

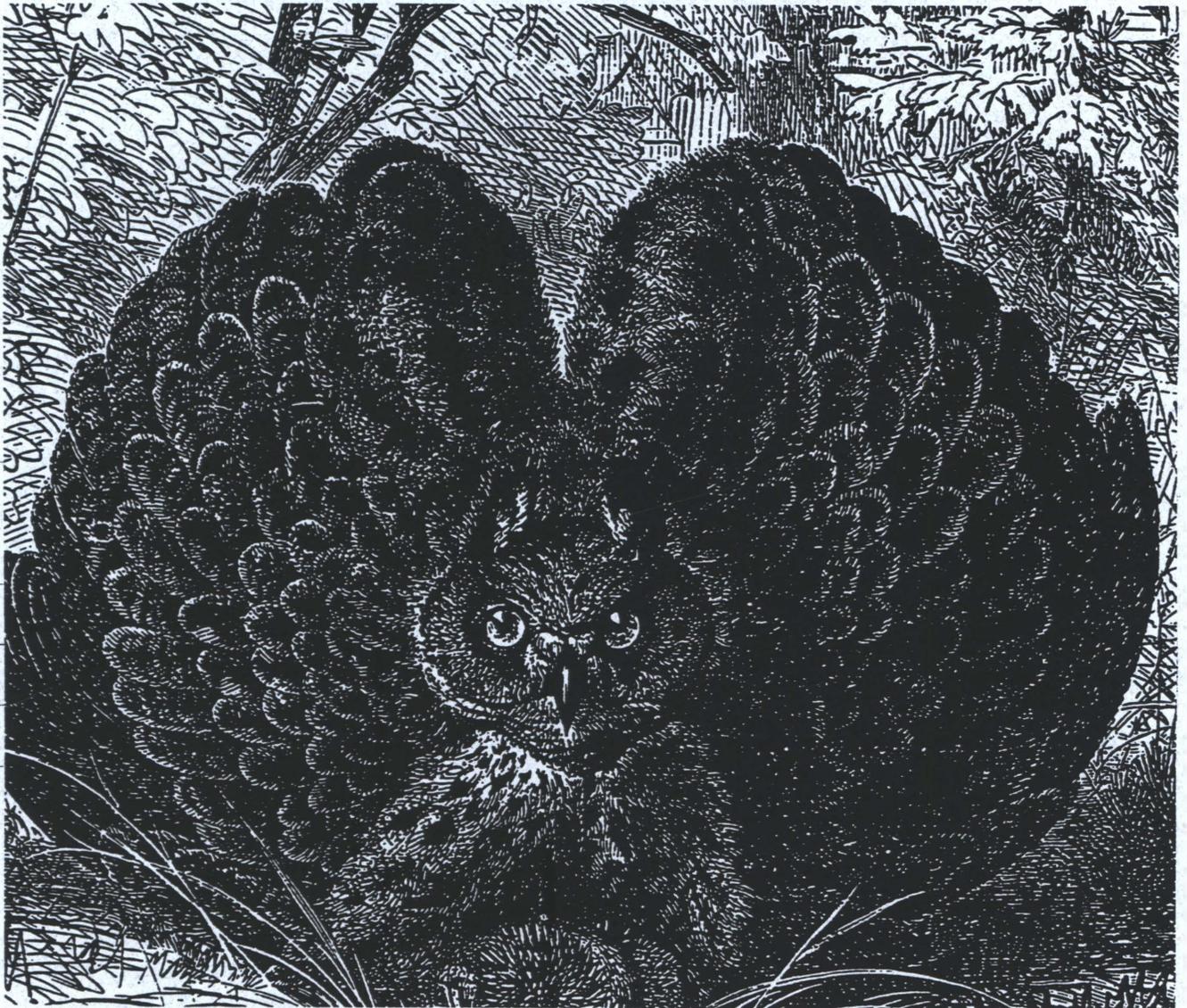
WONDERS

SEEKING THE TRUTH IN A UNIVERSE OF MYSTERIES

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Bighoot The Giant Owl



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WONDERS

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EDITORIAL

Just Another Millennium

You can start your calendar anywhere. And we have done so. What is important is that people agree to employ the same scheme of dates so that we can communicate daily, conduct business, and pursue history without confusing ourselves with conflicting schemes. While holy calendars remain in use, the planet has generally spared us a lot of confusion by incorporating one imperfect but generally understood scheme. The start of another segment of a thousand years in that scheme can have no mystical significance when its occurrence is determined by an arbitrary starting date.

