

# WONDERS

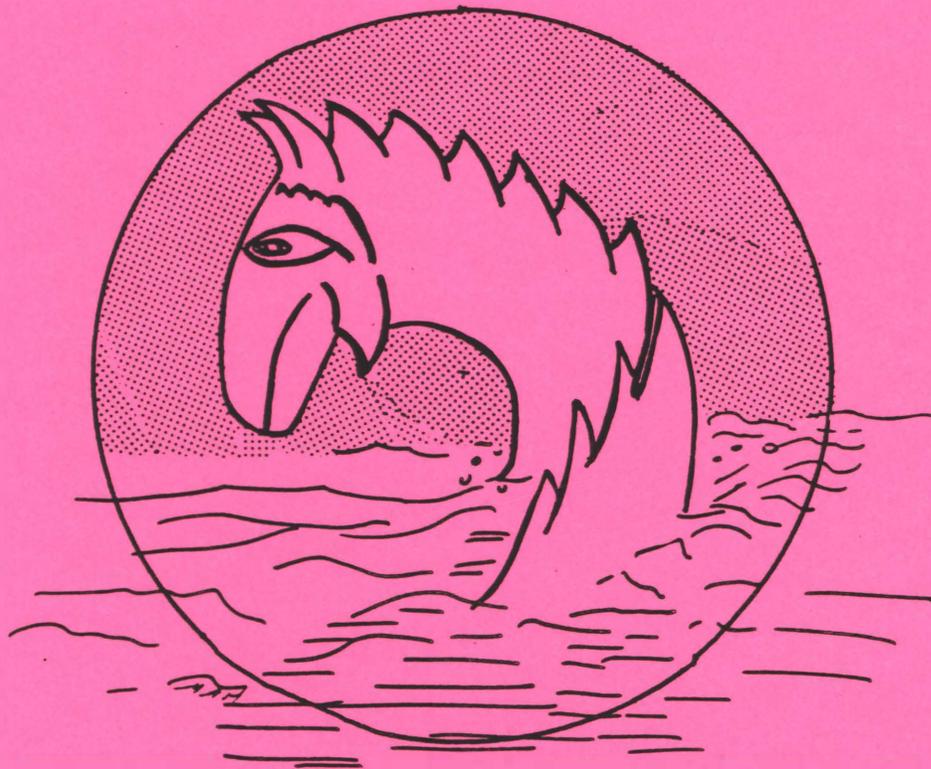
Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries

Vol.1 No.4

December 1992

## Pinky

America's Living Dinosaur



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A quarterly from Mark A. Hall/9215 Nicollet So/104/Bloomington MN 55420

# WONDERS

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VOL. 1 NO. 4

(Whole No. 4) December 1992

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Published four times a year (March, June, September, December) by:  
Mark A. Hall Publications and Research  
9215 Nicollet So., 104  
Bloomington MN 55420 USA

Individual copies: US\$2 plus \$1 postage/handling for the USA, Canada, and Mexico. Subscriptions in the USA, Canada, and Mexico: \$11.00 for four copies.

Other foreign rates: US\$17.00 for 4 issues. Single copies by air: \$4.50.

## EDITORIAL

### OUR JARGON

We feel obliged to explain periodically the jargon that appears unavoidably in our writings upon the unexplained. Words that have been in use for decades have not found their way into dictionaries. The word sleuths may be gathering citations for them now, but these words, though now seen more often, will have appeared rarely in the mainstream publications the sleuths are used to reading.

The words requiring paramount explanation are "fortean" and "forteana." Sometimes they are capitalized. These words date from the 1930's. They were derived from the name of Charles Hoy Fort (1874-1932) after he had authored four books that brought together a myriad of unexplained natural phenomena. For his sources Fort used scientific journals and newspapers that dated from 1800 to the time of his writing. The books were **Wild Talents, Lo!, New Lands,** and **The Book of the Damned.** To Fort the "damned" were the unwelcome data that were not adequately explained by professional scientists.

"Fortean" as an adjective means relating to something that remains unexplained despite efforts to sweep it under the rug or discard it as false. As a noun the word applies to anyone interested in the fair treatment of such data. The word "forteana" includes the wide range of happenings that are without adequate explanation. A list could go on for pages. Some familiar categories of forteana today are UFOs, ESP, "monsters," and Crop Circles.

For many years these words were seldom used. Novelist Tiffany Thayer (1902-1959) founded a Fortean Society (against Fort's wishes) and the word "fortean" appeared in the society's journal, **Doubt,** which was edited exclusively by Thayer. In the 1950's Ivan Sanderson used "forteana" in non-fiction articles he wrote for **Fantastic Universe.** By the way, science fiction writers are all familiar with the works of Fort as a source for ideas. Fort, in fact, invented the word "teleportation." But the writers and fans of science fiction remain mostly aloof from the pursuit of forteana today.

## PINKY, THE FORGOTTEN DINOSAUR

by Mark A. Hall

There could be some kind of dinosaur swimming around in the St. Johns River in Florida. I am only repeating what people down that way have been saying for many years. According to witnesses it is large and pink all over. So the only name by which it has so far been identified is "Pinky." This peculiar animal with a modest name has never had the P.T. Barnum treatment that would have made it famous. With a flamboyant name and some dedicated promotion it could have made its way into dictionaries along with the Loch Ness Monster, Ogopogo, Champ, Chessie, Cadborosaurus, and Mokele-mbembe. In contrast to those more famous wonders, Pinky has been forgotten by all but a few cryptozoologists and, of course, the witnesses to Pinky's modest appearances.

