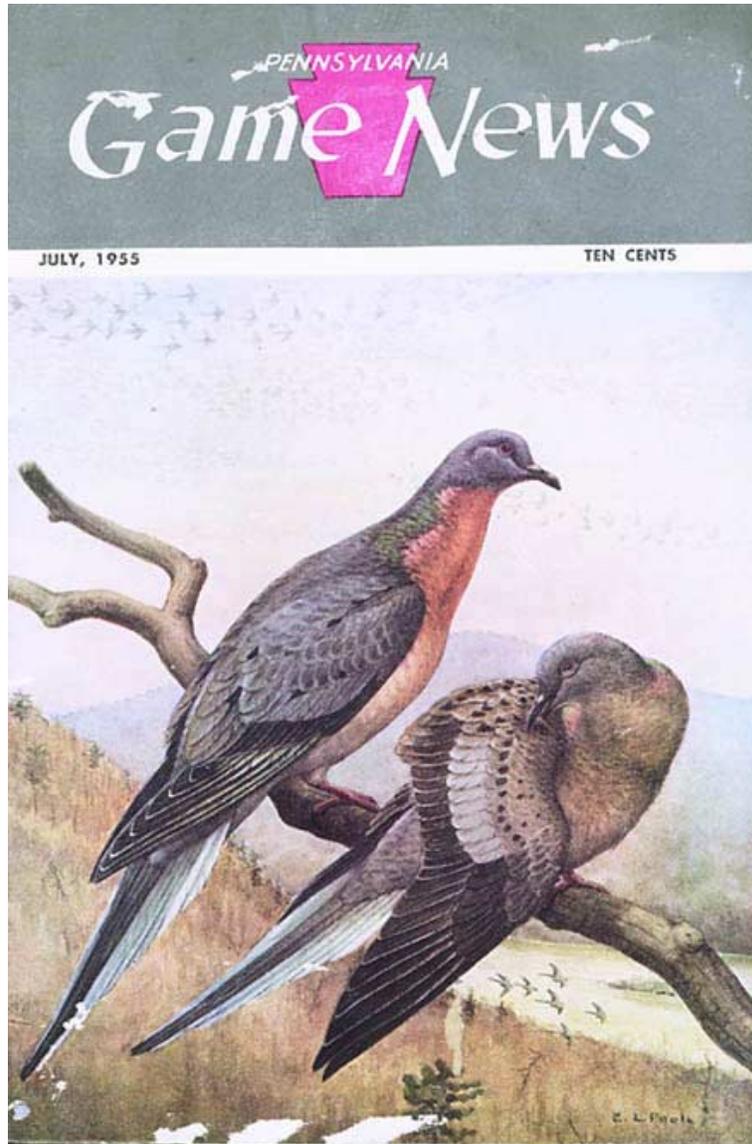


North American BioFortean Review



Thinking is what a great many people think they are doing
when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.

— William James

North American BioFortean Review

Vol. 4, no. 2, Issue #9
December 2002

Contents

BioFortean Notes

Anecdotal Accounts of “Big Birds” and “Pterosaurs”	Ron Schaffner
The Kangaroo-headed Bunyip	Chris Orrick
Audubon’s Lily Rediscovered (1877)	Samuel Lockwood
Unidentified Canids of North America	Nick Sucik
Bluff Creek Revisited	Todd M. Neiss
Migration might explain Ivorybill Survival	Chester Moore
Concerning the Luminous Appearance... (1809)	Father Bourzes
One Explanation of Reported Showers of Toads (1904)	Dr. Charles Conrad Abbott
Captive Pygmy Elephants in America (1934)	C. Emerson Brown
The Eastern Panther in Harford County, MD	Brian Goodman
Early Notes on the Origin of the Indian Bis-Cobra	Chad Arment
Additional Proof... of huge Animals in the Ocean (1814)	Samuel L. Mitchill
Further Evidence... of the Kraken (1817)	Samuel L. Mitchill
Dwarf Horses of the Grand Canyon	Arment and Sucik

From the Past:

An Abyssinian Unknown
A Texan Orang Outang
A Four-Legged Fish
A Fight Between a Beaver and a Bull Moose
Legend of the Wild Cat
Traditional Story of a Water-Serpent

Front cover image: Passenger pigeons on a cover of the [Pennsylvania Game News](#)

From the Editor

Greetings — welcome to NABR #9. This issue continues the tradition of intertwining cryptozoological pieces with odds and ends from the wonderful world of biology. You'll note a good mix of cryptid and biofortean topics along with both new material and rarely seen reprints.

This is the last issue of the North American BioFortean Review in its current format. My goal is to provide a paying resource for investigators and researchers to write about significant cryptozoological and biofortean events, and hopefully stimulate others to begin publishing their research. I am currently exploring options, but this may mean that NABR will become a print publication rather than remaining PDF.

If you have an interest in writing a piece for NABR, please contact me — I'll be happy to discuss your subject of interest. Articles of primary interest are those which bring new reports to light, those which provide a review of lesser-known biofortean phenomena, and those which detail current investigations. Other ideas will certainly be considered.

Enjoy.

Chad Arment
caalsnake@aol.com

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). In the case of reprinted texts, we strive to honor both U.S. and International copyright laws and will not intentionally reprint full texts which appear to be under copyright in the United States.

Distribution Policy

North American BioFortean Review is a free PDF-format newsletter downloadable in electronic form free from the Strange Ark website (www.strangeark.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.

All original articles are copyright by their respective authors and may not be reprinted without permission of the author. This also pertains to material reprinted here with the permission of the author.

BioFortean Notes

A 1960s Maryland Cougar Report

Here's an interesting cougar sighting that was sent to me:

“As a child I lived in an old farmhouse in what was then rural Carroll County, Md., just outside of Westminster. We lived along Nicodemus Road. There was a dirt road at the time that ran parallel to our house, and ran for several miles. My sisters and I would often ride our bikes and talk walks back along there. Anyway, I was about 5 years old, and my oldest sister, Debbie, was about 14. Walking back there one early evening, we saw a large cat bound across the road in front of us just as we came around a curve in the road. It was to me, at the time, German Shepherd sized (we had a large German Shepherd dog at the time, so it was a natural point of reference for us). It was tan colored, and had a white ring at its throat. My sister and I both saw it clearly. We went home very quickly and told our parents about it. In talking to other friends and neighbors in that area, they told us it was a Mountain Lion, or a “Painter” as the old folks there called them, and that they were rarely seen around there, but were still seen occasionally. Some of the older farmers around that area remembered hunting them growing up around there. Anyway, thought you might be interested in this story. There is no doubt in my mind or my sister that we saw what we did, and frankly, it wasn't until recently, hearing news reports of researchers trying to prove they were still around in that area of the East Coast, that I thought it was anything unusual. It got me interested in doing some reading, and I found your website, and thought I would sit down and tell you the story. However, I was back in that area a few years ago and went by the old Farmhouse, and I doubt seriously there would be many of any type of wild creatures left out there — it has gotten pretty built up and settled. It's still rural right there, but there are tons of new houses and malls and stuff within a few mile radius of that spot. Of course, in the late 60's, when we were there, it was all farms and woodland for many, many miles in any direction. You could still hunt deer and pheasant and such back then, which were abundant.”

Florida “Kangaroo”

The following comes from an undisclosed location in Florida.

“I live in Florida, and recently noted an animal crossing the road in our woodsy neighborhood that was nothing like I have ever seen before. It was about 2 1/2 to 3 ft tall, greyish in color and seemed to be a cross between a rat (high humpish backside) and a kangaroo. It had kangaroo-shaped back legs, with short front legs and kangaroo-like tail. It scampered on all fours, but initially I saw it sitting up like a kangaroo. Could you possibly advise what this might be. I looked up the nutria, but this creature is much smaller than what I saw. Thanks for any help you can provide. I understand there is an entire family of them living in wooded areas in our neighborhood... which is very rural.”

Asking for further details, I received the following response:

“I was probably 50 yards from it, so the ears escaped me, but I know they were not floppy ears. It seems the head was rat-like... I believe the snout was more pointed on the end. I can't even

draw a stick-man, sorry. I am in the northern most part of Florida. I am sure it was not a nutria, however. It was just too large for that. I was so amazed by its presence, I guess I didn't pay enough attention to the details."

I suggested a couple of species he could look up on the Internet, and received the following:

"I just looked at a couple of web sites.... and I believe the Bennett Wallabies appear to be extremely close to what I observed. The size described fits the bill perfectly. This fellow had a really chunky build about his hind end and narrowing as you got up to the front legs. The articles don't indicate that any are in Florida.... but are in other parts of the United States. I kept avoiding the possibility that it could be a kangaroo or even in the kangaroo family because of the greyish brown color. I have always envisioned them to be brown.... but when you get right down to it.... what else could it be. I certainly hope we aren't growing rats that large down here. If so, we need to get out the weaponry. I have to go with the Wallaby....99%. I am going on a mission to see if I can locate them. Other out here have seen them also, so perhaps someone has an idea about where they hang out. My curiosity is absolutely killing me. I am also glad that 'no hunting' is allowed in this area. Some of these 'good old boys' would love to bring home a trophy that unusual. Again, thank you for your help and I will keep you posted on what more I can find out."

Wallabies, of course, are smaller members of the kangaroo family. They are fairly common as exotic pets here in North America, and reports of them escaping are commonly encountered. It wouldn't surprise me to find that an irresponsible pet owner had released a few in the wild. Feral colonies are known in the U.K., New Zealand, and Hawaii.

Novel Mimicry in a Spider?

In spring of 2002, a botanist inquired on an online entomology forum concerning a strange spider he had spotted in nature preserve in north central Texas.

He stated that when facing right, it looked like a spider, but when facing left, it looked like a grasshopper or cricket. "Not just a passing similarity, from a few feet it appeared to have exactly the correct proportions and anatomical features for a small, gray grasshopper. The spider abdomen had not only the dimensions of a grasshopper head but false eye spots and spiny projections appearing like small antennae. The two front legs were the size and at the right angle for grasshopper jumping legs. The symmetry of the spider's true eyes were broken up by surrounding irregular darker patches." He noted that "From a few feet the only giveaway that it was not a grasshopper or cricket were the antennae, which were too short and tapered up from a broad base, rather like thorns. Otherwise I wouldn't have given it a second glance."

In all probability, the botanist saw a member of the jumping spiders (Salticidae). Jumping spiders around the world exhibit some of the most remarkable cases of mimicry in spiders. Species are known to mimic ants, beetles, pseudoscorpions, and scorpions. The precision of some morphological details is amazing. So far, I have not come across reports of a salticid that mimics an orthopteran insect, so this could be a new species exhibiting a fascinating new mimicry. Other groups of spiders mimic knots of wood, bird droppings, flies, and wasps (not to mention the various crab spiders that blend into their preferred flower perches), but salticids have a good track record for invertebrate mimicry.

Recently Obtained Anecdotal Accounts of “Big Birds” and “Pterosaurs”

Ron Schaffner

Within the new millennium, cryptozoology is beginning to lose many of the fringe elements on its track to a more scientific discipline. While some still talk about “monsters” and “things that go bump in the night,” there have been recent trends to try to identify these anomalies within prosaic possibilities. In this respect, it allows us the possibility of discovering something truly unique.

Some interesting theories have been set forth with good logic to indicate that some of the older unexplained reports are misinterpretations of known animals.

The majority of the witnesses are probably sincere in what they reported, but are hampered by poor visual perception and personal belief systems. Also, one cannot completely eliminate the out-right hoaxer and the occasional yarn told by some of the general public. Sincerity is no guarantee of truthfulness.

It is paramount for the initial investigator to gather all the facts without any personal bias and to stay away from leading questions. It is equally important that the investigator refrain from telling the witnesses about legends and theories. Only after all possibilities are eliminated, can the report be labeled unexplainable.

Of all the cryptozoological reports, the ‘giant birds’ (or Thunderbirds, as some cryptozoologist affectionately call them) are often the most difficult to evaluate. Like UFOs, it is difficult to determine height, speed and distance. Alleged photographic and video evidence can also be difficult to evaluate because of the trickery that can be applied from computer graphics.

With all the recorded media on prehistoric bird accounts and the circulation of science fiction works, the majority of us have that scenario locked somewhere in our subconscious.

Witnesses’ descriptions can vary in appearance depending on distance. In fact, attempting to measure the distance between witness and the anomaly is almost impossible to ascertain. In the past, the old method was holding a familiar object at arm’s length to determine size and distance. This has its drawbacks, as it exaggerates the true size. A method I often use for size and distances of a ground object, is to use the distances between telephone poles for gauging. Be dubious of any witness who claims 500 yards or more, as this highly distorts any accurate description.

Raptors (eagles, hawks, etc.) and Waders (herons, egrets, etc.) make up the vast majority of misinterpretations of Thunderbird reports. These animals have pronounced wingspans, bills and legs that could be misidentified as a prehistoric bird, especially while in flight. A raptor’s wingspan can easily be exaggerated. It’s easy to mistake feathers for skin, especially if the lighting conditions are not favorable. Therefore, it is imperative for the investigator to keep an up-to-date field guide on birds in book form.

Remember — we only get to study the reports of these large flying creatures — not the creatures themselves.

Prior to the release of the movie “Mothman Prophecies,” Screen Gems Productions asked me to put a promo on my web site with information on the script and several graphics, which I did. During this time and after the movie came to the cinemas, I received several reports of Thunderbirds, including an email from someone in Alabama that alleged a similar creature in the south. Email is an excellent way to get instant information and correspondence, but the problem remains of not doing a personal interview. On-the-spot investigations and interviews are the best method of finding out if a possible hoax is involved.

Using legends, such as Native American folklore, to support the existence of these large avians does not necessarily give proof that these “birds” are around today, or were even there in the past. It’s equally possible that our ancestors misinterpreted the many known raptors that we are familiar with.

Chad Arment and I thought that these reports and some possible explanations would make an excellent article in the North American BioFortean Review. Some of these reports do not contain enough data to evaluate correctly. Only one report made the cryptozoological circles, which came out of Alaska. Another report comes from Lusk, Wyoming, in which I had an extensive email correspondence with the witnesses. Nick Sucik investigated another out of Wisconsin. Scott Norman received several reports right after the Alaskan “giant bird” report. So, the reader can see that these reports have not been released beforehand.

As you will see, some reports cannot be easily identified with the information at hand. Unfortunately, we have to rely on the witnesses’ descriptions, drawing composites or we have to show drawings of known birds or pterosaurs, which is still leading, but sometimes can’t be avoided.

Account 1: Wyoming

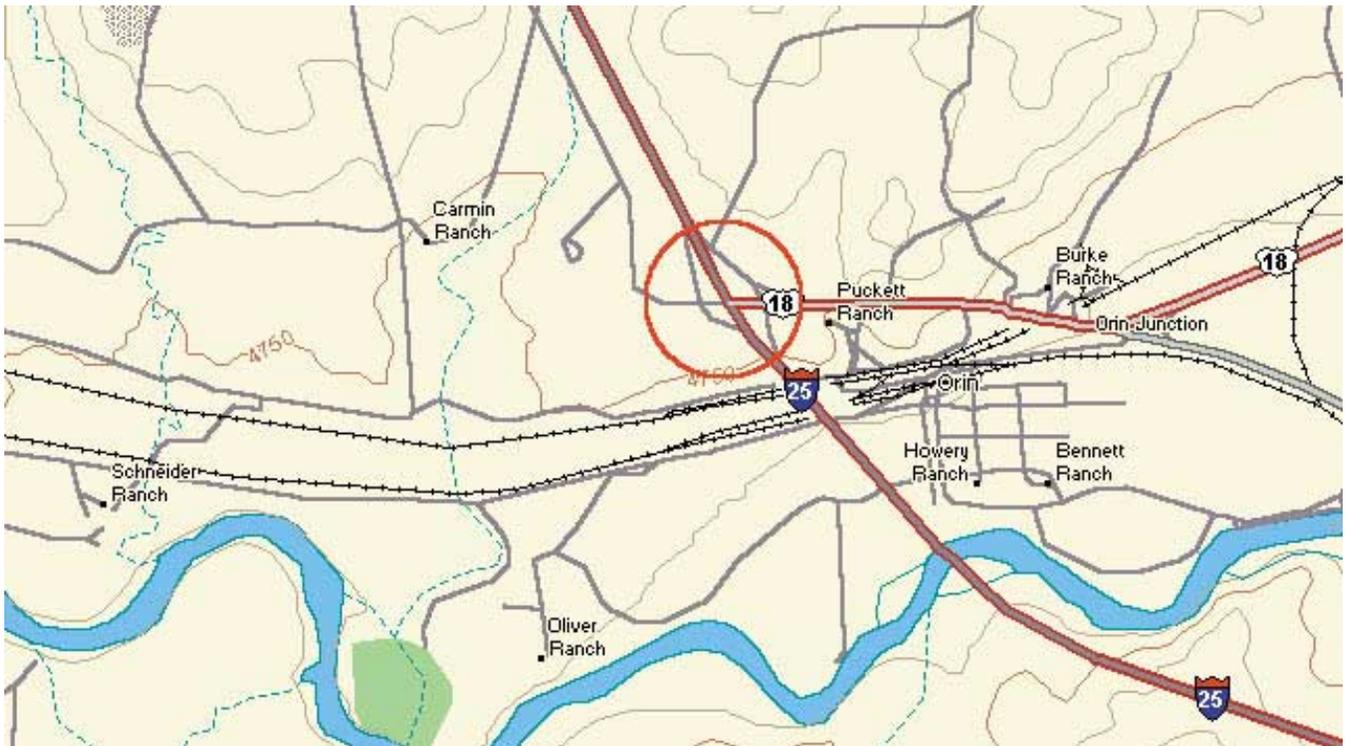
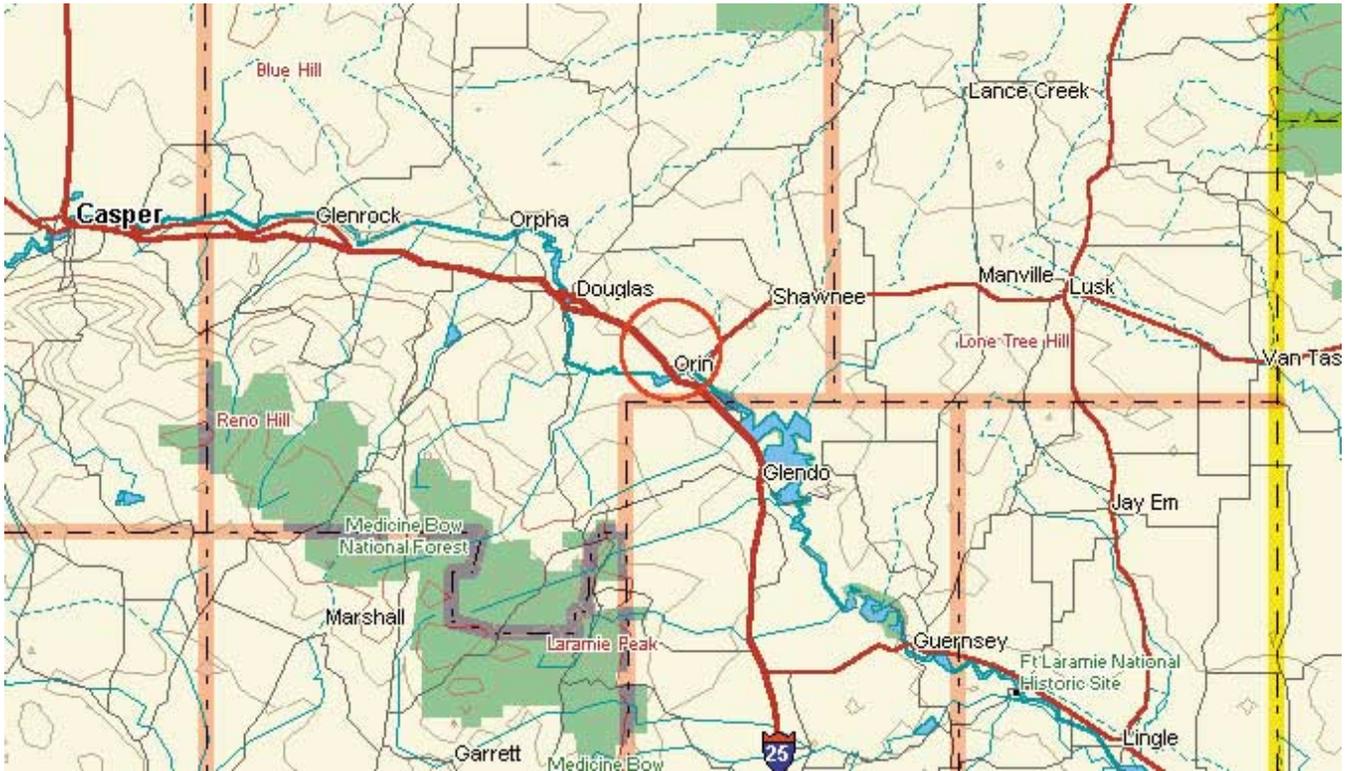
A couple in Wyoming reported the following:

“First, I would like to start by saying I am not a delusional person, nor is my husband. We are normal people who happened to see an extraordinary creature. He and I were on our way from Sheridan, Wyoming, to Chadron, Nebraska, to pick up his kids for a visit. We were on a very tight schedule, his ex-wife was a very uncooperative person who looked for any excuse to cause turmoil.

“When we exited I-25 near Lusk, Wyoming, we briefly stopped at a rest area. We returned to the car, and just as we entered the highway (the one that runs between Lusk and Chadron) I noticed a large animal in a field. I pointed it out to my husband, and he was so intrigued, we pulled off to watch the creature. It stood — my estimate is about 5 feet tall, husband estimates 6 feet. It was greenish grey and appeared to be a pterodactyl. We sat by the side of the road for about 20 minutes watching the thing. It sat and flexed and stretched its wings, each of which were as long as its body was tall. It also turned its head several times, looking out across the field. We stayed as long as we could and we did stop again on our return trip home, but the thing was gone. On subsequent trips we watched for the creature, but never saw it again.

“We told a few people about it, and of course, they all laughed. I want to emphasize, we don’t want our names in the papers or to be celebrities, we just want to know what it was we saw on that nice late fall day. If you can help, please get in touch, we’re anxious to find the answer.”

Sighting area near Lusk, Wyoming



In answer to subsequent questions:

Denise G.: “I guess I can start. It was late fall, around Thanksgiving of 1993. The weather was mid-40s — I remember commenting about how warm it was for the time of year as I was smoking outside of the car at the rest area. It was slightly overcast but visibility was excellent. The area we were in is approximately one mile east of the rest area which is located at the junction of I-25 and U.S. 18-20. This is a guess because I can’t read the intersections on the map, but it is the junction off of I-25 going east into Lusk, Wyoming. I believe we were about 2 blocks to the north of the creature. It was ‘crouching’ in an open field adjacent to the highway. We observed the animal for at least 20 minutes before we had to go due to schedule. It turned its head from side to side so that would be: it was facing north towards us, turned its head to look east, west and north. The topography of the area is mostly flat grasslands. The area it was in is an open field that is flat with very little brush.”

Scott G. noted that he thought the animal was about 50 yards away. The time of the sighting was about 12 noon.

Upon asking further questions, the following answers were provided:

“The maps you sent are correct, that is the area where we saw the creature. We will do our best to answer your questions, I seem to remember more than my husband, especially color and texture details.

“1. The head was not the same shape of that of a raptor such as an eagle. The beak was much more substantial, without a sharp hook on the end. The head and beak were not delicate in any way, but more like that of a horse. No, it wasn’t a horse. I mean it was bulky and thick.

“2. I estimate the wing span as at least 5 feet. Scott doesn’t remember the wings very well. The wing looked like thick leathery bat-like wings, but not exactly like those of a bat. Bat wings look thin and delicate — there was nothing about this creature that was thin or delicate.

“3. The wings were not like those of a bird. No feathers. It was hard to tell how they were situated at rest because we were looking at it straight on, not from the side.

“4. & 5. The skin of the animal was thick and leathery, no feathers. I describe the color as light olive drab greenish/gray. The torso and legs were thick and powerful. The torso looked sinewy, but the skin was not tight across the body. I don’t recall the feet. The creature looked powerful enough that we decided against leaving the car to take a closer look, it really wasn’t an option.

“6. We are not dinosaur aficionados. We have seen the first two Jurassic Park movies and have seen illustrations of prehistoric birds in books and on the Discovery Channel. We describe our creature as a beefier version of those typically shown in the media.

“7. I am vaguely familiar with the thunderbird legends, but I don’t recall any details of them. Scott doesn’t know anything about the legends.”

Concerning the local habitat:

“Yes, there are bluffs and cliffs in the area, easily within a 30-40 mile radius. Many can be seen from the interstate and state highways.”

Upon showing a picture of a sandhill crane:

“No, not really. The pic you sent shows a bird that has a pointed beak, the one we saw had a more blunt beak. Also the head seems small and the neck of the ‘bird’ we saw was thicker.”



Upon showing an illustration of a Pteranodon image:

“Ok, we are getting closer, that looks like the ‘bird,’ but the one we saw didn’t have such a big ‘horn’ on the back of its head.”

Account 2: Vietnam

“When in Vietnam, my outfit saw this big bird flying overhead. It was in the middle of the day and he stayed with us for quite awhile as we were humping the mountains. It was black and yellow, with the beak similar to the pterodactyl species. The N. V. A. scouts were really afraid of the bird. Have you had any other reports similar to this?”

“The bird soared about 20 feet above the trees and was about 30 yards away from me. I am not in contact with anyone from my old outfit. I figure the wingspan was about 12 feet or more. This was in the central highlands in 1970.”

In response to further questions:

“I was with Co. A 3/12th 4th Division in the Pleiku — An Khe area in early 1970. That location was in the Central Highlands. I do not recall any feathers. My friend had taken a picture but cannot locate it.”

Account 3: California

“Hello. My closest friend has seen a creature (along with her sister). This is very frustrating to me because I know it’s true. My friend is very credible. She is a college graduate, very honest and is serious when trying to explain it. She doesn’t like to tell many people because of how they will react.