We will soon turn a century and start another millennium. The fuss over when to celebrate the new millennium is a minor scuffle. Look at it this way. You get to celebrate twice: at the end of 1999 and at the end of 2000. The turn of the century is a bit more engaging for us. It is a handy reference point that permits a better sense of what was around a hundred years compared to the situation today. Who wants to reflect back upon one thousand years ago?

A hundred years ago people were excited by the growing use of the telephone. It was going to change their lives, and it did. Today we are excited by the Internet. It is going to change our lives. And it probably will.

Changes in transportation were coming. Dreams and experiments were to take the new century beyond balloons and bicycles into revolutionary abilities in the air and on the land. With them came unforeseen hazards like world-circling plagues and gridlock. Perhaps our new century will open up such dramatic changes and visit upon us new problems. Keep dreaming and experimenting.

A feeling of great satisfaction was being expressed a hundred years ago about man's knowledge. Except for the heart of Antarctica, the world was considered a known quantity. The field work had been done to describe the world's fauna. There were no lost worlds left to be discovered. It was even suggested that the patent office be closed because all the possible patents had been issued. Today we expect technological change. We have too much satisfaction, however, about the nature and ways of our world. Some of us will keep gathering facts and pondering them.

BIGHOOT - THE GIANT OWL

By Mark A. Hall

BIGHOOT - A bird of prey in the order Strigiformes. In size larger than all other owls, approaching the size of a human being. Never scientifically described, Observed in the wild in the eastern U.S.A. in the states of Ohio and West Virginia. Folklore of similar birds is found elsewhere in the world. [big + hoot, the traditional owl sound]

We share this planet unknowingly with many extraordinary animals. As a group we ignore them. As individuals we are free to wonder about them and to seek to learn more about them. Here we will examine what little is known about the behavior of one of the most secretive of these animal wonders. Their very existence has remained uncatalogued, that is, they have not been described by biologists and preserved as specimens in museums so that their existence is beyond almost all doubt. (I write "almost all doubt" because even type specimens can be the subject of debate.) This creature joins the cryptozoological cadre of unknown animals that survive when the common wisdom holds that no large animals remain both alive and undiscovered.

Most elusive in this parade of wonders is Bighoot, a giant owl and easily the most mysterious of birds. We know less about this largest member of the order of owls than we know about the Thunderbird, the giant hawk-like predator equally ignored by ornithologists. [1] Both have remained unknown for similar reasons. They are seldom seen any longer and when they are mentioned they offend the modern sense of what is possible. It is my position that the modern sense of what is possible could stand some improvement. Here we will examine what is known about Bighoot and you will be told the sources by which we come by this knowledge. The sources by which we know these birds could stand some improvement also. For this we must look to future generations to do more than the frightened and feeble efforts mustered to the present date.

The owls have been called the "night patrol" for their nocturnal hunting habits.