Many may think at the outset that Pinky is impossible and ought to be forgotten. After all, this is the 1990's and sophisticated people know that large unknown animals -- especially anything dinosaur-like -- would not be swimming around in rivers flanked by modern American cities. Perhaps when another century is upon us sophisticated people will come to accept the still-unpopular truth of natural history that unknown animals are everywhere. Wildlife does not vanish because human beings monopolize some of their space. They do retire to less desirable space, but they persist even if humans are slow to recognize them. The kind of animal dubbed Pinky may be such an animal.

The St. Johns River is no ordinary American river. It has been called "the American Nile" because it rises in a lake and flows for 300 miles along reedy banks with tropical vegetation, similar to the Nile of Egypt. **The St. Johns** by Cabell and Hanna is recommended for those who want to learn the history and details of the setting of this river.[1] A major attempt dating from the early-1970's has been made to clean up the tributaries of the St. Johns. Those creeks have been the recipients of industrial pollution and sewage from the communities of northeastern Florida.[2] The metropolis of Jacksonville monopolizes the area 23 miles above the mouth of the St. Johns River.

The most recent appearance of the pink creature in my files dates from May of 1975. Later reports are possible because I would not necessarily hear of them. The 1975 appearance appears to be typical of what witnesses can tell us. One person even made a sketch of what she saw at that time.

Early in the morning of 10 May 1975 a fishing party of five set out from the Clapboard Creek Fishing Camp. The party consisted of Dorothy and Charles Abram, Brenda Langley, Ed St. John, and Wallace McLean. They fished from a boat with an outboard motor on the St. Johns River between Jacksonville and the Atlantic Ocean.[3]

After some hours of fishing, the first to notice something unusual was Brenda Langley. Fifty yards away she saw something moving and remarked to the others, "What's that big thing out there?" But she couldn't get anyone else interested. Dorothy Abram told her it was probably just some fish jumping.

About 10 a.m. the thing came closer to the boat. Brenda Langley became excited. The head and neck of something surfaced just twenty feet from the boat. She thought it was curious about the five people and their boat. She yelled for the others to look. But at that moment they were looking at some approaching storm clouds. The decision was made to return to shore. Charles Abram then started the motor and turned the boat. The surface of the water at the time, he observed, was as smooth as glass. As the boat turned, all five of the occupants saw what Brenda Langley had been seeing.

What they saw was so strange they thought no one would believe them. Afterward they told only their friends. One of those listeners then called the **Times-Union** in Jacksonville. So six days later, on Friday, the story broke in the press.

Charles Abram was quoted as saying, "I just saw the neck. It was a long neck, I'll tell you that much. The women were scared to death."

Scared they may have been, but they had the most to say when the press began asking for statements. What they saw was out of the water for about 8 seconds at a distance of 20 feet. Here are their observations as quoted in press accounts:

Dorothy Abram:

"It looked like a dinosaur with its skin pulled back so all the bones were showing."

"It wasn't scared of us."

"He was pink. Sort of the color of boiled shrimp."

"He looked over toward us sort of curious like. Then he just went under. It was like you were in the water and just bent your head down. The water was real calm. There wasn't a ripple when he went under."

She thought about three feet of the neck came out of the water. It had "big, dark, slanted eyes."

Brenda Langley:

"It was so ugly looking. It looked like the pictures you see of dragons."

"I don't think I'll ever go fishing again."

She said it was pink and bony-looking. She thought it had little horns or fins or ridges down its long neck.

The following particulars for the head and neck were cited by both women, according to press accounts:

- \* The head was the size of human head or somewhat larger.
- \* It had snail-like horns with knobs on the end.
- \* On the sides of the head were flaps hanging down, like some kind of gills.
- \* The mouth was turned down at the edges.



