while on a hunt I helped to kill a magnificent long-tailed wild cat; it ran up a tree and out on a limb, and we shot it. I examined it closely, and it was anything but like a domestic cat that becomes wild. I have seen many domestic cats that took to the woods, they are great game destroyers, and I have killed them, but there are differences about the size of the head and body which allow no mistakes being made by a careful observer." It will be indeed interesting if a form of *Felis Catus* can be added to the list of our Pennsylvania *fauna* at this late date and it will show that science never stands still, that there are constant rewards in store for the seekers after knowledge. It is hoped that the publication of this little pamphlet will have the effect of shedding further light on the question, and that communications will come in from experienced hunters and trappers, who will by the weight of their evidence either prove or disprove this important and interesting topic. Just because natural histories, often the work of parlor or professional naturalists, who do not dare deviate from the hewn path of their equally indoor predecessors, declare that such and such an animal or bird does not exist or never existed, probably several species have been lost or confused in Pennsylvania faunal history—cases in point are the Black Moose, and the Bison, now clearly established as a part of our list of mammals within the past two hundred years.

Henry W. Shoemaker,

Altoona Tribune Office, May 6, 1922.

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### **Wild Cat Caught In Tincum Twp.**

#### **Rare Animal, Supposed to Be Nearly Extinct, Trapped by 16-Year-Old Lad**

#### **Sportsmen To See It Here**

A genuine wild cat, a species of animal that is now said to be very rare in this country, was trapped and killed on Monday, January 16, by Tunis Brady, the 16-year-old son of Joseph Brady, on the Cook premises, on the edge of the State Auxiliary game preserve in the Tincum Swamp, this county. With the possible exception of two similar animals killed about two years ago by a son of Daniel Trouts in the same locality, this is probably the first wild cat known to be taken in Bucks county for nearly three-quarters of a century. The last wild cat shot in central Bucks county was

killed on Spruce Hill, about a mile below Chalfont fifteen or twenty years before the Civil War. This capture is said to be the only authenticated taking of a wild cat anywhere in the county until the capture last Monday—but the Spruce Hill cat may have been a bob cat.

The carcass of the Nockamixon cat is now in the possession of Game Protector Warren Fretz, who will exhibit it at the annual meeting and smoker of the Bucks County Fish, Game and Forestry Association next Tuesday night, when it will no doubt be an object of great curiosity to the sportsmen.

### Terrified the Neighborhood

For three years residents in the vicinity of the Auxiliary Game Preserve have known of the presence of some strange wild animal in the vicinity, which uttered “unearthly” yells at night. So terrifying were the cries of this animal that timid women in that sparsely settled part of the county were afraid to go out of the house at night. Young Brady tracked two strange animals a few weeks ago to a den in some huge rocks near his home on the Cook place and set a trap with the idea of capturing them. Three times they sprung the traps without being caught.

### Put Up a Big Fight

Last Monday the animals were less fortunate and one of them, the male, was securely caught with one hind foot and one front foot in the trap. When Brady went to look at the traps in the morning and found that he had captured some animal, he attempted to kill it with a club, but the animal put up such a terrific fight that the boy thought it would break the trap-chain and escape. He then procured a rifle and killed it with several shots in the head. It was the male cat, and its companion, believed to be a female, is still under the rocks.

### Not a Domestic “Wild” Cat

The captured animal is not a domestic cat gone back to a wild state, but is, without much doubt a distinct species—a genuine wild cat. It is not a bob cat nor a Canada lynx, nor is it a cross between these two animals, as some people have pronounced it. It corresponds exactly with the description of the wild cat contained in Dr. J. G. Wood’s “Natural History,” and it occupied precisely the habitat which Dr. Wood says the wild cat frequents, “rocky and woody country, making its home in the cleft of some rocks,” a place just like that in which this wild cat was captured.

### The Cat’s Measurements

The animal captured in Nockamixon has strong and powerful claws and teeth, and its head is large in proportion to its body. It apparently has not an ounce of surplus flesh, being sinewy and wiry, and yet it weighs eight and a half pounds. Its length from the tip of his nose to the tip of its tail is 30 inches. Its body length is 20 inches and it stands 13 inches high. Its front legs are 7 inches long

and its back legs 13 inches. Its head measures 11 inches in circumference the broad way and 13 1/2 inches the long way. It measures 3 inches between the ears and 7 inches across the ears. Its body is 12 inches around just behind its forelegs and 14 1/2 inches around the centre. Its tail is scant 11 inches long, thick and inclined to be bushy, which distinguishes it from the domestic cat, which has a long tapering tail.

### Its Peculiar Markings

Its markings are precisely those Dr. Wood describes for the wild cat—the fur being a sandy gray, with some yellow or buffy color, the buff color being particularly noticeable on the body under the hind legs. A dark line extends from the shoulders along the spine to the end of the tail. It has black “tiger” markings on the body, legs and tail. The black stripes extend entirely around the body and hind legs. On the front legs the black bands run into black patches on the under side.

The top of the head is black, and the face grey, marked with regular black lines. The “whiskers” or “feelers” are white, stiff and bristly and rather abundant. The chin and neck are lighter gray than the rest of the body and also buffy, with a median transverse double half-moon brown line. The throat has a conspicuous white spot.

The tail is of the prevailing gray color, ringed with bands of black, and has a long black tip, the whole resembling a raccoon’s tail. The dark markings on the animal are not uniform in intensity, but they contrast with the grey with sufficient strength to make it a very striking-looking beast.

### Distribution of the Wild Cat

The wild cat, though little known here, is widely spread, being found not only in this country, but in the British Isles, Continental Europe, Northern Asia and Nepaul, though it is not as common anywhere now as it once was. It has been claimed that it is a native of Ireland, though this is disputed. It is sometimes called the British tiger, though it now is seldom found in England.

It has been claimed that the domestic cat originated from the wild cat, but this theory has been rejected by most scientific investigators. Domestic cats sometimes revert to wild life, but no matter how many generations they continue wild, there are still certain distinctions between the wild domestic cat and the wild cat. Some naturalists claim that our race of domestic cats originated from the Egyptian cat, which more nearly resembles the domestic cat than the wild cat, but, while this theory is highly probable, it has never been satisfactorily proven.

The capture of the Nockamixon wild cat is likely to cause a stir in scientific circles, because of the rarity of the incident. It is believed that there are several more of his breed in the same territory. In fact the animal is now so little known that some recently published natural histories do not even mention it—Bucks County News, January 20, 1922.

## **Tinicum Wild Cat Discussion**

### **Capture of European Species Raises Question of Its American Nativity**

#### **Great Interest In "Find"**

The publication of the story yesterday in the Bucks County Daily News of the capture of an European wild cat in the Tinicum swamp by Tunis Brady, a sixteen-year-old resident on one of the tracts included in the Bucks County Fish, Game and Forestry Association's Auxiliary Preserve created great interest locally and among naturalists generally. It is also likely to raise a controversy as to whether or not the European wild cat is a native of this country. Dr. Wood, the author of the British work on natural history, quoted in yesterday's story, mentions this animal as being found in 'this country,' but he clearly means England and not America.

#### **Should Be Investigated**

Instead of becoming a matter of controversy the question as to whether the European wild cat is indigenous to America ought to be a matter for serious and careful investigation. Present day American writers on natural history do not mention the European wild cat as a member of the native fauna. While admitting that the animal captured in Tinicum may be the European wild cat (*Felis catus*), they say it is probably an escape from a menagerie and does not belong to this country's fauna.

There are others, however, who believe that the *Felis catus* is an American animal; that in the early settlement of this country it was somewhat common, but, as it does not stand persisting hunting, had become practically extinct over a large area of the country. These claimants say that it has escaped notice in recent years because it so closely resembles the "tiger" type of domestic cat, and that hunters who have killed them in modern days have never brought them to the attention of naturalists because they thought them domestic cats, and thus they have escaped the attention of naturalists.

#### **Naturalists May Have Overlooked It**

Dr. Henry C. Mercer, of Doylestown, who saw the animal killed in Tinicum not only says that the specimen is an European wild cat, but is inclined to the opinion that the animals are indigenous to this country. He cites a quotation from Oliver Goldsmith's "History of Animated Nature," in which Goldsmith states that Columbus was shown one of these wild cats by a hunter who killed it on this side of the Atlantic.

## Well Established in Tincum

It may be difficult to prove now that this animal is native to America. There is not much doubt, however, that it has become thoroughly established in the Tincum Swamp. Residents in the vicinity have known of the existence of strange animals there for several years. Two similar animals were killed in that territory between two and three years ago, while the one trapped this week had a mate which is still in hiding in the rocky fastnesses of the swamp region.

The specimen captured on January 16 is still in the possession of Game Protector Fretz, who has called the attention of Dr. Woodruff, a noted naturalist of this State, to the capture. The animal will be exhibited at the annual meeting and smoker of the Bucks County Fish, Game and Forestry Association in the Sixth Regiment Armory next Tuesday night, after which it will be placed in the hands of a taxidermist for mounting.—Bucks County News, January 21, 1922.

## **Tincum Cat True Wild Cat**

### **Species Not So Near Extinct as Many Naturalists Think**

#### **Its Habits Are Nocturnal**

By Miss Elizabeth C. Cox, of Holicong

I have been very much interested in the Wild Cat, caught in the Tincum swamp. I went to see it and was much surprised to read that the sportsmen generally pronounced it a “domestic cat.”