~~They are familiar and nearly unmistakable in appearance, though few of us will have been fortunate enough to observe them in action in their dark and wild world. So effective are the cover of night and nature's ways of camouflage that we have remained unaware of the very existence of the largest of the order of the owls. Here you will read for the first time anywhere how this creature has for centuries baffled and terrified mankind.~~

~~There are modern encounters with Bighoot, the giant owl, that give us our only description of this bird, for it has never been captured and examined by scientists. As far as I can determine, there are no fossil remains in the scientific record to support the origin of this particular bird. Some day such evidence will probably be found, however, because the bird has survived even into modern times. As so often is the case, the American Indians knew this animal and preserved knowledge of it in their own way, as we shall see.~~

~~The modern history of Bighoot encounters comes to us primarily -- but not exclusively -- from a period of a few weeks in 1966. People living in Ohio and West Virginia in the vicinity of the Ohio River observed these birds repeatedly. However, they did not know what they were seeing. The activities of the birds were assumed, probably erroneously, to be the activities of a single creature. In this case that entity was given a journalist's label of "Mothman."~~

~~The most active reporter of these activities, writer John Keel, associated these especially strange reports with other bizarre reports in the same area which were going on before, during, and after the creature stories. In my view, this association has obscured the meaning of the animal observations made at that time and has for over three decades incorrectly labeled the creatures as being from outer space or another dimension. They were and are simply a part of the natural landscape. They are birds, though birds of extraordinary size and with an extraordinary history.~~

~~The basis for saying these birds have always been around can be found in many Indian legends. The "Mothman" of our day was seen differently centuries ago by the American Indians in the East. The Indians called them "Flying Heads" or "Big Head." Before we are critical of this fact we should remember that our modern culture is the one that has declared these birds to be from outer space!~~

~~The Iroquois, the Tuscarora, and the Wyandot Indians all told stories of the "Flying Heads." In **A Guide to the Gods** Richard Carlyon describes "Big Heads" in this way:~~

~~Demonic deities of the Iroquois Indians. They were huge, bodiless heads covered in long hair from which protruded sharpnailed claws. With open mouths and fiery eyes the Big Heads flew about in storms, the wind keeping them up by their masses of hair. [2]~~

~~I suggest these were in fact flying owls covered in feathers. They have sharp claws and fiery red eyes exhibiting the very red eye-shine that is characteristic of owls.~~

~~Erminnie Smith, in collecting stories among the Iroquois, records:~~

~~It was a common belief among Indians that there was a strange, human-like creature, consisting simply of a head made terrific with~~