**Fig. 1.** This is a copy of the sketch made by Brenda Langley.



**Fig. 2.** The sketch of "Pinky" has been re-drawn by the author to show it in a three-dimensional view.

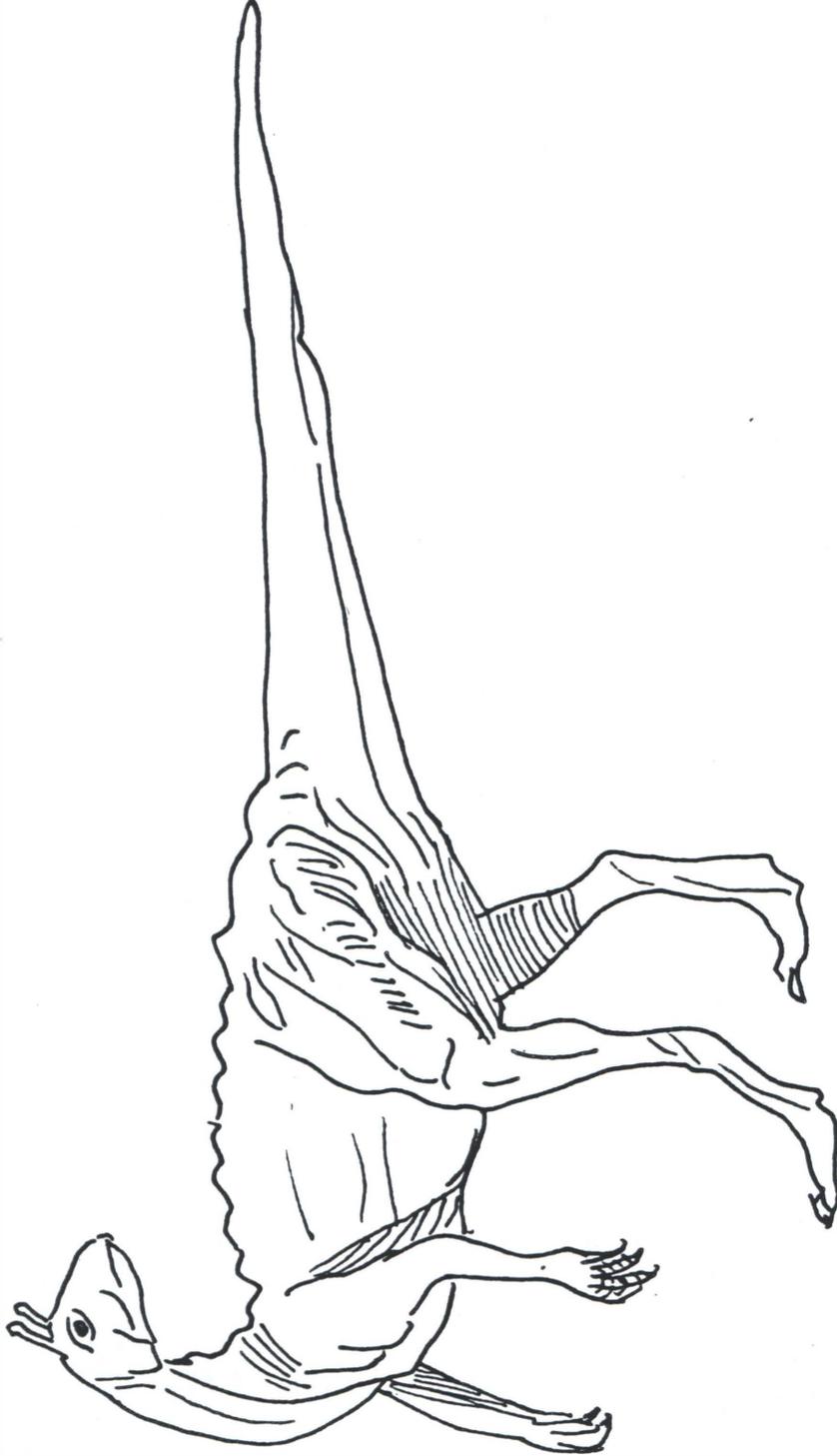


Fig. 3. *Thecosaurus*, or "wonderful lizard," was one of the last surviving dinosaurs in the heyday of the "terrible lizards." It grew to 11 feet long and had bony studs on its body. Two snail-like "horns" have been added to this reconstruction. They might be erectile breathing tubes.

Dorothy Abram thought it was headed for the ocean. After it sank the fishing party had wasted no time returning to shore.

Brenda Langley made a sketch to show the head and neck as best she could show it. The **Times-Union** published her sketch.[4] (See Figs. 1 and 2.)

The appearance of "Pinky," the name later attached to this kind of creature in the St. Johns River, is actually an old story. Twenty years ago, prior to the report of 1975, I saw a collection of similar newspaper accounts from the Jacksonville papers that went back years. But I have never had copies of those stories.

The 1975 witnesses soon heard from others who had seen this kind of thing. Dorothy Abram got phone calls after their report. One woman called to say she had seen the same thing twenty years earlier. Others had been present. They were not believed. A man called from Atlanta, Georgia, and described something very much like Pinky that he had seen.[5]

A spokesperson for the U.S. Coast Guard said they had not received reports of Pinky. This person added a telling disclaimer: "I don't mean this to sound like a wisecrack, but we don't have anyone in charge of monster investigations." [6] Indeed, and neither does any other government office.

Another organization, the Florida Marine Patrol, acknowledged that others had reported something similar in the past. The Patrol had an answer to the mystery, however. On the day the story broke in the **Times-Union** a spokesperson for the Patrol told the press the "monster" was only a sturgeon, a fish found in the river that can get to be 18 feet long. The witnesses responded that the fish was not what they had seen lift its head from the water and look around.[7]

Other suggestions were made by Jeff Hallett at the Marine Science Center at Mayport, which is located at the mouth of St. Johns. He raised the possibility of a sturgeon, as well as a tree stump or a sea cow. He acknowledged that all those possibilities had problems when trying to account for what was seen on the 10th of May.[8]

We have yet one other witness with important testimony. This comes to us from a letter received by Ivan T. Sanderson. He was the most prominent proponent of cryptozoology in the U.S.A. during the last half of the twentieth century (though he never gave up his British citizenship while residing in the States). He was frequently the recipient of people's letters telling him of events that were so unusual that the writers saw him as one of the few who would listen.

So it was that he heard from a young woman in her late teens by the name of Mary Lou Richardson. She wrote from Atlanta, Georgia, to tell him of something she described as "the most extraordinary beast I have ever seen." At the time she was a student majoring in biology. She, her father, and a friend were bow-hunting in thick vegetation along the St. Johns River when they saw it. They had since spoken with local hunters and fishermen who had seen it and they said it was not rare and came "upriver from the Atlantic." Her father gave a description that Sanderson summarized this way:

It sounded like a donkey-sized dinosaurian of a very primitive type -- one that could stand on its hind feet. It had a great flat head and a rather small neck. It was seen the same day by four groups of tourists on the river....[9]

As we consider what this creature might be, experience with other monster reports suggests that some few people might think people could be seeing a solitary animal. The application of a cute and anthropomorphizing name like Pinky aids in fostering such an erroneous perception. If there are strange dinosaurians swimming about the St. Johns, there will be different ones seen through the years. We are considering a population of similar-appearing animals. They make appearances in the estuary of the river, which does not necessarily mean that they are always there to be seen.

