

# North American BioFortean Review

Volume II, Number 2  
2000



“There is a principle which is a bar against all information,  
which is proof against all arguments  
and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—  
That principle is contempt prior to investigation.”  
— Herbert Spence

# North American BioFortean Review

Editors:  
Chad Arment and Brad LaGrange

## Contents

The Gowrow vs. Occam's Razor	Brad LaGrange
The Santer: North Carolina's Own Mystery Cat?	Angelo Capparella III
A Pennsylvania "Gorilla" Flap	Chad Arment
Strangest of All	Chad Arment
Cryptonotes with "Grizzly" Adams	Matthew A. Bille
Dinos in the U.S.A.	Chad Arment
An Old Black Panther Report	Brad LaGrange
More Odd "Wildcat" Reports	Chad Arment
My Two Fortean Experiences	Brad LaGrange
Lying Eyes	Brad LaGrange
Devil Monkeys or Wampus Cats?	Chad Arment
A New Urban Myth	
From the Past:	
A Strange Beast	
A Petrified Man	
A Giant Snake	
A Giant Eagle	
Horned Skeletons?	

Frontpiece is an image provided by a witness from near Roanoke, Virginia  
See the article "Devil Monkeys or Wampus Cats?"

### **Fair Usage Policy**

We attempt to use original images whenever possible. In certain cases, however, an article may require specific images which have been published elsewhere. We note, wherever possible, our source for those images. We are using such images for the purposes of criticism, comment, education, and research, as allowed by Title 17 of the United States Code (USC Title 17 § 107).

## From the Editors:

One of the reasons we started this newsletter is that we decided we needed an outlet for our various investigations, regardless of what was actually accomplished. Many investigations just don't have the "happy ending" that you see in many articles, where a hoax is unveiled or a mystery solved. We do find that by sharing this research, we are able to find others who have seen similar accounts or who can provide reliable confirmation or good arguments against a particular idea. Busy schedules and other interests don't allow us to do this on more than an irregular basis, but we enjoy sharing what we come across with others who may be interested in these topics. Frankly, you don't have to agree with our conclusions. We may not agree with the conclusions or viewpoints of those who write to us. But by keeping communication open, we feel we are making more progress than if we merely dismissed everyone who disagrees.

At present, we can probably continue doing this for quite some time. We're not running out of ideas so long as people continue to forward interesting reports and sightings. We would like to see more submissions for articles. If you'd like to do so, please contact one of the editors, Chad Arment ([caalsnake@aol.com](mailto:caalsnake@aol.com)) or Brad LaGrange ([ringneck2@aol.com](mailto:ringneck2@aol.com)). We could also use some illustrators - if you have an interest in that area, please let us know. Our clip art is dwindling rapidly. Have an article suggestion, or have you run across some interesting old articles? We'd like to see it.

We are especially interested in continuing to reprint classic cryptozoological material. One such article in this issue is Angelo Capparella's Santer article, which was originally published in Shadows (No. 4, pp. 1-3, Jan. 1977; No. 5, pp. 1-3, Feb. 1977). Capparella went on to become a well-known ornithologist and is now with the Illinois State University. (He is now, as of June 2000, on a three-month expedition to Peru.)

Any other suggestions, comments, declarations of war, etc., are welcome.

## Distribution Policy

North American BioFortean Review is a free PDF-format newsletter downloadable in electronic form free from the Zoological Miscellanea website ([www.herper.com](http://www.herper.com)). Print copies may be distributed in complete form so long as it is free of charge. We are unable to provide print copies of the newsletter. We encourage you to pass along the URL for this newsletter. We don't mind if you just pass along an electronic copy, but it does give us a better idea of distribution numbers if everyone downloads a copy for themselves.

# The Gowrow vs. Occam's Razor; an exercise in folklore

Brad LaGrange

The movies have told us that all giant lizards meet their match sometime. Sometimes purportedly real ones do too. Sometimes, also, a cryptid just ain't. Hoaxes, color mutation, and misidentification have laid many a new beast into a taxonomic grave. Genetic tests have reaped their share also.

The "Gowrow" is a giant lizard said to obtain lengths of up to 20 feet, and is supposed to reside in northern Arkansas in the Ozark/Oauchita mountains.

It draws its name from the sound the young lizard pups make when hatching from the egg. Some accounts though have the sound being made as an adult, along with a repertoire of suitably monstrous groans and hisses. Likewise suitably monstrous are its "tusk-like" teeth.

Using books and the Internet I located only two reported Gowrow sightings. Both occurred near the Missouri border (Boone and Searly counties) and before WWII.

The first occurred in Boone county near the town of "Self." Neither I or Troy Taylor could locate the town, but many towns were little more than post offices, rail stops, or cross roads. The came and went over the years. My own grandfather's town is gone simply because better roads were built which allowed people to travel to better stores farther away, which negated the need for a post office, so the town of Apalone faded into black.

"Prior to 1935," (one account says 1900), was the only date I could find assigned to this one, which took place in a cave called "Devils Hole" on the land of an E. J. Rhodes.

Mr. Rhodes heard a commotion from the cavern and slid down about two hundred feet, as far as he could without having to crawl. E. J. heard some hissing, like he thought a giant lizard might make. He left, but returned with buddies and a rope.

A hunk of flat iron was put knotted to the end of the rope and lowered down only to come back chewed up. An attempt with a rock resulted with the rock being chewed clean off the line. None of the party wanted to shimmy down the line after that, so the matter was dropped.

Far to the north, in an equally untraceable cave near Hannibal, Missouri, similar stories supposedly exist.

The second Gowrow account is slightly more substantial. A traveling salesman named Bill Miller was written to have killed this example of crypto-mega fauna, south of Boone county in the Searly county town of Marshal in 1897. It remains were nobly sent to America's Smithsonian Institution. Of course, the SI has absolutely no record of its arrival.

The Gowrow has also crossed from crypto folklore into folk legend. An example was found in Southern carnivals. In the sideshows some operators carried on a "Gowrow Show." At traveling carnivals, folks would pay their money and enter a darkened tent to take their seats. Just before the curtain would raise for the customers to see the monstrous Gowrow of which the hawkers had spoke—

BANG! BANG!, then a scream, some glass smashing, and cries of “The Gowrow is Loose!, the Gowrow is LOOOOSE!”

The show operators would herd the crowd outside so they could escape the certain doom of Gowrow attack. Any body left in the tent got their dime back.

To figure out what the Gowrow, if real, could be(or based on), isn't necessarily as hard as it sounds. Unlike most cryptids, we have an actual animal, not too far away, that is a near match. That fanciful sounding beast is, of course, the alligator.

Like the Gowrow, the alligator is big, running from 6-16 feet(probably less than ten in Arkansas). Although not tusked it is certainly well toothed. It also hisses, groans and while not quite “Gowrow,” they do bark while hatching.

The alligator also lives in Arkansas, too, and not far from where the Gowrow is said to reside. If Arkansas were divided into thirds, from north to south, the alligator would inhabit most of the lower two thirds, while the Gowrow is reported from the mountainous northern third. I propose here that the legend of Gowrow is just that, a legend that stems from the alligator.

Folks from the northern mountains of the Ozarks were, at the time of the Gowrow reports, desperately poor. Destitute as in Tobacco Road, Erskine Caldwell poor. They did not have highways or even roads to carry them into the southern regions. They also just had a natural sense to keep to themselves, and not travel. Isolation had made them nearly self-sufficient and in turn they saw no need for, and often subtly rejected, “outside” or “Brought on” goods. These people developed a rich folklore not like that of anywhere else.

One of the few resources in these times from the Ozarks was prime timber. Land owners would brand the trees which were theirs and would follow the cut trees downriver in the spring with the rains to sell in larger towns to timber brokers.

I think that in these towns in the south of the state, they saw gators or gator hides or at the very least heard tell of them. Such a creature would have been alien to the highlanders in the days before National Geographic, PBS, and Animal Planet. Small pickled alligators, or alligator picture postcards might have been taken back north. Traveling peddlers (such as Bill Miller) may have even brought such items with them when traveling through the north.

This isn't such an unprecedented idea. Shuker has suggested that medieval reports of small dragons and stuffed dragons may have been loosed or preserved monitors brought to Europe by traders from the southern coast of the Mediterranean

Now we can't close the case on the Gowrow just yet. But we must remember that while the Gowrow is obviously an old part of the region's folklore it has very few sightings, and nothing from the days of modern education.

#### Bibliography:

Shuker, Dr. Karl P. N. 1997. From Flying Toads to Snakes with Wings. St. Paul, Minn.: Lewllyn Publications.

Taylor, Troy. 1998. Devils Hole Cave. <http://www.ghostsoftheparie.com>

# The Santer: North Carolina's Own Mystery Cat?

Angelo Capparella III

During the 1890's, two newspapers in the western piedmont of North Carolina, "The Chronicle" (Wilkesboro weekly) and "The Statesville Landmark" (Statesville weekly), every so often wrote that a creature called the Santer was "terrorizing" one of the nearby communities. Little in the way of detail is ever given other than the statement that the Santer is in such and such a place "carrying on its work of devastation." However, when described it is usually said to have the appearance of a large cat and to have a particular fondness for cat and dog meat. Was this Santer a forerunner of today's mystery cats? \*

According to a staff member of the present-day Statesville Landmark, the Santer first appeared in the August 28, 1890 issue of that paper (though this source does not state if its name was coined then). Apparently this was just a brief mention, but the next issue, September 4, 1890, is full of detail and even includes a drawing of the Santer (whose name was in use by then). Though this writer has been unable to examine this issue or obtain copy of same, the September 11, 1890 issue of "The Carolina Watchman" (Salisbury weekly) summarizes it as follows:

"The Landmark last week presented to its readers a likeness of the physical contour of the most remarkable beast, said to be at large in the country adjacent to Statesville." (Note: Iredell county.) "Even its likeness is dreadful to behold. The brute is described as having abnormal capacity for food, and has a weakness for pigs, cow, sheep and negro children." (Note: In the Chronicle its weakness for cats and dogs is usually emphasized.) "This strange animal is called locally by several names, none of which, perhaps excepting 'Santer', conveys much meaning to the earnest reader. 'Santer' has a mysterious meandering indefinite significance which is quite appalling...."

The Watchman appears to treat the Landmark's article in a tongue-in-cheek fashion—their own article continues with a rather absurd theory of its origin. The Watchman apparently recognizes the Landmark's article to be a gag and is going along with it. Commenting on the Landmark's article the staff member mentioned above states that "the Santer was obviously a brain-child of J.P. Caldwell" who was editor at the time. There are two traditions as to why Caldwell invented the Santer. One is that the news was dull and the other is that the local blacks were spending too much time at the saloon and needed to be taught a lesson by scaring them. Whatever the reason, it seems that the name Santer was invented to describe a creature made up by Mr. Caldwell, though perhaps based on genuine reports of some strange animal.

If the Santer had only been mentioned a few times after this in obviously tongue-in-cheek fashion then there would be no doubt that it was all a journalistic hoax. But it so happens that the Santer appears in the Landmark and Chronicle throughout the 1890's, sometimes in a joking manner but more often (in the Chronicle' at least) in a largely serious manner. For this reason we should not be too hasty in relegating all Santer reports to fabrication.