#### Species Not Nearly Extinct

Instances that have come to my knowledge lead me to believe that it is a wild cat, and that the species is not so nearly extinct as is suggested. Years ago I read a book entitled “Early Settlers in Canada.” It was a very old book, the story of an English family who settled in central Canada, while that country was a trackless wilderness. One night one of the boys of the family shot an animal in a tree near the house. When they examined it, they think it a domestic cat, but an old man, a hunter and trapper, who has spent practically all his life in the forest, tells them that it is a wild cat, that while it is smaller than either the Canadian lynx or the more common bobcat, it is much more fierce than either of them and cannot be tamed, and the reason they have not encountered it before is because it is entirely nocturnal in its habits. The description of the animal, in the book, as I remember it tallies perfectly with the specimen in Mr. Fretz’s possession.

#### One in the Philadelphia Zoo

One time at the Philadelphia Zoo they had in a small cage an animal ticketed “Indian Devil.”

When I first saw it it was curled up asleep, and looked like a large house cat, but when aroused it jumped against the bars of the cage hissing and spitting, with ears laid close to its head, bit at the bars and seemed in a perfect frenzy to attack us.

Some time afterwards, when visiting the zoo, I asked an old man, who was working about the garden, if he remembered the "Indian Devil."

"Oh yes," he said; it was one of them wild cats out of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It soon died. You can't keep 'em in captivity. Why, that beast just spent every night while it lived buttin' its head agin the bars tryin' to git out. It eat enough, but it just killed itself tryin' to git away."

As I remember the cat at the zoo it was not quite as distinctly striped as Mr. Fretz's cat, and was, perhaps, a little larger. But it had the same large round head, flat ears and short ringed tail.

#### Found in Fayette County

A lady whose home was at one time on the summit of Chestnut Ridge, a spur of the Allegheny Mountains, in Fayette county, Pennsylvania, tells me that these long-tailed wild cats are by no means uncommon there; that often in driving at night they would see a wild cat cross the road in front of the car, taking his time and staring at the lights as he went. She says she never knew them to attack anyone. but that when they drove in a carriage they always carried a pistol as a protection against wildcats, and that they were always warned that if they had meat in the carriage and encountered a wild cat to throw the meat to it and get away as fast as possible.

(Miss Cox's contribution to the Wild Cat question is very interesting and valuable. Miss Cox is one of the most careful investigators and most conscientious naturalists in Bucks county, and her opinion and the facts she relates should have much weight. It is to be hoped that other naturalists will make similar inquiries.—Editor.)—Bucks County News. January. 1922.



# Virginia Devil Monkey Reports

Chad Arment

One of the most intriguing, and rarely discussed, North American cryptids are those primate-like animals which appear to move by leaping on their hind legs. These pseudo-kangaroos have been discussed by Loren Coleman on several occasions, most recently with Patrick Huyghe in The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mysterious Primates Worldwide (1999). The authors note that these may be related to Choctaw tales of the “nalusa falaya.” Generically, they and other researchers have termed these reported creatures “devil monkeys.”

This past year, I came across a website which provided three reports which seem relate to these devil monkey sightings. Paulette Boyd lives in southwest Virginia and has a strong interest in the folklore of that area, placing a number of tales on her website. When she collected the tales of this strange critter, she wasn't certain what it was, and suggested that it may just be a local version of bigfoot. She has consented to allow me to publish these reports here.

## Sighting by Paulette's parents

“These events were experienced by my mother and father many years ago, (1959) and for as long as I can remember, they have sworn it to be true. My dad, bless him (I really miss him, you know), was always a yarn spinner, but I have verified all the facts with my mother, who is a much more serious minded person. Whatever, this is the story, to the best of my recollection.

“In the late 50's and early 60's, my parents owned and operated a small restaurant and bar. They had contracted a concession stand for a local church's annual three day meeting (An Association Meeting, or May Meeting, it was called). To keep the drinks and ice-cream cold, they needed dry ice, which was sold in Saltville, several miles from our hometown. The meetings started early, so to have the ice and concessions ready, it required a late night/early morning trip to the dry ice plant, which opened around 5 AM. They planned to be there when the plant opened, and back home in time for the meeting the following morning.

“They left home around 2 AM. and made good time. It was a very bright moonlit night—bright enough to read time on my Dad's pocket watch. (This is important, since visibility plays an important role in the events to come.)

“After taking a coffee break in a church lot at around 3:30-4:00, they continued on their way, but somehow took the wrong turn-off and ended up on a lonely one lane road in the middle of nowhere. As they rounded a curve in the road, where a fairly high embankment was on the right side, they noticed a movement in the headlights on the embankment. My Dad thought that it might be a deer, and slowed the car for my mother to get a better look.

“Suddenly, a “creature” sprung from the embankment to the road, headed directly for the front window of the car. It looked as if it would crash right through the window and into the front seat. Instead, with a twist of its body, and a spin of its front arms, it changed course, and came to land beside the car on the passenger side. When my mother turned to look, it’s face was pressed against the passenger window, only inches away from her. The description of this creature is as follows: Light, taffy colored hair, with a white blaze down it’s neck and underbelly. It stood on two large, well muscled back legs, and had shorter front legs or arms. No tail was visible. When it landed beside the car, my father hit the gas and sped up—the creature kept up with the car for a short while, but then fell behind—but never stopped chasing the vehicle, grasping for the car with it’s front paws.

“Hitting a straight patch of road, and putting some little distance between the car and the creature, my father stopped the car and withdrew a pistol that he always carried, planning on shooting the “monster.” My mother pleaded hysterically with him not to fire, for she feared that a shot might not stop the creature, and enrage it more. Giving in, my dad got back in the car, and took off as fast as he could, finally losing the creature from sight, and not stopping to see if it wanted to catch up (g). They continued down the road, finally finding their way to the ice plant, and getting their ice, returned home. When they examined the car, three long scratches were found on the passenger side, from the front door to the rear, all the way into the bright under-metal. They vow (and I believe them) that this was no bear, or dog, or even an escaped kangaroo (as someone once suggested), but something completely unknown and unexplainable.

“Several days after this incident, two nurses in the Saltville area were driving home from work early one morning, and were attacked by an unknown creature who ripped the convertible top from their car before they escaped. A search party was formed, but the dogs brought in to track the creature refused to follow the trail. It has never been explained.”

Report as told by Paulette’s brother, James Boyd

“In the summer of 1975 I was telling the story of the unidentified animal to a group of friends where I worked. One of the listeners got this funny look on his face, leaped out of his chair and started to shout ‘I’ve seen it! I’ve seen it!’ I asked him ‘What the Hell’ he was talking about. I informed him that the incident I was describing happened to my parents in about 1958-59. His reply was ‘I don’t give a Da-n when they saw it, I saw it about two years ago.’

“At this point I got a funny look on my face! He proceeded to describe what he had observed one evening in 1973 as he was traversing the mountain road between Marion Va. and Tazewell Va. Here is his story.

““One evening as I was driving across the mountain from Marion to Tazewell, I was going up the mountain on the Marion side. I was driving with my window down and had my arm out the window. Somewhere about half-way up the winding mountain road a noise outside the car caught

my attention. When I glanced out the window to my left I saw an ‘animal’, just like the one you were describing, rush at my car from the edge of the woods and make a grab at my arm. I was so scared I mashed the accelerator to the floor and never let up till I reached the town of Richlands, Va.’

“My friend was so obviously shaken that I had no choice but to believe him.

#### Report from Paulette’s neighbors

“Until I started compiling this group of stories, the creature that had attacked my parents so long ago had not been something that I had thought about in a long time. My brother James, was helping me get started, and in the course of the conversation, this story arose. As you can see by the “Lonely Back roads” Addendum, he had something to add to the story—a more recent update of a second sighting. Stranger still, it seems that yet another has possibly occurred.

“Our neighbors, Cathy and Danny, have recently purchased a plot of land and a mobile home in Smyth County, Virginia, near Saltville. As you know, this is the area of the first and the second sighting of this mysterious creature. Currently, they are using the home in Saltville as their second home, using it on weekends, and for holiday retreats.

“A couple of weeks ago, Cathy, Danny and their two children were in route to their Smyth County home for a long weekend. To take advantage of less traffic, and to enjoy the scenery, they left the interstate roadway, and took a smaller, less busy side road that ran somewhat parallel to the highway. They were driving casually along, enjoying the pleasant, quiet countryside. As they topped over a rise in the road, Danny was forced to slow the truck almost to a stop to prevent striking a large animal that darted into the roadway.

“They sat there, amazed, and a bit frightened, as this huge creature crossed the road in front of them, jumped the ditch line, and over a fence, and proceeded in the high weeds lining the road to disappear into the ground cover.

“According to all witnesses, this animal was unlike any they had seen before. Walking on all four legs, it stood around three feet high. Covered in shaggy, rough greying brown fur, it had a long, muzzle and small, pointed ears. The legs of the creature were short, with the hind legs much larger than the front, and sporting long, kangaroo like rear feet. Claws were evident on both the hind, and smaller front feet. If this creature had stood on these powerful looking hind legs, they stated, it would have been at least five and a half to six feet tall. It also sported a long, hairless (opossum like was the term they used) tail.

“Though moving quickly, it gave the appearance in its gait and the gray mottled fur of an older animal. They watched in amazement as it quickly disappeared from sight.

“If this indeed were the same creature that was witnessed by my parents, it would have to be

close to fifty years old, or even if it were the creature seen in the second sighting, it would have to be at least thirty years old. Such a life span would be amazing—but what if it were a descendant of one of the others? This seems even more amazing, for that would indicate that there are several of these creatures roaming about, BREEDING. Scary thought, right?”