We have few clues to determine the identity of Pinky. We have a sketch of it from the neck up and a size estimate from the father of Mary Lou Richardson. I think that the opportunity for speculation on its identity is wide open. I have a candidate to propose, but you might have a better one. I would be interested in alternative suggestions.

After considering many of the dinosaur fossil types, some known from whole reconstructions and others from mere fragments of remains, I favor **Thescelosaurus**. The meaning of the name is variously translated as "beautiful lizard" and "wonderful lizard." It grew to a length of 11 feet (3.3 meters). Its body was long and low, with a hand of five fingers and feet with five toes. Its tail was long and stiffened, Bony studs were set in its skin. (See Fig. 3.) A skeleton of **Thescelosaurus** is said to be on display at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.[10]

The **Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs** introduces this fossil type with the following paragraph:

**Thescelosaurus** was one of the last hypsilophodontid dinosaurs. It is known from the end of Late Cretaceous of Montana in the United States, and Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada. It may have seen what happened to cause the mass extinctions at the end of the Mesozoic.[11]

Not only was it one of the last of the hypsilophodontids, it was one of the last dinosaurs recognized to have lived at all. While I am on record as supporting a view of the geologic past that involves major upheavals of regular periodicity[12], I do not think a sudden catastrophe brought on mass extinctions at the end of Cretaceous. What **Thescelosaurus** was around to experience were major changes over time that ended an age when dinosaurs flourished. They have not vanished from this planet. Some have remained successful in particular circumstances. Over periods of geological change, including crustal shifts, these species have maintained themselves by relocating into their particular niche.

I would suggest that **Thescelosaurus** was around at the end of the Cretaceous because it was one of the dinosaurs best adapted to new conditions that were becoming more prevalent. It has, perhaps,

proven that status by finding suitable habitat and sustenance throughout the 65 million years since the end of the Cretaceous.

I have added two "horns" to the drawing of *Thescelosaurus* in Fig. 3 though they are not recognized as a feature of this type. The snail-like "horns" reported for Pinky are a much-discussed feature of aquatic anomalies reported elsewhere. I would not equate Pinky to any other animals simply on this similarity. They may be entirely different animals from Pinky. What these "horns" might be is a highly successful adaptation for survival. It has been suggested that they are erectile breathing tubes that allow an air-breathing creature to remain largely submerged while availing itself of an oxygen supply above the waterline of its environment.

The pink color so characteristic of the St. Johns River creatures might derive from the food that they eat, much the way the pink color of flamingos is maintained. The color could be subject to change when the diet changes, just as captive flamingos pale when deprived of their natural diet of shrimp and carotenoid-rich food.[13]

One explanation for the appearances of the dinosaurians would be that females move into the estuary of the St. Johns River to lay eggs in circumstances they have found to be suitable. There are salt marshes extending north and south from the mouth of the St. Johns. Perhaps other subtropical estuaries have served or still serve this purpose for the animals. Such an explanation raises further questions about the birth and early development of the dinosaurians which ought to be considered in the future when more data has been collected.

The lives of these creatures might in the main be spent elsewhere. The Gulf Stream flows northward just off the Florida coast. Perhaps they find food in its rich stream. The nearby Bahama Islands might have a part in their lives as well.

We are used to hearing reports from the tropics of living dinosaurs. Roy Mackal has written a book, *Living Dinosaur?*[14], that describes his search for the Mokele-mbembe of Africa. He heard of several other large saurians described as still living in African swamps. Today's students of dinosaurs still have a chance to pursue the real thing in reports from Africa, from Florida, and from points elsewhere in the world that will not be mentioned here. Dinosaurs have a place in a large pool of unknown animals that remain elusive and unstudied by passive scientists who, unlike Roy Mackal, cannot begin to think there might be any surviving saurians.

I think these many unknown animals and any surviving dinosaurian such as Pinky is deserving of what I call a telebiological study. Telebiology is defined as biology conducted at a distance. Telebiology is an ethical approach to studying rare animals and kinds of life that are difficult to study by standard techniques. It is an approach that will ultimately get results where other approaches fail and the usual expectations are not met. A full discussion of this method will be made elsewhere.[15]

Telebiology does not begin with killing a specimen to prove the existence of a living species. The "load up your firepower and bag a specimen" approach to biology has exhausted its effectiveness. It has bagged the wildlife that is either numerous or the least capable of avoiding capture nets. That pool of unknown animals mentioned

above is large and filled with animals that are rare, clever, capable of avoiding danger, and habituated to environments that we find difficult to negotiate.

The first step in a proper study of this dinosaurian would be to prepare a dossier on all that can be brought together in the way of reports and analysis. Data gathering would have to begin in Jacksonville, from newspapers, from witnesses, and from organizations that might have any records or informed individuals. This information would be particulars on what people have seen, when something was seen (months, seasons), and specific locations of every sighting. The data are now scattered in unrecovered newspaper stories and in the memories of people who have not found anyone to record their testimony.