Supporting our theory that the Santer as it appeared in the September 4 issue of the Landmark was a hoax, but that later sightings of unusual creatures were often called by the name Santer, is the following article which appeared in the October 9, 1890 issue of the Watchman. Here a clear distinction is made between the Landmark's Santer and a strange creature which was apparently causing the people of the area some consternation. Note the portion we have underlined.

“What is it?”

“Possum hunters are scarce in the Second Creek neighborhood just now and the cause of the scarcity is a ‘varmint’ of some kind loose in the woods.

“Now this varmint is not a fake like the Santer of the Statesville Landmark, but a regular terrorizing beast; with a chain around its neck, and which has been seen a number of times, by the good people of that neighborhood, and which has a failing for cattle of the bull yearling variety and like the santer occasionally takes a negro baby between meals.

“The first time this animal was heard of in this county was about two weeks ago. Parties who were obliged to keep late hours... reported that they heard unearthly noises which they could not describe but which were enough to keep them in the house nights after they had once heard it.

“About ten days ago while out possum hunting Abe Harbin (colonel) heard it ahead of him aways and his dogs came running back with their tails between their legs. Abe... treed it in a big poplar and ‘shun’ its eyes, which were nearly two feet apart... hearing it growl, he left with his dogs a hundred yards ahead of him.

“...On last Friday Mr. Adam Lentz saw it but ‘it was only a glimpse like’...but the glimpse was enough to satisfy him that it was not quite as big as a cow.

“On Monday night it visited the houses of two widow ladies. At one of them, Mrs. Cozarts, it reared up against the door and growled. Mrs. Cozart screamed loud enough to wake up the wife of a neighbor who lived close by who went to the door to see what was the matter, as she opened the door the varmint sprang at her but failed to get its claws in her, the husband jumped up and got his pistol but when he got to the door the animal was out of sight, but he says he heard the chains.

“Opinions differ as to what it looks like... No one has missed any cattle yet...”



another question which will be considered shortly.

In gathering reports of the Santer this writer has primarily relied on the Wilkesboro "Chronicle." It is the only newspaper in Wilkes county which still has issues available for the 1890s and fortunately carried Santer reports which some semblance of regularity. Most of the reports occurred in 1897, followed by 1899. The rest of the 1890s had from three to no reports for each year.

The only other newspaper which appears to have carried somewhat regular reports was the "Statesville Landmark" which covers Iredell county. The only copies in existence are found at the Landmark's office which has remained inaccessible to this writer. However, the Landmark staff member mentioned earlier states that the most reports occurred in the early 1890s and then gradually petered out though there was a revival of interest in 1896.

At first sight it would appear that Iredell and Wilkes county were the hangout of the Santer, judging from the reports in the Chronicle and Landmark. This, however, may well be a false impression. It should be remembered that many papers of these two counties and surrounding counties have little or no issues still in existence. Therefore, any Santer report from out of Wilkes and Iredell may have been lost to the past. But until contrary information is uncovered, we can consider Wilkes and Iredell to be the Santer's main haunt.

Having examined some of the Santer reports it is now time to ask just what was the Santer? Five possible explanations are suggested:

- 1) The Santer reports (including those reports in which the creature is just referred to as a "varmint") are simply a journalistic hoax.
- 2) The Santer reports are simply misidentifications of familiar animals such as wild dogs, wildcats, bears, etc.
- 3) The Santer reports are actually reports of cougars (also called panthers, catamounts, etc).
- 4) The Santer reports are some mixture of 1, 2, and 3
- 5) The Santer reports are reports of a genuine "mystery cat," i.e. a creature resembling a cat which is not an animal in the conventional sense.

It is very unlikely that all Santer reports are purely fabrications for reasons discussed earlier. The very nature of the reports (they are presented in a serious manner) as well as their persistence over many years does not support the fabrication explanation.

As to the reports being misidentifications of known animals, it is indeed possible that a few are but doubtful that all are. For one thing, whenever a bear or mad dog, for example, does "terrorize" a community it is designated as such. No aura of mystery surrounds these animals. Also, from the descriptions we have of the appearance and behavior of the Santer it seems most unlikely that some known animal could have been the culprit.

Explanation 3 is perhaps the most difficult to evaluate. It is almost impossible to know when the panther became extinct in N.C., assuming it ever did. Certainly by

this time the panther was rare, having been pushed back into less populated areas. The average resident of Wilkes and Iredell county were probably unfamiliar with the creature; even in known cougar country sightings of the elusive cat are rare. Perhaps a few panthers remained in the area and, as the local residents were unfamiliar with them, any sighting was interpreted as being the Santer which had so conveniently been invented by J.P. Caldwell earlier. Evidence against this explanation consists primarily of the fact that the Santer behaved much differently from panthers. Where the cougar (panther) is a shy, elusive beast who has learned to steer clear of man, the Santer displays the opposite behavior and seems to have little fear of man. Consider the following report from the Chronicle.

March 17, 1897

“The ‘Santer’ at Roaring River”

“The ‘Santer’ has made its appearance at Roaring River. It has assumed the character of a ‘cat eater.’ It has the appearance of a cat, but is larger. For the last two weeks it has been feasting upon cats about Roaring River. It came into Esq. Reeves’ porch about dusk a few evenings ago and carried away a fine cat. They saw it, but it did its work so quick that they could not prevent it. Another evening it went to Lee Pardue’s where the children were playing on the porch and carried off another fine cat. All the cats in that neighborhood are passing away...”

As for the claim that the locals did not know the difference between a cougar and the Santer consider this report from the Chronicle.

February 2, 1893

Under column “Notes From Summit”

“John and H.L. Beshears caught the largest catamount the 14th ever seen in this section in 25 years. It killed a sheep at F.M. Bakers on Thursday night, and had killed several pigs, lambs and sheep before that. He is 4 feet and 6 inches long and about the size of a large hound dog...”

Here the catamount (panther) is identified as such and there is no attempt to draft it as the explanation for prior Santer reports. Though it would be premature to rule out explanation 3 as likely, it would also be hasty to accept it as valid.

Explanation 4 is likely only so long as there are no Santer reports which cannot be satisfactorily explained by either 1, 2, or 3. However, this writer contends this to be the case, that most of the Santer reports cannot be explained by any of these explanations for reasons discussed earlier throughout this article.

If explanations 1 through 4 are not satisfactory then we seem to be left with an explanation which is not really an explanation but a recognition that the Santer reports represent a mystery, i.e. that the Santer is a mystery cat. There are similarities

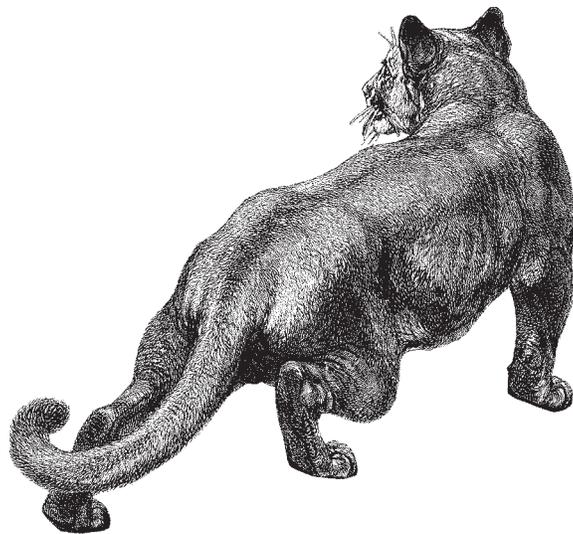
between Santer reports and more recent mystery cat reports (see references cited below), those similarities being in appearance (a large cat) and behavior (terrorizes communities, identity unknown). Whether in fact the Santer can be placed in the category of mystery cats awaits more evidence as we cannot at present confidently state that explanations 2 and 3 are very unlikely, only that they are unsatisfactory.

In closing, it is fitting to include a report indicating that the Santer was not a creature destined for oblivion before the beginning of the 20th century. For in 1934 the Santer, or its offspring, once again made its appearance according to the “Statesville Landmark” of May 28, 1934.

“From Mooresville news: ‘There is considerable excitement around here about the ferocious wild animal roaming around Shinnsville and other places in South Iredell. Most people who lived here about 40 or more years ago are satisfied that this is none other but an offspring of that same old Iredell County Santer that terrorised the natives around Statesville and Amity Hill, devouring chickens, pigs, calves and carrying off a few colored children that never were found.’”

\* An excellent source of mystery cat reports is: “On the Trail of Pumas, Panthers and ULAs” (parts 1 and 2) by Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman, FATE magazine, June 1972 and July 1972.

An excellent work on the panther, which discusses sightings of this creature in eastern Canada and eastern U.S., is: The Eastern Panther by Bruce S. Wright, Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd, Toronto, Canada, 1972.



# A Pennsylvania “Gorilla” Flap

Chad Arment

One particularly interesting area of Bigfoot research is the search for the “Historical Bigfoot,” or those early reports which indicate creatures with a distinct resemblance to the sporadic Bigfoot sightings we see today. In general, there are not a lot of known historical reports compared to the numbers we see today, but this is due to the active investigation of current researchers and probably the inroads made by humans into areas that were relatively uninhabited early in the last century. Misidentifications and jests make up a number of the early newspaper reports, but there are often some serious and interesting sightings as well.

This is a series of central Pennsylvania newspaper articles that began in late 1920 and carried over into the early months of 1921. These reports were the foundation for the Shoemaker folktale published in the last issue (Vol. II, no. 1) of the North American BioForteian Review.

While these reports cannot be used as good evidence for a biological basis for Bigfoot, they do provide a good look at how reports of such animals can be found historically. (Newspaper accounts are reprinted as closely to the originals as possible, and may contain spelling or punctuation errors. There is also some repetition in reports as some articles quote previous ones.)

## **Snyder County Weekly Herald**

December 15, 1920: p. 1

### Is There a Wild Beast in County?

Rumors flying hither and thither the past week or two are yet to be proven facts, in the case of the supposed attack on a 15-year-old lad, south of Globe Mills, by a gorilla, or other “man-like” wild beast.

The story could be lengthened into columns, but the skeptics and the “doubting Thomas’” seem to be in the majority, and nearly all whom we have interrogated say “there’s nothing to it.”

The “gorilla” has made two or three attacks on the same person, and has, within a day or so, been “seen or heard” south of Globe Mills, north of Middleburg, and next in the Narrows, at Lewistown!

But hunters are on the “path” and are awaiting snow for tracking before they have hopes of bagging the “beast.”

One Middleburg man assures us that there are only three gorillas in captivity in the world today, and that if one were in this climate it would

die within 24 hours!

At any rate, the animal has been described as ranging from the height of an undersized man to that of more than seven feet! and is “hairy” and “strong.”

We hope the story is true, and that the animal or beast may be captured—we wouldn’t dare hope it isn’t true, because the lad is lying in bed, one knee dislocated and has other bruises, showing him to have had some rough handling by some thing, and, especially because the people all over Central Pennsylvania have been interested in it in full belief; and a lot of them saw tracks and other evidences! As above stated, we hope it true, and that the beast may be captured, and placed on exhibition, so that “all who pass may see.” We are sorry that the lad was a victim if the report of the attack is substantially correct.

### **The Selinsgrove Times**

December 16, 1920; p. 7

#### Gorilla Affair Seems Good Story at Least

#### Brave Men Scouring Hills in Large Numbers Since the Animal’s Reported Pranks Obtained No Clue as to Identity of Beast

Now that it’s had sufficient time for the excitement of the moment to subside and for the show-me test to be applied the people out Globe’s Mills way scout the sensational report of Friday that a youth there was attacked by a gorilla or some other equally wild and ferocious animal.