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There are, of course, some differences between the above details and the notes in Coleman and Huyghe's Field Guide. The most distinctive is the small and barely noticeable tail in the VA reports. Without knowing on which reports Coleman and Huyghe base their mention of a “thick tail,” I can't comment on this. I do suspect that the range of this animal is not nearly so wide as suggested in the Field Guide. The problem when dealing with any possible unknown (and rarely reported) animal is that you have to sift through a number of seemingly related reports, not knowing for certain which are more likely to be misidentifications of common species, hoaxes, etc. My suspicion is that this reported critter (if indeed it is more than just folklore) will be found to be primarily an eastern inhabitant of forests, wetlands, etc. Apparently, Mark A. Hall will be publishing more on this apparent cryptid; hopefully that will provide further details on rumored sightings.

Paulette did mention one further point to me. While recently discussing these reports with her brother, he remembered that he had once shown their mother a magazine illustration of a fossil species, a sort of lemur-like animal, and she had remarked that it looked very close to what she had seen.

For the complete reports, you can visit the following URL and browse Paulette's website:  
<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Shire/2622/booger.htm>

## **Scorpions in New York?**

I recently received a note from a New York resident who had seen scorpions living in the rock/stone walls in Orangeburg, New York, twenty or so years earlier. He had talked to a local teacher who has seen them in northern Rockland county and in Putnam county. A member of his American Legion post also reported seeing them on his backyard stone wall in Pearl River, NY.

The resident stated that there was a distinctive stinger on them, which would be noticeably absent on other arachnids like pseudoscorpions. (Pseudoscorpions are also distinctly smaller than North American scorpions.) He had called Cornell's co-op agency, but was told that scorpions are not found in New York. Now, if these arachnids are found in that state, they are likely *Vaejovis carolineanus*. That species is not known that far north, but it does a large range in eastern North America, so it might be worthwhile for some enterprising entomologist to poke around in that area.

# **Black Panthers in North America: Examining the Published Explanations**

**Chad Arment**

Reports of large black felines in North America are not uncommon. Among other writers of general biofortean, Loren Coleman (1983; 1985; 1993a; 1994), Jerome Clark (1993), and Mark A. Hall (1994), have published numerous accounts with early sightings noted from Indiana/Ohio in 1948, a Louisiana sighting as early as 1945, and early sightings in Mexico from 1941. Most eastern cougar researchers encounter “black panther” sightings. Coleman (pers. comm.) noted that early investigator Bruce Wright reported 20 good sightings from his New Brunswick fieldwork from 1951-1970, recording them in his 1972 work, The Eastern Panther: A Question of Survival (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co.). Coleman also provided the citation for Gerry Parker’s The Eastern Panther (1998; Halifax, NS: Nimbus), where Parker states that “approximately 15-20 percent of sightings from most regions are reported to be black.”

Reports are known from most, if not all, eastern states. The number of reports from each varies, but this may be due to aggressive research by particular regional investigators. This may also account for the discrepancy between the number of reports between eastern and western North America.

In a breakdown of 615 eastern cougar reports collected by John and Linda Lutz of the Eastern Puma Research Network from 1983 to 1989, Greenwell (1989) noted that 37 percent of the total reports involved black felines. The majority of these black cat reports were in Maryland (40 sightings), Pennsylvania (37 sightings), and West Virginia (29 sightings), with reports also coming in from Alabama (1), Florida (4), Illinois (4), Indiana (1), Kentucky (5), Maine, (5), Michigan (6), New Jersey (1), New York (13), Ohio (2), Virginia (6), and Wisconsin (12). From extrapolation, Greenwell suggested that there could be as many as 1000 mystery cat sightings a year in the eastern states, with about a third of them involving black felines. The Lutz’s have continued to log reports from all over the eastern United States; a sample newsletter (Lutz 14(2)) noted that Wisconsin was the only state where there were more black panther reports than those of cougar. Lutz also stated that “the majority of reports from the perimeter of the Shawnee State Forest [Illinois] have been of the black panther type cat,” and gave details on black cat sightings in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Various explanations for black panther sightings have been suggested by wildlife officials, investigators, and theorists. While the purpose of this article is not to specifically denounce any particular explanation, hopefully it will create some thoughts as to what is lacking in some ideas and what needs to be further considered.

First, here are a few unpublished black panther reports which have been related to me in the past several months to give some idea about the range both in geography and chronology of these sightings. (Reports have been edited.)

1) I received an email from a woman in North Carolina who told me about her sighting.

“I know it’s a little late for reporting this, but back in the winter of 1959 or 1960 I was about 14

or 15 years old at the time. My sister and I were playing on the dirt road leading to an old abandoned saw mill behind our house. You couldn't see the old saw dust and slab pile until you went down the hill and almost reached the woods. It had snowed and frozen over and we were foot skating down the old road. Laughing and yelling and slipping and sliding, just having fun. She and I were born in the area and grew up there in the country. Lot of dirt roads and miles from town. Rocky River ran way down on the other side of the woods and she and I had spent lots of time in these woods. Playing, berry picking and fishing.

"We must of seen the thing almost at the same time cause we both froze in our tracks. We watched a very large black slick haired (shiny black) [cat] come out from behind the saw mill pile, which was about 8 or 9 foot high. It walked very slowly around the front of the pile and stopped and turned its head and stood there and looked back at us. So we got a very good look at it with the white background of snow. We were about 50 foot from the thing. We didn't move, just stood there holding on to each other. Then it just turned and leaped or run down the road toward the thick part of the woods toward the river. We scrambled the best we could in the opposite direction toward the back of the old lob house we lived in...We told mama and daddy and they didn't even investigate it—but laughed at us and said we saw a bobcat—but we knew what a bobcat looked like and it was 3 times bigger than that. It really was a panther—a very large panther. We never saw him again but wouldn't go fishing or anything in those woods without an adult. But we're in our 50's now and we've talked about it quite often over the last 40 years. We will never forget it.

"No one else as far I know ever saw it—and we never saw it again. Three years later we both married and left—and then our parents moved... So it's a real mystery to us... Now I can assure you I have driven those road lots since then and lately have seen a lot of bob cats in the area and herds of deer. Which was very scarce when we were children. I think that's a real plus... The area was near the intersection of Flowes Store Road and Zion Church Road on the hill called McDonald Hill. Behind the old McDonald house that sat facing Zion Church Road on the Rocky River side. Flowes Store Road is South of Concord, North Carolina going down South 601—turn right—go a few miles and turn right on Zion Church Road just before the Rocky River bridge.

"Old tobacco and cotton farming area and at the time very few houses. It's growing up now with lots of new houses where people commute to Charlotte, NC."

2) Matt Bille noted on a discussion list that his father had seen an unusual black feline.

"My father was on a rural road in eastern Maine about 1955 when a black cat jumped right across in front of his car. Dad describes it as much too big for a domestic cat, but it seemed smaller than black leopards he remembered from circuses. Dad was an experienced hunter and a very level-headed guy."

3) Bill Rebsamen passed along the following report from Arkansas.

"Just last Tuesday night we were at a family gathering. My wife's cousin, (a very down to earth, no nonsense guy and a hunter all his life who hunts anything that moves and that is in season) and I were seated at the same table. Robert was asking me about some of my art projects. I explained to him my interest in cryptozoology and a little about the fascinating subject matters not widely

known about by the general public. I likened many reports of unknown animals as being similar to the tales in Arkansas over the years of 'Black Panthers' and how many people fear ridicule for making such reports or simply do not know who to contact.

"As I was loading up on some fresh pizza, Robert began telling me 'believe it or not, I saw a black panther earlier this year in the river bottoms' (Fort Smith, AR is right on the Oklahoma border, separated by the Arkansas River). Robert also told me that a close friend of his, who hunts the same area, has seen it too. According to this same friend, a police officer from Arhoma, OK has seen it as well.

"Robert's description certainly sounds like a melanistic leopard (large, black agile cat with a long tail). Robert mentioned that the big cat could make a good living in the river bottoms because of the ample supply of deer, rabbits and feral hogs known to inhabit the area. In fact, Robert was finishing rabbit hunting that evening when he spotted an animals eyes off the side of the road. He said he has a habit of stopping out of curiosity and trying to take a look at what the eyes belong to whenever he sees animals looking into his headlights from off the road. Only this time he was surprised to suddenly see the huge black cat bound across the road."

4) A friend, Penny, mentioned to me that there have been several reports of a large black cat in Tennessee. She stated that the cat, about five feet long with a stub tail, bigger than a Labrador retriever, has been seen by hunters several times near Indian Mound, TN, next to a good-sized game refuge. Several hunters have reported losing deer kills to it.

## **The Explanations**

### **Misidentifications**

This is the most common explanation given by wildlife officers, game officials, and biologists. There are, in fact, a number of species which have been mistaken for large black cats.

Domestic dogs may be responsible for some reports. Many sightings are at night, or at a distance, so that characteristics may suggest a feline rather than canine. I have not seen any published accounts of dogs being mistaken for black panthers, but Downing (1984) and Cochran (1991) reported instances where supposed eastern cougar carcasses turned out to be dogs. I have seen at least one photo of a questionable black panther which showed canine characteristics.