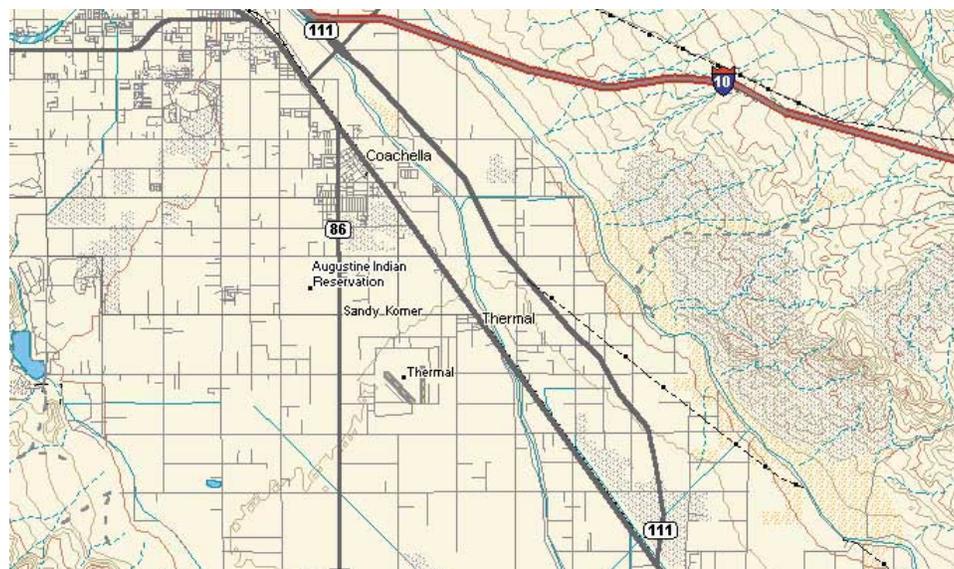
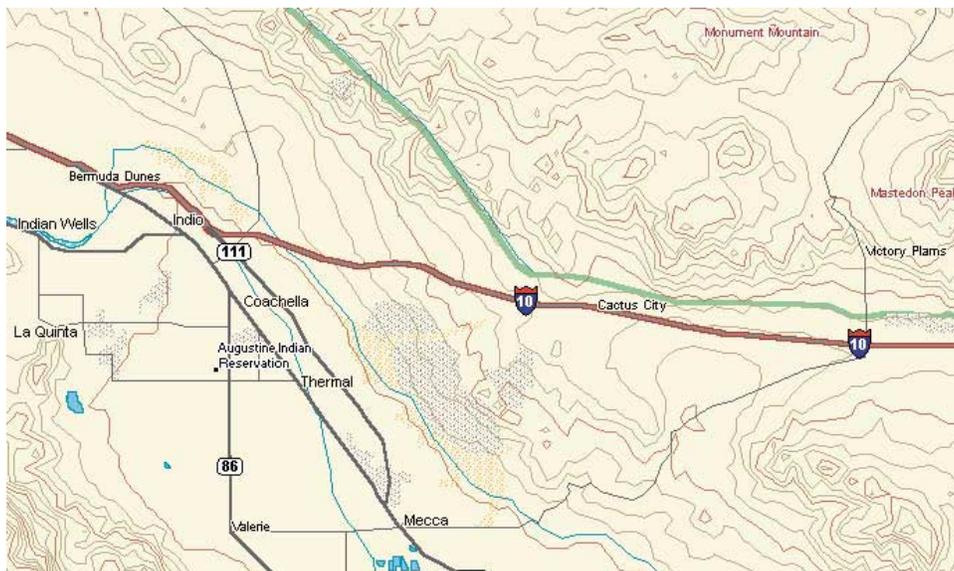
“It happened in Thermal, CA, in 1983. Her parents had a farm and their dog, Duke (Doberman Pincher) was tied to a leash, barking violently. They let him go, thinking that it was a coyote or rabbit. The dog ran around the house, but stopped short and continued to bark. Both my friend

and her sister ran toward the dog and in front of them stood a 6-foot winged, featherless creature. The body was very muscular, like a man. But the skin was leathery like an elephant. It had long nails at the end of its toes. The head was the shape of a pterodactyl with red bulging eyes and protruding bone in the front and back of its head.

“It turned and looked at my friend and her sister and crouched down, tucked its wings in and flew off. The wings were so big you could hear them flap in the wind as if flew away. The dog chased it till he lost sight of it.

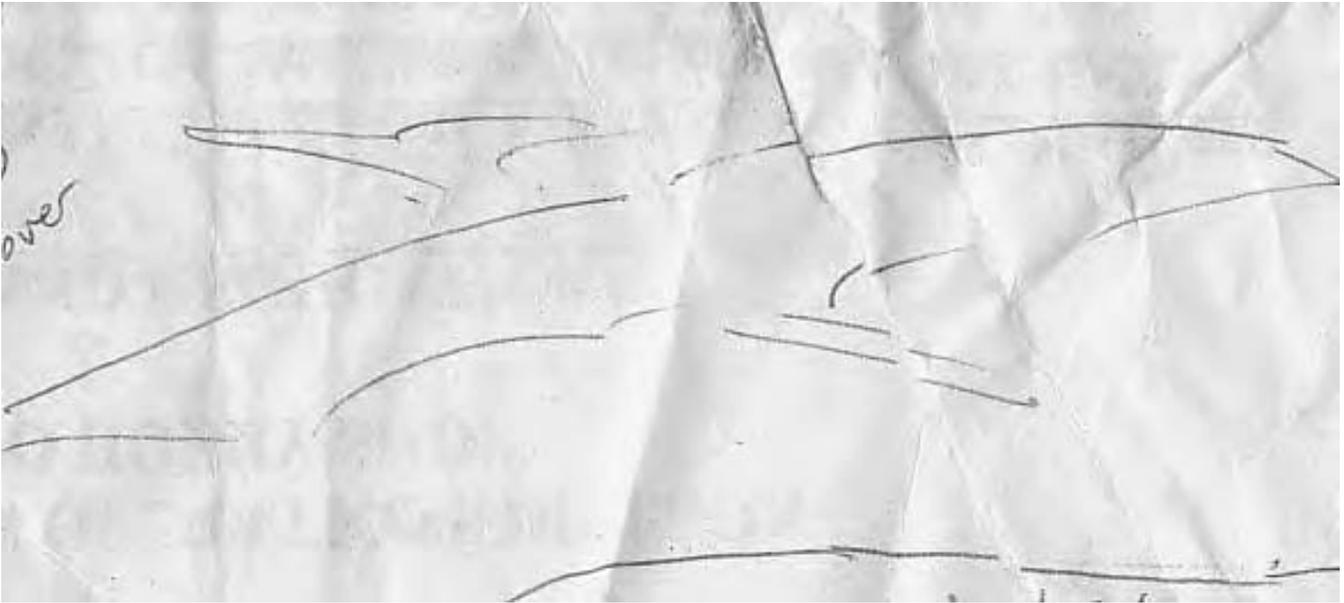
“Do you know of any other cases similar to this one?”

Sighting area near Thermal, California



Account 4: Michigan

Investigator Nick Sucik contributes: “Robert F. claims that during the second week of July in 1969, he and a friend were out on Lake Dewey in the Sisters Lakes Region of Michigan when suddenly ‘everything turned dark.’ They both looked up and caught sight of an enormous creature flying overhead. It managed to clear the remainder of the lake by slowly flapping its huge wings only twice. He thought it had more of a leathery type of skin and didn’t notice any feathers. Seemed confident enough it was a ‘pterosaur’ (and even drew the distinct hood behind the head) though it’s easy to see how under excitement one is quick to affiliate the spectacle of a gigantic bird as something of a prehistoric nature.”



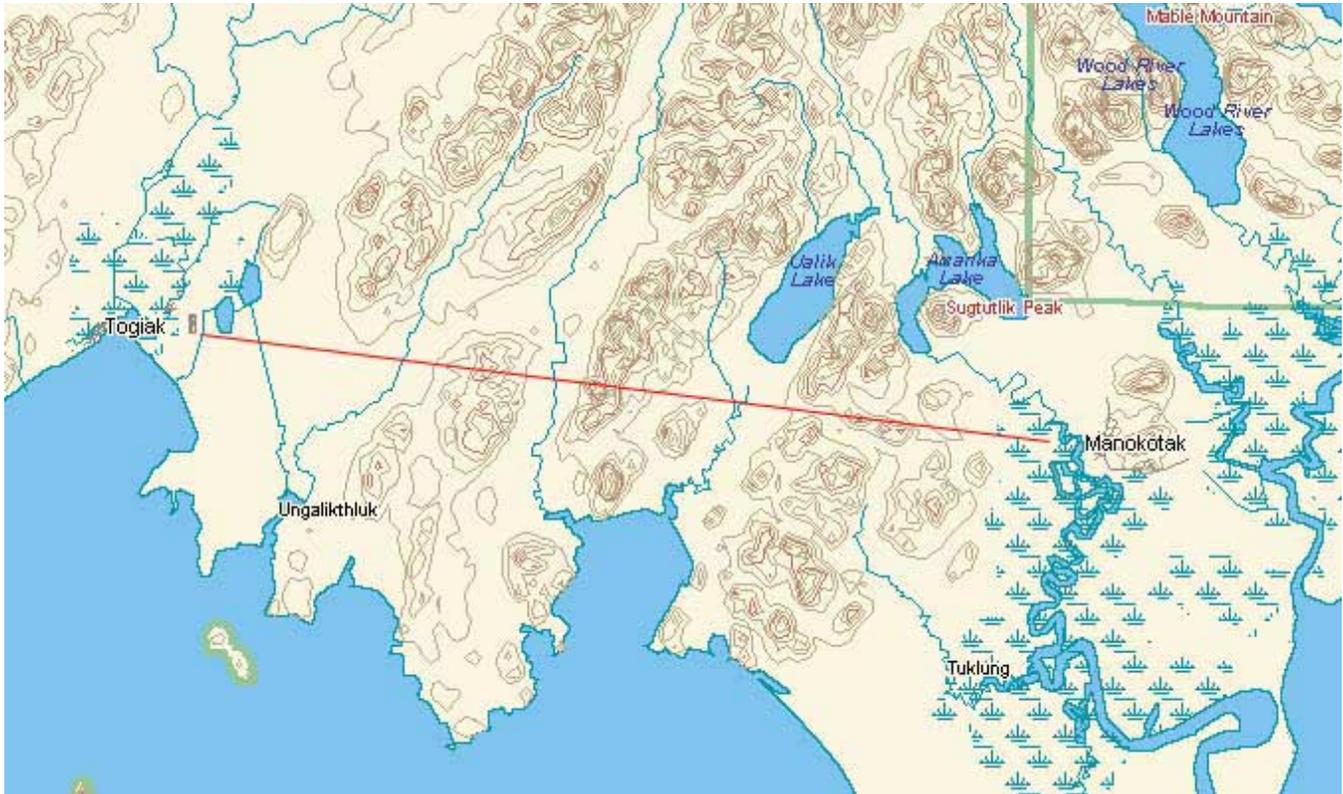
Sighting area of Sisters Lake region, Michigan



Account 5: Alaska

Recent sightings of a “Giant Bird” in Alaska led to worldwide media exposure. The Anchorage Daily News of October 15, 2002, stated that villagers in Togiak and Manokotak reported seeing a huge raptor-like bird. A pilot who spotted the bird while flying to Manokotak estimated its wingspan at about 14 feet. Biologists suggested that they may have seen a Steller’s eagle, which is about 50 percent larger than a bald eagle.

Sighting area of Togiak and Manokotak, Alaska



Account 6: Texas

Investigator Scott Norman contributes the following report:

“My name is Matthew [B.] and I live in Amarillo, Texas. I am 37 years old. When I was little (8 or 9) my father told about some farmers in Dumas that had killed a giant eagle in the early days of the panhandle. I called him today to ask about that eagle and he told me that the old man who had helped kill it was nearly carried away by it. It grabbed a sheep and he grabbed the sheep — it then carried them both a little ways and dropped them. It had been running off with sheep and calves for about two months and the farmers got together and went hunting. The old man’s name was Appling. I am going to see if I can find any of his relatives because there are several pictures of it dead and held up between and by the farmers that shot it. It had a wing span tip to tip of 20 feet. What do you think of that?”

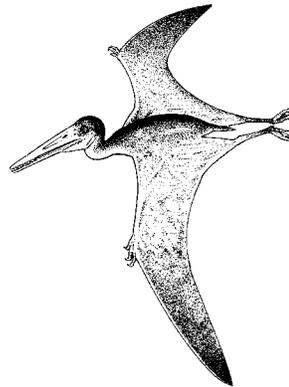
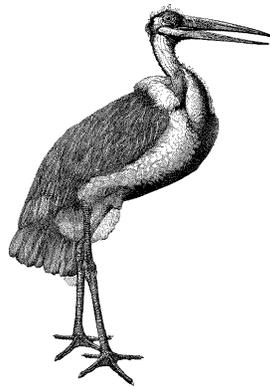
Account 7: Florida

Contributed from the files of Investigator Scott Norman:

“I live in north central Florida, 20 miles west of Ocala. About one week ago, near October 25th or so, 2002, we saw a huge bird perched in a dead pine tree on our 20 acres. We are used to seeing vultures, eagles and owls, the largest of the birds here, but this was something else. We got out the binoculars and took a good look at it. It was like nothing else we had ever seen before, the bill of a vulture, a white streak on the back of its head with a little more on its neck, not like an eagle. I know the bald eagle gets their white after 5 years, this was not like a bald eagle. My wife went to take a better look at it and got within 20 feet of the tree and looked at it again through the binocs; all the while she was looking I had my scoped rifle locked onto it for fear that it may want to attack her. I got a better look at it with the scope and I have no idea what it was — my wife was closer and said the same thing. The bird was about 3-4 feet tall, wingspan of about 6 feet, beak like a vulture. It was not worried about my wife spying on it, it just looked back at her, which had me worried. It stayed there for about 4 more hours and when it took off, it flew down into the trees and did not come back above the trees that I saw, and I did have a good view of it. We saw an article on a huge bird in Alaska with a 14 foot wingspan, and there are no birds of that size living today in the northern hemisphere. Well, we hope to see this thing again, and I would like to know what it is, any ideas?”

Accounts Summary

At this point, these accounts only provide the raw data from which an investigation might start. They do not provide enough information to conclusively indicate that an avian cryptid is at large. The witnesses may have misidentified a known species of raptor or wader, or encountered an out-of-place exotic bird. The wingspans may have been overestimated, and other characteristics may have been mistaken, exaggerated, or overlooked. It is very easy to imagine that a particular report indicates a prehistoric animal, when the culprit is more likely to be a heron. These accounts do, however, provide good locations to start looking for further reports to determine whether others may have seen similar animals.



Photographic evidence may seem like it is good evidence, but the following two images show that that is not necessarily the case. Care must be taken, as hoaxing digital images is very easy to do now with current imaging software. An image that has no provenance should not be used as evidence for existence.

Hoax Photo

The following image has been passed around with the story that it was taken in South America. It is actually from a series of digital art showing different prehistoric creatures in life-like scenarios. Paleo-art has become very popular in recent years among paleo-enthusiasts.



“Cowboy” Photo

This image was scanned from an unknown magazine and emailed to the author. The quality of the scan does not provide enough details to identify its source. Anyone who may have information on the image is asked to contact the author at ronschaffner@fuse.net.

Map Citation: Maps were generated by DeLorme Topo 2.0.

...to stories of which men- the "gods" -ids" space- minoids the e Man?

...curved mammoth tusks be straight- ened? There is no explanation un- less these ancient people were con- siderably more intelligent than any- one had previously suspected.

...race), who, according to their own legendary accounts, possessed an ad- vanced civilization dating back 650,000 to 850,000 years before the Peking man hominoid appeared on the scene.

All photos courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History except scale photography.

A photograph showing a man in a cowboy hat and dark clothing holding a large pterosaur against a wooden wall. The pterosaur is held in front of him, with its wings spread. The man is looking towards the camera. The background is a simple wooden wall with horizontal planks. The ground is covered with dry grass or straw.

...rance—of e "modern" man, also "link," who 0,000 years although re- throughout and Russia. fagnon man i degenerat- absolutely no i the degen- the modern t cannot be

...a superior larger brain no sapiens. fine features essed a high is now be- According to research as- ersity's Pea- gnon "Baton inches long. ars to have the aid of a glass." Re- established Cro-Magnon skull from France that

Professor Bader remarked that the discoveries had "thoroughly shaken up our ideas of the Upper Paleolithic."

The Auckland Institute and Museum (New Zealand) is in possession of a Cro-Magnon skull from France that

Can the archaeologists really say with certainty that no evidence exists to indicate an advanced civilization in China 1.25 million years ago?

Morning of the Magicians by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier states: Systematic archaeological ex-

The Kangaroo-headed Bunyip

Chris Orrick

While Australian zoologists have long argued with good reason that historical bunyip sightings are largely the result of vagrant seals, one bunyip mystery remains unresolved apparently stumping both cryptozoologists and professional scientists alike — the identity of the giant “kangaroo-headed” bunyip. According to Cropper and Healy, “About 60% of non Aboriginal eyewitnesses said the creatures resembled seals or large swimming dogs and roughly 20% described large-bodied animals with long maned necks and fairly small heads.”

Specific accounts of this giant “kangaroo-headed” bunyip are almost always brief and obscure. “In the Port Fairy District of Victoria in 1848, witnesses said it was brown in color with a long neck and shaggy mane, and a head like a kangaroo.” The tunatapan of Port Philip, “was as big as a bullock, with an emu’s head and neck, a horse’s mane and tail, and a seal’s flippers.”

The answer to this mystery might be solved by a reported sighting seldom mentioned in accounts of bunyips, but rather more often of sea monsters. In fact, both Heuvelmans and Costello seem to strongly imply this sighting was of a young specimen of Oudemans’s *Megophias*, the giant long-necked seal. It took place not in Australia, nor even in the nineteenth century when belief in the bunyip was at its highest. It occurred in the early twentieth century in nearby Tasmania, and of all sightings of the “long-necked bunyip,” none may have more significance. Certainly, none has more detail.

There is no doubt the sighting is genuine. It was investigated by none other than legendary collector of world anomalies, Charles Fort. Years later, after finding the story, Fort wrote the author directly, and received a reply from his wife, confirming the accuracy of the published description. Fort also found identical accounts published in various London newspapers in July, 1913.

Published in the Australian newspaper, “The Argus,” on 26 May, 1913, the original unabridged article is as follows:

A STRANGE MONSTER

“Hobart, Sunday - The Secretary for Mines (Mr Wallace) received from Hartwell Conder, State mining engineer, a description of a remarkable animal reported to have been seen on the West Coast by some of the men engaged in State prospecting work that was being carried on in the little known country between Macquarie Harbour and Port Davey.

“‘I have to report,’ he says, ‘the discovery of an animal on the sea coast, about 12 miles north of Point Hibbs, of so strange a character that it is deserving of special mention. It is so strange that both the men who saw it and I myself anticipate quite cheerfully the smiles of incredulity of those who read this account. No one is asked to believe it.

“The animal was seen by Oscar Davies, foreman prospector, and his mate (W. Harris), who are working under myself, the State mining engineer for Tasmania. I have known both of them for a considerable number of years, and can guarantee absolutely their sobriety, intelligence and accuracy.

“They were walking along the coast on April 20 just before sundown on a calm day, with small waves rolling in and breaking on the shore, when at a distance of about half a mile they noticed a dark object under the dunes, which surprised them by showing movement. They advanced towards it and finally came within gunshot. When about 40 yards off it rose suddenly and rushed down into the sea. After getting out about 30 yards it stopped and turned round, showing only the head and a portion of its neck. It waited there for about five seconds, and then withdrew under the water and disappeared.

“The characteristics are summarised as follows: It was 15 feet long. It had a small head, only about the size of the head of a kangaroo dog. It had a thick arched neck, passing gradually into the barrel of the body. It had no definite tail and no fins. It was furred, the coat in appearance resembling that of a horse of chestnut colour, well groomed and shining. It had four distinct legs. It travelled by bounding, ie. by arching its back and gathering up its body, so that the footprints of the fore-feet were level, and also those of the hind-feet. It made definite footprints. These showed circular impressions, with a diameter (measured) of 9 inches and the marks of four claws about 7 inches long, extending outwards from the impressions and away from the body. There was no evidence for or against webbing. The footprints showed about 4 feet between the marks of fore and hind feet, and then a gap of about 10 feet, making a total of 15 feet. Laterally they were 2 feet 6 inches apart.

“The creature travelled very fast. A kangaroo dog followed it hard on its course to the water, a distance of about 70 yards, and in that distance gained about 30 feet. When first disturbed it reared up and turned on its hind legs. Its height, standing on the four legs, would be from 3 feet 6 inches to 4 feet.

“Both men are quite familiar with seals and so-called sea leopards that occur on this coast. They had also seen before and subsequently pictures of sea lions and other marine animals, and can find no resemblance to the animal that they saw.

“Such are the details. When the humorists have enjoyed themselves at our expense the men of science may be able to connect this account with others which have come forward from time to time of strange beasts in our oceans.

“That no imprint was taken of the footprints and no marking out made of the form in the sand, no one regrets more than we do. The next tide swept over them, and they are gone.”

Today, the Port Hibbs area is virtually unchanged from the day Davies and Harris made their sighting. It is part of the Tasmanian South West National Park, one of the few remaining large areas of temperate wilderness in the world. The coastline is distinctive for its diverse landforms and remoteness. Presently, there are no roads and only a few huts within the park. While humans

may be rare, wildlife is abundant, and significantly, the Point Hibbs area today, and as fossil evidence indicates, has always been an important haul-out area for seals.

Four different types of seals are known to occur in Tasmanian waters. By far, the most common, as in the past, is the Australian fur seal, and to a lesser extent, the New Zealand fur seal, both otariids. The other two species, both phocids, are infrequent visitors. Sightings of Leopard seals, while rare, are historically common enough for us to believe that they have been constant, if rare, visitors to Tasmanian waters.

The same can not be said about the fourth, the Southern elephant seal. Today a very small breeding colony exists on King Island, just north of Tasmania, but the situation in 1913 was far different. At the time Davies and Harris made their sighting, the elephant seal, at least in Tasmanian waters, due to indiscriminate hunting in the early 19th century had been unknown for over one hundred years. Still, there can be little question but that the massive animal with the “head of a kangaroo dog,” Davies and Harris encountered on April 20th, 1913, was neither a long-necked bunyip nor any juvenile sea serpent. It was a male Southern elephant seal.

Eyewitness accounts, especially secondhand ones such as this, can be highly inaccurate. However, in this case, such caution seems unnecessary. Virtually everything about Davis and Harris’ description reads almost as if it was lifted directly from a textbook. The evidence that the creature they described was a sea elephant is almost as massive as the animal itself.

Davis and Harris describe the animal as being furred, chestnut in color and about fifteen feet long. Male Southern elephant seals, on average, measure 14 to 17 feet long. Their color is generally a uniform brownish color, although it can vary all the way from dark chocolate to a light sandy brown. We even know what that elephant seal was doing on that beach in Tasmania, at that specific time of the sighting.

Male elephant seals occasionally undergo a period of migratory exploration to “test” new locations and attempting to expand their breeding range. They do this by coming ashore on various deserted coasts. These seldom take hold, but doubtless, rare exploratory haul-outs by elephant seals had been going on for decades ever since their “extinction” in the 1830’s along the west coast of Tasmania. Like near Port Hibbs. In 1913. Invariably, when elephant seals come ashore, they do so at the time of their molt.

All seals undergo yearly molts of their skin. Usually, that process is a gradual one. However, in two types of seal that process is so dramatic and rapid it is referred to as a “catastrophic molt.” Those species are the Hawaiian monk seal (in which the molt can last but a week!), and the Northern and Southern elephant seals where molting occurs in but one month. While on shore, they trample vegetation and create depressions in the ground called wallows, all the while fasting as the process takes place. The timing of the molt varies by age and sex. In the male Southern elephant seal, that time is during the months of March and April. The sighting took place at exactly the end of that molting period, and its not surprising Davis and Harris first spotted the animal, “under the dunes,” (its wallow), then described the creature’s coat as “well groomed and shining,” at the very time one might expect an elephant seal’s old skin to have peeled away, revealing its new coat, unmarked, and at its brightest.

Behavior and actions by the creature, described by Davis and Harris are also entirely consistent

with an elephant seal. When first disturbed it reared up and turned on its hind legs, then suddenly at great speed, rushed down into the sea, “by bounding, ie. by arching its back and gathering up its body.” After a few brief seconds on the surface, it dove and disappeared forever.

When alarmed, the most common instinctive reaction among male elephant seals to deter an intruder is to rear up so as to raise the anterior of its body vertically in the air. Only in the elephant seal has this gesture of raising their heads and necks been so exaggerated to the point where the fore flippers are raised so far clear of the ground. In such situations male elephant seals have been measured standing on their hind flippers close to ten feet high!

Nor is the speed described surprising. While they might appear cumbersome and awkward, elephant seals can move their immense bulks on land with surprising speed when they sense potential danger. As for the fact that once it dove it did not reappear, elephant seals can stay submerged for up to two hours without once resurfacing for air.

Davis and Harris’ description of the movement of the animal clearly points to an elephant seal. While otariid seals can use all four flippers to walk and are remarkably agile on land, phocid seals are unable to use their rear flippers and move by ‘humping’ along on their belly, wriggling and hunching the entire body in the manner of a caterpillar. Undoubtedly Davis and Harris were familiar with the motions of otariids on land, but highly unlikely they had ever observed that of a phocid, given the rarity of leopard seals, much less that of elephant seals, that had been unknown in Tasmania for almost a hundred years.

But the creature did leave one tangible clue. “It made definite footprints. These showed circular impressions, with a diameter (measured) of 9 inches and the marks of four claws about 7 inches long, extending outwards from the impressions and away from the body. There was no evidence for or against webbing.”

While it may surprise some, all seals not only have five digits on their front and rear flippers, but each of the digits on the front flippers is capped with a distinct claw. Still, not all seals are created equal and the location of those claws is distinctly different. On otariids those digits are located well up their forelimbs away from the flippers edge. On phocids, however, they are located right at the flippers edge. No otariid could have left “footprints” similar to the ones observed by Davis and Harris, but a phocid could. Given the size of the impressions, and length of the claw marks in the sand, only one phocid is capable of leaving such marks — a male elephant seal.

When an elephant seal moves rapidly on land, its front flippers are spread to the side, away from its body, its pads well developed to deal with its massive bulk. As the webbing between the digits is much less weight bearing, the greatest pressure falls on the forward digits and those nails or claws on each digit. Hall and Davis observed only four claws marks but that’s not surprising. The fifth claw, the rearmost, the one bearing the least pressure of the five, even in sand, would only produce a faint spurlike mark.

Of course, no identification could be considered complete without an explanation of the “small head, only about the size of the head of a ‘kangaroo dog.’” One point needs to be underscored. At no time were Davis and Harris any closer than forty yards to the creature, and only when it initially reared and perhaps looked in their direction from at least a 100 yards in the ocean, did they observe the head face on. Otherwise, they only observed the head at a distance while the animal

was moving from right to left and only in profile. “It had a small head, only about the size of the head of a kangaroo dog. It had a thick arched neck, passing gradually into the barrel of the body.”