The community was aroused to high pitch and brave hunters swore vengeance on the unwelcome intruder because of the story which came from the Charles Bolig home, a few miles back of Globe Mills.

It was a harrowing tale. The narrative told how the other evening the father was working by lantern light at a woodpile and that his 13-year-old son, Samuel, was coming thru the barnyard to help carry in the kindling for the night. As the lad passed thru a gate, a hairy animal about the height of the youngster, jumped from his fence perch and grasped the boy in his arms.

They fell to the ground and the “gorilla” squeezed him so tightly that the boy’s clothes were torn. The youngster yelled for help and his father hastened to his rescue. Before the help arrived, tho, the animal with one claw took hold of the boy’s leg above the knee and with the other claw grasped him below the knee. Then the attacking beast gave a quick pull and a jerk. The knee was dislocated, and while the victim

writhed in pain, the strange animal hopped away.

The youngster related that the beast looked like the monkeys he had seen in circuses. The report has been current a fortnight that a gorilla escaped from a carnival company in Williamsport, and was believed to have been seen in the vicinity of Montgomery and Milton.

Community hunters were on their return from the mountains, where they had killed many deer and a few bear. They were full of the spirit of the hunt, and determined to run to earth the unwelcome invader. They went over the hills by day and by night in numerous parties, but of a gorilla, a wildcat or any other equally ferocious animal they saw not a one. Neither could they find another person in the community who has seen what the Bolig lad reports he beheld.

So they have decided the lad's clothing was torn in another way, and they are ready to compliment his imagination.

### **Snyder County Weekly Herald**

December 22, 1920: p. 1

#### Now Its Called the "Missing Link"

The wild beast which has been credited with making it's headquarters near Globe Mills, this county, has sure been going some the past week. The good judgment of most all men in Central Pennsylvania is beginning to be doubted, and the animal, wild, tame, or otherwise, bobs up simultaneously in Northumberland, Snyder, Union, Mifflin, Juniata, Perry, Centre and Blair counties! The best shots, the most composed men, and the oldest natives of these different counties have all been within firing or hailing distance of this unusual thing, and all are in one accord that it doesn't belong to these parts. And since it has not been brought to close enough view of any one rationally able to give it a name, it has been called the "missing link."

The story seems to have originally gained much of it's impetus in Lewistown, where the dispatch going to the daily papers leaves the readers of the account under the impression that the whole thing started "just across the line" from Lewistown. Hardly any one in Snyder county wants to claim the blamed thing, and we readily admit that it looks as tho some correspondent to the daily papers was rather short of "long green" and decided to "suck the dailies for spending money."

Reminds us of the perfectly good advertising this county received the time that gold was discovered in paying quantities not far from our sister town, Beavertown. Some people believed it—others didn't. About the

same condition exists in the present controversy, only we think the Lewistown correspondent is making too much spending money on the wild animal.

Maybe it's a case of too much "Hootch" and a vivid imagination?

### **Gettysburg Times**

January 21, 1921: p. 1

#### **Gorilla Story No Longer A Myth**

**Residents of Idaville and Vicinity Conducted Chase Thursday Night**

That the story of a huge gorilla frightening the people of Adams county is not a myth but an actual fact is the emphatic statement of northern county residents who late Thursday night took part in a general chase in the vicinity of Idaville.

For several days reports believed to be entirely unfounded reached Gettysburg from northern county people stating that they had seen an animal believed to be a gorilla prowling about their property. At first these reports were discredited by the majority of people who heard them but now are known to have originated from authentic sources.

Thursday afternoon and evening a general chase with the gorilla as the objective was conducted by the residents of Idaville and vicinity. The animal described by some as a gorilla and by others as a kangaroo was first seen at Snyder's hill between York Springs and Idaville where a number of men failed in a combined attempt to capture or shoot it. At 10 o'clock Thursday night about fifty men gathered on Pike hill near Idaville and again vainly tried to kill the elusive creature which escaped across the snow to Daniels' hill near the Adams-Cumberland county line.

The theory advanced for the animal is that it escaped from a circus train during a railroad wreck several months ago.

So far no damage by the animal has been done excepting the robbery of a smoke house attributed to it.

### **Waynesboro Press**

January 21, 1921: p. 6

#### **Gorilla Bobs Up Near Gettysburg**

The gorilla that started on his rampage up in the Alleghenies a few weeks ago and was later seen in Path Valley, has apparently progressed

as far east as Gettysburg.

According to an unfounded report a huge gorilla was spied sitting on a rock near Mount Rock Wednesday afternoon. When the monstrous animal saw that it was discovered by some Mount Rock citizens it arose, stretched itself, and disappeared into a nearby wood, according to the report.

When told this story one Gettysburg citizen said, "It is evident that some of my Mount Rock friends are seeing more peculiar visions now than they did before the advent of the Eighteenth amendment."

**Waynesboro Press**  
January 22, 1921: p. 1

### That Pesky Gorilla May Have Robbed the Chamberlin Meathouse

It seems like going far afield to solve the mystery of Farmer Wm. C. Chamberlin's smokehouse robbery, in which he lost eight elegant hams, as told by this paper, to venture a guess that the culprit may have been the escaped gorilla, which has been depredating about the mountains in this county and in Adams county, and yet more unlikely things have happened. The Gettysburg Times of yesterday following a report of the gorilla having been seen about Mount Rock last Wednesday, tells the following:

"That the story of a huge gorilla frightening the people of Adams county is not a myth but an actual fact is the emphatic statement of northern county residents who late Thursday night took part in a general chase in the vicinity of Idaville.

"For several days reports believed to be entirely unfounded reached Gettysburg from northern county people stating that they had seen an animal believed to be a gorilla prowling about their property. At first these reports were discredited by the majority of people who heard them but now are known to have originated from authentic sources.

"Thursday afternoon and evening a general chase with the gorilla as the objective was conducted by the residents of Idaville and vicinity. The animal described by some as a gorilla and by others as a kangaroo was first seen at Snyder's hill between York Springs and Idaville where a number of men failed in a combined attempt to capture or shoot it. At 10 o'clock Thursday night about fifty men gathered on Pike hill near Idaville and again vainly tried to kill the elusive creature which escaped across the snow to Daniels' hill near the Adams-Cumberland line.

"The theory advanced for the animal is that it escaped from a circus

train during a railroad wreck several months ago.

“So far no damage by the animal has been done excepting the robbery of a smoke house attributed to it.”

**Waynesboro Press**

January 24, 1921: p. 1

Sunnyside Party Needs Commission

That escaped circus gorilla of which so much has been published lately seems to have the quality of ubiquity: it is here, there and every place. All one has to do is shut his eyes and think gorilla and the monster will be silhouetted on the brain and be seen prowling about smokehouses.

His most recent apparition is reported today at Sunnyside. Of course, no one saw the man-eating monster, but some one had gorilla dementia and it was just the same as the real thing.

**Waynesboro Press**

January 26, 1921: p. 1

Car Barn Worker Chased by Gorilla

Harry Shindledecker, Chestnut street, employed with the C. G. & W. St. Ry. Co., while on his way to work this morning, arrived at the car barn, it is said, in a very excited condition.

The cause for his perturbation of mind, he said, was an object passing in front of him at the E.-B. baseball grounds that had the “ear marks” of being the gorilla that is running at large and is much feared and sought after by many persons.

Mr. Shindledecker said the animal was about his height and ran in a westerly direction.

**Waynesboro Press**

January 27, 1921: pp. 1, 6

Gorilla has Rouzerville in Complete Upset; Big Armed Posse Gives Chase

That escaped circus gorilla, whose peripatetic performance in the mountainous regions of Franklin and neighboring counties has been an

exciting topic in many sections, where scores of people have given him chase or tried to snipe him in the neighborhood of barns and houses, has now invaded the west slopes of the Blue Ridge and the whole neighborhood herearound is in turmoil.

As told by this paper yesterday, the big ape from South Africa was seen in the E.-B. ball park early yesterday morning by Harry Shindledecker, who was on his way from home to the trolley car barn. It was related that the black monster crossed right in front of Mr. Shindledecker. As the story has not been contradicted it stands as told.

And now the excitement is transferred to Rouzerville and the mountain range to the east. Not since Lee's battered and disorganized legions came thundering down the mountain after the Battle of Gettysburg, hotly pursued by Kilpatrick's cavalry has there been heard so much gunfire as there was about the mountain village last night.

The grisly ingeena was discovered soon after nightfall in the yard of "Shinny" Needy by his brother, Henry Needy, who was passing along one of the back streets. The animal was crouched in a heap inside the fence. Henry took it at first to be a dog, but when he called to it the animal gave a gurgling bleat, such as he had never heard before. Convinced that it was some sort of wild animal young Needy picked up a rock and whaled it at the uncanny beast. The latter, however was too quick for the missile and gathering itself up on all fours bounded away and was soon lost in the bushes along the mountain edge.

Needy reported his find and then "Bid" Whitmore and "Pinty" Naugle were fired with the spirit of the chase. They got their trusty rifles and made for the bushes where the big ape was last seen. They kept up the hunt all along the slope and finally succeeded in flushing the big chimpanzee in Mike Lookabaugh's field at the foot of the mountain spur. They shot, reloaded, shot again and kept it up as long as they could see a hair of the rapidly retreating animal. Again it had made its escape to the bushes, its first line of defense.

Then a more determined and elaborate campaign was decided on. The whole town was in an uproar at the fierce gunplay heard among the surrounding hills and fields and the news quickly went from door to door that "the gorilla" had come to town. Members of the deer club and other marksmen, to the number of a score and more were quickly mobilized and on their way to the battle front. They formed a long circle around the foothill where the animal was last seen and in this formation moved into the woodland. They scoured the mountain slope half way to Pen-Mar but couldn't raise the quarry. Meantime some of the gunners saw black dogs along the slopes and mistaking them for the gorilla shot them.

## Town in Panic

By this time the town was in a veritable panic. Scores of people looking out of their windows were sure they saw the crouching monster in their yards. John Monigan was dead sure he had seen it run past his house. It was after this that Whitmore and Naugie shot at it in Lookabaugh's field.

It was something awful. Young ladies and women who happened to be abroad sought refuge in the first house they came to. The result was that they were afraid to go home alone and had to be provided with escorts. The latter were in demand, and even married men well up in years were pressed into service. It was a night of terror and it was long after midnight before the village had settled down and been wrapped in slumber.

## Seen at Monterey

Plausibility is added to the report of the appearance of the strange animal at and near Rouzerville by the fact that later in the evening the gorilla was seen by two young men, William Flohr and Maurice Molesworth, of Blue Ridge. They were returning late from a party and as they neared the golf links at Monterey they saw what they thought was a man approaching them on all fours. Thinking it was a sneak thief they stopped and called to him, asking him what he was doing there. The animal came toward them slowly and then rising and coming forward made some gurgling sounds which were not human according to the young men. Then they beat it, not having their guns along.

The animal was about five feet in height and that is all the young men can describe about him, as they were so frightened they did not stop for further investigation.

The young men were in high state of excitement.

## Frank Goetz Saw Him

Further proof that it is a really truly escaped gorilla is afforded by Frank Goetz, of Rouzerville, who swears—or is willing to—that he saw him in the bushes back of his house on Tuesday night.