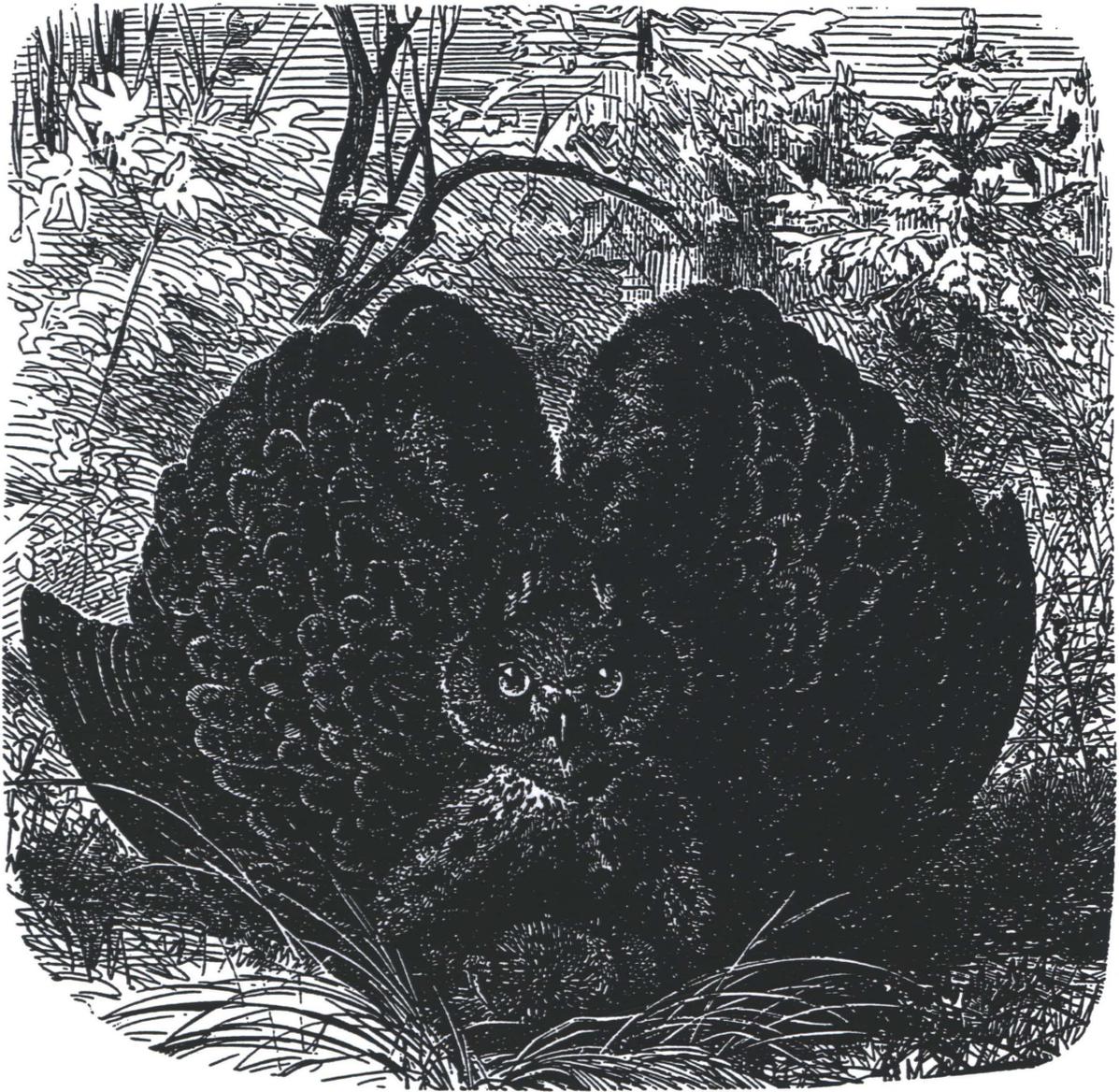


Fig. 1. This illustration of a hawk owl suggests why the giant owl known as Bighoot might have impressed the American Indians as a taloned "Flying Head" when encountered at night and exhibiting fiery eye-shine.

large eyes and covered with long hair. His home was upon a huge rock, a rifted promontory, over which his long hair streamed in shaggy fierceness. [3]

In Mythology of All Races Hartley Burr Alexander writes that "myths of heads that pursue in order to devour and destroy are found every part of America." [4] However, when we examine some of these accounts it is clear that these are not all to be equated to owls. There are stories of rolling heads and skulls that can be left to their own peculiar category of folklore. [5]

The American Indian lore of giant owls is explicit and wide-spread. One of the characteristics of the Eastern Great Head is that it carried off children. This was noted by William Connelly in this description among the Wyandots from Ohio.

The Flying Heads plagued the Wyandots. They were more dangerous and troublesome during rainy, foggy, or misty weather. They could enter a cloud of fog, or mist, or rime, and in it approach a Wyandot village unseen. They were cruel and wicked hooch-kehs and cannibals. They caused sickness; they were vampires, and lay in wait for people, whom they caught and devoured. They carried away children; they blighted the tobacco and other crops; they stole and devoured the game after the hunter had killed it.

Fire was the most potent agency with which to resist them. The Lightning sometimes killed one. [6]

Owls were blamed for carrying away Indian offspring elsewhere. The Wishram Indians along the Columbia River in the Northwest told such stories according to Krystyna Weinstein in Owls, Owls, Fantastic Fowls:

Spine-chilling stories were told to naughty children by the Wishram Indians of Washington about the old she-owl who snatched children away, and many other Indian peoples would warn children that if they did not behave they would be taken away by the owl -- much the same as European children are frightened with the witch. [7]

She went on to cite another story about the Big Owl that the Apache knew.