Mature male elephant seals have an unusual ‘trunk’ hanging down over their mouths which is used to amplify their vocalizations and together with their bulk, gives rise to their name ‘elephant seal.’ “The...trunk consists of an enlargement of the nasal cavity with its tip overhanging the mouth. When excited the proboscis is inflated partly by muscular action and engorgement with blood, and partly by inflation from the lungs.... with its forequarters reared up, its trunk inflated and its mouth wide open,... rearing up so as to raise the anterior of its body 3 m or more vertically in the air.... only in the elephant seal has the gesture of raising their heads and necks been so exaggerated to the point where the fore flippers are raised so far clear of the ground...”

“Both men are quite familiar with seals and so-called sea leopards that occur on this coast. They had also seen before and subsequently pictures of sea lions and other marine animals, and can find no resemblance to the animal that they saw.” Nor should they have. We could hardly expect in 1913, Tasmania, for them to find a photograph of a male Southern elephant seal. Especially one in the glare of sunset. At a distance, in profile. With its proboscis inflated, its mouth open. And in color. And unlike any photograph they could ever see, or any description they could ever read, the creature Davis and Harris saw was not just a photograph in a book or merely words on a page, it was alive!

P.S. For those concerned about the “scales,” “feathers,” and “mane,” described by Australian Aborigines in the giant-sized “kangaroo or emu-headed” bunyip they are readily explained by the chunk skin peeling during molting of an male elephant seal, and the massive folds of skin on its neck.

Bibliography:

- Baker, Dr. Robin. 1981. The Mystery of Migration. New York: Viking Press.
- Bonner, W. Nigel. 1990. The Natural History of Seals. New York: Facts On File.
- Costello, Peter. 1974. In Search of Lake Monsters. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan.
- Fort, Charles. 1974. The Complete Books of Charles Fort. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Healy, Tony, and Paul Cropper. 1994. Out of the Shadows — Mystery Animals of Australia. Chippendale: Ironbark.
- Heuvelmans, Bernard. 1995. On the Track of Unknown Animals. London: Kegan Paul International.
- Luckiesh, M. 1965. Visual Illusions. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Mackal, Roy P. 1980. Searching for Hidden Animals. Garden City: Doubleday and Co.
- Michel, John and Rickard, Robert, J. M. 1982. Living Wonders. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Reeves, Randall R., Brent S. Stewart and Stephen Leatherwood. 1992. The Sierra Club Handbook of Seals and Sirenians. Sierra Club.
- Reidman, Marianne. 1990. The Pinnipeds: Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wignell, Edel. 1981. A Boggle of Bunyips. Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton.



Images of Elephant Seals used solely for Not-for-profit Educational Purposes

An Abyssinian Unknown

“There is an animal, which I know not where to class, as no European has hitherto succeeded in obtaining a specimen of it; it is supposed by the natives to be far more active, powerful, and dangerous than even the lion, and consequently held by them in the greatest possible dread. They call it “wobbo” or “mantillit,” and some hold it in superstitious awe, looking upon it more in the light of an evil spirit with an animal’s form than as a wild beast. Their descriptions of this animal are vague in the extreme; some say that its skin is partly that of a lion, but intermixed with that of the leopard and hyæna; others, again, assert that its face is human, or very like it. It appears in the valleys, happily, only rarely; for they say that when it takes its abode near a village, it pays nightly visit, entering the very houses, and carrying off the children, and even occasionally grown-up persons. One had been killed some years ago on the river Werrey, and its skin presented to Oubi; but I could never discover what became of it. I heard of a village which had suffered considerably from its depredations, and for several days watched ivery night in the neighborhood, but without success.”

From: Parkyns, Mansfield. MDCCCLIV. Life in Abyssinia. Vol. II. NY: D. Appleton.

Audubon's Lily Rediscovered

Professor Samuel Lockwood

(Reprinted from: *The Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. X, April 1877, pp. 675-678.)

Discussing the varied exhibits made of the natural sciences in the late Exposition at Philadelphia, *Forest and Stream* pays a high compliment to a collection of water-color paintings of "The Birds of New Jersey." These paintings are the work of G. B. Hardenbergh, a youth in New Brunswick, who, having heard, in the Rutgers College Grammar-School, a course of lectures on birds, by the writer of this, became at once an enthusiast, and, with the spirit of a devotee, gave himself up to the study of birds in their native haunts. By wood and stream, in all seasons, the young artist naturalist watches his subject, learns its habits, gets its attitudes, then shoots it, and, in his study, with a knowledge of all its *posituræ*, produces a portrait that sparkles with active life. The figures are Audubon-like, of life-size, and every one is strikingly natural. And the trees and plants, too, are so accurate that any botanist can, at a glance, identify the species. Each picture has the Flemish peculiarity of scrupulous attention to details, being, in its own way, a bit of rigidly realistic art. All this commends the work especially to the naturalist, and is much in the spirit of the famous Audubon. And, joined to the youthfulness of the artist, it was just this realistic truthfulness which made these simple bird-pictures of New Jersey so attractive at the great Centennial show.

But, can we not see an intimate relation between this aesthetical outcome of the artist and his own ethical inwardness? All this tender care for the details, this high regard for the truthful narration of the pictorial story, comes of the scientific conscience. Its processes are directed by the religiosity of good, honest work; and thus form is given to what may be called, as its resultant, the conscientiousness of art.

And yet, strange to say, this charming naturalist and artist, this, so to speak, consecrated student of Nature in her own haunts, whom so long every one, both at home and abroad, landed for his fidelity to Nature, has of late been under a cloud. Yes, the truthfulness of even Audubon stands under a taint of both ornithologists and botanists. Let us adduce the specifications.

Our boyish delight still lingers in memory over the reading of this wonderful man's account of his first sight of that bird whose celebrity, unhappily, has given place of late to all undesirable notoriety. In a burst of enthusiasm, in which the love of Nature and of country mingled, he called it "the bird of Washington," and that Science, to the end of time, should do the same, he named it *Haliaëtus Washingtonii*. Thus stands his behest to science in his "Ornithological Biography," vol. i., p. 58:

"He first saw it on the Upper Mississippi, in February, 1814. A few years after, he met with a pair near the Ohio River, in Kentucky, which had built their nest on a range of high cliffs. Two years after the discovery of the nest, he killed a male, which was the subject of his description. After this he saw two other pairs near the Ohio River. It seems not to have been seen by any other ornithologist. Though this bird is admitted as a species on the authority of Audubon, many ornithologists do not regard it as such; and, from Audubon's own testimony, there seems sufficient ground for doubting the validity of the species."— ("American Cyclopædia," revised edition, article "Eagle.")

In one of those delightful "Letters on Ornithology," by Dr. Coues, now appearing in the *Chicago Field* (Letter IX., on the "Hawks"), occur these words:

"While we have gray eagles, and black eagles, and eagles without stint, my word for it, reader, this eagle business is about done to death. Let me beg you not to publish the next eagle you kill. Eagle-stories are almost always 'fishy.' As to the number of different kinds of eagles in this country, believe me when I assure you that there never have been but *two* species discovered in all the length and breadth of this country. That famous 'bird of Washington' was a myth. Either Audubon was mistaken, or else, as some do not hesitate to affirm roundly, he lied about it. The two species are, the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), and the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

This, surely, is somewhat terrific, and would indicate, in this instance, that truthfulness, the bright particular flower in a man's character, was badly wilted. As Patrick would say, "it does'n't become the loikes of us to talk back; and maybe it coves us, just, to be found in disagramint with the great bird-doctor, who is possised of the aridition of all the fowls that iver was, sure." So we will not openly differ with this accomplished man; and will even, like a devout Moslem, leave Audubon to those stern ladies known as the Fates, and thus will hasten to another instance in which, perhaps, even a lady may come to the rescue of the reputation of this remarkable naturalist.

If possible, Audubon has suffered worse at the hands of the botanists. From these gentlemen the famous student of the woods and fields has received a snub of the shabby-genteel sort, and of the most persistent character. In his "Birds of the South," and with his usual love of fidelity to particulars, as indicating the plant habitat, or surrounding, Audubon figured a yellow water-lily—not that very ordinary flower, the *Nuphar advena*, the spatter-dock, or yellow pond-lily, so common from Canada to Florida, but a real close cousin to *Nymphaea odorata*, our delightful, sweet-scented water-lily. Beholding it with his own eyes, the great painter put it into one of his glorious bird-pictures, and, having given the portrait of his floral beauty, he also named it *Nymphaea lutea*, or, in plain English, the yellow water-lily. But this pretty flower had never been seen by the botanists; and so, forsooth, the thing was absolutely ignored—treated as a pretty fable, a bit of art extravagance. Art, like history, may have its anachronisms, but the real artist, though he err, cannot lie. So thoroughly was that *Nymphaea lutea* snubbed, that it would have been as much as a poor mortal's reputation was worth to have mentioned credence in the thing in the hearing of sober Science. One might look in vain in any botany of the South for Audubon's yellow water-lily. Not a word can you find in Darbey's "Botany of the Southern States;" and the same ominous silence pervades that later and more pretentious work, Chapman's "Flora of the Southern States." This luckless lily of Audubon is scientifically tabooed. Luckless, was it said? Well, this abjured beauty of the good man has fallen into luck at last. When neither sought nor expected, a species of poetic justice has lately been reached; for, in the person of a lady, learned in such lore, we have "a Daniel come to judgment." Last summer, in Florida, Mrs. Mary Treat rediscovered the long-lost flower of Audubon. Yes, there it was blooming in those semi-tropical waters, and, from its golden chalice, this excellent lady drank the exquisite pleasure of a scientific discovery, and, sweeter still, the privilege that she could bid pass away that cloud of incredulity of over a generation of years. In fact, it was communicated to that Nestor of American botanists, Prof. Gray, and was duly acknowledged. It was truly the long-ignored *Nymphaea lutea*—Audubon's yellow water-lily. And, more than this, this deported beauty, through our modern Portia's zeal, is to be introduced to the best botanic circles of the world. Mrs. Treat has provided a liberal stock for the botanic garden at Harvard; and the curator, Prof. Sargent, is giving them careful and skilled culture, and is also supplying the gardens of Europe

with specimens. Among the botanists, then, Audubon and his beautiful water-lily today stand quoted above par. Whether the “bird of Washington” is to reappear, and set this early ornithologist right with the modern bird-men, perhaps may hardly admit of a hope. That Audubon, like Wilson and the rest, did sometimes err in the diagnosis of his species, was easily possible; that he could lie, we think, was impossible. Much work of these earlier students has had to be done over again, and, as Dr. Coues has shown, this is emphatically true of the *Falconidæ*, or diurnal birds of prey. Very radical undoing has been needed of the work done on the eagles. Lately, we had at our very doors not less than three notable eagles—the black eagle, the gray eagle, and the bald eagle. But more thorough and skillful work has eliminated two out of these three species by showing that the black was the young, the gray the middle-aged, and the bald the mature, or adult stage, all of one and the same species, namely, the *Haliaëtus leucocephalus*—the bald eagle. We would like to see some condonement for the long ignoring of that Southern lily. If it were scientifically orthodox to rechristen that rediscovered flower, we would have its history crystallized in a new specific name, *Nymphæa Audubonii*, which, after so long incredulity, would be doing the bonny thing; and thus the yellow water-lily would dot, with golden memories of the gentle enthusiast, Audubon, the waters of the river of time.

A Four-legged Fish.—The members of the Australian Eclipse Expedition, if they were unsuccessful in the primary object of their voyage, saw some strange things along the shores to the north of the great Continent of Australia. Mr. Foord tells a wonderful story, “amply attested by witnesses,” of a fish with four hands. This extraordinary creature was found crawling on a piece of coral dredged up from the bottom of the sea. “The body was that of a fish,” says Mr. Foord, before the Royal Society on January 22d, “but, wonderful to relate, it had in the place of fins four legs, terminated by what you might call hands, by means of which it made its way rapidly over the coral reef. When placed on the skylight of the steamer, the fish stood up on its legs, a sight to behold. It was small, and something like a lizard, but with the body of a fish.” It is to be hoped that a full and scientific description of this latest marvel of deep-sea dredging may soon be published, as the specimen appears to have been brought back to Melbourne. Mr. White, too, of the same expedition, tells strange tales about the rats. “The little island,” he said, “upon which we pitched our tent was overrun with them, and what was most extraordinary, they were of every color, from black to yellow, and some tortoise-shell.”—*Nature*.

From: The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 1, Sept. 1872

A Fight Between a Beaver and a Bull Moose

During October, 1935, Mr. Thorbjörn Ommundsen, an inspector of the forests belonging to Nes Jernverk, encountered a drama of wild life that had been enacted in a thicket of trees in a marsh in Hummelsgård, Vegårshei, the neighboring county to Aamli. In a glade the ground was torn up and deeply scored by the tracks of a moose, with evidence of a struggle having taken place. Here he found a lifeless beaver that had met its end by having been gored, and it was evident that a moose had been the rodent’s adversary, to which fact patches of blood and fur also bore mute witness. The reason why such a powerful beast should vent his rage on an animal of such relative puniness as the other, must remain a mystery. — Sigvald, Salvesen, Aamli, Norway

From: Journal of Mammalogy, Vol. 17 (1936): 290.

Unidentified Canids in North America

Nick Sucik

nicksucik@hotmail.com

Reports of unidentifiable canid-type animals in North America tend not to attain the same degree of attention often bestowed upon sightings of Big Cats. That's not to imply the former has any less validity but perhaps due in part to the vast number of domesticated breeds of canines already living in our homes and streets — the spectacle of a strange wolf or dog-looking creature fails to arouse the excitement sparked by the alarming presence of an out-of-place cougar or large melanistic cat. Initially, modern accounts of 'cryptic-canids' may appear as easy fodder for the 'misidentification' stamp (especially considering the problems some wildlife departments have with feral dogs); however, certain Native American ethnoknowns would appear to confirm previous knowledge of wolf or dog-like animals presently unrecognized by modern zoology. While not necessarily as fascinating as some of the more popular beasts reported in North America, cryptic-canines remain a mystery that refuses to heel. Earlier this year while conducting research into a particular 'mystery animal' of south-western Colorado, I came into correspondence with a resident of Farmington, New Mexico, who had taken interest in the topic of my pursuit.

In the course of our correspondence he shared an interesting experience he'd had involving what struck him as an unusual animal:

“Back in the late Seventies, probably the Summer of '79, I was driving water trucks in the oil fields on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation near Dulce, New Mexico. Late one night, I was returning to Highway 64 from the old 'Gas Buggy' area (ala 1940's secret 'A' Bomb research), as the road entered the short valley to slowly make its winding descent to the highway north of there. I saw a very large animal quickly come out of the brush to pause momentarily in the middle of the road. The headlights seemed to light up the animal's fur as they reflected back at me the image of what I thought at first to be a very large Husky poised mid-stride to assess me and the situation. I was straining to make out exactly what it was that I was seeing, letting off the fuel at the same time, when the animal's eyes shined with it's direct gaze into my lights. I suddenly realized that the animal I was seeing had all the appearances of a wolf, rather than a dog or Husky. Its snout and body seemed a little longer than a Husky's and it's chest much larger, and it's fur more shaggy — it looked more like something surreal and I wondered if I was really seeing it at all. Then it quickly took off to resume its course down off the road and into the Wash to the left of my truck, and it was gone from my sight.”

Upon mentioning the incident to friends within the Navajo community that he'd seen a “very large White Wolf” a shaman explained to him that the animal was in fact a creature known from legend as the “Medicine Wolf.” Definitions as to what exactly a Medicine Wolf was varied from a type of apparition to something along the lines of a “skinwalker” or shape shifter but what was universally understood and agreed upon was that the sight of such a creature was a very rare and special event.

Later while sifting through old newspaper indexes in Flagstaff, Arizona, I happened upon another perplexing account involving a strange wolf-like creature:

Arizona Champion

Nov. 4, 1888

A Rare Animal

While coming down Miller's canyon in the Huachucas a few evenings since, W. J. Burner saw, at a point about a mile above the Huachuca company's reservoir, an entirely strange animal to him. It had the head of a fox, neck like a deer, body of a dog, and a long bushy tail resembling a Newfoundland's. The color was a reddish-brown, and the animal about six feet in length from the point of nose to the tip of tail. Its height was from two and a half to three feet; a little dog which accompanied Mr. Burner made a dash at the animal, which lumbered off in an ungainly way. The brute was not more than 100 feet from Mr. Burner when discovered and he had an opportunity to inspect it closely. The animal did not show signs of fear, nor did it make any effort to attack him. Mr. Burner is a resident of the Huachucas and has lived a long time in Ramsey's Canyon, and never saw the like before, although a story is prevalent among the Mexican woodchoppers of the existence of such an animal in those mountains.

—Tombstone Epitaph

Unfortunately, unlike the previous one, this report lacks any form of indigenous guidance. Upon reading the article, it immediately brought to mind a sighting from Oklahoma which had been previously included in an article by Fortean enthusiast Michael Winkle for www.prairieghosts.com. Winkle had cited an excerpt from Jerome Clark "Manimals' Make Tracks in Oklahoma," published in FATE Magazine's September, 1971, issue. According to Clark:

"One evening in 1951, Mrs. Lawrence Laub of Calumet, OK, went out to check on her cattle. As she topped a hill she saw a creature that 'looked like a cross between a wolf and a deer.' 'The creature was described as standing on four thin, deer-like legs with huge pads for feet,' writes David A. Farris. 'Its body and head were also described as deer-like, except that it was covered with long hair, had a bushy tail and pointed ears.' Mrs. Laub threw a stick at the thing and then returned to her house. 'She could see the creature just standing there staring at her until she was out of sight.'"

Her husband told her that he had seen a similar creature two years previously.

It's intriguing that both reports should liken the animals to a "deer" in certain respects. The former makes note of a deer-like neck while the latter found resemblance within both head and body. Both mention a bushy tail and though the Burner sighting doesn't necessarily describe pointy ears it would seem that having the "head of a fox" would imply the feature was also mutual. It's also worth noting that both accounts describe the animals' apparent curiosity or lack of fear in the presence of humans.

Winkle pondered as to whether the Calumet animal may have been the same creature the Seminoles referred to as *Hvcko Capko* or "Long Ears." In Oklahoma Seminoles: Medicine, Magic, and Religion, authors James Howard and Willie Lena describe "Long Ears" as resembling a horse with a horse's tail but having a head more like that of a wolf with conspicuous long ears draping

the sides. It is said to reach three feet in height, covered in gray hair and carry something of a stagnant stench. The animal is known to station itself on top of rock perches and watch people pass below. Winkle felt characteristics were compliant, even including the pastime of people watching, though he admits the trademark long-ears conflict with the pointy ears mentioned by the Calumet witness.

Perhaps the best-known canid mystery is the *Shunka Warak'in*. In Cryptozoology A-Z, Loren Coleman explains the Ioway Indian term *Shunka Warak'in* (“carrying-off dogs”) was designated for a type of wolf or at least a wolf-like animal seemingly distinct from the more familiar timber wolf. Coleman cites an account written by Ross Hutchins, author of Trails to Nature's Mysteries: The Life of a Working Naturalist, where an animal bearing much resemblance to a hyena was shot near West Fork, Montana, sometime during the late 19th century. Various residents of the area had witnessed the creature apparently functioning by itself without any signs of belonging to a pack. Those who were able to get a good look described it as being of a dark color with high shoulders and a sloping back. The specimen was later mounted and displayed in a museum near Henry Lake, Idaho; however, its present whereabouts are currently unknown. Coleman notes that the general description of the *Shunka Warak'in* matches a Pleistocene hyena-like dog known as *Borophagus*.

The *Shunka Warak'in*, whatever it is, is by no means exclusive to Montana. According to Mark A. Hall reports of animals bearing similar descriptions have cropped up in Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska. Cryptozoological investigator Todd Jurasek has even come upon reports of strange hyena-looking animals in parts of Oklahoma.

Possibly related to the *Shunka Warak'in* is the infamous “Bray Road Beast” flap, which started in 1991 near the town of Elkhorn, Wisconsin, with a sighting of a strange wolf-like creature that eventually evolved into a series of werewolf reports. The phenomena was quickly sensationalized, thanks in part to regional media outlets and local merchants eager to cash in what was becoming something of a town mascot. It didn't take long before encounters with the “beast” were cropping up in various parts of the county and even into the next. Soon it seemed as though several oddities were competing for the title as the “Bray Road Beast” morphed from a wolf-like animal to a werewolf and in some instances even an ape-man. If the bipedal aspect of reports were somehow dismissed, we're left with sightings of large wolf-like creatures with an exceptionally wide chest. Elsewhere in Wisconsin rumors of a “bear-wolf” emerged but details are sparse.

That leaves us with what may someday prove to be the granddaddy of all North American canids: the *Waheela*. Ivan T. Sanderson deserves credit for bring this elusive beast to light in an article done for Pursuit. Sanderson explained how a friend working in Alaska had told him of stories he'd heard regarding “great white wolves” occasionally seen in the northern realms of the state. Keeping in mind the impressive size of golden eagles and ravens in the northwest, Sanderson was prepared to consider that wolves and other animals might on occasion attain impressive stature amongst the unhindered wild north just the same. However, a truck-driver friend of Sanderson who was referred only as “Frank” had an experience that led the zoologist to think otherwise.

Frank had been hunting in the Nahanni Valley of the Northwest Territories with an Amerindian friend when on one particular day they entered a plateau covered in grass and small bushes but surrounded by forest. Frank's partner told him to stay put while he entered the woods to flush out

any potential game. Frank stood waiting in the clearing with his 12-gauge shotgun until he heard movement in some bushes. Uncertain if the concealed figure might have been the hunter or his dog, Frank called out but received no response.

Suddenly out of the bushes emerged the largest wolf Frank had ever seen in his life, at a distance of only 20 paces away. Standing at about 3 feet at the shoulders, the “wolf” was snow-white with a long, shaggy pelt and a considerably wide head. Frank fired both barrels of his shotgun and was positive he’d struck the animal’s flank but his target merely looked at him and ambled back into the forest. When he explained to his friend what had happened, the man gawked at him for a moment and without a word took off towards the river.

Frank’s inquiries with the native locals, as to what the animal was, only received silence until eventually his charismatic tact paid off with an explanation that the beast not actually a wolf but the elusive “*Waheela*.” The creature was quite distinct from wolves both anatomically and behaviorally. Morphologically, the waheela was larger than wolves, their heads were wider, tails thicker, ears smaller, stood upon somewhat short legs with splayed feet. They were solitary animals that avoided wolves and appeared to suit the role of scavengers as opposed to active predators. Regarding habitat they were said to be more common in the northern tundra but entered the valley during the winter season. Some had accused the *Waheela* as being responsible for the Nahanni Valley’s infamous reputation as the “Headless Valley” on account of various documented instances where prospectors and travelers have disappeared or been discovered with their heads removed. (The *Waheela* is by no means the only mysterious figure held in suspect for these unexplained disappearances and deaths. Native tradition also tells of a tribe of savage cannibalistic “Bush Indians” said to haunt parts of the valley. Mark A. Hall has written of modern sightings suggesting that a relic population of Neanderthals may have made a last stand in the valley’s unique sub-tropic environment.)

Ivan Sanderson pointed out that the *Waheela*’s description was a compatible fit with that of the amphicyonids or “bear-dogs” once found in North America until about two million years ago. Certainly there’s sufficient room for such a large animal to persist with little detection throughout the vast remoteness of the Canadian sub-arctic. Aside from Alaska and the Northwest Territories, Loren Coleman has uncovered what appears to be a colonial reference from northern Michigan, which detailed a fatal encounter with an animal that complies with the *Waheela* description. Readers may recall NABR 3 included an account sent in by a Paul W., where a friend of his watched an unusual “wolf” feed upon a moose carcass near his cabin in Ontario. The wolf appeared exceptionally large with a broader head than normal and long front legs in comparison with the back. The friend was quoted as saying, “it just looked real different than any wolf I have seen before, much larger, and more robust than even a big male should be.” On a separate occasion similar animals were observed and mentioned by others in the area.

Without question there are more sightings of the waheela to be recorded, but chances are in many cases witnesses, like Ivan Sanderson’s Alaska-based friend, presumed the giant wolf they saw was just that and not some new (or very old) species. Likewise as stated earlier, with the vast array of large domesticated canines being so common amongst human populations, there’s almost always some breed that suffices as a suitable explanation. For example, I debated whether or not to include an additional account obtained while in the Four Corners region as it could very well have been an Afghan dog in spite of the remote location it was spotted in. (I should like to add that it was only coincidence that I ended up acquiring these three wolf/dog-like reports when I did. The actual animal I had come to the region to research was of a reptilian nature.)

Kiowa Indian science fiction writer Russell Bates remembers one monster canine that wasn't. During the early 1960s a hideous Man-Faced Dog haunted a popular teenage parking spot near Anadarko, Oklahoma. Stories circulated of romantic encounters being instantly transformed into moments of terror by the sudden appearance of a horrific face peering through car windows. Rumors spread that a bizarre entity, a dog with human face, lurked about until 1965 when the mystery beast was run over by a car. Immediate examination revealed that the monster was in fact a dog that had suffered disfigurement from a fire. Parts of its fur had never grown back leaving a pink face from the scar tissue.

Admittedly, there's little useful information at present to assist in researching these canids much further. It goes without saying they're most likely all predators if not scavengers, probably solitary animals and likewise going to remain elusive for some time to come. I hope that by providing this brief overview other researchers may at least find partial influence in keeping an ear out for anything of possible relevance. The Arizona 'deer-wolf' is a good example as to how it sometimes pays off to go over the indexing of local newspaper archives. Of course, one of the best places to start in any search is within native knowledge. It's ironic in a sense that while natural habitats are becoming threatened and more and more species enter the endangered species, only in this late hour are we beginning to find confirmations of many animals that have long been recognized and understood by the native peoples of North America.

Resources:

Special thanks to Michael Winkle, whose website on less-known Fortean creatures can be seen at: <http://www.geocities.com/laxaria/younever.html>

Bates, Russell. 2002. Personal correspondence.

Coleman, Loren, and Jerome Clark. 1999. Cryptozoology A-Z: The Encyclopedia of Loch Monsters, Sasquatch, Chupacabras, and Other Authentic Mysteries of Nature. New York: Fireside Books.

Farris, David A. 1995. Mysterious Oklahoma. Edmond, OK: Little Bruce.

Hall, Mark A. 1999. Guide to North American Monsters. Minneapolis, MN: Mark A. Hall Publications.