**Waynesboro Press**  
January 28, 1921: p. 1

Gorilla is Only a Matter of Moonshine

Farmer John A. Johnston was in town today on a business errand. Asked if any more gorillas had been seen about Rouzerville since Wednesday night he replied that it all depended on whether the right kind of “moonshine” had been taken. He explained by saying that the old-fashioned stuff made people see snakes, but the kind people are making now makes them see gorillas.

**Waynesboro Press**  
January 28, 1921: pp. 1, 6

### Gorilla Was Brot to Rouzerville for a Purpose

The war on the gorilla at Rouzerville was not renewed last night as expected. A lot of the crack shots had laid in a fresh supply of ammunition and were fixed for our African kinsman, but as scouts sent out in the early part of the evening reported no traces of the rover the offensive planned for the evening was not launched.

The fact that the animal after being chased into the foothills east of Rouzerville by the firing squads the night before and had been seen towards midnight at Monterey, led to the belief that the “varmint” had passed on over into Adams county again, whence he came.

### Gorilla Was Imported

All was comparatively quiet at the mountain city and young ladies felt free to go and come, and without escorts, if none were to be had—and that is another story, for it is said there is no lack of Beau Brummels in that balliwick. In fact it is hinted that certain reform interests, who look with dismay upon the growing tendency of young ladies to be too much on the streets of nights, imported the gorilla for the very purpose of breaking the practice up. If this report be true, it may be expected that the gorilla will be kept within calling distance ready to spring on the town any minute.

This being the case, it would be the part of prudence for the fair denizens to take “dad” or “big brother” along when going out at night.

### Scared Up in the Corner

The scare spread to Glen Furney yesterday and people quaked in their boots. The women folks were afraid to go to bed and couldn't sleep when they did. The least little rustle in the bushes they imagined was the

gorilla and whenever a dog barked they were sure the beast was about. Men slept with their rifles standing at the head of the bed, says reports from that section. A woman from "the Corner," having a date in town that required her to leave home at 6:30 to catch the 7:50 car at Hess' lime kiln said she carried a big rock in her hand the whole way, also some extra hat pins.

The scare was due in part to the Rouzerville excitement of the night before and was given fresh impetus by the report that Paul Gonder had encountered the black monster last evening as he was returning from Black's Gap with a load of lapwood. The report was that it had crossed the road only a hundred yards ahead of him and so frightened him that he broke a trace cutting down a side road to reach home.

### **Gettysburg Times**

January 28, 1921: p. 1

#### Chase Gorilla To Mountains Posse of Rouzerville Citizens Make Futile Attempt to Kill Animal

#### Village Was In Uproar

Marksmen Form Line of Attack But Gorilla Makes Escape.  
Was Seen at Monterey Golf Links.

"Gorilla" warfare which was started last week in the vicinity of Idaville when Adams county residents, well armed, pursued what is believed to be an animal that escaped from a circus car when it was wrecked, not long ago, was renewed by citizens of Rouzerville Wednesday night when an armed posse scoured the Blue Ridge slopes in the hope of getting a shot at the beast.

The animal was discovered in an alley just as dusk was falling on the village. The word was quickly spread and the members of the Rouzerville deer camp and every one else that had a rifle soon turned out for the hunt. After the mobilization of marksmen was completed, the attackers in battle formation started up the mountain.

#### Gorilla Chased Out

They had barely gotten underway when the animal was chased out. Although a number of shots were fired the chimpanzee kept on bounding toward the thicker brush of the slope. It was then that an elaborate

campaign was decided on and a messenger was sent for reinforcements. The firing in the mountain was heard in the village and the town was soon in an uproar. It was decided to form a great circle around the foothill where the animal was last seen. Deployed in this fashion the grizzled hunters and young marksmen moved into the woodland.

### Dog Pays Penalty

They scoured the mountain slope half way to Pen Mar but found no trace of the gorilla. A black dog running through the underbrush paid the death penalty when an excited hunter mistook it for the ape.

When the hunters returned from the mountains, reports say, the town was in a turmoil—the animal had been seen there while the hunt was on. Young women who happened to be on the streets when the “panic” started were afraid to go home and escorts had to be provided.

Since the Rouzerville affair, the gorilla was seen at Monterey by two young men who were on their way home from a party. As they neared the Monterey golf links, they saw what they thought was a man approaching on all fours. When they called the animal rose on its hind legs and came towards them making gurgling sounds. The young men did not investigate any further.

### Gettysburg Times

February 1, 1921: p. 1

### Saw Gorilla in Daylight

#### Animal Has Haunt In Mountain, According to Reports

The big gorilla, which has been wandering in the mountains of southern Pennsylvania for some weeks, has turned up again near Pen Mar, according to reports from that section.

The big ape was seen by John Simmons, who resides between Pen Mar and Rouzerville, Saturday afternoon, while the light of the sun was so bright it could leave no doubt upon the mind or vision. Simmons was going through a field near his home, when he saw a strange, unlikely object, which he at once connected with the “gorilla”, from descriptions he had read in the newspapers.

At the time he saw the strange animal, Simmons was not armed and he was not in the mood to enter combat with the gorilla.

## **Snyder County Weekly Herald**

February 2, 1921: p. 1

### Posse of 25 Chases Escaped Gorilla

Waynesboro, Pa.—Franklin county's phantom gorilla has invaded the west slopes of the Blue Ridge, and the whole neighborhood is in a turmoil.

Wednesday night a strange animal, at first thought to be a huge black dog, was seen crouching along a fence at Rouzerville. When called to the animal gave only a gurgling bleat. Recalling that the famous circus fugitive had been seen at Waynesboro in the early morning, the man who met the beast raised the alarm in the community.

A posse of twenty-five leading rifle shots was quickly in pursuit of the animal, and members say they managed to get a number of shots at it, as it scampered into the foot hills, where the trail was lost.

## **Snyder County Weekly Herald**

February 9, 1921: p. 1

### Excited Over Gorilla Tales, Shoots Neighbor's Mule

Abraham Lau, of Franklinton, York county, had been reading the papers and saw that a gorilla had escaped from a circus in the northern part of the state some time ago and was supposed to be at large yet. The story worked up a good deal of excitement in the various parts of York county, and from time to time reports came that the gorilla had been seen. It remained for Lau, however, to really have an adventure, for when he went outside the house in the dark for a shuttle of coal he saw what he supposed was the gorilla and he hurried into the house for his trusty gun. Then he stole out and fired point blank the "gorilla" and was surprised to find that he had shot his neighbor's mule, which had strolled near the Lau home.

## **Waynesboro Press**

February 10, 1921: p. 1

### Motorists See Gorilla on Jack's Mountain

Harvey Minnich, East Main street, and Frank Rodgers, Keystone Garage, motored to York yesterday. On their return trip across Jack's mountain

they met a strange looking animal, presumably a gorilla. The young men were very much frightened but continued on their way home.

Luckily the jungle monster did not show any fight, but at the approach of the car scampered off down into the underbrush and was lost to view. They say if they'd had their guns with them they'd have given chase, but this is highly problematic and would not pass current with their friends without some affidavits.

---

In most cases, these types of report fade away, with no conclusive evidence having been found. This particular flap ends in a fairly distinctive manner, however. Note that the county named below is in Maryland, nowhere near the central Pennsylvania counties previously mentioned. It is unlikely that this report has anything to do with the above flap, but the newspaper editor apparently thought it was similar enough to publish it.

**Waynesboro Press**  
February 21, 1921: pp. 1, 6

#### Gorilla Met Fate; Choked to Death by Maryl'd Farmer

The famous gorilla that terrorized all Rouzerville and the Blue Ridge and sections of Adams county a couple weeks ago, has finally met the fate that befalls all beasts of prey when they venture too far. The jungle monster, supposed to have escaped from a circus some time ago and made a tour of several of the southern counties of Pennsylvania was finally run down and killed in Queen Anne's county, Md. The following is the report from Centerville, Md., today:

#### Choked Him to Death

Locked in a death struggle with a ferocious "gorilla" which for several days had terrorized the colored population of the willoughby neighborhood, Queen Anne's county, Wm. B. Quimby, a prosperous farmer who resides on the Walnut Ridge farm in the Sixth District, choked the creature into insensibility and then kicked him to death.

Rumors of the appearance of the "gorilla" in the neighborhood were last heard the latter part of last week, several negroes told miraculous stories of escapes. Finally some fox hunters saw the animal last Saturday afternoon. The "gorilla" made its appearance at Walnut Ridge farm, Mr.

Quimby sighted him from a distance and started in pursuit with the result already mentioned.

### Known Here

Mr. Quimby is known to a number of local Eastern Shore folks and is a near relative of Roland Q. Tarbutton, one of the foremen in the Landis Machine Co., whose former home was in Talbot county, adjoining Queen Anne's.

Our neighboring people will now rest easier knowing that no more will their lives be threatened by the voracious beast.

---

This, of course, leads to the question, "What happened to the body?" If the event actually occurred, perhaps more information on it will be found in a search through the Queen Anne County historical society files or a local newspaper's issues of that period.

Strangely enough, while these events were unfolding, yet another tale emerged from western Pennsylvania. This is another story which deserves further investigation, although it is doubtful that it is related to Bigfoot or the previous "gorilla" tales. (Note, the story ends abruptly due to a type-setting error with the newspaper; perhaps more information could be found in a Pittsburgh area publication.)

### **Waynesboro Press**

January 4, 1921: p. 5

#### Ape-Man's Reign of Terror Ends

Maniac Captured After He Had Terrorized Whole Country for More Than Two Weeks.

Pittsburgh, Pa.—The "ape-man" who has terrorized the countryside between Greensburg and Homestead for two weeks was captured in a heavily wooded thicket in Baldwin township and lodged in the Hays police station. His body, nearly nude, a fearsome grimy sight, and the matted hair on his face and head six inches long, the ape-man so closely resembled his simian ancestors that the officers who came on him unawares were in doubt for several minutes whether he was man or beast.

When captured the man was sleeping beside a fire. On being awakened he sprang at Constable Risenbarth and attempted to sink his fangs in the officer's throat. He was subdued after a struggle lasting

several minutes.

Apparently unable or unwilling to speak, the ape-man, who in actions and looks is the primordial male, sits mooning in his cell in the Hays police station, occasionally uttering deep guttural sounds resembling the croaking of a huge frog.

The first appearance which the giant monkey made was in Homestead and Mifflin townships, where he suddenly invaded the blackberry patches in the neighborhood which daily attract large numbers of women and children. The ape's taste for fruit suddenly caused a hurried exodus from the patches which are now quite deserted.

Indignant citizens formed themselves into bands and decided to hunt down Mr. Monk without delay. They got down their shotguns and rifles and started a monkey hunt through the surrounding marshes and thickets.

One farmer complained that some unknown individual had milked eight of his best cows and declared that he found tracks of a peculiar shape in the fields where his cows had been grazing.

It was subsequently found that two sheep, apparently strangled to death, and two hounds used to trail the ape, had been killed, and the Mifflin township authorities realized that they were...

### **From the Past: A Strange Beast**

Waynesboro Press (PA)

January 6, 1921: p. 5

Wild Beast Puzzles Expert

#### Strange Animal Found in New Jersey Has the Head of a Raccoon and Cat's Tail

Cohansey, N. J.—A strange animal that has made even the oldest rivermen and natives pinch themselves in this dry era is puzzling trappers and hunters as to its species since its capture in the Cohansey River. The animal has the head of a raccoon, the tail of a cat and its body of a little more than a foot long is covered with gray and reddish brown fur. Its feet are black. It was captured in a scoop net at the edge of the river by Clarence Cheesman, who lives in a boat-house colony near the shore.