The next step would be hypothesizing based upon the dossier of information. The data would be the basis for proposing such things as: what this animal could be; how this animal lives; what activities are being observed when they are seen; what might they be feeding upon. All ideas about them would be re-assessed based upon the most recent accumulation of data.

The next step would be to undertake ethological studies. The data gathering and hypothesizing would lead to making original observations and recording those observations, especially by the most modern audio-visual means.

All of this would precede the obtaining of a specimen. When the killing of a specimen is made a requirement prior to a major study of such rare animals, progress is paralyzed. Such a requirement cannot be easily met for practical reasons. Also, the threats of injuring individual animals and reducing an unknown animal population are unnecessary.

Other steps would follow based upon the success of earlier steps. They would lead to the ultimate identification of the animal by modern biochemical studies and eventually the probable study of a specimen obtained after death by natural causes.

A new mind set is required to advance our knowledge of living species, one that puts the gradual advancement of knowledge ahead of the traditional experience of proving a species by reducing its population. This mind set must endure uncertainties and work patiently toward what would remain the traditional goals of biological collection and description.

Such an investment in scientific progress is an exercise unknown to professional scientists. At first they will not see the need for it. They are likely to be the last to embrace such ideas. Nevertheless, though the process may take many decades, I expect that one day they will. For now, this approach can be undertaken by anyone.

The most important qualification is curiosity, something too many professional scientists lose somewhere on the way to a Ph.D. Telebiological studies will at first of necessity be done by amateurs. Some are underway already, because a few people have come upon this process naturally by following their curiosity. Pinky, the forgotten dinosaur, is a good example of an unknown animal waiting for someone or some group of people to adopt it to study. The common assumption, sadly, is that someone else is going to do it. So no one does it.

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<b>WONDERS</b>
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Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries
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## SOBERING SIGHTS OF PINK UNKNOWNNS

by Mark A. Hall

Western culture inhibits the discussion of anything that is both strange and pink. Other cultures will be puzzled by our reluctance if not out-and-out incapacity to come to grips with such simple topics. The stumbling block is the familiar allusion to the distorted faculties caused by overindulgence in alcoholic spirits. One who over-drinks is considered inclined to see "pink elephants." By association the report of anything pink and out-of-the-ordinary is cause for suspicion and is easily ridiculed. Nature has no respect for our biases. There are unknown animals that are pink and we are going to look at some of the reports here.

In my book **Natural Mysteries** I discussed the Giant Pink Lizards of Ohio, which appeared to be the larval stage of a giant salamander still unrecognized by establishment scientists. Two centuries ago they were common in the area of Scippo Creek.[1] The appearance of pink in that case appeared to stem from the albinism of the larval stage. I continue to urge anyone interested in pink curiosities to look carefully at the excellent illustration of a pink axolotl on page 68 of the **Encyclopedia of Reptiles, Amphibians, & Other Cold-Blooded Animals** by Maurice and Robert Burton.[2] I think this photograph shows a smaller version of what people have seen as "pink lizards" in Ohio and perhaps elsewhere.

I have suggested that "Pinky," a mysterious animal from Florida, might derive its coloring from the food it consumes as do other pink wildlife.[3] These examples show us that there are natural causes that could account for genuine animals that are pink all over.

In southern Florida in 1976 there were reports of pink alligators. The talk around Andytown, Florida, in March of that year began when Danny Decker saw a five-foot pink alligator in an Everglades canal. Decker was a tour guide operating an airboat. He was alone when he first discovered the pink gator. Later he returned with five tourists including Elsie and Joe Beswick. Joe poked at the pink gator with a stick causing it to move furiously. A vacationing commercial photographer from Maryland, Alfred Harkins, went along also and took some pictures.[4]

The sighting of pink alligators was naturally cause for some amusement. The photographs were passed around. Tommie Hines of the Florida Game and Fish Commission in Gainesville was quoted as saying, "Some guy out there probably has dyed a gator pink and now is having a real laugh on us." Pat MacIntosh, an inspector for the commission, thought it might be a spectacled caiman from South America. It is sold in pet shops and resembles an alligator. He thought someone might have released a pet into the Everglades.

Ross Allen (1908-1981), a famous Florida expert on reptiles at that time, observed that, while pink alligators did not exist, white alligators do exist. He said a combination of sunshine and blood can cause white alligators to have a rosy glow. He was quoted further, "They're freaks all right. I've seen one in the wilderness near Sarasota. St. Augustine Alligator Farm on Anastasia Island has a



Fig. 1. Locations of pink oddities are shown here.

yellow one. Black ones are rare too. Most gators are a common dark brown."

Danny 'Decker and Ross Allen were to be vindicated in 1987. According to the Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans, on 3 September 1987 a Cajun fisherman came across some white alligators near New Orleans. The zoo has put them on display. A photograph of one specimen shows that rosy appearance cited by Ross Allen. This was brought to my attention by fortune author Loren Coleman. Loren also points out that these white alligators are mentioned in Vaughn Glasgow's *A Social History of the American Alligator*.<sup>[5]</sup> The episode of the pink alligators is an example of genuine animals being found to account for what was once a puzzling wonder.

We have two accounts of puzzling pink unknowns from different locations on the Eastern Seaboard. Both come from nature writers who are unlikely to be pulling our legs. The first is told by Herbert Ravenel Sass, the author of many books and articles about the Carolinas. His account was wheedled from him by the editors of the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1948.