Hendricks, Richard D. 2001. Weird Wisconsin. <http://www.weird-wi.com/brayroad/>

Howard, James H., and Willie Lena. 1984. Oklahoma Seminoles: Medicine, Magic, and Religion. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Shuker, Karl P.N. 1995. In Search of Prehistoric Survivors. London: Blandford.

Sanderson, Ivan T. 1974. The Dire Wolf. Pursuit (October): 92-4.



Bluff Creek Revisited

Todd M. Neiss

American Primate Foundation / AmericanPrimate@aol.com

If ever there existed an icon for the elusive beast known alternately as Sasquatch or Bigfoot, it would undoubtedly be the 352nd frame of the 16 mm film produced by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin back in 1967 in northern California. In 35 years, no evidence, in any format (photos, tracks, hair, dung, etc.), has intrigued both believers and skeptics alike. That being established, the very ground on which the famed creature strode remains unarguably the “Mecca” to those adventurers who pursue these giant beings. That place is located in the rugged interior of California’s Sixes River National Forest, north of the mountain redoubt of Orleans. Not far from the headwaters of Bluff Creek lies the exact location where, on that fateful day, Roger and Bob flushed out the unwary female Sasquatch as she squatted along the banks of the freshet. The following is my personal account of what I believe will be considered, not only as a personal highlight as a researcher, but a historic venture as well.

As far back as April, I was contacted by Peter Byrne as to my interest in participating in a documentary being filmed at Bluff Creek on (or near) the 35th anniversary of what has become commonly known as the Patterson-Gimlin (P-G) film site. I had a vague recollection of such a venture as I had previously rented my home on Mount Hood, Oregon, to the director and his assistant Alec in the winter of 2001-2002. Without hesitation, I graciously signed on to was to become a truly fulfilling experience as a dedicated researcher in the phenomenon. The object was to gather a group of noted researchers together for a historical gathering at the original film site in an attempt to pinpoint the exact location of the creature’s path (more difficult than I imagined). The director’s intention was to record this search as it unfolded.

The participants were to rendezvous at Louse Camp, situated along Bluff Creek some 1.5 miles downstream from the film site. It was at this very camp, some nine years prior to the film, that Tom Slick bankrolled the now famous “Pacific Northwest Expedition” back in 1958... nine years BEFORE the P-G film! This was a rare instance in which John Green, Rene Dahinden and Peter Byrne worked together (along with Bob Titmus, Ed Patrick, Kirk Johnson, Tom Slick and Gerri Walsh (Tom’s secretary). The first to arrive were Blake “Buck” Eckard and his assistant Alek from Missouri. Not far behind was Joe Beelart (author of “The Great Sasquatch Conspiracy”) from West Linn, Oregon. Joe had carried the bulk of the camp gear in his truck and graciously agreed to set up the camp. I drove in on my own from Vancouver, Washington. Peter and his associate Rick arrived via commuter plane in Eureka, California on the Pacific coast. Ron Morehead and Al Berry (creators of the “Sierra Sounds” recordings) flew in from Mariposa, California on Ron’s private plane. The Cameraman (another Joe) and his assistant joined late Friday night and rounded out the group.

My journey took me down the I-5 corridor to an exit just six miles south of the Oregon-California border. There, I took the scenic Jefferson Highway which follows the Klamath River as it courses westward through the rugged northern California Coast Range. As I passed the remote hamlets of Salmon River, Happy Camp and Sommes Bar, I was taken by the absolute beauty of the surrounding forests. All along the way, one couldn’t help but observe a number of Bigfoot references (i.e. Bigfoot Towing, Bigfoot Car Wash, etc.). It was then that I knew I was getting close to THE place. Upon entering the town of Orleans (population 120), I noticed a small forest fire just outside of

town. Helicopters, tankers and a spotting plane swarmed over the blaze and soon had it quickly under control. My concern was whether I could still access the “Go Road” (15N01) as it is known by the locals. After conferring with the local ranger station, I was assured that it would not be affected by the blaze.

I left the highway 96 on the western outskirts of Orleans turning north on 15N01 for approximately 23 miles where upon I made a left turn onto the Lonesome ridge Road (13N01). From there the road becomes somewhat dicey as it is littered with rocks ranging from the size of tennis balls to watermelons. As I was driving a small front-wheel drive Saturn sedan, it took every ounce of my concentration to dodge these obstacles and simply keep on the roadway... such as it was. Lonesome Ridge courses southwesterly for about 10 miles where it veers to the South at Blue Creek Mountain (where Rene Dahinden and John Green cast a number of tracks). At that point, I turned left on 12N10 heading east. It should be noted that the roads thus far basically followed the 4,000-4,500 foot ridges the frame the Bluff Creek Basin. The road at this point (12N10) becomes a very step serpentine decent down to the basin floor. In less than three miles, I found myself loosing about 2,000 feet of elevation! This series of switch-backs is not only littered with psoriatic rock falls, but is bounded by extremely steep drop-offs. Between the blinding sunlight, rock pylons and sharp curves, there was little doubt as to how Daniel Perez’s motorhome wound up leaving the roadway in his unfortunate and fiery accident a few years back. I doubt that I would have had the courage to so much as even attempt to maneuver such a large vehicle down that careening path.

Upon reaching the river bottom, I breathed a sigh of relief and loosed my death-grip from my steering wheel. A quick right turn and I found myself staring at a brown sign with white lettering reading “Louse Camp” (so named due to a major lice infestation that plagued the former prospecting camp in the late 19th century). It was at this very spot that the “Pacific Northwest Expedition” (a.k.a. the “Slick Expedition”) set up their base camp some 44 years ago (and some nine years before Patterson & Gimlin would get their lucky break). A prelude to the expedition, was the repeated discovery of giant five-toed footprints left amongst heavy equipment used by Gerry Crew and his fellow road builders in 1958. Theirs were not the first, nor the last, tracks to be discovered in the area.

I drove on into the camp, greeted my comrades, then set about unloading my gear into the tent I had sent ahead with Joe. Save but for Peter’s guest, introductions were not necessary. Peter and Ron were both members of my duration team during my 1998 expedition, dubbed “Entice Contact II” (or EC2 for short), situated at the base of Saddle Mountain in Oregon’s coastal temperate rain forest for eight days. I had also worked with Peter on several television projects since 1994. Joe Beelart and I have collaborated on numerous treks, investigations and camp outs for several years now and I consider him a great friend indeed. Al Berry and I had met on two occasions prior and have corresponded from time to time. As mentioned before, I have known Blake and Alec for about three years and have assisted them on their film project for much of that time (which has included the same cameraman and his assistant). So it was, that I felt quite at home and in good company when I arrived.

Once unpacked, Joe and I took a walk up the road where he pointed out a bridge over nearby Notice Creek (a tributary of Bluff Creek) with the date 1958 clearly cast into the concrete guardrail. At that moment, I couldn’t help but visualize Gerry Crew and his coworkers staring wide-eyed at the gargantuan foot prints that they may have witnessed on this very spot at that time. Surely the same type of concrete that was used in the bridge’s construction was the same as they used to

cast numerous tracks in the area. As a side note, several years ago (1995?) I was contacted by the granddaughter of Mr. Crew who told me that her grandpa had claimed to have coined the name "Bigfoot" and that her father still retained several of the original concrete tracks in their garage.

Friday was spent discovering (or rediscovering in Peter's case) the surrounding area. While the film crew scouted out suitable panoramic vantages (no shortage of those), other members sought access to the original film site. Up until then, we did not know whether or not we would be hiking into the site. Spirits were buoyed at news that, with a 4x4 vehicle, the group could drive right to the very site. That night we enjoyed a great meal of lasagna cooked over two side-by-side camp stoves. As with every night, good conversation and rounded out the crystal clear night. Anticipation ran high as we all were eager to make our "pilgrimage" to the P-G site the following day.

Saturday greeted us with bright blue skies, a virtual phenomenon in October and which held throughout the entire camp out. After a light breakfast of hard-boiled eggs and poppy-seed muffins, Blake decided to do some preliminary filming of Peter and I down at Bluff Creek which skirted Louse Camp (some 2 miles downstream from the P-G site). We had only been down at the creek a few minutes when a large American bald eagle swooped down through our little gorge. While this happened too quickly to get on film, I saw this as a good omen of what was to come.

At around 11 am, we boarded the vehicles and embarked on our journey to the P-G site in hopes of identifying the exact location of that now famous episode 35 years prior. Heading west on forest road 12N13, we rapidly gained about 2,000 feet of elevation in little time. Although the P-G site was a mere 2 miles upstream from Louse Camp, it took at least 20 minutes to reach the site as we had to first ascend to the summit of the ridge just south of the site before making a somewhat harrowing decent back down into the steep canyon. A word of caution to those who plan accessing the site in the future: the road is quite steep (especially near the bottom), strewn large rocks, and punctuated with numerous swales for water drainage. Do not attempt to access the site without four-wheel drive and use extreme caution during the wet season! And under no circumstances should one venture down there on your own.

We finally arrived at the end of the road which consisted of a wide sandy flat where we parked our vehicles and dismounted. A large nesting box stationed atop a 20 foot pole (ostensibly for the use of wood ducks) served as a landmark. Time and nature has taken it's toll over the years. The very stream itself has shifted nearly 50 feet to the North, burying much of the site under 10 feet of silt and debris. Once stout trees have fallen victim to ravages of 35 years of cyclical flooding. Had it not been for some original photographs which Peter had brought, it would have been nearly impossible to identify the site. But, within roughly 15 minutes, we had located the large Douglas fir seen in the background to the left of the creature in frame #352. This giant tree cants slightly to the right and now serves as a lonely sentinel to this historic spot. The large stump (with a sharp break to it's left side) seen between the large fir and the creature was also used to corroborate that we indeed had relocated the film site. As for the large downed tree seen in the film that separated Roger and the creature...it was long buried. As I cannot speak for the others, I can only say that for me, I was overwhelmed with a sense of awe and respect. Not only for what Roger and Bob accomplished the autumn day, but for the creature itself. The spirit of Patty truly permeated this sacred ground. We wrapped up the filming and, after taking a group photo, we boarded the vehicles for the ascent from Bluff Creek and returned to camp satisfied that we had accomplished what we had came to do.

That night, we all sat around the campfire and enjoyed a delicious venison stew I had brought (courtesy of a rather unfortunate 4-point mule deer I had shot less than two weeks prior in Central Oregon). As the evening wore on, we shared our differing theories and long-winded stories which only a good old-fashioned campfire can elicit. Peter had been taunting us all day regarding a humorous tale involving the late Bob Titmus and his unceremonious departure from the Slick Expedition. After some prodding, and a few “imbibements,” Peter relented. His story follows...

During one of Titmus’ scouting trips, he stumbled upon what could only be described as a “giant pile of dung” in the middle of nowhere. This was not just a single stool, but a long-term repository which a large animal was obviously frequenting on a regular basis. Peter went on to say that such behavior is not entirely unheard of in the animal kingdom as rhinoceros display that very characteristic. Thinking that he had discovered “Bigfoot’s privy,” Bob returned to camp and summoned Tom Slick to accompany him back to the site to validate his find. After a difficult ascent through thick brush, they finally arrived at the spot. Tom himself became excited at the sight of this massive pile of feces and began to think of what it could represent to the expedition. Just then, they were both surprised to hear the sound of heavy footsteps approaching their location! Could this be the chance that they had been hoping for? They withdrew into the brush to await the long anticipated arrival of their elusive quarry. To their amazement, an elderly Hoopa Indian came ambling up the hill on the back of his trusted steed. After tying the horse to a nearby tree, he turned to see two wide-eyed white men staring back at him. One of the men asked him what he was doing up there, to which he replied that he had been coming to this spot on a regular basis to gather spices for nearly 40 years. At that point, Tom asked, “I don’t suppose you tie your horse to that same tree every time do you?” The old Indian replied, “Yes. Why do you ask?” Upon hearing his reply, the two adventurers turned and left. Peter went on to say that, after a rather long and silent trek back to camp, Bob quietly packed his gear and left camp... never to return. This was just one of numerous great stories shared around the campfire which I will treasure forever.

In retrospect, the entire trip was a resounding success. Good food, good weather, and good company all converged to make for a very memorable adventure which can never be replaced. To have the good fortune of being in that historical place, at that historical time, in the company of my fellow friends and research colleagues was something that I will never forget.

For those who may be interested, the following is the GPS coordinates for both the Patterson-Gimlin film site and Louse Camp (readings taken by Ron Morehead):

Patterson Site: N. 41°26.301 W. 123°42.357 Elevation: 2560' - 72'

Louse Camp: N. 41°24.194 W.123°43.986



Migration might explain Ivorybill Survival

Chester Moore

The ivory-billed woodpecker survives in the swamplands of the Southern United States.

Last year's highly publicized Zeiss Sports Optics-sponsored expedition failed to prove but did not contradict this assertion. In fact, evidence gathered by the Zeiss team gives genuine hope a few ivorybills are still around.

I was one of the few journalists allowed to enter the field with the search team as they probed the inner realms of the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Boque Chita National Wildlife (Refuge) near Slidell, La.

After the 30-day search concluded, the team announced their findings, which included a controversial recording of a double-rap pecking sound associated with the mysterious bird.

The most interesting part however, was that five of the six researchers said they believe ivorybills are not yet extinct. They put their reputations on the line with no apologies.

This came as no surprise to me as the time I spent in the field with them opened my eyes to the habitat needs of ivorybills.

Ornithologists have for years stated that ivorybills need virgin forest. Anything touched by loggers is inadequate for the highly specialized diets of the ivorybill or so they said.

Discussions I had with team members David Luneau and Martjan Lammertink showed that area of the Boque Chita NWR where we explored were not 'perfect' ivorybill habitat according to the standard literature, but more than adequate to house a few of them.

Lammertink who spent time searching for ivorybills in Cuba said the first thing he noticed when coming to the United States was all of the habitat.

"In Cuba there is very little habitat, but over here there are plenty of possibilities," he said.

Yes, pure virgin forest is a rarity in the south, but there are numerous of stands of mature timber throughout the region that could support ivorybills. The Zeiss team targeted only the public lands in the Pearl River basin because of an alleged sighting by forestry student David Kulivan in 1999.

They ignored the rest of the South.

Some of the old references to the ivorybill speak of it being a rather nomadic species that tended to move from food source to food source. The timber practices of the early 20th century could have heightened this characteristic of the species and forced them into a more nomadic lifestyle.

By nomadic I do not mean that the birds from Florida fly to Arkansas or anything that drastic.

However, I do believe birds from the lower Sabine River basin for example might range up and down that desolate stretch of river or over into the Calcasieu River bottoms 30 miles away. It is silly to believe a bird (which by the way can fly — I think some scientists forget that) would stay in one area and starve to death when there are other food sources within reach.

For the most part only hunters and fishermen enter these remote locations and considering how the Zeiss search team ranked potential ivorybill habitat there are several areas that could be a sleeper for the enigmatic species.

I am conducting extensive investigations into the Sabine River bottoms on the Texas-Louisiana border.

In January 2002, I discovered two huge cavities in an old, rotten loblolly pine in the southern extremes of the Sabine River basin. These cavities are much larger than any of the nearby cavities made by the closely related pileated woodpecker. In fact, they dwarf them.

This tree fell a few months later and I was able to cut the section with the cavity and preserve it.

The cavity was never used by any bird and the excavation was recent, which leads me to believe there are still ivorybills in the area. I watched the tree from January until early June when it fell and never saw any birds working it but I did receive an interesting report of an ivorybill sighting from a mile away during that same time period.

The area is under observation.

Biologist and award-winning science teacher Mike Hoke put together a four-day ivorybill research project a few miles north of that area back in 1983. While the team did not find see or hear any of the birds they found several suspect cavities in old trees.

“There could be some evidence of ivorybills roaming these bottomlands in the not so distant past,” Hoke said.

Other areas ripe for ivorybill research include the Big Thicket National Preserve in Southeast Texas. In fact, Art Mackinnon with the Golden Triangle Chapter of the National Audubon Society has searched this area periodically since the early 1980s and developed an interesting theory about the survival of the species that correlates with my nomad concept.

“I started birding in 1978 and quickly became interested in pileated woodpeckers. I ended up coming across James Tanner’s book and was hooked on ivorybills,” Mackinnon said.

“Working with the National Park Service I learned about the southern pine beetles and the large areas of dead pine forests they would create. In Tanners book he talked about ivorybills needing a large area to feed and large dead trees to feed on.”

“I ended up putting two and two together and started going to all the big beetle sites and watching. The Beech Creek unit was a great area saw a few things I could not identify.”

“The best area I found was in a oil field north of Silsbee, Texas. The area has since been clear-cut.

The site was about three miles from the Neches River bottom and that is a short flight for ivorybills.”

Mackinnon said in this area there were about 150 to 200 large and dying loblolly pines.

“One of the pines about 32 inch diameter had a large oval hole about 35 feet up in the tree. I watched the hole for several months with no sightings,” he said.

“There were several pileateds around, but none of these birds went in to the oval hole. In 1983 the tree with several others fell and I with Dr. Paul Horlcomb, from Rice University, cut and took the tree to his lab and took measurements and photos.”

He could not identify the down feathers from inside the nest cavity. They could be from ivorybills or pileated.

Mackinnon met John V. Dennis in Wier’s Woods near Lumberton, Texas in 1984.

Dennis saw ivorybills in the Neches Bottom in 1965 and made a recording of the birds that day. Living in North Carolina, he could only make the trip to Texas once a year so his research was limited.

“He did not see the bird again until 1977 and again recorded it. In 1976 the National Park Service was setting up the Big Thicket National Preserve,” Mackinnon said.

“What is interesting about this is the Neches Bottom Unit is the only Unit of the Park that has no public access and this is the same area John Dennis had his sightings.”

At the time of this writing, I received an interesting photograph of a massive, fresh cavity in a tree just outside of the Big Thicket preserve. It is an area I had numerous reports from after a television appearance I did addressing the ivorybill mystery.

An expedition into this area is in the works.

It is important to note that science knows very little about the species. An 1898 BIRD magazine said that even at that point ivorybills were rare and elusive so it should come as no surprise we are debating their extinction now.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) lists the birds as ‘endangered’ not extinct.

They list the carrier pigeon as ‘extinct’ along with numerous other birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians but not the ivorybill. Top officials seem to believe there is justification for federal protection of the species and so do I.

Let us just hope we can find them before it is too late.

(You can learn more about ivorybills at www.cryptokeeper.com and contact Chester Moore at bigfoot@cryptokeeper.com)

Concerning the Luminous Appearance observable in the Wake of Ships in the Indian Seas, &c.

Father Bourzes. N° 337, art. 23, p. 230.

From: Hutton, C., G. Shaw, R. Pearson, eds. 1809. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Abridged. Vol. VI, 1713-1723. London: C. & R. Baldwin, Blackfriars.

1. When the ship ran apace, we often observed a great light in the wake, or the water that is broken and divided by the ship in its passage. Those that did not view it narrowly, often attributed it to the moon, the stars, or the lantern at the stern; as I did myself, when I first perceived it; but having a window that looked directly down upon it, I was soon undeceived, especially I when I saw it appear more bright when the moon was under the horizon, the stars covered with clouds, and no lights in the lantern, or any other light whatever cast upon the surface of the water.

2. This light was not always equal: some days it was very little, others not at all; sometimes brighter, others fainter; sometimes it was very vivid, and at other times nothing was to be seen.

3. As to its brightness; I could easily read by it, though I was 9 or 10 feet above it from the surface of the water: that is, the title of my book, which was in large letters.

4. As to the extent of this light, sometimes all the wake appeared luminous to 30 or 40 feet distance from the ship; but the light was very faint at any considerable distance.

5. Some days one might easily distinguish in the wake such particles as were luminous from those that were not: at other times there was no difference. The wake seemed then like a river of milk, and was very pleasant to look on.

6. At such times as we could distinguish the bright parts from the others, we observed that they were not all of the same figure; some of them appeared like points of light; others almost as large as stars, as they appear to the naked eye. We saw some that looked like globules, of a line or two in diameter; and, others like globes, as large as one's head. These phosphori often formed themselves into oblongs, of 3 or 4 inches long, and 1 or 2 broad. Sometimes we could see all these different figures at the same time. Another day when our ship sailed slowly, the vortices appeared and disappeared again immediately, like flashes of lightning.

7. Not only the wake of a ship produces this light, but fishes also in swimming leave behind them a luminous track; which is so bright, that one may distinguish the size of the fish, and know of what species it is. I have sometimes seen a great many fishes playing in the sea, which have made a kind of artificial fire in the water, that was a very pleasant sight. And often only a rope, placed crosswise, will so break the water, that it will become luminous.

8. If one take some water out of the sea, and stir it ever so little with his hand in the dark, he may see in it an infinite number of bright particles.

9. Or if one dip a piece of linen in sea water, and twist or wring it in a dark place, he will see the same thing, and if it be even half dry.

10. When one of the sparkles is once formed, it remains a long time; and if it fix upon any thing that is solid, as on the side or edge of a vessel, it will continue shining for some hours together.

11. It is not always that this light appears, though the sea be in great motion; nor does it always happen when the ship sails fastest; neither is it the simple beating of the waves against one another that produces this brightness, as far as I could perceive; but I have observed that the beating of the waves against the shore has sometimes produced it in great plenty; and on the coast of Brazil the shore was one night so very bright, that it appeared as if it had been all on fire.

12. The production of this light depends very much on the quality of the water; and, if I am not deceived, generally speaking, I may assert, other circumstances being equal, that the light is largest when the water is fattest and fullest of foam; for in the main sea the water is not everywhere equally pure; and sometimes linen dipped into the sea is clammy when it is drawn up again. And I have often observed, that when the wake of the ship was brightest, the water was more fat and glutinous; and linen moistened with it, produced a great deal of light, if it were stirred or moved briskly.

13. Besides, in sailing over some places of the sea, we find a matter or substance of different colours, sometimes red, sometimes yellow. In looking at it, one would think it saw-dust; our sailors say it is the spawn or seed of whales. What it is, is not certain; but when we draw up water in passing over these places it is always viscous and glutinous. Our mariners also say, that there are a great many heaps or banks of this spawn in the north: and that sometimes in the night they appear all over of a bright light, without being put in motion by any vessel or fish passing by them.

14. But to confirm further what I say, viz. that the water, the more glutinous it is, the more it is disposed to become luminous, I shall add one particular which I saw myself. One day we took in our ship a fish, which some thought was a boneta. The inside of the mouth of the fish appeared in the night like a burning coal; so that without any other light I could read by it the same characters that I read by the light in the wake of the ship. Its mouth being full of a viscous humour, we rubbed a piece of wood with it, which immediately became all over luminous; but as soon as the moisture was dried up, the light was extinguished.

As to the marine rainbows, I observed one after a great tempest off the Cape of Good Hope. The sea was then very much agitated, and the wind, carrying off the tops of the waves, made a kind of rain, in which the rays of the sun painted the colours of a rainbow. It is true the common iris has this advantage over ours, that its colours are more lively, distinct, and of longer extent. In the marine iris we could distinguish only two colours, viz. a dark yellow on that side next the sun, and a pale green on the opposite side; the other colours were too faint to be distinguished. But, in recompence for this, these irises are in greater numbers, one may see 20 or 30 of them together, they appear at noon day, and in a position opposite to that of the common rainbow, that is to say, their curve is turned as it were towards the bottom of the sea.

As to exhalations in the night that form in the air a long tract of light, these make a much larger tract of light in the Indies than they do in Europe. I have seen two or three that I should have taken for real rockets: they appeared near the earth, and cast a light like that of the moon some days after her change. They fall slowly, and in falling make a curve line.

One Explanation of Reported Showers of Toads

Dr. Charles Conrad Abbott

Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society (April 1904, no. 176)

The frequent references in newspapers to occurrences of “showers of toads” have suggested to the author that a condition in the life-history of the spade-foot toad, a little-known and strictly nocturnal species, living in the ground, might explain them more rationally than that the little batrachians are picked up by the wind in one place and dropped in another, perhaps miles away, or that other still more strange view quite common among the ignorant that toad-spawn is sucked up by the sun and hatched in clouds, where the tadpoles remain until they have advanced to the dignity of hoppers, when they fall to the earth. Unlike the common toad and the frogs, the spade-foot toad (*Scaphiopus solitarius*) does not have a regular season for deposition of ova, but the eggs may be laid at any time from April 1 to August 31. Furthermore, this batrachian does not resort to permanent watercourses or ponds on such errand, but takes advantage of temporary pools formed by showers of longer duration than is usual. It is remarkable how admirably this strange irregularity of an important event should be adapted to transitory conditions. Pools of rainwater seldom remain long on the ground’s surface. Soakage and evaporation soon obliterate them; but that this may not prove a fatal objection, the eggs of the spade-foot toad hatch in about ninety-six hours, and in less than two weeks, or fourteen days at most, the tadpole has become a terrestrial animal or a “hopper” and leaves its nursery. The development is even more rapid occasionally, I am led to believe, being accelerated by excessive warmth or retarded if the days are cool and cloudy.

It will be readily seen that young spade-foot toads, congregated in or immediately about a temporary pool, will not wander far from it when their subterranean life begins, but will bury themselves in the comparatively moist ground where they happen to be. Should, at this time of their limited wandering, there occur one or more violent showers, the ground being wetted and little pools formed, the young spade-foot toads would necessarily, we might say, wander over a much wider extent of territory, and, escaping notice when confined to one fast disappearing pool, would be observed when dotting the ground over an extent perhaps of an acre or more. Seen thus, immediately after rain, and not previously noticed, the inference is not so strange that they came to the earth with the rain, or that there had been a shower of toads as well as of water.

— Trenton, N. J., April 7, 1904.

“A Texan Orang Outang.—

Gatesville, Texas, is excited over the appearance of an immense orang outang in its vicinity. The animal is described as being about seven feet high and covered from head to foot with a thick coating of hair. Its eyes shine like fire and it boasts of a double row of murderous looking teeth. When last seen it had in one hand a large crooked stick, and under the other arm a young calf apparently just killed. A hunting party has been organized to capture or kill the monster.”

— The Michigan Argus, September 1, 1871, page 1, column 4

Captive Pigmy Elephants in America

C. Emerson Brown, Philadelphia Zoological Garden, Philadelphia, Pa.

From: Journal of Mammalogy, 15(3), 1934

On April 4, 1925, there arrived at the Philadelphia Zoological Garden a fine specimen of pigmy elephant. This was the third of this much discussed species to arrive in America. The animal was purchased as an *Elephas africanus*, and we were somewhat surprised when it was found to be a specimen of the rare *Elephas cyclotis* Matschie, of which comparatively little was known. The height of this species it is said is limited to under seven feet. Our specimen upon arrival measured but three feet, six and one half inches, and weighed 550 pounds. She was estimated to be about two and one half years old. Her neck circumference was three feet, nine inches. For the first three or four years she made unusually rapid gains in growth, as shown by the following table:

Year	Height at shoulder
July, 1925	3 feet, 6 1/2 inches
July, 1926	4 feet, 7 1/2 inches
July, 1927	4 feet, 10 1/2 inches
July, 1928	5 feet, 3 inches
July, 1929	5 feet, 6 1/2 inches
July, 1930	5 feet, 8 1/2 inches
July, 1931	6 feet, 2 1/2 inches
July, 1932	6 feet, 4 inches
July, 1933	6 feet, 6 inches
December 13, 1933	6 feet, 7 inches

This shows the rapid first growth and gradual tapering off as she approaches full size.