[Ed. Note: Recognize the beast? It's a common out-of-place animal, the coatimundi.]

# Strangest of All

Chad Arment

One of the things an investigator dreads most (in my case, at least), is running across a report that is so dissimilar from anything else that you know that no one will take it seriously. Every investigator has a bias; the extent of that bias is determined by a number of factors, but it is there. A common prejudice occurs when there is only a single report of a particular animal. Now, granted, a certain amount of skepticism is called for in this circumstance, but there is a distinction between skepticism and outright dismissal. In cases like this, if a blatant fraud or obvious misidentification is not apparent, then it may be necessary to just place the case “on hold” until further investigation is made.

Here are a couple of intriguing “solo” reports, both involving aquatic organisms. (Minor spelling/punctuation editing was made.)

## The Oregon Critter

I received the following details from an individual who came across my website:

“Thirty five years ago at the age of 21 I watched a large black tentacled animal with an orange shell-like center rise out of the water. I watched it for about one minute before it went back under. Over the years I have told people about it and learned to keep my mouth shut. They don’t believe me. Three years ago I went back to where I saw it and am convinced that it is still there. It is in a pond about five or six acres with a deep center and marshy edges. The reason I am sure it is still there is some unnatural things have happened to the pond that would not have happened in nature.

“The two tentacles that I saw were about six inches [in diameter], one tentacle came out of each side of the orange disc. I was sitting on the bank, it was late August. One tentacle arched out of the water and then another one started out. As they arched out of the water an orange disc rose about three feet above the water. There was about 8 or 9 feet of tentacle on each side. It stayed still for a minute or so then quivered and water hit the surface, like it was squirting out water. I have later wondered if it could have been an air sack. I could see more of the animal under the surface, then it went down and disappeared. A few weeks earlier I tried to fish the lake but my line went straight down at the bank, it was very deep. That was over 30 years ago. When I went back believe it or not the lake has moved about 35 ft. The bank I was sitting on is now in the deep part of the lake, and where the deep part of the lake was is now a mucky marshy area. The marsh is in a straight line about 1000

long and 150 wide. The deep water area is about 100x100 feet at one end of the marsh. In nature, lakes or ponds slough in from all sides; they don't move. When I first saw it, it looked more like an excavation than something natural and what I saw on my return visit was not a natural metamorphosis. The lake is in the southern end of the Willamette Valley of Oregon. The water table in the area is only a few feet down. I am 57 years old and determined that before I die to go back and get the thing on video tape and prove that it does exist."

Now, I suspect that there is a natural hydro-geological explanation for the movement of the lake. The creature is very interesting, though, in terms of possible connection to Native American lore from that region involving "skookums." These were a great part of the mythology, supposedly inhabiting most, if not all, bodies of water. Yet there are very few descriptions of what these "skookums" supposedly looked like. One legend (<http://www.usgennet.org/alhnorus/ahorclak/kalapuyas.html>) tells about a "tongue" that emerged from a river to capture people. Is it possible that this sort of tale came about through sightings of stray tentacles?

### Lovecraftian Beasts in the Gulf of Mexico

The following came from a posting to an Internet newsgroup:

"I used to have a friend who was at one time an undersea welder for Gulf Oil in the 70's and did work on the oil rigs way out in the Gulf of Mexico.

"He gave it up because he was seeing things down there that were beyond his ability to comprehend and even describe. And he wasn't the only one. At one oil rig, the welding crew were getting used to seeing this 'giant headless glowing living firehose' that would zoom in

from out of nowhere at incredible Nascar speeds and would keep on zooming past the welders for up to fifteen minutes!

"My friend then said he finally saw what ate giant headless glowing living firehoses one scary day and caught the first helicopter back to shore. He never saw the ocean ever again and was thankful."

I queried the individual who posted this, and he kindly provided some more information:

"My friend George Hale [who died in 1994] was unable to describe the predator in detail. It was too big and too close to him. It was as big to him as you are to an ant. As a matter of fact, he had to ascend PDQ because he was in fear of being crushed like a bug. But the predator had a pallor and skin texture like a sea anemone and it might have been built along the lines of a starfish or a freshwater pond hydra. And it

was eating the firehose entity by swallowing it. It's method of propulsion is a mystery.”

The easy rejoinder to this report is to bring up hallucinations and sea stories. But, I would be very interested to hear whether anyone has bothered to spend time with and collect the folklore of the Gulf divers to determine whether similar reports have surfaced. In and of themselves, these are not biological impossibilities. There are invertebrates which roughly suggest such beasts, though size and biogeography may differ. Until such time that serious investigation can be made, however, these are open files.

### **From the Past: A Petrified Man**

Snyder County Weekly Herald (PA)  
June 1, 1921: p. 1

#### **Gravediggers Uncover Petrified Body of Man**

Forest Aikens and Roy McKinley, both of Milesburg, recently undertook a commission to remove the body of A. Jones from the old cemetery a mile outside of that village to the new Tresiyulny graveyard in the town. The family of the deceased man objected to the body remaining longer in its original resting place, because they believed a nearby stream of water trickled into the grave thruout the year. Aikens and McKinley were gravediggers of experience, and went about their task unaffected by circumstances which would have been uncomfortably grewsome to many others. But their composure was of short duration. The first surprise was to learn the dead man's legs had been drawn up and his knees protruded above the original level of the rough box. What made the circumstance all the more remarkable was the revelation that the bended knees were petrified. The grave held two feet of water, and the men began anxiously emptying it to learn whether all of the body had been turned to stone. The completion of their task revealed that such was the case. Moreover, the transition was so complete that they recognized the features of their departed friend. It was the first time a petrified body was found in a cemetery in their section, and stranger, too, is the fact the petrification took place in the comparatively short time of eleven years. The heavy contents of lime in the water, which saturated the grave, is the generally accepted explanation of the body into stone. The services of four men and a block and tackle were required to lift the ponderous body from its first grave and to lower it into another.

## Cryptonotes with “Grizzly” Adams

Matthew A. Bille

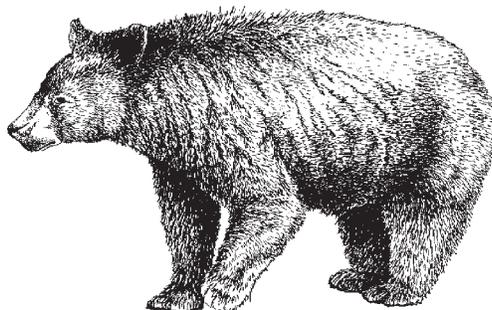
[Ed. Note: The author has kindly allowed us to reprint this section from his former print newsletter, Cryptozoology Newsletter (Vol. 2, no. 1, Jan/Feb 1995), later renamed Exotic Zoology. The text was titled “From the Archives.” Also of interest is this statement from the article “Whatever happened to... the Eastern Cougar,” in the same issue: “Incidentally, 140 years ago the famed hunter John “Grizzly” Adams traveled to Nevada’s Humboldt Mountains in search of the region’s allegedly famous *purple* panthers. He was disappointed.”]

The above-mentioned “Grizzly” Adams had another interesting story to relate, this one from California around 1854. The passage in Richard Dillon’s 1966 biography *The Legend of Grizzly Adams* reads, “Grizzly narrowly missed killing or capturing the rarest, most bizarre animal he had ever seen. The beast, which looked like a hedgehog with the head and feet of a bear, escaped.”

What is one to make of this? A freak bear with a bizarre skin condition seems the most likely suspect. Adams was not above telling a tall tale, but this doesn’t sound like one: there is no colorful detail, just a brief sighting of a weird-looking animal.

A final incident from this biography sounds a caution for cryptozoologists. In the desert near Nevada’s Walker River, Dillon writes, “The atmosphere here played tricks with the men, too. Once, Adams was astonished to see an immense animal ahead. It appeared to be bigger than a buffalo and Adams began to wonder if it were not an elephant, and, if so, what it was doing in the Nevada desert. Coming close, a mirage dissolved and the hunter found it to be just a normal-sized horse which had probably escaped from an immigrant train.”

**Source:** Dillon, Richard. 1966. The Legend of Grizzly Adams. New York: Tower Pub.



## From the Past: A Giant Snake

Waynesboro Press (PA)

January 24, 1921: p. 6

### Town Turns Out to Fight Reptile

#### Ohioans Show Bravery in Defending Homes, Although Battle Becomes Fiasco

Logan, O.—“Help, help! A snake 40 feet long is chasing me!”

Shouting between gasps for breath, Gerald Grimmer dashed from the woods on Snow Fork.

“It’s as big around as my waist and its right down by the edge of the pond, curled around a tree,” cried the boy.

The village was aroused. A monster reptile imperiled the live stock, not to mention small boys. Shotguns, pitchforks, scythes, any weapons that came to hand were grasped as the fire bells called the village to fight the slimy invader.

Two hundred men advanced upon the woods, weapons held ready. Scouts were thrown out, while the pseudo army deployed as skirmishers.

“Hiss-s-s-s-s!”

The attackers retreated. A council of war was held.

The honor and safety of Snow Fork were at stake. Some brave spirit gave the word to advance and the battle was on.

Step by step the champions of local pride closed in on the foe. A shot echoed through the woods. Another. Yet another.

“I got him!” shouted a villager, as a load of buckshot tore into the dimly outlined form on the tree.

An angry hiss, a thrashing in the branches, and the writhing form dropped to the ground, quivered spasmodically, and was still.

The men of Snow Fork had saved the day.

Five years ago, Jesse Thompson, a sawyer, had a mill on Snow Fork. To siphon water from the pond he used a 40-foot length of hose. Later he left the woods, also the hose.

Now the hose is unfit for use, being perforated by buckshot.

The hisses? A swarm of bees which occupied the hose objected to acting as targets.



# Dinos in the U. S. A. A Summary of North American Bipedal “Lizard” Reports

Chad Arment

In an interview with Mark Chorvinsky (1990), Fortean investigator John Keel stated “If you want to hunt dinosaurs, you might as well go to Texas or chase any of our lake monsters and things. There are something like twenty lakes that supposedly have monsters in them here in the United States. And yet these idiots will be living next to one of these lakes and they’ll go out to Africa and talk to the pygmies and the pygmies will say, ‘Oh, sure, we see them all the time.’ The natives are hip to all this—they have all these good dinosaur stories. And then they’ll come home and say ‘We’ve got evidence that there are dinosaurs in Africa.’ Well, you can get the same evidence in the Ozarks.”

While I won’t personally criticize those who decide to investigate the Congo or other lands in search of strange creatures, it is true that North America is often overlooked. No doubt it’s easier to imagine undiscovered species living in exotic swamps and forbidding jungle refuges. There are those individuals in North America, however, who also encounter animals that are strange to them, animals that just don’t seem to be part of our natural landscape. Reports of large bipedal lizard- or dinosaur-like animals are in this category. These reports are sporadic and uncommon, but they do exist. I don’t personally hold that these are proof positive that some sort of dinosaur exists in the United States, but I do consider them interesting. There certainly should be more investigation into these reports than has so far been accomplished. I haven’t seen a summary of published reports of this type, so I decided to put this together. After some consideration, I have decided not to include in this list reports of scaled primate-like creatures or “lizard-men.” I am also not including reports of oversized quadrupedal lizards that are often described as “dinosaur-like.” Both of these categories deserve attention, but in separate articles.