In the heart of North America the familiar story was also told among the Omahas and the Ponkas. We quote James Owen Dorsey on the subject:

In-da-dhin-ga. This is a monster in human shape according to the Omahas; but the Ponkas compare it to the great owl; saying that it is of huge size, and dwells in the forest, being able to pull up large trees by the roots. Mothers scare their children by saying,

"Take care, the Indadginga will catch you!" [8]

From the nearby Ozark Mountains there are modern stories of Booger-Owls with wings ten to twelve feet across. They preyed upon lambs, calves, dogs, and -- yes -- children. Folklorist Vance Randolph cited Hemmed-In-Holler near Compton, Arkansas, as one source of such stories. [9]

The only alternative explanation for the "Big Heads" has been that they represent cyclones. [10] The Indians had a name for tomadoes, however. An identity as owls seems favorable.

The modern record of Bighoot in West Virginia dates from early in the twentieth century. Our source is the research of James Gay Jones, emeritus professor of history at Glenville State College and the author of **Appalachian Ghost Stories and More Appalachian Ghost Stories**. In **Haunted Valley and More Folk Tales** he writes:

In the early 1900's at Pt. Pleasant, a large bird with the head of a man and wingspan of at least 12 feet was seen. it appeared just prior to or immediately after the occurrence of a tragic event... It was also seen by rural farm families in Mason, Jackson, Roane, Clay and Kanawha counties. By World War I, birdman was observed flying over Looneyville, up Johnson Creek, down Gabe in Roane County thence down Elk Valley into the Kanawha. Its monstrous size and dark reddish feathers which glistened in the sunlight cast fear in all who saw it. Parents kept children indoors after sightings. After World War II people said they were chased by a huge bird while traveling on the highways of Mason, Jackson, and Wood counties near the Ohio River. [11]

In November of 1966 the "birdman" was back in the news and stayed there for the next year. An Associated Press dispatch from Point Pleasant, West Virginia, got the ball rolling by reporting events late on the 15th of November. A sighting was made by two young couples of "a flying man with a 10-foot wingspan who flies after cars at 100 miles per hour."

They said the gray and white "thing" which appeared like a 6-foot man with wings, flew after their car off W. Va. 63 north of here at about midnight Tuesday. Speeding back to the city at up to 100 mph, they said the "Mothman" flew overhead at about 50 feet. But the object veered away as they approached the town, they said, apparently in fear of the town lights. [12]

The reports of similar creatures came from nearby parts of West Virginia and

southeastern Ohio over the next year. We can learn something about these birds by looking closely at these reports. The first summary of the 1966-67 reports was made by writer Helen M. White. White reported on them as birds or "bird-monsters." [13] Other sources are reports published in the Charleston (West Virginia) Gazette and the writings of John Keel on "Mothman." [14]

The two couples who first reported the creature were Mr. and Mrs. Steve Mallette and Mrs. and Mrs. Roger Scarberry. They first saw one creature standing on the ground in a marshy area north of Point Pleasant. It looked to be over six feet tall. It had wings folded on its back. Two enormous red eyes were seen. The couples sped away in their car. Then they saw the creature in the air. Its wings looked ten feet across. Despite the speed of their car the creature kept up with them effortlessly. They heard a sound from it "like the squeaking of a mouse."

As I have observed previously, [15] these birds, in common with the enormous Thunderbirds, seem at times to take advantage of the artificial air currents created by automobiles. The effect on the humans in the vehicles is startling, but the birds are looking for a natural advantage. Soaring flight is important to large birds. In technical terms, the contrast with small birds has been expressed by Colin Pennycuick:

In large birds the metabolic rate is relatively much less, and so a greater proportion of the total power can be saved by soaring. [16]

In the post-World-War-II era people have reported being chased on the highways of "Bigfoot Country." It is their automobiles that have created this situation.