The tusks on this female have made rapid growth, having already reached the length of 22 inches, with a six inch circumference at the base. They have a decided inward turn. The trunk is very short, measuring but 36 inches with a circumference at tusks of 31 inches. The ears measure, from top to tip of lobe, 30 1/2 inches, while the width is but 22 1/2 inches. Unlike *Elephas africanus*, *Elephas cyclotis* has five toes externally visible on the front feet and four on the hind.

There has been considerable controversy regarding the standing of *Elephas cyclotis*, many naturalists considering it a subspecies. Dr. Thomas Barbour, Director of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College, in a recent letter, said "there is no doubt whatever that this is a perfectly distinct species." He further states, after studying at great length with Dr. Glover M. Allen some recent photographs of our specimen and comparing them with specimens and photographs of elephants from other parts of Africa, that Dr. Allen was completely won over to his way of thinking. Dr. Allen has always maintained that these little West African elephants are small because of the fact that trade in ivory has gone on longer in this part of Africa than anywhere else, and that the killing of big bulls generation after generation had resulted in the production of a depauperate race.

The first pigmy elephant to arrive in America was purchased by the New York Zoological Society. Dr. William T. Hornaday's description of it in "Tales from Nature's Wonderlands" (pp. 223-225), is as follows:

"During the last two centuries — not to weary ourselves by going farther back — thousands of white traders, hundreds of white officials, hundreds of missionaries, scores upon scores of hunters and animal dealers and probably half a hundred 'professional' naturalists have worked the West African coast on both sides of the Equator, for a total of 200 miles or more inland, without ever collecting or even recognizing a pigmy elephant. The white nationalities represented have been English, French, German, American and Belgian.

"The traders have bought and exported ivory elephant tusks in quantities formerly great, and we know that thousands of the queer-shaped and tiny tusks of the pigmy were part of that loot from the jungle. But, one and all, they never developed the fact that a *small species* of elephant was represented. Ivory hunters, sportsmen and explorers — and, sad to say, some naturalists also have gone elephant hunting and killed many elephants without having the eyes to see the small round ears, extra toes and miniature tusks of the pigmy species. No. For two centuries a wonderful undescribed elephant actually thrust itself under the eyes of all those people, who should have noticed, without having been understandingly seen at all! It was a carnival of heedlessness.

"At last the redoubtable Carl Hagenbeck appeared upon the scene. I never learned what impelled him to send out men to catch elephants in West Africa, but it was his men who captured the first pigmy elephant that ever came into a zoo. When it finally landed in Hamburg, a German naturalist, Professor Noakes [= Noack, Zoöl. Anzeiger, vol. 29, p. 631, January 8, 1906], saw that it represented a new and undescribed species, and he described and christened it with the Latin name of *Loxodonta pumilio*. [*Elephas africanus pumilio* was the name employed by Noack. Ed.] That very type-specimen animal was immediately purchased by our Zoölogical Society, and brought to New York.

"It being a male, we named him "Congo", and he lived with us for ten years. He grew to maturity. When fully grown his height was 6 feet 8 inches, and his weight was 2,700 pounds. His tusks were 23 1/2 inches long outside the lip, and no thicker than a lady's wrist. Finally he contracted an incurable leg disease, and died. Judging by the number of years it took him to reach maturity, he should have lived about forty-five years.

"Aside from its pigmy size, which is limited to a height under 7 feet, the most noticeable different feature of this new elephant species is its small and round ears. It will be remembered that other African elephants have ears that are enormously large, and triangular in shape. The Pigmy has [externally visible] five front toes and four hind toes, which is one more on each foot than the number allotted by Nature to the big African elephants. Our "Congo", the type specimen, died in July, 1915..."

His remains were presented to the American Museum of Natural History, where his skin and skeleton are preserved for mounting.

"Tiny", another pigmy elephant, was received in the New York Zoo on December 6, 1922. He was believed to have been born in 1920. Upon arrival, his height at the shoulder was three feet two inches, and his weight was 425 pounds. When he died in March, 1933, his weight was 2045 pounds,

and the last measurement taken in June, 1932, was five feet, ten inches.

The oldest name for this animal and the name now used is *Elephas cyclotis* Matschie¹; the type specimen is in the Berlin Museum.

Mr. Edmund Heller, Director of the Washington Park Zoological Garden in Milwaukee, writes, in the bulletin of his society:²

“A third and very distinct species of elephant occurs in extreme western Africa, in Liberia (the land of the pygmy hippo) and eastward to the Kamerons. This elephant is also a pygmy of sorts and is usually known to the zoo public as the pygmy elephant. The name Pygmy will doubtless stick in the public mind and replace the older or first name bestowed on this species of round-eared or *cyclotis* given it by its original describer. The history of the name pygmy (*pumilio*) runs thus: In 1904 Carl Hagenbeck secured from Africa what he considered a pygmy elephant. At that time it was a mere baby (but was erroneously considered adult) three and one half feet high and weighing six hundred pounds... Wild killed males of this species often stand seven feet at the shoulder and weigh over three thousand pounds. They are known to science as *Loxodonta cyclotis* but to the public they will doubtless remain the pygmy elephant, because they attain only one-half the bulk or weight of the African elephant. The ear is very different in shape from that of the large African species, being circular in outline without the fold inwards at the neck and only half the size proportionately of the African elephant.”

Our specimen “Josephine” is, I believe, at this time the only one in captivity in America. She is in excellent condition, very gentle and quite intelligent. She is being carefully watched and measured at intervals of six months to obtain exact data as to the tapering off as she approaches full growth. Daily during the summer months she take her bath by picking up a hose and spraying herself, preferring this to going into the large tank used by the other elephants. In all the time she has been here I have never seen sign of trickery or of a mean disposition. Now at the age of eleven years, I believe she has nearly reached the peak of her growth in height. Measurements taken December 13, 1933, were:

Height	6 feet, 7 inches
Length of tusk	22 inches
Circumference of tusk at base	6 inches
Width of ear	22 1/2 inches
Height of ear	30 1/2 inches
Length of trunk	36 inches
Circumference of trunk	31 inches

¹ Sitz.-Ber. Gesellsch. Naturforsch. Freunde zu Berlin, 1900, p. 194.

² Bull. Washington Park Zool. Soc., vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 11-12, May 1933.

The Eastern Panther in Harford County, Maryland

Brian Goodman

History: The eastern panther is officially listed an extirpated extinct species in Maryland and evidence suggests the native cats haven't been prevalent in the region since the mid- to late-1800s. Nonetheless, accounts of the large felines in Harford County have come in nearly as frequently as those of black bears, a species known to still exist and wander into the county now and again.

Random scattered reports aside, no period on record produced as much evidence, as many sightings or generated as much concern as a stretch of time 40 years ago. A report of a dead pony, found viciously mutilated and partially eaten, appeared in a front page article of the Oct. 20, 1966, edition of *The Aegis* newspaper and kicked off several months of intrigue, fear and an all-out monster hunt. Subsequent editions of the newspaper blared the front page headlines, "Alarm Grows, Search Intensifies for Huge Cat That Killed Pony," "Area Now Genuinely Scared of Giant Cat As More Reports of Depredations Come In," and "Search Is Intensified For 'That Thing' As Deputy Sheriff Get Close-up Look At It."

Whispers of mountain lions continued to circulate about Harford County as large paw print tracks were found, a calf was found partially eaten and dragged for a good distance and locals reported frequent sightings of the elusive lion. After the Baltimore Zoo confirmed the paw prints were indeed from a cougar, 250-man posses were formed to patrol the local woodlands and, while the bands of marauding hunters weren't able to track down their quarry, a number of them found themselves in trouble with the law for brazenly brandishing firearms in their trek through the northern wilderness of the county. A deputy sheriff caught a glimpse of the tawny animal, which he described as about five feet long and weighing about 100 pounds, but it was never confirmed whether the roaming feline was an escaped pet or a wild resident. In the span of just two months, dozens of concerned residents relayed their fears to local law enforcement officials and many reported actually seeing the animal.

In more recent times, cougar, panther, mountain lion and catamount sightings have occurred sporadically in the area. In 1992 and 1993, several residents described a brown or tawny colored cat roaming about the county's woodlands and farmlands, but no definitive explanation was ever presented. Photographic evidence of a tawny-brown cat in 1992 and a grayish-brown cat during the blizzard of 1996 appear inconclusive and, while they certainly portray living cats, it is unclear whether the feline is a house cat, bobcat, panther or something else.

What follows is a chronology of sightings, evidence and accounts of recent large cat activity in Harford County unlike any seen since the 1960s.

Location: Harford County is a 448-square-mile area, still heavily agricultural, with 106 miles of shoreline located at the top of the Chesapeake Bay, the largest inland body of water on the Atlantic coast. The county is located in Maryland's northeast corner and is bordered by the Susquehanna River on the east, Baltimore County to the west and Pennsylvania farmland to the north. Roughly 224,000 residents inhabit the county, which is located roughly 45 minutes from Baltimore City and an hour from Washington D. C., Harford County contains rolling hills and valleys, tidal wetlands, rocky ledges and a chain of river islands characteristic of the topography of Maryland, which earned the state the nickname, "America in miniature."

June 2001: As reported in naturalist Bob Chance's Earthline column for *The Aegis* newspaper, a woman near Priestford Road (Route 136) near the Aberdeen Proving Ground tank testing area in Cool Spring saw what she described as a "wild cat." On a secluded dirt driveway leading to a farm, she saw the cat, described as tawny-gold with a white butt area and a long tail, walking near a small stream at 6:45 a.m. She watched it through binoculars at two intervals and later found its tracks in the dirt. Both Chance and the woman suggested nearby development in the rural area may have prompted the mammal to alter its normal exposure. The testing station is on Deer Creek and lies about five miles west of the heavily wooded 2,500-acre Susquehanna State Park on the west bank of the Susquehanna River.

June 19, 2001: The before-mentioned sighting was almost completely ignored because it was overshadowed at the same time by what was called a close encounter with a bigfoot-type creature, but the similarities in situation, time and place warrant a closer look.

At a home on Walters Mill Road, which sits on Deer Creek and only about five miles from the above cougar sighting, on the night of June 19, a strange noise, unlike anything the occupants had ever heard, echoed from behind the house. The occupants heard the strange grunting, snorting and screaming followed by the barking of their own dog and the screeching of a cat they hoped wasn't their family pet. The residents were afraid to venture out in the dark of the night, but said it sounded as if something was carrying the screeching cat around because it seemed to be following the snorting as the animal moved closer and farther from the home. The entire incident lasted about 45 minutes and no one caught a glimpse of the culprit. Afterwards the family dog came running into the home with its tail between its legs.

The next morning some unusual evidence was found. Bob Chance was again notified and he found about five or six tracks that were 42 inches apart, about 14-15 inches long, eight inches wide and with five toes. The residents found a strange oil mark left on the glass backdoor that stood about 7 feet off the ground and had the impressions of hair prints in it. Chance said the area of the Deer Creek valley has been known to harbor unusual mammal activity in the past several decades. Although it appears to be a bigfoot/bear-type incident, it is worth mentioning due to the proximity of this residence to the previously mentioned cougar sighting. This incident was about five miles northwest of the Cool Spring cougar sighting.

November 2001 (a few days before Thanksgiving): Although unreported until the most recent big cat sightings in the summer of 2002, a resident of Havre de Grace, who lives on several acres of property backing up to Susquehanna State Park, was pulling into her driveway one evening when she saw a large animal sitting under her car port, apparently sleeping. Not knowing what it was, the woman got out of her car and came within 20 feet of the creature before it sat up and stretched and she retreated to the safety of her nearby car. She said as soon as she saw its paw, she knew the jet-black creature was a panther and that, interestingly enough, it was not her first experience with the large beast.

A few years earlier, sometime in 1999, the same woman was on her way home one evening when a large animal passed in full view of her headlights. The animal froze in the beams and eventually crossed the road, but not before turning to glare at her. The woman described the animal as such: "It was definitely a panther. As a little girl, I used to watch a weekly show that had a panther in it, so I know what it looks like. I'm 100 percent sure that's what I saw. It had no other color, it was coal-black." The black cat was said to weigh at least 100 pounds and sat up at a height

of about three feet high. Its long tail was said to end in a “bulb.” The panther was said to act very much like a normal house cat with the exception of its unusual size. The woman who saw the cat said she is certain it was a big cat and not a black Labrador retriever saying, “We have lots of black labs in this development and we used to own one, but this was totally different. They have a totally different muscular structure in the face.” The woman said her son’s friend also viewed the cat and she heard it screaming along with several others on subsequent nights.

Concerned it may attack her or a neighbor, she contacted the Plumpton Park Zoo in nearby Cecil County and was told they were not missing any large cats. A ranger at Susquehanna State Park visited the site after the woman said she had found large scat on her patio and heard what she believed to be the large cat knocking a wreath off of her front door. The scat had been discarded, but she was instructed to save any further samples as evidence.

Interestingly, both sightings in 1999 and 2001 occurred during periods of severe drought in the central Maryland area. The woman commented during each sighting the water levels of the Susquehanna River below the Conowingo Dam were low enough to see the rocks and so one could probably cross the river on foot. As to why her property was sought out by the panther both times, the woman hypothesized it may have been attracted by the overhang of her carport, the only one in the community, perhaps thinking of it as shelter or a cave. The woman’s property on the edge of Susquehanna State Park is about five miles east from the Cool Spring area of the June cougar sighting and about 10 miles east from the Walters Mill Road June bigfoot incident.

November 2001: A resident living on Whiteford Road (Route 136) in Pylesville near Broad Creek saw what he described as a large, solid brown-colored cat crossing a field by his house one morning. The man, a hunter who lives on a farm with a goose-filled lake and deer-rich fields, described the animal he saw walking across the field as such: “It’s dark brown in color. It’s a good-sized cat. It’s about five feet long counting the tail and is about three feet off the ground. It is a humongous thing.” The man saw the cat crossing a field from about a hundred feet away and was sure it was feline by its movements and appearance. When neighborhood children made some noise and commotion on their way to school he said the cat dropped flat to the ground in a crouch and remained in that pose until the children left, upon which it resumed its walk. The Pylesville property where the cat was seen is about five miles northwest of the Walters Mill Road incident and about 10 miles northwest from the Cool Spring sighting.

February 20, 2002: Outdoors columnist for *The Aegis* newspaper, Hayward Putnam, concluded his weekly fishing and hunting report with a curious mention of a strange animal being sighted about Harford County. Putnam said he had talked to hunters and hikers who have seen what they call a “cat-like creature” in the northern part of the county. The animal was also referred to as a “black panther” and Putnam said others who haven’t seen the big cat have heard its “eerie cry” at night.

April 5, 2002: A Bel Air man saw what he described as a dark, 3 to 3 1/2 foot tall cat with a very long tail and pointed ears emerge from the woods sometime in the late morning as his son was mowing the lawn at a wooded property in Bel Air on McCormick Street. While the Town of Bel Air is a very much an urban area, there still remain small patches of woodland and larger section of wilderness, which follow Winters Run and Bynum Run as the creeks wind around the municipality. The man was adamant that what he saw was not a bobcat and that it was a very dark brownish or black color. He saw the animal from about 75 feet away and explicitly said there was no white chest or throat area.

The man also reported several others who saw the cat in the same 3-4 acre wooded area in years past. His son saw a large black cat during a day in April or May of 2000 and a friend of his saw a similar black cat about one year later in April of May of 2001, both times at the same spot. The owner of the Bel Air property also saw a large animal, which she believes may be the big cat. Two other people in the Bel Air area, one living near Bynum Run and another living near Winters Run, each reported hearing a terrifying screaming at night. These reports kicked-off a flurry of nearly a dozen reported sightings of a cat-like animal, both tan and black, in the region. Bynum Run runs from Jarrettsville (about four miles northwest of Bel Air), through Laurel Bush in Abingdon before emptying into Otter Point Creek and, ultimately, the Bush River about eight miles southeast of Bel Air.

April 18, 2002: Again in an Earthline column in *The Aegis*, Bob Chance said in recent weeks a diurnal mammal had been feeding on goats, deer and other herbivores in the hills just across the Susquehanna River in Cecil County. South of the Octoraro River, Chance examined the carcass of a large pet goat, which had been killed and dragged. A photograph of the goat and of a slightly eroded four and one half inch track ran in the paper and Chance said the track pads were too heavy for the native bobcat, a German shepherd or a coyote. While no one saw the predator, Chance said the forested Susquehanna River valley has served as a traditional migration route for bear, otter, mink, deer, fox and beaver for thousands of years. The Octoraro River runs roughly parallel to the Susquehanna River and is located in Cecil County less than three miles east and directly across from Susquehanna State Park in Harford County.

April 2002: The same Pylesville resident who sighted the cat in November 2001 said he again saw the dark brown cat several months later as it again crossed his field. The man commented the cat, which he called "some type of a Pennsylvania mountain lion," perhaps was too old and that is why it was out in the day and not afraid of being seen. The man also said local hunters have been jack lighting deer at night and leaving the carcasses in the area, which may be attracting the large cat. Both times he saw the cat it was early in the morning and he believes it was the same dark brown individual. After April, corn began to grow in the field, blocking his view of whatever may be crossing the property.

Several months later, when the cougar flap was in full swing, the man's wife would claim a friend of hers, who is a wildlife rehabilitator in Jarrettsville, had not only seen the large cat, but also its kittens. She would further allege her friend actually found the lion's den in the wilderness near her home, but was unwilling to divulge information for fear trophy hunters would seek out the den to kill the cat.

May or June 2002: A Delaware man who uses the Harford County Airpark in Aldino reported he was flying an ultra-light plane low to the ground near the Conowingo Dam in Darlington when he saw a cougar chasing deer below him. The dam spans the Susquehanna River from Harford to Cecil County just about three miles north of Susquehanna State Park.

Early June 2002: A Jarrettsville woman who lives close to Rocks State Park was working in her garden near dusk when she saw a large, tawny-brown cat with a white chest and pointed ears sitting at the edge of the woods near the rear of her property. She was able to run into her home and take a photograph of the animal from about 100 feet away and the pictures offer a large tan animal with triangularly pointed ears, a white chest and blazing eyes. No tail is visible in the photograph and the cat disappeared before the woman could see it move or determine if it had a tail. The woman said she owns three cats and that this animal was much larger and had tufts of

hair on its ears. She believes what she saw and photographed was a bobcat, but described its screams she has heard as terrifying nonetheless. "You hear ghastly noises from the woods at night," she said. The 600-acre Rocks State Park is located in northwestern Harford County about eight miles north of Bel Air and about four miles southwest of Pylesville. Deer Creek runs through the park.

June 13, 2002: The son-in-law of the Bel Air man who spotted the black cat on McCormick Street was coming home from a soccer game at 11 p.m. when, near Route 543 and Prospect Mill Road, a large cat ran out in front of his car. The man said he almost hit what he said was definitely a big cat that he thought was black in color. The location of the Prospect Mill Road sighting is in a wooded area northeast of Bel Air and removed by about two miles from Bynum Run. It is also about five miles west of Deer Creek and the Cool Spring sighting.

Mid-June 2002: A woman who lives in the curator's house near the 4-H Camp at Rocks State Park saw a large cat at about 2 p.m. one afternoon in her yard. She described the cat as 3 to 3 1/2 feet tall, dark brownish red in color with no white on it and a very long tail. The camp is located directly within the park on Deer Creek.

July 5, 2002: A woman living in Abingdon said she saw a large animal with a very long tail. The sighting occurred in an area behind Laurel Bush, which lies directly on Bynum Run and the heavily wooded and protected Bynum Run Conservation Area. It is about four miles southeast of Bel Air and roughly four miles from where the creek empties into Long Bar Harbor of Otter Point Creek.

July 8, 2002: During a severe electrical thunderstorm passing through the area, an Abingdon woman living in the Woodsdale Senior Housing Development went outside at about 10 p.m. to see if any other residences in the community were without power. As she shined her flashlight outside, she saw what she described as a jet-black cat with big eyes that appeared to be the size of a small bear. The woman quickly entered a neighbor's home and together the two women watched the long-tailed animal pace for a while before they said it "leapt" away very much like a large and heavy cat. The homes are heavily wooded in the rear and lie only about three miles from Bynum Run and the previous Abingdon sighting and about two miles from Otter Point Creek.

July 11, 2002: A Fallston resident was returning to his home at about 11:30 p.m. when a red fox dashed out in front of his car, followed closely behind by a pursuing mountain lion. The man said had he not slammed on the brakes to avoid killing the fox, he would have certainly hit the large cat, which he said was about the size of a large dog with a long tail. He estimated the animal weighed about 80 pounds and was of a dark, solid color of deep brown or black. The man is a hunter and said he is familiar enough with wildlife to know what he saw was not a bobcat and resembled a cougar. He commented his rural property is home to many deer and geese, which the cat may be feeding upon. He also claimed to have heard what must have been the animal ferociously growling and screaming outside his home on July 13 and 14. The man commented recent development in the region may have driven the animal out of its wilderness home. This Fallston sighting occurred just three miles east of the Little Gunpowder Falls, the expansive 11,000-acre Gunpowder State Park and the Baltimore County line. The location lies about eight miles west of Bel Air and eight miles southwest of Rocks State Park and Deer Creek.

Mid-July 2002: A woman residing in Cool Spring, within a mile of Deer Creek and the Aberdeen Proving Ground Tank Testing Station, saw a large animal appearing in her backyard each night at

dusk for about a week straight. A neighbor took a photograph and the families believe what they have been seeing may be a coyote.

July 12, 2002: A man living on the east side of Bel Air, within a mile of Bynum Run, heard what he described as two terrifying screams early in the morning, but was unable to locate their source or point of origin. The residence is located right on Bynum Run and about four miles north of the Bynum Run Conservation Area.

July 22, 2002: The same Bel Air man, living within a mile of Bynum Run, again heard the terrifying screams at about 4 a.m. This time, upon looking out his window, he saw a big, cat-like animal pacing between two bushes in front of his house. The man said the animal was about 3 1/2 feet tall and screamed four more times as he watched it pace. He was unable to see if the animal had any sort of a tail. When he called the Maryland Department of Natural Resources he was told it was most likely a fox, but he insists what he saw and heard was not a fox.

July 24, 2002: A woman who resides on the flats near Deer Creek in Street said she had just returned home from a vacation when she heard an odd noise she described as a “woman screaming” in her back yard. As strange as the screaming was, she said she was familiar with it as she had heard a similar cry two years ago, when a neighbor’s goat was ripped to shreds by a predator. When she ran to her garage door and looked outside she said she saw a pair of eyes shining back at her and an animal about the size of a small collie run off. While she didn’t notice the color of the animal or if it had a tail, she did hear it hissing and screaming as it ran off into the woods. Familiar with indigenous fauna, the woman assumed it was a bobcat and, afraid of what threat the animal may pose to her children and pets, called a cat biologist in California and described the sounds she heard and creature she witnessed. To her amazement, the biologist told her she had just described a cougar.

The validity of this witness is unique in that she was on vacation for the previous week and missed both stories in *The Aegis* newspaper about cougar sightings. When she casually mentioned to a friend that she thought a bobcat was in the area again, but that a biologist told her it was a cougar, her friends quickly alerted her to the situation involving the numerous mountain lion sightings in the area recently. It was only then, that the woman found out about the flap of sightings. The heavily wooded area where the woman resides lies directly on Deer Creek and, while it is about eight miles away from the previous Bel Air sighting on Bynum Run, it is within three miles of the Cool Springs and Walters Mill incidents.

August 26, 2002: A woman living on Ady Road (Route 543) witnessed a long, dark brown, cat-like animal eating apples from under a tree in her back yard. At about 11 a.m., the resident noticed a peculiar animal in her yard feasting on fallen apples, pacing about and even relieving itself on her lawn. After finding her camera, but unable to locate any film, the woman grabbed binoculars and decided the best thing to do would be to study the animal’s behaviors from afar, which she did for about 10 minutes. She described the animal as dark brown in color with no white or lighter areas, short-haired with big, pointed ears, a long body, just bigger than a fox, with an approximately three-foot long tail and a pointed, fox-like face. The woman went on to say she was able to get a good look at its face and would have thought it was a mange-ridden fox with a cat-like tail, but she is familiar with local wildlife and knew this animal was something different. Having seen several of the above-mentioned photographs, the woman said this was definitely something different.

Upon researching the topic, the woman concluded, to the best of her judgment, it could not have been a fox, bobcat, cougar or dog, but matched identically with photographs she had seen of the Central American jaguarundi. The woman said the most curious features of the animal were its pointed snout, excessively long tail, solid brown coloration and its eating of the fallen fruit, each of which, she said matches the habits of the jaguarundi. The woman said several cats had been missing in the area and she noticed a dramatic reduction in the number of young rabbits on her property this season. She also noted that the day she spotted the animal coincided with the day she brought her dog back to the property after it had been boarded for some time. The woman's property lies less than a mile from Deer Creek, the heavily wooded Deer Creek Park and Walters Mill Road, where the aforementioned "bigfoot" encounter occurred.

November 4, 2002: From the police blotter of *The Aegis* newspaper, a man residing on Whiteford Road told police there was a cougar behind his home and he was concerned for his dogs because he believed a previous dog he owned was killed by a cougar. The man's home is located directly on Broad Creek about five miles northeast of Rocks State Park.

Analysis: There are several certainties which cannot be disputed in this case. First, people are definitely seeing something. Not only have a dozen sightings been reported, but there is photographic evidence in at least three of the instances. Having personally viewed the photos, I can say with certainty that there are animals out there that people are seeing; whether they are panthers, bobcats or something else, I cannot.

Second, Harford County and indeed much of Maryland is suffering from the worst drought since the 1960's. Ponds and creeks are literally drying up and typically elusive wildlife has been moving out of seclusion in search of food and water. County workers are reporting a record number of road-killed beavers, traveling from one water source to another, and many are reporting numerous sightings of large multi-pointed bucks emerging from the deep woods in search of food and water. Wildlife was on the move this summer. The last drought of this magnitude to parch Harford County was in 1960, the same year, as mentioned above, that cougar sightings were at their greatest on record.