## The Ohio River Region

1) Brookes (@1978) detailed several newspaper accounts from the late 1800’s from a small town in Warren County, Ohio. On the banks of a small creek near Crosswicks, two young boys were fishing when one was attacked and carried off by a “snake” with legs which attempted to drag the boy into a hollow tree which was approximately 26 feet in diameter at the base. A trio of men heard the cries and rushed to help, rescuing the boy. The animal disappeared into the large hollow tree. Later that day, a group of sixty men came and began cutting down the tree. The animal jumped from the tree, erected itself to between twelve and fourteen feet in

height, and raced away on its hind legs. The men described it as “from thirty to forty feet long, and sixteen inches in diameter, and the legs four feet long and covered with scales as the body. Feet, about twelve inches long and shaped like a lizard’s, of black and white color with large yellow spots. Head about sixteen inches wide with a long forked tongue, and the mouth inside deep red. The hind legs appeared to be used to give an erect position, and its propelling power is in its tail.” Similar tales circulated years later from Shaker Swamp, west of Lebanon, Ohio, but these latter were thought to be told to scare away berry-pickers. I have not yet located the original newspaper reports, and it is very possible that this was a newspaper hoax.

2) In 1975, there were several sightings of a large lizard-like animal near an auto body shop in Trimble County, Kentucky, near Canip Creek. Hall (1991) records a witness’ description of the animal as a giant lizard with a red forked tongue, large eyes, black and white stripes with “quarter-size orange speckles over it.” Another witness estimated the lizard’s length at about 15 feet. Most of the reports indicated a quadruped, but Coleman (1990) noted that “some witnesses told Mark A. Hall that the creature ran bipedally.” Hall (1991) reviewed these reports, suggesting that the animal was some sort of amphibian and related to some other quadrupedal lizard-like animals in the Ohio River region. He did not mention any reports indicating bipedality. Whatever this animal was, it was certainly not an amphibian. Not only are the characteristics clearly reptile-like, but a large amphibian would quickly dehydrate in the July sun, especially underneath the sun-heated metal of wrecked cars. My initial reaction to this story was that the description is close to that of a common pet lizard, the tegu, if one is willing to claim that the size has been strongly exaggerated and that the reports of bipedalism were false. At present, however, I’m wondering why the description of this creature so closely matches the one seen almost a hundred years earlier just across the Ohio River in Warren County, Ohio. The coloration given in both reports is almost exactly the same, but the earlier report was a local tale that was never widely published. Whatever the case, more investigation into these reports is necessary before any conclusions can be made.

3) Along some railroad tracks in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, in 1981, four young boys spotted a “baby dinosaur” hiding by a sewer drain. One 11-year-old boy caught the animal, but it squealed and he dropped it. After it escaped, he told police that it looked like a green lizard, was about two feet tall, and had a long tail. The police chief told the press that “the creature was described as about 3-feet-tall, two arms and a tail, and hunched over on two legs.” (It’s likely that the size of the animal was greatly exaggerated with repeated tellings.) A drawing of the animal from the front exaggerates a “lizard-man” bipedal posture, but does note a sort of “crest” on the head. No one else saw the animal, but a great deal of publicity led to a small media circus and a lot of scared parents. The unfortunate thing about this report is that after it was initially investigated by a UFO researcher, this story was used in a variety of

“strange green underground dweller” theories. Now, I don’t have anything against UFO researchers, but the obvious explanation seems to have been overlooked here. A moderate-sized, occasionally bipedal, green lizard with a crest is a pretty good description of one popular pet lizard, the green basilisk. In the early 1980’s, a wide variety of exotics began to appear in pet shops. Within a few weeks of this particular article’s appearance, for example, the same newspaper ran an article on pet tarantulas. It is very likely that someone purchased a basilisk, which was let go or escaped (they’re quick little buggers when they want to be). As exotics were not as widely advertised, and as kids back then didn’t have the advantage of seeing strange reptiles on Discovery or Animal Planet, it may easily have been mistaken for a “baby dinosaur.”

### The Texas Tales

4) Jimmy Ward (1993) claimed to have heard tales of a “giant lizard that walked on its hind legs and whose voice sounded like the roll of distant thunder,” called the Mountain Boomer. The stories came from west Texas, usually near the foothills of Big Bend National Park. The lizard was usually greenish or brownish, the forelegs were very small, with large robust hind legs. After investigating these tales, Ward spent time in that area and met one individual who had just witnessed the animal. The lizard was approximately 5-6 feet tall, was eating roadkill, and ran away with its long tail straight out behind it. Frankly, I’m more than a tad skeptical of these reports. The Big Bend area was a favorite snake-hunting area before Texas laws restricted that activity, but I’ve never heard of any such tales from individuals who used to constantly road cruise there. Guys who jump from moving cars onto unidentified snakes (and that doesn’t even begin to cover how crazy some snake hunters are) aren’t likely to be put off running down a large bipedal lizard. I tried to track down Ward to determine if there was any validity to his stories, but it appears that he died two years after the article was published. (Ward was apparently an active UFO researcher in Texas, but I have not yet met anyone who can vouch for his credibility.) I’ve yet to come across any similar folklore in this region, but Keel (1994) did note very briefly that a “dinosaur” was supposed to have run a car off the road in Texas in the early 1970’s. (John Moore kindly forwarded a short mention on this by Keel in the INFO Journal.) Honestly, I’m surprised that we don’t see a lot of obvious hoaxes from this region, just because of all the “lost valley”-type dinosaur movies, such as 1969’s “Valley of the Gwangi.” I should also mention that the generic term “mountain boomer” is usually applied to a small species of lizard, *Crotaphytus collaris*. It isn’t impossible that a common name may be applied to more than one type of animal (it happens all the time, actually), but I have never seen the term used for anything but a collared lizard beyond Ward’s article. If he was able to find such reports fairly easily, why don’t we see more of them? Or is no one looking? I don’t know. Hopefully someone will decide to investigate this further.

5) In a similar vein, I received a post from Nick Suzik concerning a possible episode of Unsolved Mysteries or Sightings involving a small dead dinosaur. Nick notes:

“I was talking to a friend I’ve met since being over here [Hawaii] about cryptids and he was relating some stories his mother told him from her growing up in Panama. Some interesting things there that I’ll get back to you later for but what was REAL interesting is out of nowhere, meaning I didn’t bring up the topic, he started telling me of a program on TV, either Unsolved Mysteries or Sightings that talked about a dead ‘baby dinosaur’ being found. He couldn’t quite remember the exact facts because it was about 2 years ago he saw it, but the story went like this:

Cattle farmer lived in this area all his life, nothing unusual ever happened. One day he and his wife go horse-back riding up in the mountains, he passes by what looks like a strange dead lizard. Tries not to think much of it but points it out to his wife. The wife showed more interest which resulted in them both examining it. The first impression was that it was a toy, but why would a toy be found way up in the mountains? They became convinced that whatever this creature was, it was unique enough to keep the corpse and photograph it. The program even showed the photo and my friend tells me it looks like something right out of Jurassic Park, almost too hard to believe, which made the toy theory somewhat understandable. I also think he meant it looked like a toy because of how limp the body was. So the couple contacts the local college or university, and from here things become too classic as these stories go. The ‘expert’ contact is so interested he buys it from them and they never hear from him again. They still had the photo but made the mistake of selling the story to (again, no certainty on which magazine) possibly it was the Star he recalled but was uncertain. Anyway, as a result no one believed them afterwards...

Unfortunately he couldn’t remember what state, but assumed it Texas or Arizona because the background was all desert.”

I’d be interested in hearing from anyone else who may have seen this episode, just to fill in a few more details on the story. The tale is, like Nick pointed out, highly suspicious, but bipedal lizard tales are rare in the U. S., so it is interesting from that perspective, at least.

### The Colorado “River Lizards”

6) Clark (1993) gave the details on a report of five “baby dinosaurs” that a woman claimed to have seen when she was a young child in May 1935, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado. She stated that a local farmer shot one a few months later. She described it as “about seven feet tall, was gray, had a head like a snake, short front legs with claws that resembled chicken feet, large stout back legs and a long tail.” She claimed

that she saw a dark green one in a cave in 1937, and that many years later, in October of 1978, she saw one while driving home as it crossed a field near the vicinity of the same cave.

7) In January of this year, Cincinnati investigator Ron Schaffner received an email from an individual from Pueblo, Colorado, concerning a small bipedal lizard-like animal. He stated:

“I live in Pueblo, Colorado. I moved out here when I was six and since then I’ve heard stories of the prairie devil, the pig man and the mini-rex; there’s even old Indian legends of evil river demons. You get older and you try not to believe in monsters, however not even the high school kids will have a kegger down by the river without a raging fire and a lot of people. It’s not like people don’t see things, people see them they just don’t make a big deal of it. If you live by the river like me you just get used to it. For some reason you can’t find them in the winter or fall. I guess they’re like a snake? Regardless, 7/2/98 me and my friend were riding his dirt bike at the river (the Fountain river is right by my neighborhood; it floods every year and every year islands on the river get washed away and new ones made and every year the Fountain curves thirty or forty feet closer to my neighborhood! It’s also where the prairie devils are suppose to live a perfect environment too, what with all the islands, some as big as four or five football fields long, and full of forested areas and wet lands) when we observed something move across the clearing in front of us. It was three to four feet long, greenish with black markings on its back, and a yellowish-orange under belly. It walked on its hind legs, never dragging its tail, its front limbs (I call them limbs because they were more like arms than anything) were smaller in comparison to the back ones and it had four or three claws/fingers. I’m not sure for it was seen at a great distance. It also had some kind of lump or horn over each eye. When it noticed our presence it let out a high pitched screech or some sort of bird chirping, that pierced my ears, and then took off... Immediately we rode back to my house and I grabbed my camera. We took a picture of its tracks (three toes, couple inches in diameter) with a Marlboro Red by it’s side for comparison. I have seen nothing since then, only heard of sightings. One of my other friends said he had a few pictures of the creature, so I took a look at them and to my surprise, I saw pictures of the exact same thing I saw. It took some convincing and bribing but I obtained the photographs. I was going to give them to the weekly word news, or some other — tabloid, but for some reason I thought you guys may take it more seriously????????”

The photos are extremely vague and hard to distinguish without viewing them in magnified formats. Ron passed them along to myself and a couple of other investigators, asking for opinions. I don’t know what the others noted, but Ron and I agreed that the photos could easily have been made with dinosaur models. The



dinosaur model hobby is growing rapidly, and there are a number of realistic models out there. (See the magazine [Prehistoric Times](#).)

I emailed the individual and suggested that if these animals were real, he would need to get better evidence, preferably in the form of a specimen. I figured that that would be the end of it, and that we'd probably not hear anything further. In April, however, I received another pair of photographs, apparently two scans of the same

image. This is by far the clearest image of this type of cryptid that I've seen. There is no mistaking this as a misidentification. Either it is a fake or it is the real thing. The individual stated that it took him a while to acquire the image and that he didn't know when or where it was taken, just somewhere in Colorado. The river system, he said, flows across the whole state. (I should also mention that he called these animals "river lizards.")