Feral cats are another problem. It's difficult to imagine that domestic cats could possibly be mistaken for large "panthers" but under the right conditions it can happen. Size can be mistaken when no objects are near enough for scale, or optical illusions may prevent accurate determination. Downing (1984) noted that a 1979 South Carolina black panther report turned out to be a domestic cat. Schaffner (1991) provided the details on photographs taken in Ottawa which were determined to be of a housecat. Alfs (1999) published three photographs of a feline taken in Minnesota, stating that "some casual observers argue that the photos show an ordinary house cat." A less casual observation shows the same. (For those of you who have a copy of Alfs' article, please compare the profile in those photos to that of the eastern cougar on the front of this issue of NABR.) Tinsley

(1987) related how the stretched skin of a large black house cat was mistaken for a young black panther on Matecumbe Key, Florida. On two separate occasions, Coleman (pers. comm.) was shown roadside kills of large, apparently feral domestic cats which were mistaken by the Southern Illinois witnesses as black panthers.

It has been suggested that bobcats or jaguarundi may be responsible for some reports (Shuker 1989; Busch 1996). These felids are smaller than cougar or leopards, but should be kept in mind when reports are within their known ranges. Melanism is known in bobcats, but this is too rare (most reports are localized in Florida) to be responsible for most black panther sightings.

Shuker (1989) noted that fishers may be responsible for some northeastern black cat reports. He also mentions that some Native Americans refer to it as a "black cat" in their native tongues. This is also true for early settlers (Shoemaker 1920). Individuals who search for historical reports should keep this linguistic similarity in mind.

It is difficult to estimate how many reports of black panthers are due to misidentifications. Most investigators encounter these in one form or another. It is also apparent, however, that this label is incorrectly applied to numerous reports with little or no justification. Lack of a suitable explanation is a poor basis for shoddy classification.

## **Hoaxes**

While the possibility of a hoaxed report must always be kept in mind, there are few published cases of this occurring with black panthers, although Downing (1984) did note several hoaxes involving eastern cougars. There are a few known mountain lion pelts which have been dyed to look as if they were black (Bellucci 1999). Bellucci (pers. comm.) notes "I've seen several over the years, some were done and entered into a taxidermy competition as 'black leopards!' When I called the person on what they were trying to pull off as a leopard, they would ask me how I could tell, and I would regale them with the anatomical differences between cougars and leopards, as well as the obvious differences in the outer coats of fur!... Even the 'blackest' 'black' leopard is in reality an extremely dark shade of brown (blackish-brown), the spots being an even darker brown (blackish-brown) color. In direct sunlight this true color is VERY obvious. In indirect lighting however, these animals 'appear' to be the blackest of black! This is where most guys screw up. They dye the cats with a black dye... and man, does it look like crap! Besides the fact it just looks like a dyed cougar!"

## **Melanistic Cougars**

Melanism is well documented in certain feline species like the leopard or jaguar. In mountain lions, however, melanism appears to be a very rare mutation. After going through a number of books dealing with the natural history and biology of cougars, I ended up with only a handful of accounts of melanistic cougars. Even then, some of the accounts are vague and may be inaccurate. Most books just make general statements without providing details. For example, Guggisberg

(1975) just noted that “black pumas have occasionally been obtained in South and Central America, but never in the United States and Canada,” while Danz (1999) stated “it is still possible that very rare specimens of albino or black cougars will turn up from time to time...”

The following is a list of reports I’ve seen.

1) Young and Goldman (1964) stated that occasionally pumas have been found in South America that are black or almost black, citing Cabrera and Yepes (1940, Historia natural ediar. Mamiferos Sud-Americanos (Vida, Costumbres y Descripcion). Compañía Argentina de Editores. Buenos Aires.).

2) Young and Goldman also noted that Thomson (1896, Great cats I have met: adventures in two hemispheres. Boston: Alpha Pub.) recorded killing a black puma in Brazil during a trip in 1843. “The whole head, back, and sides, and even the tail, were glossy black, while the throat, belly, and inner surfaces of the legs, were shaded off to a stone gray.”

3) Tinsley (1987) noted that “British adventurer Frederick Boyle travelled unsettled jungle portions of Costa Rica in 1866... ‘We have diverged to the subject of black lions, an animal whose existence has been denied. The ranchero had nothing decisive to advance on this disputed question. He heard with astonishment and contempt that European savants doubted. Black pumas, he alleged, are as well authenticated as black jaguars. He had never killed one. Such skins as had come beneath his notice were very large truly. But he laughed scornfully at the idea that any woodsman could make a mistake.’”

4) Tinsley reported that “a California sportsman, Leon T. Mott, in personal correspondence with the author, wrote that he saw black pumas while he was riding a bobbing pipante down the Coco and Wawa rivers in Nicaragua in 1957. Knowing that the black variety of the puma has long been questionable, Mott added: ‘I examined some skins and it is in my opinion that this Central American variety is, in fact, a black puma or panther—I could not discern any jaguar markings in or under the fur.’”

5) Tinsley reported that “Neal Griffith Smith, zoologist with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in the Canal Zone, says that melanic forms of the puma are not infrequently shot in the Republic of Panama, and that in most cases the animals were hunting cattle.”

6) Tinsley published a photo of a black feline labeled: “Black puma, or pantera negra, killed by Miguel Ruiz Herrero in 1959 in the Province of Guanacaste along the north Pacific coast of Costa Rica.”

7) Tinsley also noted that “Bruce A. Hartman of West Jordan, Utah, killed what some writers have called a black cougar on 8 December 1912 near Cochetopa Creek south of Gunnison, Colorado. He told the author in a conversation that the animal was not pure black, but was the darkest he had ever seen.” This may or may not be the animal to which Bolgiano (1995) refers when she noted that “a reputable amateur naturalist mentioned seeing a black pelt from Colorado.”

The cougar itself is a highly variable animal. This shouldn't be surprising, as it occupies a wide range of habitats throughout North and South America. One color phase runs from "buff, cinnamon, or tawny to cinnamon rufous and ferruginous," while the other "ranges from silvery gray to bluish and slaty gray" (Nowak 1999). This variability is present even in a single region. "A striking variability can, however, be encountered within one and the same locality, and Theodore Roosevelt, hunting in Colorado, records shooting both red and slaty grey pumas" (Guggisberg 1975). A few other genetically variable characteristics have been noted in cougars. Tufted tails and small manes have been noted, as was the presence of a dark dorsal line from the shoulders to the tip of the tail in one Florida specimen (Shoemaker 1917). (The latter characteristic may have some bearing on the unusual Tennessee feline noted in an article in the first issue of NABR.) Notable markings are also known. Bellucci (1999) stated that "there have been, however, cougars exhibiting unusual black markings. One of these was a subject of an article on cougar mounting techniques written by Phil Sousy for Breakthrough Magazine a while back. If you recall, this cougar had a full black chin area, and was mounted in a 'coming-down' pose, with the head elevated to a level position showing off this unusual marking." Frankly, it would be strange if such a wide-spread species as the cougar did not exhibit variability in markings, coloration, hair density/length. Variable differences are well known in lions, tigers, leopards and other wide-ranging felines.

With as variable a species as this, would it be possible for melanism to occur throughout the (assumed and officially unrecognized) population of eastern cougars to such an extent as to account for the large number of black panther reports?

Melanism itself is caused by a genetic mutation. With most wild felines like the leopard, melanism is recessive to the wild-type, though in the jaguar it is dominant (Rabinowitz 1986; O'Grady 1979). Cougar coloration cannot just be placed on a scale from light to dark with all the colors in between. While there are certainly shade variations within the two predominant color schemes (red-yellow-brown and blue-gray), continuous breeding of the darker individuals will not necessarily produce melanistic individuals. This is due to the different kinds of melanin present in feline hair. The genetics of domestic cats are better known than that of wild felines, but the principle is the same. "The colors in hair, skin, and eyes are caused by the presence of melanin. Melanin is deposited in the hair shafts in the form of microscopic granules which vary in shape, size, and arrangement, giving a variety of colors. There are two chemically different kinds of melanin: eumelanin and phaeomelanin. Eumelanin granules are thought to be spherical in shape and absorb almost all light, giving black pigmentation. Phaeomelanin granules are thought to be elongated 'footballs' in shape, and reflect light in the red-orange-yellow range. Several genes can cause variation in the density of the melanin granules, so other colors can be produced" (Starbuck and Thomas 1994-1999).

The reports of cougar in eastern North America accentuate a tawny, golden-brown color. (I am currently unaware of any reports from eastern states in the last 50 years where the cougar was described as blue-gray or slaty in coloration.) If we assume that a population of cougar exists in eastern North America, and if we assume that melanistic individuals occur on a regular (if proportionally smaller) basis, then it appears we must assume that the color differences are the result of a polymorphic population.

Kettlewell (1973) defined polymorphism as "the occurrence together in the same habitat of

two or more discontinuous forms of a species in such proportions that the rarest of them cannot be maintained merely by recurrent mutation.” With color polymorphism there are no continuous grades of colors between the two or more primary colors, although some intermediate colors may be noted. Think of the color range as being stair-step rather than a slide. Ewer (1973) noted that only a few carnivores are known to exhibit stable polymorphism, examples including the African golden cat, the jaguarundi, the red fox, the arctic fox, and the leopard.

There have been a few suggestions made concerning why polymorphism might occur in the eastern cougar. These usually involve environmental factors in variations of Gloger’s Rule, which connects body coloration to humidity and temperature. Generally, species in warmer and more humid environments are darker. Eveland (1990) suggested that solar radiation may be the primary factor. “Black pumas may not exist in the West for this very reason—too much solar radiation. This is also true of lions on the East African plains. Yet, black leopards do occasionally occur. Why? Because this species spends much of its time in dense forest habitat with little sunlight penetration... Although it is possible that diet and genetics may also play a role, the amount of solar radiation that reaches the animal may play a larger part in determining adult color phases.” He also noted that “the northeastern USA has a number of mammal species that contain many black specimens,” mentioning squirrels, otters, and black bears. Tischendorf (1991) asked: “Could Eastern pumas be more pre-disposed to melanism than pumas in the West? Could melanism in these and other animals in the East be a function of shade, soil, minerals, or some other environmental rather than genetic factor/s?”