Third, one front page story and another follow-up story, both written by myself, appeared within the pages of *The Aegis* newspaper along with several columns by Bob Chance, perhaps prolonging the flap or eliciting further evidence.

With one photo, which appears to show a large fox-like cat, orange with a brilliant white underbelly and feet and pointed ears, another photo showing a large, gray and black cat that appears to be a massive house cat and a dozen reports of cougars or panthers, it is obvious people believe what they are seeing is feline. People aren't reporting the canine features of a wolf or coyote or the ursine characteristics of the occasional bear and cub which wander from the north and west into Harford County. They are seeing large, sometimes dark-colored cats with long tails. Given such characteristics, the native, yet elusive bobcat and coyote are eliminated from contention, although it is fair to say a glimpse of a fleeing bobcat or coyote may appear to be many things. However, several of these sightings occurred during the day and two such sets of photographs exist. Some witnesses were "certain" what they had seen was a mountain lion, while others scoffed at the notion and said it had to be a bobcat they saw because panthers don't live in these parts anymore. That assertion, I suppose is the crux of this case.

If evidence existed to support the claim eastern panthers still range on the Atlantic side of the Mississippi River, north of Florida and south of Canada, we would have little trouble accepting these cougar sightings as legitimate. In his work as director of the Eastern Puma Research Network, John Lutz has documented more than 6,000 such sightings in the last two decades alone, yet the notion still elicits a laugh from local wildlife officials. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources claimed it hasn't had a legitimate cougar sighting in the state in a decade and even then it was a pet chained to a tree in a front yard. When asked, representatives from DNR flat out denied they were hearing any whisperings or calls about large cats, even though several of the witnesses said they called the agency themselves to file a report. I have heard of secretaries at both DNR and the Harford County Sheriff's Office quickly terminating phone conversations with people they said were "crazy" because they were ranting on about a mountain lion or bigfoot being in their back yard. The agencies seem to have a decidedly close-minded approach to the entire matter of the existence of eastern cougars.

Without the support, records and resources of such organizations and left with only the testimony of eye-witnesses, the only recourse is looking into the past. Fortunately, Chad Arment, a researcher with the *North American BioFortean Review*, has done just that. Aside from detailing the 1966 and 1992 cougar sightings, Arment has unearthed a curious, yet intriguing piece of evidence, especially in light of the recent sightings. In his research of strange occurrences in Harford County, Arment came across the story of the White Ghost Dog of Spesutie Island. The island is owned by the federal government as part of Aberdeen Proving Ground and is located in the Chesapeake Bay just south of where the Susquehanna River pours into the body of water. In his research of the legend, Arment came upon mention of the wildlife on the island from a 1954 article in *The Baltimore Sun*, which says a motorist traveling on the island is apt to startle a fawn, red fox "or it may alert one of a peculiar race of black hunting cats discovered on the island." While Arment was never able to track down the curious meaning of that statement, it appears to take on new significance given the recent proliferation of sightings that are described by most as — a peculiar race of black hunting cats.

For the record, APG is one of the nation's top military bases and has recently become the country's center for anti-terrorism training. Air Force One regularly takes off and lands in testing flights at the base and Middle Eastern tanks and weaponry are tested and maneuvered on post. Despite the above descriptions, APG is perhaps the greatest of all local wildlife sanctuaries. It was one of the first areas in the nation to see bald eagles return in record numbers and today Harford County residents can drive five minutes down the street and routinely observe numerous eagles. Similarly, before September 11, when the post was open to the general public, visitors could drive through the base and watch white-tailed deer stroll casually about the property along with a proliferation of groundhogs. A recent report indicated APG was looking to expand its deer-hunting season to include wild turkey and studies show bald eagles are so plentiful they have been moving back into residential areas where they are being electrocuted on power lines. At night, passersby can hear the howl of coyotes echoing from the base, which also houses 85 percent of the county's shoreline. Albino deer, a snake-like cryptid dubbed "Chessie" and, mountain lions have been spotted on post. If what is being seen is truly a large cat, it makes sense that it would follow a waterway like Deer Creek, Bynum Run or Winters Run, which all empty into the Susquehanna River, Otter Point Creek or Swan Creek, which in turn each empty into the Chesapeake Bay.

A local Cecil County zoo has reported no loss of large or exotic cat and although people have told me they know of at least one nearby resident who keeps a cougar penned in his backyard, no

one has come forward to claim a missing pet. Could the 50-year drought and continued development into the woodlands of Harford County be pushing a reclusive native cat into the public eye? If what people are seeing is a bobcat or cougar than perhaps, but if the reports of jaguarundi and other exotics abound than the answer most certainly lies in an escaped or released pet. A tiger, ocelot, caiman and even a red macaw have all been pets that have been released or escaped into the county, so a jaguarundi wouldn't be out of the question. Yet, thus far, only one witness has proclaimed what she saw was positively an exotic species and not a bobcat or cougar.

Brian Goodman is a reporter for *The Aegis* newspaper in Harford County and was assisted in his research by Bob Chance, John Lutz, Frank Dagostin and each of the above-mentioned witnesses. The photographs appear courtesy of David Easter and Maggie Patton. For more information or to contact, the author can be reached at goodman_brian@hotmail.com or through his web site <http://www.subsist.tv>.

Addendum: Fallston Feline Images

On July 22, 2002, just prior to meeting me, the photographer, David Easter, saw pictures of cougar cubs hanging up at a local high school and said he no longer had any doubts that what he saw was a young cougar.

The feline was spotted during the week-long blizzard of '96 on Friday, January 12, 1996, at approx. 1:45 PM in the backyard of a Fallston home.

The feline was coming from the direction of the barn on the lot next to the home. The family was removing decorations from the Christmas tree and saw the cat. When he saw the feline, he grabbed his 35-mm. camera that was still out from the holidays to take pictures.

He used 35-mm. color slide film (speed unknown). He used a 125-mm. telephoto lens with a 2x extender. Distance from house to woodpile was approx. 75 feet. It was windy and snowing (fine). On open areas, the snow was approx. 24 inches deep.

The feline walked over to the shed and woodpile. There was a "hollow" in front of the woodpile caused by the wind. The cougar moved into this hollow.

The hollow was approx. 20 inches from the ground to the snow ridge.

The feline looked at the house (or the photographer) several times. It then retraced its steps toward the barn.

The feline had a mottled, multi-colored coat. It had a tail. He estimated its length as greater than 36-inches, excluding tail. He estimate the tail to have been at least 18 inches. The height, ground to back, was 18 to 22-inches.

The cougar looked into the open end of the barn and then moved around the near side to a single, closed door. This door leads to a room at the far end of the barn. This room is closed off

from the part of the barn that is open to the outside at this level. The door has a large hole at the bottom and at least one groundhog was known to live inside. The feline sniffed around the hole before climbing through it. (He was loading film and got no shots of this.)

Since kids of the homeowner (of the barn) had been seen playing outside in the snow earlier, he called her and warned her of what they had seen.

He went back to the woodpile and took photos of footprints, etc. For perspective, he placed an 18-inch ruler by the best footprint and photographed it. The print was at least 4.5 inches across in snow that was less than a half-inch deep in the hollow. He also placed a yardstick in the branches of some bushes that the feline was near, so the feline photos could be compared with the yardstick.

Within an hour or so, two sheriff's deputies arrived in an U.S. Army HumVee. He explained what he had seen and took them back to the woodpile to see the footprints. They then went made our way over to the open end of the barn. The barn was dark and, although he explained that the back room was closed off from the open end of the barn, the deputies decided there was no reason to go inside. They also said that if something were inside, it would probably leave overnight.

They went back to the HumVee and drove over to the homeowner's house, spoke with her and left. By this time it was late afternoon and getting dark fast.

The property is located in a wooded area in the western portion of the county. It is known to carry many deer and groundhogs and backs up to Bread & Cheese Branch, a waterway that connects into Winters Run. It is located roughly five miles from Gunpowder Falls State Park.

Although the photographer is sure he captured an eastern cougar on film, Bob Chance studied the photos and suggested it was a bobcat.

Interestingly, the photographer first called the animal a "mutant bobcat" because he said it had all the features of a bobcat (mottled coat, tufted ears and small size), but had the long tail of a cougar.

[Editor's Note:— Three images are shown here with enlargements. None of the images shows a tail, so it may be that the photographer was mistaken (or the angles may just have been wrong). If there was no tail, then the feline was probably a bobcat. If there was a long tail, the feline was almost certainly a large domestic cat. This would provide a good illustration of how size can be exaggerated — though, given the size that feral and semi-feral domestics can achieve, it wouldn't have to be exaggerated too much. The cat does not have certain characteristics found in juvenile cougars, however. Note, for example, the coloration in the enlargements: a mottled black/brown coloration. With each image, the first is the whole image, the second is the feline itself, and the third is an enlarged and sharpened image.]

Fallston Feline Image 1



Fallston Feline Image 2



Fallston Feline Image 3



Addendum II: "Bobcat" Photo

[*Editor's Note* — This is the photograph taken by the Jarrettsville resident near Rocks State Park in early June 2002. The feline's color and pattern are clear enough to determine that the cat is actually a domestic feline, rather than a bobcat.]



Legend of the Wild Cat.

(From Hunter's "History of Doncaster.")
[1828, Part I., pp. 390, 391.]

From: Gomme, G. L., ed. 1885. The Gentleman's Magazine Library: English Traditional Lore.
London: Elliot Stock.

Respecting the manner of Percival Cresacre's death, there is a romantic tradition, firmly believed at Barnborough [co. York], and the figure of the lion couchant at the foot of the oaken statue is appealed to in confirmation of it; as is also a rubiginous stone in the pavement of the porch. The tradition is, that he was attacked by a wild cat from one of the little woods of Barnborough, and that there was a running fight till they reached the porch of the church, where the mortal combat ended in the death of both.

Whatever portion of truth there may be in the story, it is evident that it derives no support from the image of the lion in the monument, or the tincture of the stone in the porch, which is only one of many such found near Barnborough. That some such incident did occur in the family of Cresacre is rendered, however, in some degree probable, by the adoption by them of the cat-a-mountain for their crest, which may be seen over their arms on the tower of the church. On the other hand, it may have been that the accidental adoption of the crest may have laid the foundation of the story. That the cat was anciently considered as a beast of chase, is evident from many proofs, going back to the age of the Confessor, in whose charter to Ranulph Piperking, supposing it to be genuine, there is given to him, with the forest of Chalmer and Dancing in Essex,

"Hart and hind, doe and bock,
Fox and cat, hare and brock."

And again,

"Four greyhounds and six raches
For hare and fox and wild cates."

In 6 John, Gerard Camvile had license to hunt the hare, fox, and wild cat. In 23 Henry III. the Earl Warren obtained from Simon Pierrepoint leave to hunt the buck, doe, hart, hind, hare, fox, goat, cat, or any other wild beast, in certain lands of Simon. In 11 Edward I., Thomas, the second Lord Berkeley, had license of the king to hunt the fox, hare, badger, and wild cat; and in 10 Edward III., John Lord Roos had license to hunt the fox, wolf, hare, and cat, throughout the king's forests of Nottinghamshire. All this, however, proves little for the tradition, which as a tradition only must be allowed to remain, only observing that in other parts of the district I have heard the wild cat spoken of as still an object of terror, and as haunting the woods.

Traditional Story of a Water-Serpent.

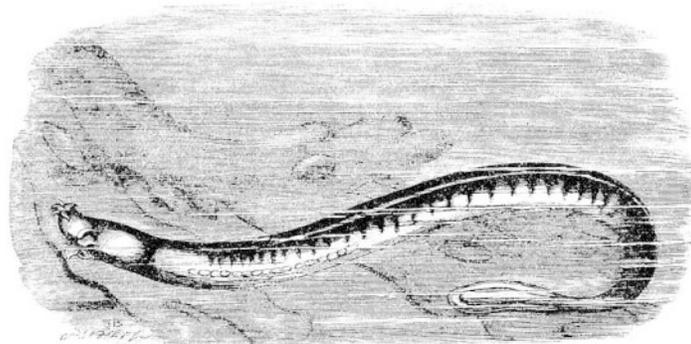
[1758, pp. 466, 467.]

From: Gomme, G. L., ed. 1885. The Gentleman's Magazine Library: English Traditional Lore.
London: Elliot Stock.

Some part of this summer I passed my time in the country, where, as it is usual with me when I am in these cool shades of solitude and retirement, my inquiries are directed towards anything that is curious in science; my course of studies having much led me this way. In consequence of a story, that I at first thought fabulous, I one day went out of curiosity to a farm, where the incident, I was told, was painted on the walls. Agreeable to the common report, the history of this singular transaction I found there, in the manner described to me. The story is thus:

In the year 1578, which appears above the painting, in a pond surrounded with briars near the house, a water-serpent of an uncommon size was frequently seen by a woman, who belonged to the house, when she went to get water. The creature, whenever she came, made advances to her; perhaps for the reason which Sallust gives, speaking of serpents, *Quarum vis inopiâ cibi acrior.* The woman, terrified at his appearance, told the story to her neighbours, who advised her one day to sit near the pond side, while some of them stood behind the briars, with an intention to shoot it, if possible, when it advanced towards her. The thing was accordingly effected, and the skin of the creature, according to the tradition of the place, was hung up withoutside the house, stuffed with straw, for many years; but in process of time, by being so exposed, decayed. Ever since the year when this thing happened, the story has been painted on the walls of the refectory or hall; for I find the house was formerly, by the arms visible in many places, an hospital for the Knights Templars. And, as it cannot be supposed that the first painting could continue to this time on the bare wall, as often as it has been in a state of decay, so often has it been renewed. The present painting was done about forty years since, by the famous Rowell, the glass-stainer. About half a mile in a vale beneath this house stands the church of Hitchendon in the county of Bucks, where I find some of these knights were buried, having myself seen their figures in the Gothic position, at full length on the pavement, in their military accoutrements. The imagination of the painter has given the serpent wings and legs, which has made some people suppose the whole fabulous; but that the story, exclusive of these emendations of the painter, is in every respect true, is plain from the traditional accounts of sensible judicious people hereabouts, and from the pencilled record of it on the wall of the house.

Yours, etc., Edgar Bochart.



Early Notes on the Origin of the Indian Bis-Cobra

Chad Arment

The following are a few interesting papers which evaluate a folkloric animal in colonial India — the Bis-Cobra. Said to be a venomous reptile, possibly some sort of lizard, the bis-cobra was greatly feared by the native peoples of India. To start, here is a sample of such belief:

From: Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, 1889, Vol. 4, pp. 310-311.

1.—Belief in the Bis-Cobra

My servant came running this morning to say that there was a large bis-cobra in a shesum tree just outside the house. All hands assembled at a respectful distance from the tree and evidently were very jumpy. Going close, I found a largish Monitor on one of the boughs trying to get away from a squirrel. When the squirrel came to close quarters the lizard snapped at him, but the little fellow was much too quick for him, jumping back or round the bough, and then tackling the Monitor from another quarter. At last the latter gave in and came down the tree pursued by the squirrel with tail erect and hair frilled out in great triumph. The Monitor ran into the grass, where my terrier settled accounts with him forthwith, greatly to the sweeper's horror, who thought it was all up with "Tim, Tim." It is curious that here in the North-West Provinces the appearance of one of these monitors causes more dismay among the natives than any Krait or Cobra. One of my men assured me that he had known a woman who died from the bite of a bis-cobra.

G. J. Rayment.
Bubugarh, September, 1889.

The first paper primarily investigates the folklore from a biological standpoint. Was there such a thing as a venomous lizard in India?

From: Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, 1888, Vol. 3, pp. 71-82.

The Bis Cobra

By G. W. Vidal, C. S.

(Read at the Society's Meeting on 4th January, 1888.)

In that charming and inimitable little book, "The Tribes on my Frontier," which delights all who read it,—and of which our Society has special reasons to be proud—there is a characteristic description of the bis cobra, which will serve admirably as the text of the remarks I have to make. "But of all things in this earth that bite or sting the palm belongs to the bis cobra, a creature whose

very name seems to indicate that it is twice as bad as the cobra. Though known by the terror of its name to Natives and Europeans alike, it has never been described in the proceedings of any learned Society, nor has it yet received a scientific name. In fact, it occupies much the same place in science as the sea serpent, and accurate information regarding it is still a *desideratum*. The awful deadliness of its bite admits of no question, being supported by countless authentic instances; our own old *ghorawalla* was killed by one. The points on which evidence is required are—first, whether there is any such animal as the bis cobra; second, whether, if it does exist, it is a snake with legs, or a lizard without them. By inquiry among natives I had learned a few remarkable facts about it; as, for instance, that it has eight legs and is a hybrid between a cobra and that gigantic lizard commonly miscalled an iguana; but last year a brood of them suddenly appeared in Dustypore, and I saw several. The first was killed by some of the bravest of my own men with stones, for it can spring foul feet, and no one may approach it without hazard of life. Even, when dead, it is exceedingly dangerous, but, with my usual hardihood, I examined it. It was nine inches long, and in ‘appearance like a pretty brownish lizard, spotted with yellow. It had no poison fangs, but I was assured that an animal so deadly could dispense with those. If it simply spits at a man, his fate is sealed; for, excepting a few cunning Bengalees, no one knows any muntra or charm which has any power against it. Afterwards one appeared in my own garden, and I made an attempt to capture it alive with a butterfly net, my devoted butler’s hair turning grey as he watched me from a great distance; but the bis cobra got off into a hole. It escaped me once or twice again, and then finding I was bent on catching it, it gradually changed colour like a chameleon and grow larger at the same time, until in a few weeks it had developed into an unmistakable iguana. Some people would jump to the conclusion that it was it young iguana to begin with. My butler would endure the thumb-screw sooner.”

It is, perhaps, an unusual proceeding to undertake to read a paper on a certain animal and then to deny its existence *in toto*; but this is what I have to do. There is no doubt that a large number of human beings do believe—and probably always will believe—in the existence of venomous lizards in India, and of the bis cobra in particular. If any such believers are present here to-day I hope to be able to convince them that the mysterious bis cobra, of which we hear now and again, is merely our old friend Mrs. Gamp’s own particular Mrs. Harris in another sphere of life—a transmigrated Mrs. Harris, in fact, and that, as far as India is concerned, there “aint no sech a person.” The origin of the word bis cobra is in itself a mystery. It is neither wholly Oriental nor wholly European, but apparently a barbarous compound, which may be justly repudiated by all decent languages. “E H A” in his playful manner affects to believe the name implies that the animal is *twice* as poisonous as a *cobra*. But the learned author of Hobson-Jobson will not admit that the name has anything to do with either *bis* in the sense of *twice* or *cobra* in the sense of *snake*; he contends that *bis* is *bish*, the Hindustani word for poison, and that *cobra* is probably a corruption of *khopra* or *khapra*, the vernacular word for “a shell” or “a skull.” Hobson-Jobson is no doubt right about *bis* being *bish*, poison. But his derivation of *cobra* from *khopra*, a shell, seems far-fetched and fanciful. Had the term bis cobra ever been used to denote a venomous cockle or a poisonous periwinkle, the derivation would have been plausible enough. But though cockles, winks, *et hoc genus omne*, may be poisonous in the sense that they sometimes disagree with frail mortals, if indulged in too liberally, I don’t think they have ever yet been called bis cobras, or endowed by the wildest romancers with the attributes popularly ascribed to the latter. I am inclined, therefore, to believe that *cobra* in bis cobra does after all mean *cobra*, which, as we all know, is the Portuguese rendering of the Latin *coluber*, a snake, and I can only conjecture that the original discoverer of the bis cobra was rather mixed as to the distinctive characters of snakes and lizards. Possibly the creature to which he applied the name, and which has unfortunately not been preserved as a type specimen,

was one of the skinks, a family of lizards, which would be very like snakes indeed, to all outward appearance, if they lost their legs. The derivation of the name would be of little consequence if we could fix the creature itself, and confidently refer it to any single species. We are unfortunately used to all sorts of atrocities in the nomenclature or mis-nomenclature of animals. We might leave etymologists to wrangle over the name, if the identity of the bis cobra were not such a hopeless puzzle. One day it is one lizard, and the next day another. Almost every harmless lizard in its turn seems to be branded as the genuine bis cobra. It is useless to demonstrate that any particular species declared by "One who knows" to be the real article, is a common harmless lizard; for the next day a totally different, but equally harmless, species will be produced as the true bis cobra by "One who knows better." All the families into which lizards are divided contribute from time to time to swell the ranks of venomous lizards. It is impossible to give any exhaustive list, but I will here mention a few which figure more often than others as bis cobras. First, there is the common and well-known Indian water lizard or monitor (*Varanus dracæna*), the "Ghorpad" of the Mahrattas, the "Goana" of Ceylon. This is the species which is so frequently miscalled the iguana by Europeans in India, and probably identical with "E H A's" brood of Dustypore bis cobras. We have several specimens in our collection. The stuffed monitor before us is too large for a bis cobra. But young monitors, which are more conspicuously marked than their elders, by white *ocelli* and dark cross bands, are often called bis cobras in Sind and Cutch. The natives of Southern India are also said by Dr. Shortt to hold monitors in deadly fear. Not only is their bite fatal, but they hold on with such bull-dog tenacity, that they will not relinquish their enemy till a donkey brays, which soothing noise, according to local superstition, operates on them as a charm and turns away their wrath. It is needless to say that the monitor is quite innocent of venom, though its bite is no doubt severe, and though it can administer a very punishing stroke with its tail. Many funny stories are told of this species. Perhaps the funniest of all is the old Mahratta legend that the ancestor of the well-known family of *Ghorpares*, originally a *Bhonsle*, like Sivaji, changed his name to *Ghorpare* after a very daring exploit he achieved with the aid of a Ghorpad. This exploit was nothing less than the scaling of a fort in the Konkan—hitherto deemed impregnable—by availing himself of the services of a friendly Ghorpad to pull him up the wall by means of a rope fastened to the animal's tail. Now these lizards have, as you see, very strong claws with which they can no doubt hold on even more firmly than with their teeth. Their skin is also remarkably tough, and for this reason is, I believe, in great demand for tom-toms. But I should not advise any enterprising member of this Society to follow the example of the ancestor of the Ghorpares, at all events unless the ditch below the fort wall he selects for the experiment has a good ten feet of water in it. Ghorpad—as perhaps you know—is eaten and thought a great delicacy in various parts of the country, especially in Ceylon. This seems strange considering the horror in which it is held in other parts. Kelaart, the naturalist, tells us that he had some excellent soup made of a Ghorpad, and that it tasted very like hare soup. This, however, is another example which I should hardly recommend any one to follow. Another and more handsomely marked species of this same family, the ornate monitor (*Psammosaurus scincus*), the *Chandengo* of Guzerat, is also not unfrequently passed off as the bis cobra, probably from its resemblance to the young of the common *Ghorpad*. Thus the monitors which are forked tongue lizards contribute at least two species to the army of bis cobras. Next come the Geckos, with short thick tongues and adhesive toes, some of which live in our houses and others in rocks and trees. This family contributes more bis cobras than all the rest put together. In the North-West Provinces, as I find from a letter from "Young Nimrod" in the *Asian* of November 23rd, 1880, all Geckos are called bis cobras indiscriminately. Another correspondent of the same paper declares that *the bis cobra par excellence* of the North-Western frontier is Hardwick's Gecko (*Eublepharis Hardwickii*, Gray), a stout-bodied nine inch lizard, which is not very common. The same species is also, according to Dr. Shortt, *the bis cobra* of India. "Some years ago," he writes in an interesting

note in the *Madras Monthly Journal of Medical Science*, "I saw some articles in the Madras papers about this reptile (*Eublepharis Hardwickii*) which made it out to be the most poisonous creature with or without four legs, and one or two of the officers who were in service in Bengal mention that several sentries were found dead at their posts from the bite of some creature, which was afterwards found, and which I took to be, the bis cobra from the description they gave of it." In Burmah, again, there are two large Geckos (*Gecko guttatus*, Dana; and *Gecko stentor*, Cantor) which are widely believed to be exceedingly venomous, and are consequently held in great dread. These deadly reptiles are not, however, called bis cobras, or by any other names conveying an idea of their poisonous nature. Their local name "Tuctoo" is a very innocent one, and merely an imitation of the loud note with which they and other members of the same family frequently relieve their feelings; and which sounds like "tuck," "tuck," "tuck," repeated in a crescendo scale. Dr. Shortt had a specimen of *Gecko guttatus* sent to him for examination by a correspondent with the following description:— "This is the Tuckatoo of the Burmese, a large species of lizard found in Burmah, inhabiting trees and seldom ever seen, and heard only at dark and during the night: it is of a dark ash colour spotted with red, but the old ones are much darker in colour, as are also the spots. Their first cry begins with a croak, and then they sing out tuckatoo, tuckatoo, quite slow and then in a quicker time. The same word is repeated for a few seconds, and then another croak, and all is still. Their voice is quite loud and hoarse and heard at a great distance. The Burmese, as well as other natives, dread this reptile, as their bite is poisonous, and their hold so tenacious that they can only be cut off the body of the person they fall on. The Burmese say that when any one is bitten their body swells to a great size; and they seldom live over a day." In Southern India again, according to the same authority (Dr. Shortt), the Bengal Gecko (*Hemidactylus cocteauui*, D. et B.), is dreaded, more especially the larger kinds found about rocks and trees. Then again, some gross calumniator has dared to take away the character of our old friend the chameleon (*Chameleo vulgaris*, Lin.), the *Sasumba* of Cutch, and *Guhira Sarad* of the Deccan. Any one who has watched the child-like and bland expression of the pet chameleon, whose life was made so happy in these rooms by Mr. Phipson's tender care, will find it hard to believe that he is a deadly monster, whose bite is instant death. Nevertheless, he has not been allowed to escape the stigma of being called a bis cobra. According to Dr. Fairbank, he is the bis cobra of Guzerat, and Dr. Shortt relates a story showing the extreme dread in which he is held in Madras: "When *Zillah* Surgeon of Chingleput," he writes, "I remember on one occasion a native came running to my house: he was almost breathless, streaming with cold perspiration, looking pale, skin cold, pulse small, holding the thumb of his left hand in his right, and complaining of being bitten by a chameleon on the tip of his left thumb, and requesting with tears in his eyes that I would do something to save his life. Nothing that I could say convinced him that the chameleon was harmless and the bite not poisonous, but to satisfy the poor fellow I applied some *liquor ammonia* to the part said to be bitten, where there was a slight abrasion of the skin, and gave him a little brandy and water to drink. He sat down for a time in my verandah, and then went away apparently quite well. That the man was in a great fright about his life there was no doubt from the state of his pulse, skin, and general appearance, when he presented himself to me." It is needless to state that all the lizards mentioned above are perfectly harmless. The Skinks, the ground lizards, the sand-fish lizards and the pretty little Dragons, or flying lizards, have hitherto, it appears, escaped the unenviable notoriety of being called bis cobras. So also has the familiar Bloodsucker (*Calotes versicolor*, Dana). This is odd, as in his scarlet war paint the Bloodsucker is one of the most formidable looking lizards we have. That very uncanny Australian lizard, the Moloch, of which we have a good specimen here, is another species which if found in this country would hardly escape being called the true bis cobra. I have little doubt, however, that some day, when the most credulous have begun to believe in the innocence of monitors, geckos and chameleons, all the lizards mentioned above will have their turn. They

offer at least a wide field for the selection of future bis cobras. The belief in poisonous lizards is by no means confined to India. It may safely be said that there is no known species of lizard in the old world which is provided with glands for secreting venom, or fangs through which to eject it. Nor are there any lizards in India whose dentition is in any way suspicious.