In a *Post* article on a South Carolina ibis colony Sass had made reference to an earlier experience while boating in a lagoon in the area. He wrote that he had "glimpsed for one unforgettable moment a water monster so fantastically impossible that I resolved on the spot to give no account of it."

He later wrote a piece titled "The Pink What-is-it?" for the *Post*. Sass and his wife, Marion, had been boating on Goose Creek near Charleston around 1928. He was in the bow of the boat when they observed a shape moving below the surface of the water. As the boat passed over it Sass extended his oar and managed to lift part of it from the water. He found it to be heavy and as big around as his lower thigh. It was a bright salmon-pink and orange color. It slipped off his oar and disappeared. Both were certain they had seen a pair of short legs on it, "like an alligator's or salamander's." He described it as some kind of giant hellbender that was at least five or six feet long. He thought its upper surface was beaded like a Gila monster, but his wife did not detect this. The area had many alligators, but both were certain this creature was no alligator.<sup>[6]</sup>

A second account of a pink unknown from the Eastern Seaboard came to me from the two eyewitnesses themselves. They were none other than the famous writer on cryptozoology Ivan T. Sanderson and his wife. Their story is best told with some background on the setting for this occurrence, which was Ivan's farm in the northwestern corner of New Jersey.

Around 1950 Ivan had settled in Warren County, New Jersey, on a small farm. Over time he decided he wanted a place to swim on his property. He was fond of telling how a neighbor had gotten an estimate for a swimming pool to be built on his land. The cost was prohibitive. Ivan had his own solution. A small creek ran through some woods in a low area of his property. He had the topsoil from a nearby field moved to create a dam across the creek. The water backed up to create a swamp. A culvert through the dam fed water into another pond behind a second dam a little further down the creekbed. Another culvert

then fed water into the creek. This second pond was designed as Ivan's swimming pond.

Muskrats, birdlife, spring peepers, and other wildlife moved into the swamp and Ivan had a place to swim in the small pond. He liked to tell of his experience one fall when he noticed the muskrats were building extraordinary lodges in the swamp. In fact, the lodges were nine feet high! Ivan telephoned a neighbor of his, who happened to be Leonard Lee Rue, a famous nature photographer. Ivan asked why his muskrats would be building such lodges. Rue replied that this meant that there would be an eight foot flood when spring came. This prediction proved correct. The following spring the waters were higher than they had ever been, extending up from the creek and across Ivan's yard. How did the muskrats know this flood was coming?

In the year 1969 when I visited Ivan one of the things on his mind was the subject of eutrophication. This is a natural process by which bodies of water become clogged with plant life. He was considering the various means to deal with eutrophication because his swimming pond was -- in a natural way -- dying. Plant growth was slowly turning his pond into an extension of the swamp. He had determined that the soundest method -- being a life-long ecologist -- was the direct physical removal of the plant growth.

When I next saw Ivan in 1972 he and his second wife, Sabina, told of an experience they had months before while trying to remove some of this plant growth from the pond. They waded into the pond with a blanket extended between them, set on removing some of the offending growth. Suddenly the blanket parted, torn in half, and something alive showed itself for an instant above the water. What they saw was two feet of something pinkish-orange. It was large and worm-like.

There is probably no right time to have an encounter with a strange animal. But it can easily be inconvenient and often is so. There was no follow-up to the Sandersons' encounter with the creature, and I don't fault them for it. Neither of them was in good health at the time. Ivan had been diagnosed with cancer and, in fact, died within a few months of telling me of this event. It was enough of an effort for them to have tried to clear out the pond. And what were they to do? Drain the pond? Drain the swamp? The pink thing might have gone right down the creek and out of the area. Or it might have gone back up into the swamp and sat there undetected. Who could say?

After leaving Ivan's property this creek wound its way across other properties and emptied into Paulins Kill. This stream then joined the Delaware River.

Ivan thought this thing was some kind of tatzelwurm that had taken up residence in his swamp. He was comparing it, rather loosely I would say, to an unrecognized amphibian reported from the mountains of Europe. Ivan had the thought of rafting back into the swamp to look for some trace of this strange visitor, but, as noted above, he succumbed to cancer a few months later and to my knowledge no such probe ever took place.

Another pink unknown comes by way of a journalist in New England. Since journalistic license is something defined differently by every

individual journalist, this item may be a mere invention of some journalist. But journalists should not be assumed to be inventors just because some of them have practiced that art through the years.

Perhaps there is a pink unknown to account for the report from Vermont. Writing in his newspaper column "Fishy Tales" in the Rutland Herald, Charlie Spencer makes reference to a report of a "pink crocodile" in his state. It had been glimpsed in the Tinmouth Channel, which is the name given to the headwaters of the Clarendon River in east-central Vermont.[7]

The watery web of North American rivers and swamps seems to contain some peculiar and yet-unrecognized animals of fairly large size. One of them is likely to be a salamander that exceeds the largest known salamanders. In its larval stage it is pinkish in appearance which makes it stand out. The solitary reports from South Carolina and New Jersey are hints that this amphibian might be found in widely separated locations. Perhaps other pink oddities are about as well. If people are allowed to speak out without ridicule, we might learn more of such things. But we are dealing with a cultural bias against reporting sightings of pink peculiarities. And cultural change comes slowly.