It is true that environmental factors can influence coloration in a population. In one of several examples, Kettlewell (1973) noted that “Dice (1936-1942) showed that, throughout the range of the animals [deermice], the colour of the fur followed the colour of the soil.” Note, however, that environmental factors do not create melanism. Rather, they influence the proportion of individuals which are melanistic once the trait expresses itself within the population. A random mutation could conceivably occur anywhere within the cougar’s wide range. Once expressed, the successful spread of the trait throughout the population may be limited or benefited by environmental factors. (It should also be noted that there is no purpose with the advent or appearance of such a mutation. It cannot be argued that melanism will not occur in North America just because there is no reason for it to occur. Random mutations are just that—random.) It is also possible, though improbable due to the amount of time necessary to create a wide-ranging stable polymorphism, that melanism in eastern North America may be a neutral mutation, and that neutral genetic drift may be responsible for maintaining the polymorphism.

There are definite problems with the idea of melanistic eastern cougars. The most obvious is the lack of any documented melanistic specimens from North America. A few thousand mountain lions have been killed over the last two centuries in the United States and Canada. Not one melanistic cougar has been officially documented. Early ring hunts in Pennsylvania, a state which has had a number of black panther reports in the last several decades, never produced one. In order for the genetic frequency of melanism to be high enough today to maintain a polymorphic state throughout a large population, the trait should have been present, even if infrequent.

McMullen (1984) provided a related argument. “It has never been proven there is such a thing as a black panther, or melanistic mutation, and yet I have records of more than a hundred sightings

of big black cats in the Everglades. It is a far-fetched idea to begin with because in the recorded history of the cougar species, even in captivity, there has not been one black cat, ever, in a litter. With all the breeding populations in zoos, one would think at least one would show up. To this day, it has not.” Cougars are bred frequently by private breeders and zoological parks. With stock taken from all over the two continents, one would expect melanism to occur even rarely in the captive population if it really has such a high frequency in the wild.

One further idea along this line was in a question I received concerning the possibility of a lone melanistic leopard mating with a cougar and possibly passing along the trait to that species. In general, hybridization of different species of felines in the wild is very rare, and such a pairing between species of different genera would most likely result in sterile offspring (if in fact live offspring were produced). Even should such a hybrid survive and reproduce, it is unlikely that the trait would ever express itself in the population.

## **Exotic Releases**

The idea of escaped or released exotic pets has been frequently suggested, but rarely discussed. This is, along with misidentifications, one of the first explanations offered by wildlife officials when a black panther is reported. If an exotic species is responsible for black panther reports, the most probable species is the leopard, as melanistic leopards are not uncommon in the exotic pet trade. (Certainly, more common than melanistic jaguars.) While private and public zoos also keep melanistic leopards, they have more stringent safeguards. Zoo animals do escape on occasion (and sometimes are never recaptured), but it's far more likely that escapees would come from private keepers. It's also less likely to occur in menageries and travelling circuses, though I did receive interesting details from Pennsylvania writer Patty A. Wilson concerning an early (circa 1930's) escape of a black panther from a travelling show in that state.

It is difficult to get an accurate estimate on how many big cats are now kept in captivity in North America. In a recently published book, Animal Underworld (Green 1999), the author estimated that there may be as many as 20 tigers in the private sector for each one in zoos. In other words, there could be more than 5000 privately-owned tigers. There are as many, and probably more, African lions and cougar. Melanistic leopards are not bred as easily as these, litters by melanistic females tending to be smaller than litters by spotted females (O'Grady 1979), but there certainly are a number of them in captivity.

Many breeders and owners dislike publicity as it draws unwanted attention from neighbors and local officials. Quite often, it's only when a pet escapes that the public discovers the exotic proclivities of their neighbor. As with any type of pet, there are owners who are unprepared for the responsibility of a big cat. It really isn't uncommon for a lion, tiger, or other big cat to get out of a poorly-constructed cage. Just prior to my move from Ohio to Pennsylvania in the fall of 1999, there was an incident in Greene County, OH, with a lioness that escaped from its cage and was shot by the local Sheriff. The local news showed the owner sitting next to chicken-wire cages with his remaining pets—a tiger, a mountain lion, a male African lion, and a melanistic leopard.

Another problem is the intentional release. This is most common with smaller pets like

reptiles or fish. Someone who is no longer able to keep their pet iguana or discovers that their cute baby alligator really doesn't stay small just by keeping it in an undersized cage may decide to just "let nature take its course" and release it into the wild. Herpetological societies all around the country deal with strange reptiles found in the wild. Green (1999) recorded the extralimital release of such species as ratites and prairie dogs by individuals who no longer wished to keep them. It isn't too far-fetched to believe that someone might release an exotic feline to fend for itself. This may be the reason why some exotic animals are found near suburban areas while others are found in more remote forested areas—the former are probably inadvertent escapees while the latter may be intentional releases. Frustrated pet-owners often find that it isn't easy to find a new home for an adult exotic animal. Zoos often won't accept them for quarantine reasons. (While I don't agree with his entire philosophy or all of his conjectures, Green (1999) details numerous cases of big cat owners futilely attempting to find new homes for their pets.) Laws may prevent the owner from coming forward and advertising the animal for sale. So, the animal may be taken back into a remote area and released. Certainly, this is illegal and irresponsible, but I've met too many people who shouldn't own exotics to dismiss the idea.

One other interesting theory has been suggested but I don't know that it has been explored. Investigator John Lutz has noted that melanistic leopards may have been available through Asian traders to American slavers (Bolgiano 1995). Anyone who has gone through early newspapers knows that captains of various ships would often bring into port some odd creature that they had obtained on their voyages.

Let's assume that a melanistic leopard has been introduced into the wild. Would it survive in eastern North America? As Bolgiano (1995) noted, "cats are almost preternaturally adaptable." As a species, the leopard is a good example of this. "The leopard can adapt to almost any habitat that provides it with sufficient food and cover. It occupies lowland forests, mountains, grasslands, brush country, and deserts. A specimen was found at an elevation of 5,638 meters on Kilimanjaro" (Nowak 1999). Bailey (1993) suggested that "there are few habitats where leopards could not exist today given adequate prey and protection from humans." Bailey also noted the climatic extremes that leopards tolerate: high altitudes (up to 3,000 feet in the Himalayas, sometimes higher in African ranges), eastern Siberian winters (where temperatures can drop to  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), to the deserts of Namibia (with an annual rainfall of 175 mm).

Would a leopard find enough prey in North America? Recorded prey for leopards includes small to medium-sized ungulates, rodents, rabbits, birds, fish, snakes, and arthropods (Nowak 1999; Bailey 1993). Bailey noted that because leopards are opportunistic, they have been known to kill and eat unusual species like hyenas, storks, and vultures, as well as readily scavenging carcasses.

Intriguingly, leopards can live near human habitation without being recognized. "Even where they live virtually among humans, they know how to remain invisible, and before they were protected and could be seen in national parks, it was not at all unusual for somebody to spend twenty or more years in Africa without ever catching a glimpse of a leopard. And this in spite of the fact that these animals were then infinitely more common than they are today" (Guggisberg 1975). Bailey (1993) noted that leopards take advantage of rough terrain and prefer heavy cover. In areas with limited cover, leopards adapt by reducing their daytime activity.

One interesting aspect of melanistic leopard behavior is that they tend to be high-strung and more antagonistic than their spotted counterparts (O'Grady 1979). This could be one explanation for the aggressive behavior noted in a number of black panther reports.

There is one significant problem with the idea of released exotics (whether intentional or inadvertent) being responsible for the numerous black panther reports. Before getting into that, however, let me quickly address two other arguments concerning exotic pets which have been put forth.

One argument is that exotic pets are uncommon and difficult to acquire. Fate Magazine recently printed such an argument in a blurb following an account of a small alligator being found in Indiana (Calvin, et al, 1999). They stated: "As usual, local authorities suggested the animal was an escaped pet. But the days of being able to buy an 'alligator' out of a comic book are as gone as *Leave It to Beaver*." Young alligators, caiman, and other crocodilians are legally sold in the reptile trade in a number of states. In 1998, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources instituted an emergency ban on the sale of crocodilians and other "dangerous" pets, ending a thriving market, but further legislation now allows crocodilians under five feet in length to be kept without a permit. As owners realize that they will need to get permits when their 'gator gets bigger or as they find themselves unable to take care of a larger reptile, it isn't unexpected that some will end up in the state's waterways. Frankly, there are very few animals that cannot be acquired by a someone who really wants one. The exotic pet market is large, and not all owners are responsible enough to properly keep their charges for the length of the animal's natural life (or at least locate a good home for it).

Another argument is more specific to exotic felines—that a released feline would have difficulty adapting to the wild. For example, eastern cougar investigator Ted Reed stated that pet cougars "have completely lost their hunting skills. Almost all of them have been declawed and could survive only a very short time" (Brandt 1996). It is true that many exotic felines are declawed (note Reed's statement that almost all have been declawed) but a cat as adaptable as a leopard isn't going to have a problem with small prey.