The events on 15 November caused Kenneth Duncan to speak up. On 12 November he had seen something like a brown human being gliding through the trees near Clendenin, West Virginia. He was assisting in digging a grave for his father-in-law. The thing disappeared before the 4 people with him could see it. [17]

On 20 November a couple reported to a Charleston patrolman that they had seen a large bird near Ferry Branch. Its wingspread was wider than their truck. It flew over their truck, landed in a tree, and then flew up Ferry Branch Hollow. [18]

On the same date a bird "about four feet tall with red halfmoons under his eyes" was reported by Howard Miller. It landed on a school bus shelter in Dixie, Nicholas County. [19] Also, Brenda Jones of Point Lick saw one beside a rock quarry at Campbell's Creek. It ran into the woods. [20]

On 25 November Thomas Ury of Clarksburg saw the usual six-foot figure with ten-foot wings early in the morning. He was 8 miles north of Point Pleasant. It hovered over his car and then flew toward the Ohio River. [21]

The next day on Cat Creek near Lowell, Ohio, the most extraordinary experience of all took place. For over two hours several people were able to watch four large birds as they sat in bare trees and flew about the area. Two farmers, Marvin Shock and Ewing Tilton, and Shock's children watched them in daylight. The birds were four to five feet tall. Wingspreads were 10 feet or more. The breasts were charcoal gray; the backs were dark brown with light flecks. The eyes could not be described. Shock