It must, however, be admitted that there is rather strong evidence, if not actual proof, as to the existence of a venomous lizard in Mexico. This is the Mexican Heloderm (*Heloderma horridum*, Wiegmann), a species of the monitor family. Mr. Tegetmeier has written an interesting account of this reptile in the *Field* of August 19th, 1882. The Heloderm was first described by Dr. Wiegmann in 1829. It had long been held to be venomous by the inhabitants of the tract in which it is found, that is the hot zone of Mexico. Dr. Wiegmann called attention to its peculiar dentition, which seemed to confirm in great measure the popular belief in its poisonous nature. For although there were no signs of poison glands, as in the case of venomous snakes, it was found to have recurved grooved teeth, through which its saliva, whether poisonous or not, could be introduced into the puncture made by its bite. Dr. Wiegmann himself does not appear to have believed that the Heloderm was really a venomous species, and he made no experiments to test the matter. Many years later, a French naturalist, Sumichrast, took up the subject again, and wrote a more detailed account of the Heloderm in the *Comptes Rendus* of 1875. He also procured and sent preserved specimens to Paris. According to Sumichrast the animal has a strong nauseous smell, and when irritated secretes a large quantity of gluey saliva. "In order to test its supposed poisonous property"—I am quoting from Mr. Tegetmeier—"he (Sumichrast) caused a young one to bite a pullet under the wing. In a few minutes the adjacent parts became violet in colour, convulsions ensued, from which the bird partially recovered, but it died at the expiration of twelve hours. A large cat was also caused to be bitten in the foot by the same Heloderm; it was not killed, but the limb became swollen, and the cat continued mewling for several hours, as if in extreme pain." Mr. Tegetmeier further writes that the dead specimens sent to Europe were carefully examined as to the character of the teeth. Sections were made, which demonstrated the existence of a canal in each tooth, totally distinct from and anterior to the pulp cavity; but the soft parts were not examined with sufficient care to determine the existence or otherwise of any poison gland in immediate connection with the perforated teeth. Nothing further was heard of the Heloderm until 1882, when a live specimen, 19 inches long, was presented to the Zoological Gardens by Sir John Lubbock. The arrival of this interesting stranger caused quite a little sensation at the time amongst the naturalists of Europe. Mr. Tegetmeier tells us that for some days it refused all kinds of foods. A live frog, a guinea pig, and several rats, however fell victims to its bite. The frog died in convulsions immediately after it was bitten. The guinea pig (bitten in the hind leg) died convulsed in three minutes, while some young rats perished even more quickly. After a time it was found that eggs were the particular food which the Heloderm fancied, and these it disposed of very readily. It was expected that further systematic experiments would be made to test the poisonous character of this lizard, and that the results would be published. Whether such experiments have been made or not, and with what result I should be glad to know; for I have not been able to come across any record of them.

Fortunately no "horrid" Heloderm has yet been found in India, nor any other lizard with similarly suspicious teeth, to justify the believers in the bis cobra. The origin of the belief in poisonous lizards in this country is not easy to trace. Dr. Shortt, writing of Southern India, thinks that a certain learned work in Tamil called the Sittar Vedum, or work of the "Seven Sages," which can be had in the bazaars for two or three annas, and which is a very popular book, is to a large extent responsible for the absurd beliefs of that part of the country. This book, he tells us, gives an account of all poisonous animals, including in the same category snakes, centipedes, spiders, beetles, lizards,

dogs, cats, tigers, and monkeys. A similar work is said to exist in Ceylon. As regards Bombay, the Deccan, and the Konkan, I am inclined to think that Europeans are quite as much, if not more responsible than, natives for the propagation of wild stories as to snakes and lizards. I have myself very seldom heard a native of these parts asserting the deadly character of any lizard, though they are very ready to take away the character of the most innocent snakes. The touch of a lizard is, I believe, generally considered a pollution by Hindus, but the bis cobra, according to my experience, is a creature of European, quite as much as of native, imagination. Hindus, however, whether they believe any lizard to be venomous or not, have some wonderful superstitions concerning them. The omens portended by the various ways in which a lizard can present itself to man or boy, wife or maid, are so many in number, that it must take a man or woman all his or her life to learn them. This must be rather awkward, as the fulfillment of the omen must in many cases precede the knowledge of what is coming; and if the omen is a bad one, deprive the victim of all chance of averting it by recourse to the various mysterious ceremonies prescribed for the purpose. If any one is interested in the subject, a paper on "Omens from the falling of house lizards," contributed to the *Indian Antiquary* by Mr. K. Raghunathji, will repay perusal. From the exhaustive list of omens given in this paper, we can see what will happen to us when a lizard falls on any part of us from head to foot. These omens have little or nothing to do with the subject of bis cobras, and there is no time now to describe them in detail or to attempt to trace their origin. I cannot, however, refrain from mentioning a few of them for your comfort, or discomfort, as the case may be. Men will be glad to hear that if lizards fall on their noses it is lucky. But the dividing line between joy and grief is so very thin that if the lizard touches the tip of the nose the result is extremely calamitous. This is like a warning to men with prominent hooks not to carry their noses too high in the air. Men also may or may not be pleased hear that if a lizard falls on their left cheek, they will be blessed with a sight of their deceased relations. But the luckiest thing of all is for a lizard to fall on the soles of a man's foot; for then all his enemies will surely perish. This is an event which I fear is not very likely to happen to many of us, unless we habitually stand on our heads, or make a point of sitting expectantly for hours together every day in the position taken up by the Japanese gentleman in Chiarini's Circus. Ladies will be glad to know that if a lizard falls on their left cheek, they will meet not their deceased relatives, but their beloved. There will be misery if one falls on their right eye, but grass widows may be consoled by the thought that a lizard on their left eye is a certain sign that they will meet their absent husbands. Lastly, immense wealth and a son are hers on whose left foot a lizard falls, and she will be rich in grain if one falls on her toe nails

Venomous Lizards
To the Editor of the "Bombay Gazette."

Sir,—In your article of 7th inst. you call attention to the following words, which occur in the paper I recently read at a meeting of the Natural History Society. "It may safely be said that there is no known species of lizard in the old world, which is provided with glands for secreting venom, or fangs through which to eject it." You ask, with reference to this passage, if the time has come for saying that none of the Indian lizards are poisonous. If you refer to *known* species—that is, species which have been examined, described, and named by competent authority, your question may be confidently answered in the affirmative. My remark is, of course, limited to such species. He would be rash, indeed, who would deny the *possibility* of a venomous lizard being discovered in the old world. There are still tracts in the Himalayas, and elsewhere in Asia, of which the zoology has been very imperfectly, if at all, observed, and where the local bis-cobras, if not bis-cobras, may at least turn out to be "boojums." Nothing that I have said is in any way inconsistent with the admission that another "horrid" heloderm *may* be found in India, slight though the chance of such

discovery may be. The assertion that there is no *known* species of venomous lizard in the old world is, I need hardly say, *not* made as a hasty deduction from personal observation. It expresses, as far as I can ascertain, the conclusion of all the leading authorities on the subject. This conclusion is obviously strengthened by the fact—to which I drew prominent attention in my paper—that all the specimens of lizards commonly produced as bis-cobras belong to species already well-known to be innocuous.

You are quite right, however, in stating that the Statistical Abstract shows that in 1884 and 1885 four to seven persons, respectively, were killed by lizards. I might add that in each of the preceding years, 1882 and 1883, one person is said to have died from a similar cause. Most of these casualties occurred, I believe, in Guzerat. I have a dim recollection of having myself, while in Broach, examined an inquest report declaring a man or woman to have been killed by a *chandengo* (the local name of the two harmless species of monitor lizards, *Varanus dracæna* and *Psammosaurus scincus*).

Some irresponsible critics affect to believe that the annual official returns as to deaths caused by wild animals and snakes are not worth the paper they are printed on; that all sorts of murders and dark deeds are covered conveniently and safely by the mortality for which snakes and “other animals” are officially held responsible; and that “snake poison” is merely a happy and conventional way of alluding to the “cup of cold poison” which terminates domestic disputes, and gets rid of people who make themselves disagreeable. My faith in the accuracy of the reports has never been materially weakened by these and similar reckless insinuations. I will therefore admit, for the sake of argument, that these alleged victims were really bitten by lizards, and died after being bitten. I prefer to meet whatever evidence the returns may give against me boldly and on its merits, and scorn to shelter myself behind the plea that a man, declared by a village punchayat to have been killed by a lizard, may have had a dose of arsenic.

But I reject the inference which the believers in the bis-cobra will naturally draw from these reported deaths. Admitting that death in each of these cases followed the bite of a lizard, it by no means follows that death was due to the action of any poison. Those who, like myself, refuse to believe, on the evidence before us, that there are any venomous lizards in this country, will say that the direct and immediate cause of death in these cases was *fright*, and *fright* only aided possibly by a diseased condition of the heart. I believe that nothing is more certain than that grossly ignorant and superstitious subjects, bitten by harmless snakes and even by lizards, do occasionally die from pure *fright*. Many doctors, I fancy, could quote instances in support of this statement from their own experience.

Here are two cases recorded by Dr. Russell, the pioneer of ophiology in India, from which those interested in the question may draw their own conclusions. Case No. 1.—“Two sepoy's at Rajamundri were bitten in the same night by the same snake, which was described as being ‘scarcely six inches long, about the size of a large goose quill, of a dark straw colour, a flat head, with two very small eyes, which shone like diamonds, and behind each eye was a black streak about three-fourths of an inch long.’ The first man bitten died after six hours. He said and felt that death was inevitable directly he was bitten. The second man bitten within a minute of the first, died within eleven hours. Neither man, it appears, suffered visible pain or convulsions, but passed away in a kind of stupor.” Case No. 2.—“The porter of Mr. Bouchier, Governor of Bombay, a *very stout Arab*, was bitten by a very small serpent, and died *almost instantaneously* after exclaiming that a snake bit him.” The italics are mine. Dr. Russell's information was got from the Governor's

son, Mr. James Bouchier, who spoke from memory, and added “that the snake to which the man’s death was imputed was by the Portuguese called cobra de morte; that in the course of twenty years he had only seen two of them, one on the island of Bombay, the other in his own house at St. Thomas’s Mount, near Madras; that the length of the snake was from six to nine inches; its thickness that of a common tobacco pipe; the head black with white marks, bearing some resemblance to a skull and two cross bones; the body alternately black and white, in joints the whole length; and that its venom is of all others the most pernicious.”

Dr. Russell, it must be admitted, has not suggested that the death of the two sepoys, and the very stout Arab, evidently stouter in body than heart, was due to fright. He made no comments, and possibly believed that the snakes described were as deadly as they were said to be. Very little was known in those days on the subject of venomous snakes. Local superstitions were too deeply rooted to be shaken by the little exact knowledge then available. The diminutive cobra de morte was then a living tradition, and its existence not to be rashly questioned. But can any one now believe that the diminutive snakes described, even if immature specimens of venomous species, were capable of causing death, *by their poison alone*, of the two sepoys and the stout Arab? From the descriptions given it is impossible to say what the snakes in question really were. But they are certainly more likely to have been harmless than venomous species, and the description of Mr. Bouchier’s snake, to whose bite the stout Arab succumbed “almost instantaneously,” reads uncommonly like that of the familiar and innocent little *lycodon aulicus*. This theory of death by fright is not a new one. In commenting on the same cases, in a chapter on the snakes of the Poona district, contributed to the *Bombay Gazetteer* some years ago, I ventured the same explanation of the cause of death, observing that the “cobra de morte, like the mythical bis-cobra or poisonous lizard, has no real existence, but whereas the latter name is still applied to various species of lizards, known to be innocuous, the cobra de morte is now, whatever it once was, a name and nothing more.” Dr. Fairbank also in his “Bombay Reptiles,” writes of the Ornate Ghorpad as follows:— “It inhabits Sind and Cutch, and there it is called *chandengo*, and its bite is though poisonous. No lizard has a poison sac or fangs. The saliva may become an irritant when the lizards gets much vexed as that of a wharf rat does. Some lizards spring fiercely and bite severely, and some snakes that are not venomous do the same, and many persons bitten by such reptiles have died, *not from poison, but because they believed themselves poisoned.*”

The extract from Dr. Shortt’s note which I quoted in my paper on the bis-cobra, is another good instance in point. There was a man bitten by a chameleon. As there is only one species of chameleon in India there can be little, if any, doubt as to the identity of the lizard. Few will be bold enough to assert that the chameleon is a venomous reptile. But the man *believed* it was, and his belief remained unshaken. Despite all Dr. Shortt’s assurances, the symptoms of fright were alarming enough. He was “almost breathless, streaming with cold perspiration, looking pale, skin cold, pulse small,” &c. In this case the poor man did not die. Why? — Because he had faith in the doctor’s remedies, and was comforted by brandy and water. A bread or sugar-pill would probably have had the same effect. But what might have been the fate of that man without the doctor and his brandy and water? — He would have gone to his house and his friends and relations would have crowded round him, shrieking and wailing, telling him it was all up with him, till the poor wretch would have been seized with convulsions and died. I have myself seen a woman as near death as possible under very similar circumstances. She was working quietly in the garden. All of a sudden she gave a shriek, and muttering something incoherently about a snake, went off into violent convulsions. The doctor was sent for, and he succeeded with some difficulty, and after some hours, in getting her round. The snake was killed. It was a harmless one, and had not even

scratched her! She admitted afterwards that she had not been touched by the snake. But she had been told—and of course believed—that if a certain snake's shadow fell on her, she would certainly die. The shadow of a snake did fall on her, and she would in all human probability have died had skilled medical aid not been at hand.

G. W. Vidal
Thana District, Jan. 10

Not long after this paper was published, another evaluation comes in, from an etymological standpoint. Where did the term Bis-Cobra come from?

From: Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, 1888, Vol. 3, pp. 154-164.

Notes on the Origin of the Belief in the Bis-Cobra

By J. A. Da Gama, L. M., K. C. J. C.

(Read at the Society's Meeting on 7th May, 1888.)

I had the pleasure some time since to listen in these rooms to a very interesting paper by Mr. Vidal on the *Bis-cobra*. Mr. Vidal, supposing that the *Bis-cobra* belonged to some one of the lizard families, and that it was a very poisonous lizard, or, according to some, that it was twice as poisonous as the Cobra-de-Capello, says that such an animal as the *Bis-cobra* never existed, because there has not yet been found a poisonous lizard in India. The more one studies the subject on the lines Mr. Vidal takes, the more one feels inclined to yield to the belief that there never has been such an animal in existence, and the descriptions given of it by the natives are a myth. But looking at the subject in a different light, I think that there exists an animal which, in the 16th century, had the name of *Bis-cobra*, but which subsequently came to be known, both scientifically and popularly, by other names, and which is neither a cobra nor a lizard.

When we desire to verify accounts of facts sent down to posterity by tradition, we should not criticise them merely through the improved means of investigation which have been placed in our hands by recent discoveries. It is necessary to transport ourselves to that period of time, when those facts are supposed to have occurred, and we should examine them by having regard to the amount of the information which was available to the people then living, and to various other circumstances which probably may have influenced the result of those enquiries. You all know what treatment Galileo received for having ascertained the earth's movement. If we were to judge of the result arrived at then through our present knowledge of astronomical subjects, we should be astonished at the condemnation of Galileo by the Inquisitors at Rome for his discovery, which forms the basis of all the astronomical calculations of the present day. But then we must remember that the fact occurred in the year 1615, when superstition and religious autocracy reigned supreme. History has sent down to us accounts of facts which were exaggerated according to the feelings and ways of observation of the writers who wrote when those facts occurred, or were supposed to have occurred. Cobra-de-Capello itself had once been fabulously described and painted in Italy with more hairs on its body than a bear has. Capello in the Italian language means hair and a hood

as well. In giving the description of the cobra, the writer, who had never seen a Cobra-de-Capello before, said that it had long, thick and grizzly hair, and illustrated it so. Had not that impression about the cobra been corrected by subsequent travellers in the East, Europeans would still have believed that the Cobra-de-Capello was a *cobra-bear*.

In order, then, to ascertain the existence of the *Bis-cobra*, we must go back to the period of time at which, so far as we can discover, the term came into use in India, and find out its origin, and the reasons which led to its application to the animal, which was given that name, bearing in mind particularly that the term must have been applied to some animal having something to do with the Cobra. It is by means of this method of enquiry that I intend shortly to examine the origin of the belief that such an animal as the *Bis-cobra* existed.

First as to the origin of the term. The term *Bis-cobra* is not of Oriental origin. It is simply a Portuguese expression, which seems to have undergone contraction long since by a process, similar to that which the native servants, jugglers, and vendors use now-a-days to contort English phrases.

The term *Bis-cobra* is *Bicho-de-Cobra* contracted.

The word *Cobra* being, in Portuguese, the equivalent of *coluber* and *anguis* in Latin, the earlier Portuguese in India, with whom the use of the word must have commenced, applied it to all sorts of snakes, and some lizards and worms, but their acquaintance with Natural History being very limited, they naturally classified the animals they met with, but which they had not seen before, according to their most prominent features and appearances. For example, they named the snakes thus; the *nag*, on account of its hood, they called *Cobra-de-Capello*; the *gonoos* or the *Daboia*, on account of its beautiful mosaic skin, they named *Cobra-de-Alcatifa*, or carpet snake; the water snakes they called *Cobras-de-agoa*, and so on; even some of the lizards they called cobras.

Permit me to read to you by way of illustrating the above stated view, namely, that the earlier Portuguese in India classified the animals they saw, according to appearances, the description of Cobra-de-Capello given in his work called "*Oriente Conquistado ao Jesus Christo*," by the Jesuit Father, the Rev. Francisco de Souza. Although this work was published in the year 1710 it had been written previous to the year 1697. It treats of the Portuguese Conquests from the year 1542. I believe that it is the most elaborate and one of the first descriptions of the Cobra-de-Capello ever given at that time, although mention is made of the Cobra by Garcia do Orta, Fathers João Lucena, Daniel Bartoli, Bastian Gonsalves, Fernão Mendes Pinto and others. The despatches from the Portuguese Viceroy and other contemporary authorities and letters from private individuals to their friends also refer to it. The passage, which I translate into English as literally as possible, is as follows:—

"The *Cobra-de-Capello* is so called, because it has a cartilaginous skin on its head, which opens and closes. When it is open, it resembles a monk's hood, and more appropriately a lady with *patas* and *monhos*. [The *patas* and *monhos* were a peculiar head-dress worn at that time by the Portuguese ladies, which spread out on both sides of the face having the concavity forwards.] It is a very ferocious animal. When enraged, it extends its hood, raises half its body from the ground, and throws off such puffs, that with them it kills chickens, hens and middle-sized quadrupeds. Its length is from five to seven spans, and its breadth is proportionate to its length. Its belly is white, the sides yellow and the back of a dark grey with black points. On the open hood there can be seen two perfect SS [esses] of a black colour placed side by side. Although it is very fierce, it

becomes so charmed at the sound of a juggler's pipe, that it comes out of its hole to enjoy the melody nearer, then the juggler catches it, and shuts it in a basket, and with his tricks so tames it, that he makes it dance along with a rat, but its dancing movements are limited to moving the upper part of its body from side to side with the open hood, and this at the sound of the pipe and that of a small tambourine, which the country people call 'daca' or 'dak.' On the application of the juice of certain herbs to the nose, it becomes so drowsy that a child seven or eight years old, naked as he is, as I have often seen, takes it in the hand with the greatest ease and confidence, and does what he pleases with it.

“He places it round his neck as a necklace, sometimes across the shoulder, at others around his waist as a belt. Occasionally he puts its head in his mouth, trusting perhaps in the virtues of the herbs he has chewed. The jugglers go about in the villages with these tricks to make their living, but it happens sometimes that the cobra bites them and then it invariably kills them. This Cobra is worshipped by the Gentoos, who always rear it in their pagodas, and some of them rear it in their houses out of devotion; to such kindness the cobra makes a return to its benefactors by killing one of their sons or daughters. The Gentoos say that the machine of the whole world rests on the head of one of these cobras, which must be of a very large size, but when they are asked where does that cobra rest its tail, they do not know how to reply. The most efficacious remedy against the bites of these cobras, and those of any other venomous animals, is the virtue, which a family of idolaters, called *Mandrecaros*, has in curing them. The members of that family, by taking a little water in their hands out of a well or a fountain, and giving it to drink, and throwing some on the head of the bitten individual, cures him infallibly. Only the males and the unmarried girls of the family enjoy this privilege. They cannot receive any remuneration for the cure. If, however, they accept any money, the remedy loses its efficacy. When any one of them is called to cure a bitten person, and he cannot attend to him personally, it is enough if he sends water which he has drawn by his own hands. Nor is it necessary that he should touch the water. It is sufficient for the purpose if he has drawn it by some vessel. Not long ago a descendant of this family became a convert at Margáo, and after being baptised retained the same virtue. He was employed as an interpreter of the Margáo Church, and seeing him make such easy and admirable cures, I tried to examine the principle and the basis of such a singular prerogative, but he could not tell me anything, except that it was a privilege which his family had enjoyed from centuries immemorial. After this man became a Christian, he had a son, whom I baptised, and without much ado I say that he actually makes similar cures as his father did before.”

It is said that people believed then, and I think they believe even now, that the Cobra-de-Capello is dreadful not only in its bite, but also in the revenge it takes on any person who molests it. It is supposed that if the cobra is not killed outright when it is once hurt by any person, some time or other it will seek out the offender and kill him. When the cobras are in pair and the male happens to be killed, the female is said to be sure to revenge herself sooner or later on the assassin of the male. It is also said that the cobra will traverse a large expanse of water, such as rivers, lakes, &c., in order to take its revenge.

These are some of the traditions regarding the cobra, and they enable us to compare the information which people had at the time of the Portuguese conquests with that of our own days. I pass now to the other animal, which the word *bis* prefixed to the word cobra brings to existence.

Having shown that the word *cobra* is a Portuguese word, it is not unreasonable to infer that the word which is prefixed to it might also be Portuguese in its origin, and it appears to me that it is so,

and that the word is *bicho* made into *bis* by the process of contraction I have hinted at before. The original idea conveyed by the word *bicho* in the Portuguese language is that of an animal which bites, no matter what. Whether it bites man or beast, wood, clothes, or the earth, it is called in Portuguese the *bicho* of such and such a thing. By amplification the term has been applied to all living beings from man and beast to the microscopic bacteria. For instance, the expression *bicho homem* means a man who is a *mischievous animal, cunning and mischief-making*. A lion, a tiger, a cobra or any other animal, when it is larger than its ordinary dimensions, or when any one of them has made large depredations, admiration or fear of it would be usually expressed in the Portuguese language by saying "*he um bicho tremendo*," "it is a tremendous beast." Any animal, then, that bit the cobra or killed it habitually, would be called *Bicho de Cobra*. With your permission I am going to translate to you a passage on the subject from a book published in Goa in 1563. The author of it Dr. Garcia de Orta, who lived in Goa for more than thirty years, and who was once the owner of the island of Bombay. It is as follows (he speaks to his friend Dr. Ruano):—

"In the beautiful island of Ceylon, though it is full of a large quantity of luscious fruit, birds and wild game; there is also a large number of serpents, which the people call *Cobras-de-Capello*, and which we would call in Latin *Regulus serpens*. [He meant most probably the king cobra, *Ophiophagus elaps*, a specimen of which we lately had in the cage in the other room.]

"On account of these, God created in that island the *cobra tree*, and its use in cobra bites was discovered, because there are in this island some *bichos* (animals) resembling the *ferrets*, which are called *quil* (others call them *quirpele*), and which very often fight with these serpents. If the *bicho* knows that it is going to fight with a serpent, or if it is afraid of it, it goes and bites a piece of the root of the plant which is above ground, and chews it, then it moistens its bands with the juice of the plant and applies it to the head, and to those parts which it knows the cobra will bite in its spring. It fights with the cobra, biting it and scratching it until it kills it; if it does not kill the cobra, or if it finds it stronger than itself, then the *bicho* called *quil* or *quirpele* goes to the root, and applies its juice again and repeats the fight with the cobra, and thus kills it and conquers. By these means the Sinhalese came to know that this tree and its root were of use in cobra bites; and the Portuguese believed in the virtue of this plant, both by what the country people told them, and by what they found out by their own experience, and made use of the plant against the poison. They also saw with their own eyes, that the story of the fight of the *bicho* with the cobra was only too true, and in order that you may be more certain of this if you are not tired, I shall relate to you a thing which a Franciscan friar, worthy of belief and a virtuous man, saw at Negapatam, a continent near that island of Ceylon." On his friend requesting him to relate the story, he thus continued: "Many Portuguese men have these *bichos* domesticated and tamed in their houses for killing rats and for fighting with *cobras de capello* which the joguees carry and by means of which they beg alms. These joguees are Gentoos, who go about begging, besmearing their bellies with ashes. They are venerated by the Gentoos, and also by Mussulmans; they wander about many countries, and know a great many medicines and applications, some of which are true, others are false. Many of these joguees play the trick of *passa-passa*, [This is a trick, which we see nowadays displayed by the jugglers with 3 small cups and 4 or 5 balls, a sleight-of-hand trick.] They carry with them those cobras of which I have spoken before, and after having drugged them they pull out their teeth and fangs in order to prevent them from doing harm. With this and with a little familiarity, they (the joguees) put them round their arms and necks, and try to make us believe that they are under an enchantment. But I believe it is all a lie. I will relate to you the following case:—

"'A Portuguese gentleman at Negapatam' (and this is the story of the Franciscan Friar) 'called a

joguee who carried cobra with him, and told him to let his cobra fight with his (the gentleman's) *bicho*, but the joguee having pulled out the fangs of the cobra, wherein consisted all its strength, refused at first, but the gentleman gave him one *cruzado*, (about two shillings and fourpence) and he consented. The *bicho* warned for the fight walked at first under the benches and chairs to see if it could smell the root of the cobra tree, but seeing that it could not get it, it daubed itself with its own saliva and came out to fight the cobra, which on seeing it made a dart at its head and slightly bit it twice or thrice, the *bicho* also bit the cobra as many times. Then both somewhat wounded, separated, but the cobra got the worst of the fight. The joguee having got the price of the fight and also the cobra remaining alive (which recovered afterwards) came back with another cobra, which had its fangs and challenged the gentleman for another fight between the animals, on condition that he should pay him more money because his first cobra was nearly dying and he had brought another. The gentleman only offered him as much as he had paid before. The joguee was quite glad to accept it, because this time his cobra was better armed. The gentleman prepared his *bicho* for the fight, he caressed it first, then brought out for it some roots of the tree which the *bicho* chewed for some time, and taking some of the juice in its hands applied it to its head, loins and belly, and also to its former wounds. The *bicho* being thus prepared, the joguee brought his serpent, which raising half its body from the ground at once darted forward, but the *bicho* avoided its bite by jumping on one side. They went on in this manner for some time, the *bicho* hitting the cobra, and the cobra hitting the *bicho* also; at length the *bicho* jumped on the cobra's head or a little behind it, and bit, squeezed, and scratched it so, that when he found that the cobra was completely exhausted, he killed it. The cobra however was disabled by the very first bite of the *bicho*, for *the breath of the bicho is poison to the cobra*. Thus was the joguee's cobra killed, and he left the place broken-hearted."