Looking at the photo, it would be very easy to jump to the conclusion that this is good evidence for such an animal. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. It is just too easy to fake photos and create models, even if they look incredibly life-like. In no case should a photograph or video be accepted as anything other than circumstantial evidence. (This is one problem I have with folks who are spending so much energy on trying to photograph Bigfoot; it doesn't matter how good the photo is, it isn't going to prove anything.) I do have some problems with the way the "lizard" looks. I don't see why the tail wouldn't just hang straight down if the animal was recently shot, or why the mouth would still be open to that extent. Most dead reptiles are very limp



immediately after death. Frankly, this could very easily be a rubber model. I did ask the individual to consider catching a specimen, so who knows? It really shouldn't be difficult to catch such a reptile if it exists.

I should also note that I have heard from another source that the term "river dino" has apparently been used for such an animal. Some friends of mine in the reptile trade had done business a few years ago with an individual who had collected some Colorado species and had offered to catch some "river dinos" for them. At the time, they had not heard of such an animal and declined due to lack of funds, but told me that the description was similar to the ones that Ron's contact had given.

I would be very interested in hearing about other tales of bipedal "lizards" in North America. I vaguely recall hearing about one in South Carolina, but that may be a poorly-recalled "Lizardman" report. I'd also be very interested in hearing about any "Ozark dinosaurs." Keel aside, I've not heard of anything from that region beyond the gowrow folklore. At present, I don't see any good evidence for such critters within the North American continent, but I do see plenty of questions which need to be answered and numerous areas for potential research. Whether or not such animals exist, the reports need to be collected and made available for public access.

#### References:

- Brookes, H. @1978. Crosswick monster. Folklore Series, No. 11. Lebanon, OH: The Warren County Historical Society.
- Burke, M. 1981. 'Green thing' sparks rumors. Valley News Dispatch (New Kensington-Tarentum-Vandergrift, PA) (March 5): A1-2.
- Chorvinsky, M. 1990. Cryptozoo conversation with John A. Keel. Strange Magazine (5): 35-40.
- Clark, J. 1993. Unexplained! Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press.
- Coleman, L. 1990. Other lizard people revisited. Strange Magazine (5): 34, 36.
- Hall, M. A. 1991. Natural Mysteries. 2nd revised edition. Bloomington, MN: Mark A. Hall Publications and Research.
- Keel, J. A. 1994. The Complete Guide to Mysterious Beings. New York: Doubleday.
- Ward, J. 1993. The mountain boomer. Far Out 1(4): 45-46.

[Note: Email has been slightly edited for spelling and punctuation. Photos have been cropped or resized. Photos are used within the scope of "fair usage" for scientific, educational, and not-for-profit research.]

# **An Old Black Panther Report**

**Brad LaGrange**

This story goes back to around 1959-1961 and takes place in Florida. Back then the area around Ft. Meyers was quite a bit more undeveloped and an uncle of mine, along with his wife, decided to take a drive in the scrub forests one day.

While on a very overgrown private road they had gotten permission to use, a large, long, black cat leapt across the road. Both Bill and Shirley Ann agree the cat was quite black, and very large, much more so than a dog but not necessarily big for a panther or leopard. They really remember the long tail of the cat as it glided in an arc over the road in front of the vehicle. Neither got a good enough look to determine if it had subdued spots like a leopard.

Chad points out though that Florida, and south Florida in general is and was a haven for exotic pet owners and private facilities that refer to themselves as “zoos.” It is very reasonable to assume this could have been a feral leopard.

Typically I wouldn't think of putting this story in the newsletter. It is short, old, and not that exciting. However, since Florida isn't typically black panther country I reckoned this might be of interest to someone.

## **From the Past: A Giant Eagle**

Waynesboro (PA) Press  
Jan. 26, 1921

Huge Eagle Attacks Boy

Efforts of Entire Family Required to Save Lad From Monster Bird in Wyoming

Glendo, Wyo.—It took the combined efforts of the Spaulding family to save 8-year-old Walter Spaulding from being carried away by a giant eagle at their ranch near here.

The huge bird, with a spread of eight feet, attacked Walter in the yard. He grasped the eagle by the neck and screamed for help.

John, Walter's 7-year-old brother, came to the rescue, and a third boy ran for help. Mrs. Spaulding beat off the bird with a stick and the eagle attacked her. She was saved when Mr. Spaulding came with a shotgun and dispatched the bird.

The two boys were severely lacerated by the eagle's claws.

## More Odd “Wildcat” Reports

Chad Arment

Here are a few more intriguing reports which may relate to the “long-tailed wildcat” reports mentioned in the last issue of NABR. I received the following via email:

“I am a Geologist with a Master’s Degree and am skeptical of many ‘crypto’ creatures, but I will relate one that I believe has some merit.

“I got my MS at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, which is just north of the massive Shawnee Nat’l Forest. The locals talk of a ‘woods cat’ or sometimes a ‘timber cat,’ much bigger than a housecat but with a long tail, so definitely not a bobcat—we have a few of those too, most people know them by sight. These ‘woods cats’ are anywhere from brown to tiger striped, and about the size of cocker spaniel—say 25-30 lbs. I ran into a taxidermist in Olney, Illinois, a rural So. Illinois town, who claims he mounted one for a guy many years ago—he was about 80 years old in 1985, when this conversation took place, plus or minus a year or two. He claimed that he was aware of them as a boy, and his father told him that the Indians had brought them up from Mexico. I later took him a book that had a picture of a jaguarundi in it and he said ‘that’s it!’ Lots of good people in Southern Illinois claim to have seen these. As a geologist who works in the oil fields, I get in some remote backcountry quite a bit, and I make a point of asking farmers or rural residents about these cats—MANY have personally seen them.

“They may just be feral cats, but I thought I would write you to let you know in case you didn’t have any knowledge of these critters.”

More Pennsylvania reports come from Robert R. Lyman Sr.’s (1973) Amazing Indeed: Strange Events in the Black Forest, Vol. II. (Coudersport, PA: Leader Publ. Co.) Prior to 1840, Burrel Lyman of Roulet, PA, shot two “bobcats” with long tails. In September, 1951, Lynn Wycoff trapped a wildcat with a foot-long tail south of Wharton, PA. The cat was kept alive, but never tamed down. “Hundreds of persons saw the captured animal but nobody seemed to know what it was. All agreed that it was a nasty tempered, snarling beast.” After three months, Wycoff said “It is a big cat now. Nobody can tell me that it is a bobcat. Their color lightens as they grow older but this animal’s color has not changed.”



## My Two Fortean Experiences

Brad LaGrange

I reckon that everybody in life has at least something that happens to them that would be considered “Fortean.” Most of the time I suspect that there is an explanation for what happens but we don’t all have resident naturalists, mathematicians, or meteorologists to tell us the how and why. All we know is that the spots on the crappie you caught look just like the letter “A” to you and your aunt.

Fortean events do make me suspicious. Not as much as poltergeist reports, but just the fact you can’t explain it does something to me on the inside. If I see a sasquatch grazing in my garbage can, I can apply half a dozen theories as to what it is and why it is there.

Nevertheless, I have had two incidents occur in my presence that can be considered Fortean or an “earth mystery.” All I can do is relate them to you in a way that I think is entertaining, which is truly the format for relaying such accounts.

My area is still very rural. Belief in witches was reinforced by the beliefs carried by the three major ethnic groups to settle the area; Irish, Belgian, and German. Those beliefs only died out in the 30’s and 40’s. Still, ghost and witch stories and folklore persist to some point, like “spooking.”

To be brief, “spooking” is the age-old art of boys taking girls out to explore “haunted” houses in the hopes that the girls would become scared and thus become more attached to you. Highly scientific and dating back well into the 1800’s.

One trip began about week before we planned to go. John “Yorkshire” York had his eyes on getting to know a girl who had just moved in from Madison, Indiana. We figured out a long trip around the county hitting all the best looking rundown houses and dovetailing with me being able to swing the old Chevy Nova I had just rebuilt around to some popular hangouts. Even more perfect was Wade Etienne’s suggestion to stage a little prank.

## Lying Eyes

Brad LaGrange

I saw a UFO. While driving north from Tell City on SR 37 I saw, in the sky a triangle with a non-flashing green light on each end. The object was truly massive; each point of the triangle was about 800 feet apart.

I quickly pulled over on to the shoulder to look at the thing better. I got out and stood staring as it moved closer to me. It looked to be quite a bit darker than the sky around it, so I quickly dismissed any doubt in my mind that UFOs must exist and that I had been wrong all along.

Then I heard the throbbing of engines. I recognized it as the sound army UH-60 Blackhawk helos make. Then I realized what I was seeing, a formation of three choppers, with one single green light on their tail rotors. It wasn’t actually darker than the sky, my brain had just filled that part in to make the sight “fit” as a “UFO.”

This is a valuable lesson. So often we must take the word of witnesses in cryptozoology. How often have you been fooled by optical illusion? Hunters

The prank was to have “Fat Dwayne” hide in the kitchen of the old Adie Kaiser house with a mason jar full of ball bearings. When he would hear us enter the house he would throw the jar against the wall for a terrific “SMASH” sound, to be followed by the sound of ball bearings hitting the ground and rolling round the floor. Only Wade, Dwayne and I were in on it.

The night went perfect. A perfect way to waste your junior year in high school. As we approached the Adie Kaiser place we told made up tales about Adie herself. Claiming her life as a single woman was due to her being a man-hating lesbian. How she had hated all men and tried to kill a runaway boy she caught in the barn with an ax, the police finding the body in the attic of the house where the wounded boy had tried to hide. Blood stains coming down the wall. It was all BS. If Adie Kaiser had ever killed anything bigger than a chicken it would have been a surprise. She was single mainly because she taught school her whole life and had quite enough of children at school. But our story was better.

We pulled into the driveway, crept up onto the porch and entered the long abandoned house. Water stains on the walls looked just like bloodstains, too perfect. A hallway was off to our left, the kitchen door in front of us. We were looking down the hallway when a small ball of light cruised down towards us, turned, and drifted into the kitchen. We had been so shocked by its appearance Wade and I had forgot about Dwayne. Dwayne hadn’t expected to be assaulted by “ghosts.” He threw his jar at the light, as he tried to flee. He bounced off one wall and threw himself out the back door hollering. We in the living room, having attributed Dwayne’s actions to the light, were desperately trying to get out of the living room anyway we could. I got through the door, some went through the window. Most of us made a lot of promises to God, Country and the Flag that night if only we would be allowed to escape the clutches of Adie’s ghost.

Looking back, I don’t think what we saw was a “ghost.” I think it was some sort of natural phenomenon like other “spook lights” the world over.

have shot stumps that they thought were game, soldiers at non-existent enemy. Have you ever pulled into or stepped out onto a street only to nearly get hit by a car that “wasn’t there” when you had looked just a second before?

I put a high value on eyewitness testimony, though. Witnesses can often give you details that tracks, hair samples, or broken brush cannot. But, as I said above, witnesses are very fallible, as police can tell you. The part of the “UFO” I thought I was seeing, the bottom, looked very dark to me, but was actually the color of the sky around me.

We mustn’t become too excited over an eyewitness testimony, but consider it a piece in the puzzle. With it, historical accounts, existence of a similar animal, other sightings, and the area’s flora and fauna, we can get a good percentage of the picture.

In the end, we must always remember that our brain can fill in “details” of something to make it fit without us realizing it, and so while valuable, we can’t get really excited about something someone says they have seen.