The real problem with the melanistic leopard escapee hypothesis is that there would have to be a large number of releases in specific regions to create such a wide-ranging (yet non-homogenous) pattern of black panther reports. It wouldn't be difficult to suggest that reports in a particular area may be of the same animal over a period of time, as leopards are known to live for about 10-12 years in the wild, up to about 20 in captivity. (It would be interesting to know how long a leopard would live in North America with little competition from other large predators.) But this would still require frequent releases on a regular basis.

Investigator Loren Coleman (1993a) has argued against the frequent release theory. "While I think this is a case of *deus ex machina* à la Felidae, [Dr. Karl Shuker] believes it is an example of Occam's Razor. Nevertheless, I understand but disagree with Dr. Shuker's sentiment on the situation. Sadly, the escapee explanation is often the one most believed by people not accepting any 'unknown animal' hypothesis." He continues, "While we know that many more felid releases and escapes are occurring than reported, we too are conscious of the fact that many unchronicled sightings of large mystery cats are happening in locations where no escapees have ever left a pawprint." The comment concerning remote locations is interesting, but care needs to be taken

not to extrapolate a range that doesn't truly exist. Yes, black panther reports are wide-spread, but we still require a good analysis of these reports to show that some regions are not merely statistical outliers.

The phrase *deus ex machina* dates back to the Greek and Roman writers who wove tales placing their heroes in certain doom, only to resolve the problem with an extraneous miraculous event. We know that there is nothing unusual about escapees and released exotics. Coleman himself keeps track of and publishes these occurrences, but he has his own pet theory. (There is nothing wrong with that, of course; it is common with most investigators.) He and a few other researchers have suggested that the black panther reports may be related to a relict population of the North American lion, *Panthera atrox*. Now, the consideration of creatures from the past is a not uncommon practice with theorists, but isn't the resurrection of an extinct species a bit more *deus ex machina* than an irresponsible pet owner?

## Relict Species

In an effort to explain infrequent reports of maned lions in North America, a few researchers (principally Loren Coleman and Mark A. Hall) have suggested that there may be a relict population of the North American lion. *Panthera atrox* was one of several Pleistocene felines to range this continent, including *Dinofelis*, *Smilodon*, *Miracinonyx*, and *Homotherium* (Turner 1997).

How does *Panther atrox* connect to the black panther reports? The suggestion is that *Panther atrox* is sexually dimorphic, with some females being melanic (black). The sole evidence offered for this connection are the 1948 Indiana/Ohio reports of a pair of felines, one being described by two teen-age boys as "large-headed and shaggy and appeared to be brownish" while the other "had more the appearance of a panther and was black" (Hall 1994). (I will note that Coleman (pers. comm.) does not agree that this is an accurate summary of the evidence for the connection between black panthers and *Panther atrox*. I don't consider theory or conjecture to be evidence, no matter how well-worded, and merely aligning possibly random reports just doesn't hit me as good analysis. One could use the same sort of reasoning to align black panther and bigfoot reports, but that doesn't mean that there's a connection between the two cryptids. Yes, I'm very interested in seeing reports to back up any further claims of the *Panther atrox*-black panther connection, but I'm still waiting to see them published.)

The facts in that case (predation on domestic animals during a season when wild game would have been abundant, unwary appearances around humans, and vagrancy rather than territorialism) indicate that these were not native animals. Hall (1994) argued against such explanations, however, stating that "the prospect of released pets or escaped circus animals is often raised but with little evidence to support such origins. When animals escape from captivity they are identified as escapees and tracked down unless they expire in unsuitable surrounding. The folklore of people turning pets loose seems to me to have grown largely out of a situation where numerous unknown animals such as *P. atrox* remain uncatalogued. It is assumed that the animals just have to be pets." He stated further: "In addition to being unproven in any single instance among all the accounts cited here, the reports of large black cats and cats with manes are too numerous to be brushed

aside. A multitude of careless and imaginary circuses and cat-owners would be a bigger mystery.”

Notice the problem with Hall’s argument. This is an argument of exclusion—in order for a report to meet Hall’s definition of a mystery maned cat sighting, and thus be part of “all the accounts cited here,” it must not result in capture and identification as a released exotic. He then claims that the remaining reports, which by definition cannot be directly connected to escapees, are free from criticism because there is no evidence that they are released exotics. This is circular reasoning. He also makes the unsupported claim that released animals will be captured or will die, allowing for no possibility of adaptability by the species.

At this time, I do not wish to evaluate the *Panthera atrox* explanation for maned lion reports in North America beyond pointing out that those reports are relatively scarce compared to black panther sightings. Rather, I would like to point out several reasons why it is unlikely that the black panthers, as reported, would have anything to do with the *Panthera atrox* hypothesis.

First, there’s the problem of size and build. The maned lions that are occasionally seen in North America have generally been comparable to the extant *Panthera leo*. This isn’t the case with the black panthers, however. Most reports are of animals stockier and/or smaller than extant lionesses. That in and of itself could be explained by selective adaptation, with different behavioral and environmental pressures being placed on North American *Panthera* than on the Old World species, but only if one is able to show that the skeletons of *Panthera atrox* lionesses show such a difference from extant lionesses. So far, I’ve never heard that this is the case. The habitat hasn’t changed enough since the Pleistocene megafauna roamed North America for such a drastic adaptation to have occurred recently.

A more important argument goes back to one of the early “evidences” for *Panthera atrox*. As Hall (1994) recorded, there is an early hunting tale from Pennsylvania in 1797 where Peter Pentz shot a “panther” with a mane. But, take a look at the entire hunting tale (Shoemaker 1912). It is reprinted elsewhere in this issue. The animal was shot *with its mate*. The mate was unextraordinary, and appeared to look like a “normal” cougar—it was certainly not melanistic. Shoemaker (1917) noted that a pantheress shot in 1901 in West Virginia exhibited “long white hair on chest and belly, a fluffy, dark brown tail, culminating in a large tuft of black hair, like the tip of the tail of an African lion.” Here’s another “lion-like” cougar, a female, with normal coloration. He also mentioned a Florida specimen, sex not given, with a rich chocolate brown coat and a tuft on the tail. (But, wait—Coleman & Clark (1999) state that “the females *sometimes*, perhaps often, are black.” [Emphasis mine.] Hold that thought, I’m coming back to it..)

In other words, in order to accept this black panther/*Panthera atrox* connection, and if we assume that the vast majority of *Panthera atrox* females are melanic, we have to conjecture not just that a relict Pleistocene species has survived to the present day, but that only the females underwent anatomical adaptation for no apparent reason, and then in the last 100 years underwent rapid transformation from tawny coloration to predominant melanism, again for no apparent reason. Remember, a few thousand cougar have been killed in North America over the last two centuries. If we assume for a minute that there may be relict *Panthera atrox*, we might possibly find it reasonable that a tawny colored *atrox* lioness could be mistaken for a cougar, but there are no substantiated reports of melanistic specimens despite intensive hunting. It has occasionally been argued that *Panther atrox* exhibited more intelligence than other carnivores, which could

help it remain hidden. There are, however, numerous reports of antagonistic, aggressive black panthers or unwary animals which walk in plain sight or through neighborhoods. Not a good argument.

But, to get back to Coleman and Clark's (1999) statement—what if the melanic females are a smaller proportion of the *Panthera atrox* tribe? What if they only make up 30% of the females? Well, that would mean that, logically, for every black *atrox* female that is seen, we should have two reports of a tawny-colored female. Remember Greenwell's estimate of 1000 big cat reports in the eastern United States, and the 1/3 portion involving black cats? If we assume that, generally, the same ratio of misidentifications and hoaxes occurs with both black and tawny felines, we can pretty much kiss the continued existence of the eastern cougar goodbye. One can always adjust the black-to-tawny ratio to one's own liking, but it leaves little room for both tawny *atrox* and eastern cougar.

### The Historical Problem

We've briefly looked at this with the melanistic cougar and *Panthera atrox* explanations. There is a distinct lack of reports of melanistic felines in North America prior to the 1940's. Perhaps an investigator has earlier reports in their files, but I have queried a number of researchers with no positive results. Everything that has been published about early reports is too vague to be useful. Bolgiano (1995), for example, stated that "reports of [black panthers] date to the earliest days of exploration in both Americas," but gives no record of early published accounts.

Even more significant is the lack of published Native American traditions concerning black felines. The only published account I've seen is from Tinsley (1987): "In an early history of the state of Maine, William D. Williamson wrote that three species of cats were found in the forests, identifying them as the catamount, wild-cat, and black cat. He was quite explicit in his description of the last named: 'The *Black Cat* is much larger in size than the wild-cat, very ravenous and fierce, has shorter legs and a long tail, and is of a black colour; called by the natives Wooleneag.'"

A number of other investigators have a strong interest in examining Native American traditions for hints of strange critters. The lack of black panther traditions has been commented on by some. Coleman (1993b), for example, requested readers to send such information to him in a letter to Strange Magazine, noting that "The Lutz newsletter discussion regards the fact that some American Indians termed the large black cats they observed in the wild as 'black devils' or 'devil cats.' And this labeling was different than the names that Native Americans would give to the tawny-colored lions. The article gives no references but notes the sources as 'Indian writings and legends' and the 'elders of several nations [who] discussed the legends' of these 'black devils.'" Coleman (pers. comm.) noted that he didn't receive anything helpful from that request, but he is currently sifting through a bulk of files given to him by Lutz which may provide some useful data in that regards.