#### NOTES.

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**WONDERS**

Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries



## AUTHORS

## Ivan T. Sanderson (1911-1973)

Twenty years ago an old friend died. He was a British subject who chose to live in the U.S.A. During his life Ivan T. Sanderson was first a nature writer and then an avid fortune author, devoting his later books and articles to mysterious natural phenomena of all kinds. His life and work are difficult to summarize adequately here. More information can be found in an excellent biographical entry that appears in the **National Cyclopedia of American Biography**, Vol.57 (Clifton, NJ: J.T. White, 1977), 192-194. The entry is unsigned but its comprehensiveness and accuracy indicate that it could only have been written by his widow and second wife, Sabina (who has also written under the name Marion Fawcett).

Sanderson's earlier books are still cited today for his observations on mammals (**Living Mammals of the World**), on elephants (**The Dynasty of Abu**), on primates (**The Monkey Kingdom**), on whales (**Follow the Whale**), and on jungles (**Book of Great Jungles**). It can be said that he was always controversial. One is as likely to find a disparaging offhand remark made about him in a popular science article of his day as to find a reference citing his work. But such remarks were usually in the nature of a cheap shot without the elaboration that would have shown that Sanderson was incorrect. He was always taking positions on the cutting edge of scientific inquiry.

His curiosity led him to pursue the mysteries of science full-time. His later books included two on unidentified flying objects (**Uninvited Visitors** and **Invisible Residents**) and three collections of essays on a wide range of topics ("**Things**", **More "Things"**, and **Investigating the Unexplained**). His most influential book has been his 525-page opus on the varieties of Yeti/Bigfoot/Giant mysteries, **Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life**. It is the basis for all work done since that time in pursuit of mysterious primates. Even the old guard of Bigfoot hunters who predate his book owe him a debt. Without it the awareness of Sasquatch/Bigfoot might have continued to be as regional as, for example, the many lake monsters. I think this book and **Uninvited Visitors** represent Ivan's best work. He did his best to meld an open mind with the scientific rigor of his early training.

His "**Things**" and **More "Things"** are very good but have not had a greater influence because they appeared as paperbacks only and have always been hard to find. The publishers, Pyramid Books, were notorious for poor distribution of their line of books. Now the works are out of print and much sought-after.

Sanderson had another impact during his lifetime that might easily be overlooked. I lived through the years that his popular articles were appearing in American magazines. I think those articles on strange happenings (from sea monsters to UFOs) were broadly influential in maintaining a healthy curiosity about our world and a healthy awareness of the existence of things yet undiscovered. As professional scientists slumbered through the last half of the twentieth century, a few influential voices such as Sanderson's reached the general public to pique curiosities and to assure witnesses to strange happenings that they were not alone and they were not crazy.

Sanderson's popular articles appeared in the **Saturday Evening Post** in the decade following 1944 covering such topics as sea monsters and living dinosaurs. From the late 1940's till his death in 1973 popular articles appeared in **True**, **This Week**, **Sports Afield**, **Argosy**, **Saga**, **Fantastic Universe**, and **Fate**. Many of these periodicals will be hard to find preserved today even in library stacks. But these were popular magazines read and re-read by millions of people. They were bought by the ordinary person and passed around, read in barber shops and in military service day rooms around the globe. No one today reaches a similar readership with these topics and with the solid background that Sanderson gave to his articles.

Only one scientific establishment publication, an Italian journal called **Genus** published in Rome, had the vision to print some of Sanderson's later works on the unusual. From 1962-1969 they published four essays on the possible survival of primitive sub-men.

Since Sanderson's death specific allegations have been repeatedly published stating that he died from a brain tumor and that condition caused peculiar behavior in his later years. These allegations are complete rubbish and reflect only upon the dubious credibility of the sources. I can personally refute them because I was an assistant to Sanderson in the last few months of his life and lived in his house at the time. I see no reason to detail the man's medical history except to say that he died from cancer in his abdomen for which he was treated by doctors at the time. One of the things that occupied him almost up to the day of his death was giving radio interviews by telephone to numerous broadcasters around the country who were his old friends. To the end he remained a forceful and entertaining advocate of investigating true mysteries, despite the pain that came with his illness.

Recently Ivan Sanderson came back into the news, briefly, upon the revelation of a hoax in Florida in 1948. All the recent discussions have been based upon an article in the **St. Petersburg Times** for 11 June 1988. That article explains, in convincing fashion, how large three-toed tracks were made on beaches and stories were invented to fake the appearance of a mystery in 1948. Ivan Sanderson investigated these and failed to identify the hoaxed elements of the reports. This episode is a lesson to all who would investigate such mysteries to look for repetitive jokers such as perpetrated this hoax. It would be unfair to Sanderson, however, to discuss this error as if it were the only thing he had done. If we do this then we justify the self-interested and pathetic flight by professional scientists from any investigation of the mysteries that crop up and are neglected. The possibilities of hoaxes, misidentifications, and bogus elements introduced by debunkers will always plague us. The professionals won't risk anything because they stay away and invent excuses. Those who do investigate take risks and the most active of them are open to being burned. If we venture nothing, nothing will be gained. This is the crux of why most professional scientists aren't gaining anything and will be remembered as mere time-servers in their professions.

In common with the rest us, Ivan had flaws and made some mistakes. Not all of his ideas will hold up and some will be put aside with just cause. But his positive influence upon today's world has been widespread. And the wisdom in much of his works will be proven yet in years to come. This is a common characteristic of the best fortune

endeavors, that vindication can only come many years later. The fortean problems are the difficult questions that are routinely avoided for generations by the boffins, as Ivan might have referred to the research scientists. Sanderson deserves to be remembered for his contributions to organizing the mysteries that still intrigue us and for his unique encouragement to the generations now living to explore this marvelous world of ours.