This is the passage from Garcia de Orta, who was considered to be the highest authority in Natural History among the Portuguese in India. It was said at that time (and I am sure it is said also now in some places) that this *bicho* not only fought with, and killed the cobras, but that, when hungry, if it happened to spy a cobra, caught it, divided it into three parts, and ate the middle part; then it joined together the remaining two parts, and applied to the wound the juice or the leaf of some plant. The cobra then got well and walked off as quietly as if nothing had happened to it.

About 400 B. C. Aristotle mentioned this animal as being an enemy of serpents, in his *History of Animals*.

Pierre Belon, a French naturalist, who travelled in Greece, Asia, Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia, describes this animal in his *Observations of Singular and Memorable Things* he found in those places.

This book was published in 1555. I give an extract from it in the original French— "Les habitans d' Alexandrie nourrissent une bête nommée *ichneumon*, qui est particulièrement trouvée en Egypt. On la peut apprivoiser és maisons tout ainsi comme un chat ou un chien. Le vulgaire a cessé de la nommer par son nom ancien, car il la nomment on *leur langage* rat de Pharaon. Or nous avons vu que les paysans en apportent des petits aux marché d' Alexandrie, où ils sont bien recueillis pour en nourrir és maisons, à cause qu'ils chassent les rats, les serpents, &c. Cet animal est cauteleux en épiant sa pâture; il se nourrit indifféremment de toutes viandes vives, comme d'escarbots, lézards, chamèleons, et généralement de *toutes espèces de serpens*, de grenouilles, rats et souris; il est friand des oiseaux, des poules et poulets."

Prospero Alpini, a Venetian naturalist, while acting as physician to the Venetian Consul in Egypt in 1580, had one of these animals with him, and like Pips of Mr. Sterndale, it also proved to him a friend. He describes it in his *Historia Egypti* thus: "Ichneumon seu Mus Pharaonis. Mihi ichneumon fait ultissimus ad mures ex meo cubiculo fugandos; unum alui, a quo murium damn plane cessarunt, siquidem quotquot offendebat, interimebat, longeque ad hos necandos fugandosque fele est ichneumon utilior." These works were published up to the 16th century.

Engelbert Kaempfer, a German naturalist who was in India about 1690, is probably the first author who refers to the animal as the Mongoose. In the *Amœnitates Academicæ* of 1693 he refers to the cobra tree also, and he says that the Portuguese called it *Mungo* and the Dutch *Muncus*. I give an extract from his writings only which refers of the subject. "Primum antidotum... radix est plantæ malaice *Hampa du Tanah*, id est, Fel terræ, dicta a sapore amarissimo... Lusitanis ibidem *Raiz* seu radix mungo appellata a mustela seu viverra, Indis *Mungustia* appellata quia radicem monstrasse, et ejus usum."

I could cite passages from other writers of the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Maillet, John Klein, Hasselquist, George Edwards, Linnæus, Albert Seba, Vincent Marie, Buffon, &c., but suffice it to say that they are unanimous in saying that the *Ichneumon* or *mongoose* is *serpenticida* or serpent killer. From this one can easily identify the *mongoose* or *Herpestes* of the present day, and which was once called in Greek and Latin *Ichneumon*, *Mus Pharaonis*, *Donula*, *Donola Mustela* and in French *Mangóuste*, &c, with the same animal described by Garcia de Orta as *Bicho de Cobra*.

It may be asked, that even granting that the mongoose is the *bis cobra*, how can the idea of its being a poisonous lizard be explained? When Vasco da Gama and his successors, imbued with the adventurous spirit of the age, set out to discover new countries, they fully made up their minds to conquer those countries, and christianise them, and also to appropriate their commerce. This they did by the sword, and while they thrust the Catholic religion on the people, they also forced them to learn the Portuguese language; for both the soldiers and the priests, by whom they were accompanied did not take the trouble to learn the language of the people, but spoke to them in their own. A large number of the converts were kept by the Portuguese, as personal servants and military and other retainers, who had to learn the language whether they willed it or not; they picked it up as best they could, and as it was to be expected, contorted it very much in speaking it. The converts and the priests were the chief factors in disseminating extensively into the country the Portuguese language, and this was done so effectively, that even now, after a lapse of three centuries, the Portuguese language, or a jargon purporting to be that language, is spoken in several places which have long since ceased to belong to the Portuguese nation.

The language and the religion are the two indelible traces which the Portuguese have left of their conquests in India. Moreover, a great many Portuguese words have been introduced into the several languages of the country, such as in Marathi, Guzerati, Hindustani, Tamil, Canarese, Malyalim, Chinese, &c., and the word *bis-cobra* was one of them.

Strange as it may appear, there is another instance of the contraction of the prefix in connection with the word *cobra*, but in this case the animal is a perfect lizard, and it is not at all poisonous, as it was supposed. There is a brown lizard, about 9 or 10 inches long, with yellow stripes and a forked tongue, which is called "*Tia-de-cobra*," in English "*cobra's auntie*." Now the expression in the Portuguese proper is—*tira-se como cobra*—that is to say, "an animal that crawls about like a

cobra.” And it has undergone a similar process of contortion as the expression Bicho-de-Cobra.

As I have said before, the Portuguese in India named the animals they saw here according to their most prominent features; because their knowledge of Natural History was rudimentary; they consequently were not very clear about the Amphibia, Reptilia, Mammalia, &c. They regarded the Mongoose as a reptile, and it may be gathered from the old and now dictionaries that they were right then. A reptile is an animal that moves on its belly or by means of short small legs, such as *caterpillars, lizards, snakes, earthworms*. So say the dictionaries.

Almost all writers, modern writers included, are unanimous in saying that the Mongoose sometimes crawls with its belly on the ground, when occasion arises, to seize its prey, or as Buffon says: “elle marche sans faire aucun bruit, et selon le besoin elle varie sa démarche; quelquefois elle porto la tête haute, raccourcit sou corps, et s’élève sur ses jambes; d’autrefois elle a l’air de *ramper et de s’allonger comme un serpent*.” Mr. Sterndale says “They are active and sanguinary, chiefly hunting *along* the ground.” It is not to be wondered at then, if the Portuguese had an idea that the *bicho-de-cobra* was a lizard reptile.

That the Portuguese certainly regarded the *Mongoose* as a poisonous animal, may be gathered from the writings of Garcia de Orta. The *Oriente Conquistado* says that all lizards are poisonous; they are described therein as having their teeth “*set in different rows and hollow, having enclosed within them smaller ones filled with venom*.” In fact the Mongoose was described and taken to be in the last analysis as *that Poisonous Reptile Bicho-de-Cobra*. Well then the story of the *poisonous reptile, bicho-de-cobra* or *bis-cobra*, seems to have spread far and wide during the first 70 years or more of the Portuguese conquests in India. Subsequently, however, on the intercourse between the Portuguese and the natives becoming greater and of a more familiar character, they began to be more observant of the language and other things of the country. They noticed that this animal was called by the natives *Mungutia, Mungus, Mungli* and by various other names in various places, but that the first two were more prevalent, and they now began also to call it *Mangús*. I have no doubt that the Dutch and the scientific travellers of other nations largely contributing towards generalising its native name, *Mongoose*.

As years rolled on, the Portuguese, the naturalists and the natives all called the animal Mongoose, and thenceforth the Portuguese term *Bis-cobra* fell into oblivion, but among the natives the idea of the *poisonous reptile Bis-cobra* still remained, and it has been handed down together with the exaggerated accounts of its tremendous poisonous properties.

The natives still believe in its existence, but they, like the Mussulmans of Cowper, are uncertain which animal was meant. Most probably having got an idea that it must have been a reptile, they have a suspicion that it is a lizard. Here then, I think, is the origin of the belief which the natives have in the poisonous lizard *Bis-cobra*.

This is an interesting case for those who investigate historical reports of strange creatures. Cultural context is as important as any other ingredient. When evaluating a cryptid, we need to be looking not just at possible biological models, but at the surrounding ethnological history. There may be twists and turns to the story that are not readily apparent.

Additional Proof in favour of the Existence of huge Animals in the Ocean, different from Whales, and larger than they.

In a Letter from Samuel L. Mitchill, to John Fothergill Waterhouse, M. D. of Philadelphia, dated New York, July 17, 1814. (Vide Plate, Vol. 1 New Series, page 398).

From: The Medical Repository, V. 17, no. 4, July

Dear Sir,

It is now more than a year since I addressed to Baron Lescallier, a letter on the Sepias and Krakens of the deep. It was read before the class of Natural History, and afterwards printed in the 15th volume of the Medical Repository. (Vol. i. New Series, page 396 - 406.) I think it contains a powerful body of testimony to show the existence of enormous creatures in the sea, differing in their forms and manners from whales, and frequently exceeding them in bulk.

Since the publication of that collection of evidence, I have received further information on the subject.

A commander of a ship with whom I am particularly acquainted, performed a voyage from New-York to Canton in 1809. Being outward bound during the month of September, he steered from the Cape of Good Hope towards Kerguelen's Land. In the latitude of about 41° south, the man in the fore-top cried out that there was a rock ahead, distant about a league. A lump or mass was distinguished in the direction the vessel was then going, directly forward, and having exactly the appearance of a rock.

On approaching it, the captain was soon convinced it was not a rock, but a body possessing motion of its own, and unquestionably an extraordinary animal. It was ascertained that the creature made progress towards the ship. They kept her somewhat away to avoid running foul; but at the same time sailed near enough to allow observations to be made.

The animal continued its course without intimidation, and crossed the vessels wake just behind the rudder.

The part of the back that was above water, seemed to the captain as large as the floor of a parlour in which we were then sitting; which was a chamber of about twenty feet by fifteen.

The guns had been loaded to shoot it; but on drawing near, the view was so terrible that not a single piece was discharged. It was judged most prudent to sail by without offering any disturbance, or even hoisting out a boat. Its motion was steady, but slow and heavy.

Another gentleman, Mr. Robert Cornwell, who was on board, possessed of good eyes and quick perceptions, told me it would have been easy to have run the ship on board of it. This was avoided by keeping her away.

The appearance, as far as I could gather from these two respectable witnesses, was such as to refer this monster to the same class with the others. It was longer than the ship, and her length on

deck was one hundred and ten feet. A person could with the greatest ease have leaped from the quarter-deck upon its back, a little before it passed the ship's track.

The skin was totally destitute of hair; but was black and distinguished by spots, or rather seemed to be covered with barnacles. Mr. C. thought the part above water was forty feet in length. This was roundish or gibbous. The elevation might be four feet from the level of the sea. The captain thought he saw a knob or head. On the part above water, he distinguished a wrinkled or folded appearance, which he compared to an umbrella. And the wrinkles or folds seemed to possess living motion.

A sailor on board assured the crew that this formidable creature was nothing but a sea-elephant. An inquirer, however, who knows any thing of the matter, will perceive at once that it cannot be a species of the Phoca. And not a seaman on board presumed to think it a whale. It was probably a Polypus of the colossal size described in my former communication; a creature with whom it becomes naturalists to cultivate a more particular acquaintance.

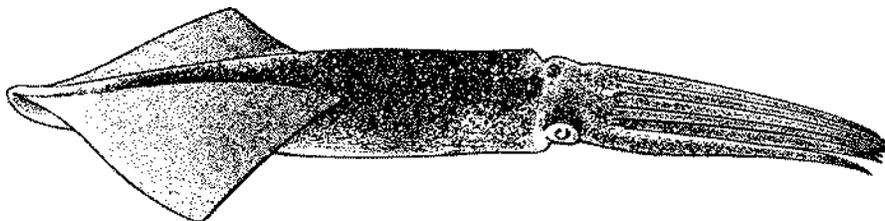
While I have my pen in hand, I must state to you another fact. I remember to have read among the articles of ship news and marine intelligence in our gazettes within a few years, that the putrefying carcase of a gigantic cuttle-fish, tainted the air to a great distance around the spot where it lay, to the east of the most southern promontory of Africa, during an antarctic summer. It continued to corrupt during the season of austral heat, and to afford food to numberless birds of prey. I neglected at the time to cut out that paragraph with my scissors; and I know not where I should turn to find it. But my recollection is strong as to the leading particulars.

Before I close my epistle, I beg leave to offer you a further piece of information.

Captain Jonathan Worth, formerly of Nantucket, saw, during one of his whaling voyages, in the year 1762, on the coast of Newfoundland, a squid, that was driven ashore dead at the Bay of Bulls. The animal was enormous. The biggest limb or arm was computed by him to equal in magnitude a twenty barrel sperm whale; which, according to the most correct estimate, would have made it at least thirty feet long, and ten feet round. The flesh of the squid is very much prized as bait for codfish, and Captain W. said the fishermen of the place came out and cut it away in quantity sufficient for the outfits of their boats, during the season, until it was rendered unfit by putrefaction. Besides the natives and others, many of the Nantucket whalers were there, and witnessed the occurrences. The account of this person may be considered as a rough estimate, or gentle hyperbole of an event that is correct in the great lines and features.

Allow me to congratulate you on your botanical honours, and to beg a continuance of your friendly regard.

Samuel L. Mitchill



**Further evidence to prove the existence of the Kraken, in the ocean,
and tending to show that this huge creature is a species of Sepia or Squid.**

Being three several communications of facts, made to Dr. Mitchill, by William Lee, Esq., Capt. Riley, and Capt. Neville, in September, 1817, communicated to Dr. Mitchill.
(See our Magazine for June, p. 124, for Capt. Fanning's Narrative.)

Copy of a letter addressed to Dr. Mitchill, by our late Consul at Bordeaux,
now in the treasury department, Wm. Lee, Esq.

From: The American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review, V. I, no. 6, Oct. 1817

“Washington, Sept. 2, 1817.

“My dear sir,

“The description given in our newspapers of a Sea-serpent, lately seen for several days in and about Cape Ann harbour, has brought to my recollection one of this species.

“On a passage I made from Quebec, in 1787, in a schooner of about eighty tons burden, while standing in for the Gut of Canso, the island of Cape Breton about four leagues distant, one of the crew cried out, ‘A shoal a-head!’ — The helm was instantly put down to tack ship, when to our great astonishment, this shoal, as we thought it to be, moved off, and as it passed athwart the bow of our vessel, we discovered it to be an enormous Sea-serpent, four times as long as the schooner. Its back was of a dark green colour, forming above the water a number of little hillocks, resembling a chain of hogsheads. I was then but a lad, and being much terrified, ran below until the monster was at some distance from us. I did not see his head distinctly; but those who did, after I had hid myself in the cabin, said it was as large as the small boat of the schooner. I recollect the tremendous ripple and noise he made in the water, as he went off from us, which I compared at the time to that occasioned by the launching of a ship.

“My venerable friend, Mr. —, of your city, was a passenger with me at the time. He will corroborate this statement, and probably furnish you with a better description of this monster; for I well recollect his taking his stand at the bow of the vessel, with great courage, to examine it, while the other passengers were intent only on their own safety.

“At Halifax, and on my return to Boston, when frequently describing this monster, I was laughed at so immoderately that I found it necessary to remain silent on the subject, to escape the imputation of using a traveller's privilege of dealing in the marvellous.”

On the evening of September 9, capt. James Riley was at my house, and said that he knew capt. Folger, of Nantucket, who was occupied on a whaling voyage in the southern Atlantic Ocean, about 20 years ago. On the cruise, he saw an animal of uncommon size, floating on the sea, off the coast of Brazil. Capt. F. then commanded a very large French built ship, and the floating carcass was four or five times as long as his vessel. It attracted the spermaceti whales, who came to feed upon it, and had eaten away great portions of the flesh. He visited the huge body of the creature, and satisfied himself that it was an enormous kraken. He hauled all his boats upon it, and his men

ascended it and lived upon it as if it had been a rock or island. They remained on it and near it for the purpose of killing the whales that came to devour it. In this, they were so successful, that by continuing there they took whales enough to load their vessel and complete her cargo. The back of the kraken was high and dry enough for them to inhabit temporarily, and to look out for their game. And when from this point of observation they discovered a whale coming to make a meal, they launched their boats from the top of the dead kraken, and made an easy prey of him. The substance of the monster's body was skinny, membranous and gelatinous, and destitute of the fat and blubber for which the whale is remarkable.

Captain Neville, being on a voyage from London to Archangel, in the year 1803, saw floating on the ocean in about the latitude of 68, a mass of solid matter of a dirty whitish colour, which when he described it, and for some time after, was believed to be an island of ice. On approaching it, however, he ascertained it to be an animal substance of an irregular figure, as if lacerated, decayed, and eaten away.

The remnant of the carcass was nevertheless full as large as the brig in which he sailed; whose capacity was one hundred and eighty-nine tons, and length seventy feet.

The enormous body was the food of animals both of the air and of the water. For, as he sailed within a few rods of it, he saw great numbers of gulls and other sea fowls, sitting on it and flying over it; those which were full, retiring, and the hungry winging their way to it for a repast. He also beheld several cetaceous creatures swimming round it; some of them were whales of a prodigious magnitude, exceeding the vessel in length. Others were smaller and seemed to belong to the grampus and porpoise tribe. He considered them all as regaling themselves with its flesh.

Near one extremity of this carcass, he distinguished an appendage or arm hanging down into the water, which from his acquaintance with the sepia, he conclude to be that of a squid; being probably the only one left after the rest had putrified or been devoured.

Such was likewise the opinion of a navigator of much experience and long observation in the scenery of the north Atlantic then on board; who remarked that the corrupting lump was intolerable fetid and offensive to man; and would, if the brig was suffered to run against it, impregnate her with foulness and stench for the whole voyage. She was accordingly kept to windward for the purpose of avoiding it; but the smell was, notwithstanding, extremely nauseous and disgusting.

On conversing with mariners in the White Sea, such occurrences were spoken of by them, as to common to excite much attention or any doubt.

Afterwards, while at Drontheim in Norway, capt. N. discoursed with practical men concerning things of this kind. The prevailing idea was, that such drifting lumps were by no means uncommon; that they were bodies or fragments of huge squids; that these were sometimes borne away by the Maelstrom current, and ingulphed and dashed to pieces by its whirlpools; and thus these broken trunks and limbs sometimes cast on shore and sometimes tossed about on the sea.

It is supposed that squids and whales inhabit the same tracts of ocean; because the former furnishes food for the latter, at least for the cachalats, orco, and other toothed and voracious species.

Dwarf Horses of the Grand Canyon

Chad Arment and Nick Sucik

It started out with great fanfare. It was 1937, and the nation was eager for true stories of adventure and exploration. Dr. Harold Anthony, chief mammalogist for the American Museum of Natural History, was leading a scientific expedition to Shiva Temple Mesa in the Grand Canyon, Arizona, in search of a “lost world.” Anthony believed that the steep sides of the mesa created an insurmountable barrier, holding in a pristine ancient environment which might hold prehistoric creatures and unique biological species. The newspapers of the period took the story and ran, creating descriptions of all manner of strange monsters that might be encountered, creating a backlash among some in the scientific community who noted the absurdity of these claims. Anthony himself was only hoping for interesting biological discoveries.

Alas, it didn't prove true. When the expedition reached the top, they found little that varied from the known natural history of the surrounding area. Even worse, they had been beaten to the top by famous Grand Canyon guide Emery Kolb, who had been refused a position in the AMNH expedition. Planted evidence of Kolb's climb, Kodak film packages and empty cans, was found, but covered up quickly to save face. Kolb was harangued by the park service when the expedition was finished, but the story went 11 years before being published in his biography (Suran 1991).

What is interesting about this story is that some of the folklore that reached Anthony and attracted his attention to the Grand Canyon was the story of dwarf horses being found there. Showmen and carnivals occasionally exhibited “pygmy horses” which were claimed to have been discovered in the Grand Canyon. It may be that these were merely genetic dwarfs, which are known to occur with inbreeding (Cothran 1998). (The miniature horses that we see today come from stock brought over from Europe in the 1930s to work in mines pulling carts, along with later imports from both European and South American horse breeders.)

Tall tales fed the “dwarf horse” mythology, as local prevaricators included them in their stories. Cook (1999) recounted one such tale: “Cap Hance, the renowned storyteller of the Grand Canyon, reported seeing the little horses only once. On winter night the Canyon was filled with fog and the temperature dropped so low that the fog froze solid. Hance set out across the Canyon on snowshoes. He took a break on top of one of the stone temples that rise out of the Canyon. There he saw two tiny stallions fighting for leadership of a herd of horses. Cap said the larger of the stallions, a husky bay about 21 inches tall, easily vanquished the smaller blue horse. He also reported the tiny colts were so cute it would make your heart ache.”

Not long after the AMNH expedition, the Park Service became involved. In 1938, Grand Canyon Park Superintendent Tillotson sent three rangers along with a mail carrier, a deputy sheriff, and three Havasupai men, to investigate the rumors of dwarf horses. They traveled from “Cataract Canyon to Carbonate Canyon, climbed up to Sinyala Mesa and proceeded in a northeasterly direction to Great Thumb Mesa” (Cline Library 2002). In his notes of the trip, Ranger Bert Lauzon stated that the Havasupais living in the canyons kept little “sand rock horses” which were “descendants of horses that their great Grandfathers ranged in these canyons years and years ago.” The horses were small, but not as small as the folklore had suggested (as small as a dog, for example). “The smallest measured 48 inches at the shoulder, 53 inches girth, and 67 inches from

ears to tail and they estimated the horse to be about 11 years old and close to 300 pounds.” The party was told that the small horses range “up the main Cataract Canyon for 30 miles, west on the sand rocks in Grand Canyon to Mohawk Canyon and East to the Big Thumb in Grand Canyon.” The expedition was able to show that there was, in fact, dwarfing in the canyon horses, but no specimens were found as small as the folklore claimed.

Investigators may still be able to find stories of these dwarf horses. Nick was given the following report recently: “Which reminded me of stories I’d heard when a kid living in Southern Utah near St. George. I worked for a couple of Cattlemen/Ranchers out on the Arizona Strip and up on ... the Cedar Mountain and Kolob Plateau country... and maybe before that time? There was some talk of seeing small horses living down in the bottom of the Grand Canyon, some foot in height.”



From Bert Lauzon: Warren Hamilton and another Supai (J. Jones) standing beside one of the Dwarf wild horses that we caught in the Canyon under Gatagama Point on Jan. 23, 1938. This is a sorrel stud 52 inches in height, 21-1/2 in. length of head, 68 in. from ears to base of tail, 58 in. girth, weight about 600 pounds.

Courtesy of: The Cline Library Image Database, Cline Library
Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University

Dwarfism is actually not uncommon in feral horses in harsh climates. When a small population is reproductively isolated, rapid genetic changes can spread quickly. Some of these changes may be morphologically apparent, while others are not. Dwarfism (and its opposite — gigantism) is fairly common in various species after such reproductive barriers. Several cases of dwarf populations in feral horses are known — several groups of the North Carolina island “Banker’s ponies” illustrate this, as they are descended from full-size Spanish horses (Urquhart and Dough 2002). “Gizy” (2002) notes that the small Sardinian Giara horses are today protected by the Sardinian government, with perhaps 500 of them in existence today. In 1995, a group of French scientists discovered a group of small horses in a valley in Tibet (Humi 1995). They were dubbed Riwoche horses, and bear a resemblance to certain cave-paintings of horses. The characteristics of this horse, which reach only four feet in height, included “stubby mane, dark stripes on its back and legs and flat angular head.” The French expedition hoped to be able to return in the future to collect samples for DNA testing, thinking that the horses might represent an unknown species.

The Havasupai-bred canyon horses are, unfortunately, going the way of the passenger pigeon. The horses appear to be descended from the Spanish Barbs, and were probably introduced by the first Spanish explorers in the Grand Canyon area. Today, there may be no more than 30 of these small, sturdy horses in captive hands (“Gizy” 2002). Might there still be a few wandering the canyons? Feral domestics have earned the ire of conservation biologists, for good reason, but there are a few breeds which have a fascinating history here in North America — the Carolina dog is another such creature — and worth, I think, at least protecting in a captive situation.

Citations:

- Cline Library. 2002. Bert Lauzon: 40 Years at the Grand Canyon. Northern Arizona University.
<http://www.nau.edu/library/speccoll/exhibits/lauzon/pages/grandcanyon2.htm>
- Cook, Jim. 1999. Little Horses of the Grand Canyon. *Journal of Prevarication*.
<http://www.wickenburg-az.com/journal/1999/littlehorses.html>
- Cothran, E. Gus. 1998. Genetic Marker Analysis of Feral Horses. *Equine Disease Quarterly* 6(3).
http://www.uky.edu/Agriculture/VetScience/q_apr98/q_apr98.htm
- “Gizy.” 2002. Grand Canyon Barbs. <http://server3003.freeyellow.com/gizy/canyons.htm>
- Humi, Peter. 1995. Tibetan discovery is ‘horse of a different color.’ CNN.
http://www-cgi.cnn.com/WORLD/9511/tibet_pony/
- Suran, William C. 1991. WITH THE WINGS OF AN ANGEL: A Biography of Ellsworth and Emery Kolb. Internet version. <http://www.kaibab.org/kolb/10.html>
- Urquhart, Bonnie, and Wynne Dough. 2002. The History of North Carolina Feral Horses.
<http://home.att.net/~feralhorse/nchx.htm>