This next story is truly Fortean. My uncle Bobby had just purchased a pair of used four wheelers and asked me if I wanted to accompany him and his grandson on their four-wheeler ride. The plan was to ride the old jeep trails on his property back on to some National Forest fire trails, come out on the county road and ride that home.

The ride went fine and I was drinking a soda back at his place when I noticed the flap over my shirt pocket was stuck down inside the pocket causing the pocket to bulge out. That had allowed all manner of woodland detritus to fall into it. I picked most of it out, stopping to unroll a piece of what looked to be birch bark. On the inside was what looked to be stenciled writing.

I don't remember the exact text of the "writing," but it wasn't a word, more like a serial number, but with mostly letters instead of numbers. The truly odd part about this was that the writing was oriented the correct direction. Not "mirrored" as if it had seeped through from the outside. No writing was evident on the outside of the bark.

The bark seemed to have come from a limb or maybe a sapling, as it's "curl" indicated the branch it came off of wouldn't have been much larger than my thumb. I'm 99% sure it was birch bark due to its texture and the way it had peeled off the tree.

I thought at first that I was just seeing something I wanted to see. I then handed the bark to my uncle without giving him any indication of what I thought I had seen. He immediately noticed the writing and when I asked him to read what he saw, he didn't see any words either. We agreed on all but two characters. One we never agreed on, the other we never decided if it was an 8 or a S. He also said he thought the letters were in all capitals and that they looked to be plain "regular" typewriter-like letters. We both thought there were five or six characters. To me, the letters looked if they would have been a little larger than a size 12 if they had been typed on a Microsoft typing program.

That is about the end of my odd encounters in the world. I guess I do feel fairly lucky to have had them. Granted, spying a sasquatch would have been a bit more exciting.

### **From the Past: Horned Skeletons?**

From Robert R. Lyman, Sr.'s (1971) Forbidden Land: Strange Events in the Black Forest, Vol. I. (Coudersport, PA: Potter Ent.):

"At Tioga Point, on the Murray farm, a short distance from Sayre, in Bradford County, an amazing discovery was made. Dr. G. P. Donehoo, State Historian..., together with Prof. A. B. Skinner of the American Investigating Museum, and Prof. W. K. Morehead, of Phillips Andover Academy, uncovered an Indian mound. They found the bones of 68 men which were believed to have been buried about the year 1200.

"The average height of these men was 7 feet, while many were much taller. On some of the skulls, 2 inches above the perfectly formed forehead, were protuberances of bone, evidently horns that had been there since birth."

Odd tale. Suspicious, like most tales of finding "giant" skeletons, but might be possible to track down, assuming the American Investigating Museum is really the Smithsonian or AMNH?

## Devil Monkeys or Wampus Cats?

Chad Arment

I've become interested in the reports of "devil monkeys" from Virginia and vicinity. After publishing a sighting report in the last issue of NABR, I received a similar report from near Roanoke, Virginia. It is as follows [with slight editing]:

"I came across your website and found it interesting. I have been trying to do some research since I had a weird sighting myself. So far no one has been able to help me figure out what I saw.

"I live in Ohio, but a few summers ago I was traveling in my car from Nashville, TN, to the Outer Banks of NC. Because of some road construction (those darn orange barrels) I was knocked off my planned route and had to go out of my way for about 4 hours. I had originally planned on arriving at our vacation home in NC during daylight hours. Since that was impossible, my daughter and I stopped for food and then I decided to just drive & drive until I got there, no matter how late.

"I had just passed through Roanoke and was remembering my school days and how I had learned there had been a lost colony there. It was so dark and remote I was scared and could see how easily people could disappear in a place like that. I was in a hurry to get to the coast and to our home. I also saw a road sign that read "Red Wolf Crossing" which I was a little surprised about. About 20 minutes I guess after seeing that sign I was going through some dark winding roads and a creature leapt across the road in front of my car. I thank God my daughter was sleeping in the back seat. If she would have seen it I swear she would never have been able to get to sleep for a month. The creature was NOT a wolf. It was all black with very short sleek fur, pointy ears and a long thin tail. It seemed catlike, yet not like any cat I have ever seen. It was very long (or should I say tall when standing on its hind legs). I would say it was easily 6 feet tall when standing. Its torso looked very much like that of a very thin man and its head resembled a man almost with a pointy beard. However, its hind legs were more like a wild cat or dog I guess. Very muscular & thin.

"I have checked with the US Game & Wildlife Dept. They say there are no black wolves in the area but that they had only recently been reintroducing the red wolf to the area. If anything, they say I could have seen a feral dog or a wolf-dog hybrid. But I do not think so. It didn't look like a wolf to me at all."

I sent her a few questions, and she was able to provide some more information:

"1. When I say that it leapt, I meant I saw it only on its hind legs but I had the impression it may have been on all fours just before leaping. However, it leapt with such force and height that it only took one bound to make it across both lanes of the road.

“2. I can’t remember exactly which road I was on, but it was either route 17 going southbound or route 158 going southeast. I do remember crossing a few bridges and there must have been farms because I was startled by a sleeping cow that was almost right next to the winding road. I know it was close to Elizabeth City. At Elizabeth City there were more signs about “The Lost Colony” which is a play they have in an outdoor theater there. Also, I remember being distressed shortly after the sighting that I was going to have to head southward about 25-30 miles before being able to reach my rental house farther north in the outer banks because there were no other bridges nearby.

“3. The snout was flatter than a dog’s and more like a cat’s. To be totally honest with you, I thought it was a man at first. But men don’t have pointy ears and tails.

“4. Its funny you ask for a sketch because my daughter wanted to know what it looked like and I made one for her on my Paint program. It is not very good, but I tried. I will attach it to this.

“In addition, I expect I will be driving through the Elizabeth City area within the next 3 months. This time I will have my 2 mean dogs with me. I will be grateful for their protection because whatever I saw was scary. Maybe I will bring a camera just in case I see something. I don’t want to be one of those people who spends the rest of my life chasing down a weird creature, though. I do not know yet what time of day or night I will be going through there. I do know it was about 2:30 a.m. when I saw it.”

The image that she sent me is the coverpiece for this issue of NABR.

Do you recall those weird reports of “black panthers” that suddenly stand up and walk on their hind legs? The Bords mention a few accounts in their book [Alien Animals](#), and a few other authors have briefly noted them. But what if these felines are actually primates? Is there any possibility that the “devil monkeys” might account for bipedal black panther reports? There’s an interesting folkloric critter that might tie in with this, the Wampus Cat.

Today, Wampus Cats are most often met with in the amateur sports arena as a team name or mascot. The origin of the folklore, however, is in Native American tales of a “half-man/half-wildcat” beast. One website (<http://itasca.isd.tenet.edu/wclegend.html>) explores this myth:

“The legend of the Wampus Cat, however, began with the Cherokee Indians, who settled in the eastern hills of Tennessee. Cherokee folklore is filled with tales of evil spirits lurking in the deep, dark forests that surround their villages.

“Accounts of Wampus Cat sightings also come from Georgia. For years, outdoorsmen and residents of the swamplands in southeast Georgia have reported hearing strange, high-pitched screams late at night. A few claimed to have seen a shaggy, man-like “cat creature” loping through the woods. The Wampus Cats sighted

there are half-man and half-wildcat.

“Other accounts of Wampus Cats say that they have cat eyes, only they’re bigger than any you have ever seen! They also leave enormous paw tracks. One report from Johnson City, Tennessee, in the 1950s reports that ‘the cat was about the size of a large spaniel. In fact, my daddy did mistake him for a dog at first. Then he noticed that the animal has stripes, just like a big tabby. No dog was ever marked like that! It reached Jones-Vance Pharmacy, raised up on its hind feet, put its paws on the windowsill, and peered into the window. After the cat had seen all that it had wanted to see inside Jones-Vance, it turned and, still standing on its hind legs, continued walking down the street and disappeared around the corner. Daddy said that his blood ran cold.’”

Taylor (1994) noted that sightings of Wampus Cats have been related from Roanoke, VA, to Chattanooga, TN, and even into eastern Kentucky. He gives two accounts of large “cats” walking or running on their hind legs, one from Wise County, VA, and another in Abingdon, VA.

Loren Coleman (pers. comm.) has written a column this past year connecting the name Wampus to bigfoot, but I haven’t seen it and can’t comment on its pertinence to this article.

Let’s just speculate for a minute on a moderate-sized occasionally bipedal primate that does not appear to be a true ape (as it has a fairly distinctive tail). New World primates (platyrrhines) offer very little to help identify such a beast, if it is in fact a native species. The largest of these are the atelines (*Alouatta*, *Lagothrix*, *Brachyteles*, and *Ateles*), none of which are known to be much larger than 10 kg (Fleagle 1999). None of these species are habitually bipedal, or even take to terrestrial leaping, as has been noted in many Devil Monkey reports. The Old World primates include much larger species; if I were to choose a suitable candidate, the sacred langur (*Semnopithecus entellus*) is at the top. Fleagle notes that this species “is one of the most adaptable of all higher primates. This species is found from Sri Lanka in the south, to the Rajasthan Desert in the west, and well into the Himalaya mountains of Nepal... In general, they are long-limbed, gray to brown monkeys with a very long tail, short thumbs, and long feet. They thrive in virtually all imaginable habitats found on the Indian sub-continent, including tropical rain forests, deciduous forests, temperate dry forests, and conifer forests, as well as deserts and cities. Hanuman langurs are the most terrestrial of the colobines. In the trees they use both quadrupedal gaits and leaps, but mainly the former.”

But what about New World primate fossils? We know that there are no Pleistocene primates in North America. Earlier fossils exist, but are of little use; all are fairly small primates. Further south, however, comes an intriguing fossil platyrrhine. Fleagle notes that “In 1836, Lund [Danish naturalist Peter Wilhelm Lund] found a proximal femur and a distal humerus of an ateline-like primate that was larger than any living platyrrhines and probably had a body weight nearly two and a half times as large.”

Known as *Protopithecus brasiliensis*, this is just one example that shows that “the extant platyrrhine fauna is very impoverished from that in the Pleistocene.”

With fossils, of course, we cannot distinguish external features like coloration, markings, or hair texture, but we see a wide variety of characteristics in extant platyrrhines which suggest other species. That’s why we have spider monkeys, squirrel monkeys, owl monkeys, etc. Why not a “cat monkey?”

Regardless, reports of this sort of critter need to be recorded and investigated. Care should be made to immediately sift out those reports of stray exotics: kangaroos, felines, or whatnot. Smearing these sorts of reports together merely exacerbates a difficult situation. Too often there is a compulsion to place even the most trivial report into categories where they serve no purpose beyond muddying the waters further.

### **Sources:**

Fleagle, John G. 1999. *Primate Adaptation and Evolution*. Second edition. San Diego: Academic Press.

Taylor, L. B., Jr. 1994. *The Ghosts of Virginia, Vol. II*. Progress Printing Co.

### **A New Urban Myth**

From an email to the editors:

“I recently ran into an interesting urban legend. It appears there are rumors of a rat being found in older cities, like New York, which has started partially metabolizing many of the non-organic compounds it chews through.

“The result seems to be that because they can not be nutritious, they are excreted. Not just through the feces though. Apparently they’ve started excreting the compounds through hair follicles and new teeth enamel. The popular vernacular for them has been “shard rats”, from how some of the ferrous compounds have appeared. I have no earthly idea if they have anything to back the legend up, and personally I doubt it, but it does make an interesting urban legend.”