One point Coleman made to me was that "there's a lack of all kinds of reports of anything cryptid before the advent of cryptozoologists, romantic naturalists, and men's magazines in the USA. Think about what is historically going on. The year of 1850 is the beginning but not the end of the extinction threshold for the eastern puma; some states declared the puma extinct as late as

1920. You had two world wars, and a depression to distract people. Finally, after WWII and the fact no such animals were around, you get people seeing black, tan, and maned felids in the east. Nevertheless, the folklore from the black forests of Indiana and Pennsylvania suggests old reports of black felids are to be found.” This is a very interesting perspective, and it certainly deserves some attention and further investigation. I can’t agree with it immediately, however. Early newspaper records (1850’s to early 1900’s) did in fact note strange animals that were reported at that time. During this period, there was a boom of amateur naturalists who attempted to describe and explain various sea monsters, natural phenomena, and other odd natural events, oftentimes doing so in their local newspapers. Travelling menageries carried curious exotic animals from town to town, numerous small natural history journals were started (most disappeared), and local newspapers routinely mentioned reports of strange critters that had been shot while trying to get into a farmer’s chicken-coop. (Mild hyperbole, but the point remains.)

Coleman also suggested (and I’ve seen him mention this in other forums) that there may be a link between the word “panther” and black feline sightings in colonial America—that early “panther” tales which otherwise may not describe the animal’s coloration may refer to black panthers while other terms were used for cougar stories. Having gone through a number of early pioneer histories, I’m inclined to be a little doubtful, but this does deserve some study.

For now, however, beyond a handful of sporadic and vague instances, there doesn’t appear to be any good evidence for the presence of large black felines in North America prior to the 1940’s.

### **Expanding a Theory**

Let’s assume for a minute that no further evidence of pre-1940’s black panthers is found, and that the case for continuous release of captive melanistic leopards just isn’t good enough. What would we be left with? I’d suggest that investigators begin to look at the possibility of an introduced population of melanistic leopards. A small self-sustaining population could be responsible for regional sightings.

This isn’t intended to be more than a suggestion as it hasn’t been completely examined. But, here are is a brief overview of the establishment of invasive species.

The stages in the invasion process begin with the **arrival** of the organism to the site of introduction. Most introduced species are small invertebrates or plants which stow away in agricultural or other product shipments. Mammals have usually been brought in through the pet trade, for academic research, exhibition, or for hunting purposes. In most cases, there is a distinct “attractiveness” which initiates this stage. This is noticeable in the pet trade, for example. Pet enthusiasts often look for large, attractive animals, so there is a better chance for a species with those characteristics to be imported than an animal that is small and drab.

The **introduction** is the successful release of the organism into the introduction site. The introduction stage can end with the individual(s) being released into an unfavorable environment where it is incapable of surviving for long, or one in which the release is in a favorable setting where it is able to survive for a reasonable amount of time and can possibly move to the next stage. It may be, however, that an introduction does not establish itself, even under favorable

circumstances. A single male leopard, for example, is not going to establish a population. In that case, the introduced animals are considered “waifs,” “casuals,” “colonists,” or “accidentals.”

The **establishment** of the species occurs when a self-sustaining and reproducing population is successfully created at the site of introduction. It is at this stage that a species may become a true concern to wildlife management. It should be noted that some populations will be established, but will not be able to sustain themselves over a long period of time, for a variety of reasons. “Boom-and-bust” invasions may quickly achieve a peak population density, but suddenly decline for no apparent reason, until the population becomes extinct (Williamson & Fritter 1996).

**Integration** is where the species forges ecological links with other species in the region of introduction, allowing selective changes to occur which bring the new species closer to an ecological equilibrium with its physical environment. The changes may occur in both the introduced species, and within other species which, through competition, predation, or other factors, are influenced by the introduced species. Carroll and Dingle (1996) state that substantial changes may be rapid, as “small populations of invading organisms may carry only a fraction of the genetic diversity of their source populations. Experimental studies with houseflies have shown that such ‘bottlenecking’ may alter genetic relationships among traits that could lead to differentiation along evolutionary trajectories less accessible to the original populations.” Eventually, genetic changes within the introduced species may be great enough to warrant subspecies or species status.

A final stage, **expansion**, may occur when the range of the established population expands outside of the site of introduction. Technically, this is not the same as a species being introduced from a donor region to separate introduction sites. Rather, the expansion occurs from the initial introduction site. Some species are not capable of expanding their ranges outside of a specific introduction site, while others are capable of doing so with great ease.

It should be noted that these stages are not simple barriers for an invading species. A variety of climatic, tectonic, ecological, or man-made conditions may cause the invasion process to fail. It has been estimated that each attempt to broach one of these stages has only a 10% chance of success.

For each “jump” into a higher stage in the invasion process, different physiological and behavioral characteristics are required. These appear to be intrinsic characters, an idea supported by the fact that some species are consistently successful invaders while closely related species are consistently unsuccessful invaders (Ehrlich 1989). These characters may include having a large native range (usually on a continent), abundance within that native range, vagility, broad diets, short generation times, high genetic variability, association with humans and disturbed areas, ability to function in a wide range of physical conditions, and past invasion success.

There does not appear to be a special combination of these characters which will guarantee successful introductions. The characters must be available at the right time (release) and at the right place (introduction site). Lodge (1993) noted that “it is increasingly recognized that the characteristics of the target community are as important to the fate and impact of an introduction as the characteristics of the introduced species.” These characteristics are varied, but include:

**Disturbance**—While disturbance has long been recognized as a factor in introductions, Fox and Fox (1986) go so far as to say that “there is no invasion of natural communities without disturbance. Where there has been successful invasion of natural communities by introduced species we contend that there has been subtle alteration of endogenous disturbance regimes.”

Disturbance can create or diminish a natural resource (food or water), create new microclimates, and create new competition or predation relationships with other species.

**Similarity of the physical environment between the source and target areas**—This is an obvious but important characteristic. Climate, plant community structure, hydric activity, and geology all must be compatible with the physiological tolerances of the invading organism. The animal's ability to adjust to a new introduction site must strongly conform to the selective parameters of its prior adaptation.

**Saturation of communities**—Species are most likely to colonize less biologically “sophisticated” communities, where there is less ecological adaptation to multiple predators and competitors. They are also less likely to colonize areas where a related species of similar size or with similar habits already exists.

With numerous factors coming into play when an animal is introduced into a novel region, it is no wonder that so many invasions fail. Lodge (1993) notes that while the two primary reasons for invasion failure are inappropriate climate and predation, it is much more difficult to measure the effects of competition, disease, and other factors, so those reasons should not be discounted out-of-hand. The number of individuals that initially colonize an area does not appear to be a strong factor in whether the invasion is a success.

Introduced mammals in North America, beyond a few species of primates, are primarily feral domestic animals or were introduced as exotic prey for sport hunting. Interestingly, these exotic introductions began in Texas in the 1930's. Today, there are a number of introduced species of exotic hoofstock, including axis deer, fallow deer, sika deer, sambar deer, nilgai, gemsbok, blackbuck, Himalayan tahr, ibex, European mouflon sheep, and Barbary sheep. Red fox has been established outside its native range in California for hunters. How difficult is it to imagine that an early group of sport hunters may have imported a more interesting challenge for Ozark or Appalachian hunting? They may not necessarily have had to bring in just melanistic leopards. If the animals were brought in from European zoos, they would probably have been heterozygous for melanism. As a small population was established, genetic drift within a limited gene pool may have produced a melanistic population.

How many individuals would be necessary in a population to prevent inbreeding depression? Bailey (1993) related that the “minimum genetically effective population size” is fifty individuals, while five hundred individuals would be needed for healthy genetic adaptation. He goes on to note that “an actual population of at least eighty to one hundred leopards” would be necessary to maintain the minimum genetically effective population (due to disease and mortality) in several parts of Africa, and that would probably be true for North America as well.

The most apparent problems with this scenario are biogeographical. Would we be considering one large population spread over a wide range, or a couple of isolated regional populations (for example, a Pennsylvania-West Virginia-Maryland population, a Florida-Georgia-Arkansas-Carolinas population) with limited genetic flow?

Other questions would have to be considered. How large would a founding group have to be in order to establish a genetically viable population? How fast could a small group spread? Are there appropriate pathways for expansion to new regions? Beyond habitat and feeding behavior, what other adaptations would be necessary?

## **Concluding Remarks**

There is, unfortunately, a tendency among some cryptozoological investigators to tie themselves to their theories, treating even a minor critique of their work as a personal attack, as if their personal legacy to the field is at stake. This is unfortunate. Frankly, good evidence for most cryptids is lacking, or they probably wouldn't be considered cryptozoological. Misidentifications and hoaxes do occur. Exotic escapes and releases do occur. (After reading this, go back and look at the four sightings published—ask yourself how you would now evaluate these reports.) Whether we are seriously considering a genetic phenomenon, an introduced species, or relict survivors, other possibilities must not be ignored merely because they don't fit neatly into our predetermined expectations.

I suspect that one reason we see this attitude is that some researchers consider cryptozoology to be an all-or-nothing affair, as if no result other than "unknown species" is satisfactory or of value. Frankly, I believe it is probable that the answer to the black panther controversy is cryptogenic, not cryptozoological. A known species of unknown origin is still of great interest and should not be ignored. Exactly where the animals originated or when they arrived, I don't know, but the various explanations for an indigenous feline (whether a genetic morph or a relict species) currently appear inadequate to explain most questions. Certainly, this could change, but it is going to require data, not blind faith. Personally, I am very interested in hearing good arguments against the idea of introduced leopards. I would be especially interested in good evidence that these animals have a wide-spread history in North America that dates back further than the 1930's or 1940's. Mere hints or intimations of early reports should not be the primary foundation for widely publicized theories.