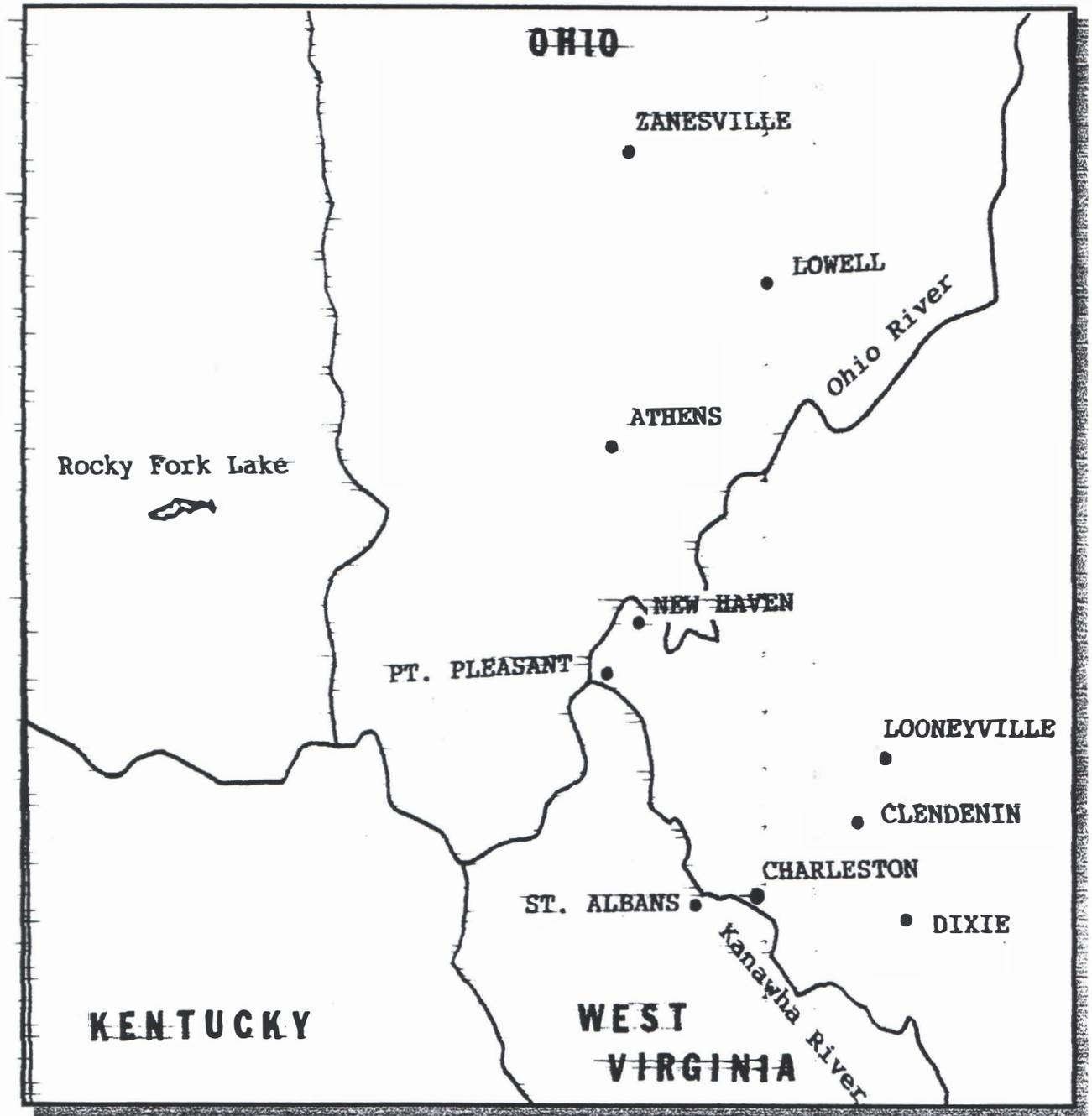


Fig 2. "Bighoot Country"

Reports of giant owls have occurred in this century within a triangular area with Dixie, West Virginia, Lowell, Ohio, and Rocky Fork Lake at its corners. The birds have impressed and frightened people with their size and remarkable flying abilities.

thought there was a "reddish cast" to their heads and their bills were straight and 5 to 6 inches long. [22]

Other brief encounters followed for almost a year. On 27 November near New Haven, West Virginia, Connie Jo Carpenter saw a creature fly toward her car. On 7 December in Ohio near the Athens-Hocking county line on Route 33 a car nearly collided with a giant bird. The four women in the car described the usual bird. On 11 December Kathryn Beaver reported something flew over her car near Wilson Straight in West Virginia. [23]

In 1967 Mabel McDaniel saw the thing on 11 January on Route 62 at Point Pleasant. [24] In November of 1967 Virginia Thomas saw something gray and over 6 feet tall running in the area of the first reported encounter almost one year earlier. [25]

One report from November of 1966 may have seemed odd to the Charleston police department. Richard West phoned the police on 28 November to say he had looked out his apartment window and saw what he called "Batman." Said West, "He's on the roof next door. Just sitting there looking at me." In response to questions he said further, "It looks just like a man. It's about six feet tall and has a wingspread of six or eight feet. It has big red eyes." It flew straight up when it left. [26]

His experience would not have seemed odd to Linda Scarberry, one of the original observers of Bighoot that month. When investigator Brent Raynes visited Point Pleasant in 1976 he talked to her and learned that she had continued to see one of these creatures, perhaps hundreds of times. She said, "It seemed like there for two years that it would follow us everywhere we went." She continued, "It seems like it doesn't want to hurt you. It just wants to communicate with you. But you're too afraid when you see it to do anything," She said it appeared outside her bedroom window one night, just as Richard West reported. "It was sitting on the roof one night, looking in the window and by then I was so used to seeing it I just pulled the blinds and went on." [27]

The two largest birds of prey in North America, the Bighoot and the Thunderbird, have remained unknown species, i.e. unrecognized to exist except by the few people who have chanced to encounter the birds.

The somewhat naive suggestion has been made that this could not be possible because amateur bird watchers would be reporting these birds. But not one word of Thunderbirds or Bighoot has yet to appear in any bird watchers' book or magazine. The cultural taboo against reporting a giant bird is in place for the amateur bird watcher just as it is for other citizens.

The backgrounds of all witnesses to giant birds are not known, but none have been identified specifically as an amateur bird watcher. So, at the time of this writing, it can truly be said that no amateur has reported a giant bird. But this is a very different thing from being able to say that no amateur has ever seen one of these birds. In truth, we do not know what they may have seen. They have not been asked or polled in any way. They are generally uninformed about the very existence of giant owls and Thunderbirds and the birds' characteristics. And if asked, who will volunteer to be ridiculed for some rare sighting of a bird others already consider an impossibility?