-- Mark A. Hall

### **Selected Bibliography of Ivan T. Sanderson**

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- CARIBBEAN TREASURE (1939, Viking Press)
- LIVING TREASURE (1941, Viking Press)
- ANIMAL TALES, editor (1946, Knopf)
- HOW TO KNOW THE NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS (1951, Little, Brown)
- LIVING MAMMALS OF THE WORLD (1955, Hanover House)
- FOLLOW THE WHALE (1956, Little, Brown)
- THE MONKEY KINGDOM (1957, Hanover House)
- ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN: LEGEND COME TO LIFE (1961, Philadelphia: Chilton).  
An abridged paperback edition with additional footnotes appeared in 1968 from Pyramid Books. That edition was reprinted in 1977 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- THE CONTINENT WE LIVE ON (1961, Random House)
- THE DYNASTY OF ABU (1962, Knopf)
- BOOK OF GREAT JUNGLES authored with David Loth (1965, Messner)
- UNINVITED VISITORS (1967, Cowles Education Corp.)
- "THINGS" (1967, Pyramid Books)
- MORE "THINGS" (1969, Pyramid Books)
- INVISIBLE RESIDENTS (1970, World)
- INVESTIGATING THE UNEXPLAINED (1972, Prentice-Hall)
- GREEN SILENCE (1974, David McKay)

**Herbert Ravenel Sass (1884-1958)**

Herbert Ravenel Sass was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and that was where he died just over 73 years later. From reading his articles and books it is clear that he loved the natural world of the Carolinas. In 1925 he wrote of the Carolina Low Country that it was a "strange lovely region which is as full of history and romance as a bit of old England; and yet, far from being a tamed, domesticated country like England, remains today one of the greatest surviving strongholds of wild nature east of the Rockies." He occasionally came upon the unusual topics that we now identify as cryptozoology.

He had experienced the sight of a large and pink unknown animal as related elsewhere in this issue of **Wonders** (pp.60-64).

He wrote two articles on the mountain lions in eastern states. They were "The Cat of the Cherokees" in **Colliers** for 5 June 1926 and "The Panther Prowls the East Again!" in the **Saturday Evening Post** for 13 March 1954.

In his book **Hear Me, My Chiefs!** he treated the Cherokee traditions of the Great Mythic Hawk, which we can recognize as the Thunderbird known to American Indians throughout the continent.

Books in his long writing career included:

THE WAY OF THE WILD (1926)

ON THE WINGS OF A BIRD (1929)

ADVENTURES IN GREEN PLACES (1926, 1935)

FORT SUMTER authored with DuBose Heyward (1938)

HEAR ME, MY CHIEFS! (1940)

OUTSPOKEN (A History of the Charleston News and Courier) (1953)

THE STORY OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA LOW COUNTRY (1956)

**Corrections to Volume 1 of WONDERS**

Page 18, line 27: Saluda is located in the state of North Carolina.

Page 24, line 23: The name of the author of **The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Pterosaurs** is Peter Wellnhofer.

Page 33, line 9: The countries where fossils of Gigantopithecus have been found include China, India, and Vietnam.

**Charles Montgomery Skinner (1852-1907)**

In the course of fortean research in North America almost everyone, sooner or later, will come upon the works of C.M. Skinner. Primarily this is because of his **American Myths and Legends** (1903) and **Myths and Legends of Our Own Land** (1896). While considered folklore, these works contain many summaries of fortean news items from the 19th century. Skinner was an editor on the staff of the **Brooklyn Eagle**, which put him in an ideal position to gather the fortean news of his era.

For example, in both books (under the headings of "Some Snakes" or "Monsters and Sea Serpents") one finds one example after another of lake monster reports. The 19th century was filled with such reports, from Connecticut to Oregon, as the continent was settled east to west by the new Americans. Skinner's collections at the end of the 19th century reflect this fact.

Skinner was born 15 March 1852 in Victor, N.Y. He had a public school education in Cambridge, Mass., and Hartford, Conn. He married in 1876. He was sent by the **Eagle** as part of the relief expedition of the "Dixie" to Martinique in 1902 after the eruption of Mont Pelee.

Skinner was also a playwright, having written "Villon, the Vagabond" and adapted another dramatic play which were vehicles for his actor-brother, Otis Skinner (1858-1942). Otis' daughter, Cornelia Otis Skinner (1901-1979) went on to fame as an actress and writer.

C.M. Skinner's folklore collections other than the works mentioned above are less well known and can be downright hard to find. Here is a bibliography of Skinner:

MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF OUR OWN LAND (1896)

NATURE IN A CITY YARD: SOME RAMBLING DISSERTATIONS THEREUPON  
(1897)

MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF OUR NEW POSSESSIONS & PROTECTORATE (1899)

DO-NOTHING DAYS (1899)

FLOWERS IN THE PAVE (1900)

AMERICAN COMMUNES: PRACTICAL SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES (1901)

AMERICAN MYTHS AND LEGENDS (1903)

LITTLE GARDENS: HOW TO BEAUTIFY CITY YARDS AND SMALL COUNTRY  
PLACES (1904)

MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF FLOWERS, TREES, FRUITS, AND PLANTS (1911)

MYTHS AND LEGENDS BEYOND OUR BORDERS

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