I suppose if there is one point that I'd like to make, it is that there may be numerous possibilities to the question of identity when a particular cryptid is examined. Due to individual preferences, some theories will receive more press than others. This can lead, however unintentionally, to the mistaken impression that there is good solid evidence for such a possibility, when in fact it is merely a favored conjecture. Readers need to continually question the assumptions and data that are being presented. Writers and theorists need to accept that such questions must be asked if we are to continue promoting cryptozoology as an investigative science.

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### **Seeing Things** **From W. H. Hudson's (1910) A Shepherd's Life**

One very long summer day spent in roaming about in this endless wood, always on the watch, had for sole result, so far as anything out of the common goes, the spectacle of a hare sitting on a stump. The hare started up at a distance of over a hundred yards before me and rushed straight away at first, then turned, and ran on my left so as to get round to the side from which I had come. I stood still and watched him as he moved swiftly over the ground, seeing him not as a hare but as a dim brown object successively appearing, vanishing, and reappearing, behind and between the brown tree-trunks, until he had traced half a circle and was then suddenly lost to sight. Thinking that he had come to a stand I put my binocular on the spot where he had vanished, and saw him sitting on an old oak stump about thirty inches long. It was a round mossy stump, about eighteen inches in diameter, standing in a bed of brown dead leaves, with the rough brown trunks of other dwarf oak-trees on either side of it. The animal was sitting motionless, in profile, its ears erect, seeing me with one eye, and was like a carved figure of a hare set on a pedestal, and had a very striking appearance.

As I had never seen such a thing before I thought it was worth mentioning to a keeper I called to see at his lodge on my way back in the evening. It had been a blank day, I told him—a hare sitting on a stump being the only thing I could remember to tell him. 'Well,' he said, 'you've seen something I've never seen in all the years I've been in these woods. And yet, when you come to think of it, it's just what one might expect a hare would do. The wood is full of old stumps, and it seems only natural a hare should jump on to one to get a better view of a man or animal at a distance among the trees. But I never saw it.'

What, then, had he seen worth remembering during his long hours in the wood on that day, or the day before, or on any day during the last thirty years since he had been policing that wood, I asked him. He answered that he had seen many strange things, but he was not now able to remember one to tell me! He said, further, that the only things he remembered were those that related to his business of guarding and rearing the birds; all other things he observed in animals, however remarkable they might seem to him at the moment, were things that didn't matter and were quickly forgotten.

## **On Monsters (Classic Reprint)**

**G. K. Chesterton**

I once saw in the newspapers this paragraph, of which I made a note:

### “Leprechaun” Caught

Great excitement has been caused in Mullingar, in the west of Ireland, by the report that the supposed “Leprechaun,” which several children stated they had seen at Killough, near Delvin, during the past two months, was captured. Two policemen found a creature of dwarfish proportions in a wood near the town, and brought the little man to Mullingar Workhouse, where he is now an inmate. He eats greedily, but all attempts to interview him have failed, his only reply being a peculiar sound between a growl and a squeal. The inmates regard him with interest mixed with awe.

This seems like the beginning of an important era of research; it seems as if the world of experiments had at last touched the world of reality. It is as if one read: “Great excitement has been caused in Rotten Row, in the west of London, by the fact that the centaur, previously seen by several colonels and young ladies, has at last been stopped in his lawless gallop.” Or it is as if one saw in a newspaper: “Slight perturbation has been caused at the west end of Margate by the capture of a mermaid,” or “A daring fowler, climbing the crags of the Black Mountains for a nest of eagles, found, somewhat unexpectedly, that it was a nest of angels.” It is wonderful to have the calm admission in cold print of such links between the human world and other worlds. It is interesting to know that they took the Leprechaun to a workhouse. It settles, and settles with a very sound instinct, the claim of humanity in such sublime curiosities. If a centaur were really found in Rotten Row, would they take him to a workhouse or to a stable? If a mermaid were really fished up at Margate, would they take her to a workhouse or to an aquarium? If people caught an angel unawares, would they put the angel in a workhouse? Or in an aviary?

The idea of the Missing Link was not at all new with Darwin; it was not invented merely by those vague but imaginative minor poets to whom we owe most of our ideas about evolution. Men had always played about with the idea of a possible link between human and bestial life; and the very existence—or, if you will, the very non-existence—of the centaur or the mermaid proves it. All the mythologies had dreamed of a half-human monster. The only objection to the centaur and the mermaid was that they could not be found. In every other respect their merits were of the most solid sort. So it is with the Darwinian ideal of a link between man and the brutes. There is no objection to it except that there is no evidence for it. The only objection to the Missing Link is that he is apparently fabulous, like the centaur and the mermaid, and all the other images under which man has imagined a bridge between himself and brutality. In short, the only objection to the Missing Link is that he is missing.

But there is also another very elementary difference. The Greeks and the Mediaevals invented monstrosities. But they treated them as monstrosities—that is, they treated them as exceptions. They did not deduce any law from such lawless things as the centaur or the merman, the griffin or the hippogriff. But modern people did try to make a law out of the Missing Link. They made him a lawgiver, though they were hunting for him like a criminal. They built on the foundation of him before he was found. They made this unknown monster, the mixture of the man and ape, the founder of society and the accepted father of mankind. The ancients had a fancy that there was a mongrel of horse and man, a mongrel of fish and man. But they did not make it the father of anything; they did not ask the mad mongrel to breed. The ancients did not draw up a system of ethics based upon the centaur, showing how man in a civilized society must take care of his hands, but must not wholly forget his hooves. They never reminded woman that although she had the golden hair of a goddess, she had the tail of a fish. But the moderns did talk to man as if he were the Missing Link; they did remind him that he must allow for apish imbecility and bestial tricks. The moderns did tell the woman that she was half a brute, for all her beauty; you can find the thing said again and again in Schopenhauer and other prophets of the modern spirit. That is the real difference between the two monsters. The Missing Link is still missing and so is the merman.

On the top of all this we have the Leprechaun, apparently an actual monster at present in the charge of the police. It is unnecessary to say that numbers of learned people have proved again and again that it could not exist. It is equally unnecessary to say that numbers of unlearned people—children, mothers of children, workers, common people who grow corn or catch fish—had seen them existing. Almost every other simple type of our working population had seen a Leprechaun. A fisherman had seen a Leprechaun. A farmer had seen a Leprechaun. Even a postman had probably seen one. But there was one simple son of the people whose path had never before been crossed by the prodigy. Never until then had a policeman seen a Leprechaun. It was only a question of whether the monster should take the policeman away with him into Elfland (where such a policeman as he would certainly have been fettered by the fatal love of the fairy queen), or whether the policeman should take away the monster to the police-station. The forces of this earth prevailed; the constable captured the elf, instead of the elf capturing the constable. The officer took him to the workhouse, and opened a new epoch in the study of tradition and folk-lore.

What will the modern world do if it finds (as very likely it will) that the wildest fables have had a basis in fact; that there are creatures of the border land, that there are oddities on the fringe of fixed laws, that there are things so unnatural as easily to be called preternatural? I do not know what the modern world will do about these things; I only know what I hope. I hope the modern world will be as sane about these things as the mediaeval world was about them. Because I believe that an ogre can have two heads, that is no reason why I should lose the only head that I have. Because the mediaeval man thought it that some man had the head of a dog, that was no reason why he himself should have the head of a donkey. The mediaeval man was never essentially weak or stupid about any of his beliefs, however unfounded they were. He did not lack judgment; he only lacked the opportunities of judgment. He had superstitions; but he was not

superstitious about them. He was wrong about Africa; but then, to do him justice, he did not care whether he was right. He had got that particular thing which some modern people call “the love of truth,” but which is really simply the power of taking one’s own mistakes seriously. He thought that ordinary men were a serious matter; as they are. He thought that extraordinary men were a fantastic fairy-tale; and he thought (very rightly) that the fairy-tale was all the more fantastic if it was true. He did not let dog-faced men affect his conception of mankind; he regarded them as a joke, the best as a practical joke. But in our time, I am sorry to say, we have seen some signs of the possibility that such aberrations or monstrosities as spiritual science may discover will be taken as real tests of, or keys to, the human lot. For instance, the psychological phenomenon called “dual personality” is certainly a thing so extraordinary that any old-fashioned rationalist or agnostic would simply have called it a miracle and disbelieved it. But nowadays those who do believe it will not treat it as a miracle—that is, as an exception. They try to make deductions from it, theories about identity and metempsychosis and psychical evolution, and God knows what. If it is true that one particular body has two souls, it is a joke, as if it had two noses. It must not be permitted to upset the actualities of our human happiness. If some one says, “Jones blew his nose,” and Jones is of so peculiar a formation that one may with logical propriety ask, “Which nose?” that is no reason why the ordinary formula should lose its ordinary human utility. This is, I think, one of the most real dangers that lie in front of the civilization that has just discovered the Leprechaun. We are going to find all the gods and fairies all over again, all the spiritual hybrids and all the jests of eternity. But we are not going to find them, as the pagans found them, in our youth, in an atmosphere in which gods can be jested with or giants slapped on the back. We are going to find them, in the old age of our society, in a mood dangerously morbid, in a spirit only too ready to take the exception instead of the rule. If we find creatures that are half human, we may only too possibly make them an excuse for being half-human ourselves. I should not be very painfully concerned about the Leprechaun if people had thrown stones at him as a bad fairy, or given him milk and fire as a good one. But there is something menacing about taking away a monster in order to study him. There is some thing sinister about putting a Leprechaun in the workhouse. The only solid comfort is that he certainly will not work.