These are no ordinary birds. While their size might seem to make them obvious, they are species that have survived into the modern day under threat of mankind's

retaliation for their predatory habits. Both have been reported to attack and carry off human beings. This does not happen as often now as it may have happened when the American Indians were the numerous human beings being preyed upon. In 1977 a ten-year-old boy was attacked by a Thunderbird. The story justifiably made headlines in newspapers. The whole thing was then swept under the rug by the fact that bird experts could not make head or tail of what was happening. They said the story was untrue.

Indians knew the Thunderbirds to attack human beings, apparently when food was otherwise scarce. And in some places on the continent the Indians specifically blame owls for carrying off young Indians. Both types of birds have reasons to avoid their some-time prey and hereditary enemy, mankind.

Bighoot is active at night. The cover of darkness has generally prevented human observers from correctly identifying this bird. As for safety in the daytime when a giant owl is most vulnerable, the Bighoot has evolved a most effective camouflage. This kind of camouflage is already recognized among the owls. To introduce this aspect of Bighoot's survival, here is a quotation from Lewis Wayne Walker on observing a long-eared owl. He was constructing a photographic blind which caused the owls "to become secretive."

One, perching on a broken branch, followed each movement that I made through eyelids closed to mere slits. Clamping every feather to its body it assumed a sticklike appearance and the feather tufts were raised to their utmost height, creating an illusion startlingly like a broken log -- even to the jagged splinters that might protrude from the top. The normal coloration of this owl matches the bark, so with erect stance to further heighten the protective mimicry, this pair had everything -combined with a dramatic sense of timing which enhanced the effectiveness of each act. [28]

The protective mimicry described above has been utilized by the giant owls to disguise themselves as upright trees and logs lying on the ground. This has certainly been one key to their survival and to our lack of knowledge of their existence.

An example of this mimicry in action comes in a report from a woman in Ohio who observed something she could not understand. She saw this thing at Rocky Fork Lake in southern Ohio around August of 1982. About a year later she saw a similar sight at the same lake. Her account was eventually published in the **Bigfoot Co-op** for October of 1988.

... while fishing in Rocky Fork Lake in Ohio we drifted into a pristine cove on the SW side and noted with utter disbelief an old tall topless tree trunk approx 9-10 feet high, 112 inches around,

move about 4 ft. sideline. (This was on shore about 20 ft. inland ~~among like-looking trees, with underbrush.~~) Again it moved only this time there was a partial twisting ~~or~~ rotation from the top 18-24 inches. It slowly ~~maneuvered backward~~ (keeping erect like a tree) into the woods with NO NOISES from it or underbrush as graceful as a bird thru a tree. It stopped in the mid of a sunlight clearing....

She then writes that "wings unfolded with a span greater than most small airplanes." ~~After a while it returned to its "tree appearance."~~ She saw the "semblance of two eyes" and thought it was watching them. The Sun went down and the sight was lost to view. Then:

One year later, same lake and a half mile or so from that first cove this figure appeared near shoreline again. (It seemed taller or leaner.) This time [I] got a look at its legs and feet -yellowish grainy ~~like chicken legs ...~~ they were so thin and short for its height. Three long slender toes with a hooked toe or nail on lower leg.... [29]

The writer of these experiences did not know what to make of them. You are reading here ~~the first explanation for them.~~ She was observing -- and was being observed by -- an owl, just as Walker described his experience.

~~In the modern day these giant owls appear to pose no meaningful threat to ordinary people. They are retiring, rare, and even appear to be curious about us. Such a curiosity makes them vulnerable. I think it would be folly to practice violence against these creatures for the purposes of either capturing or killing them. Everyone should remember that these animals are formidable predators and capable of defending themselves and doing damage in the process. No one should endeavor to antagonize these creatures without expecting to pay an awful price.~~

Our approach should be to maintain a distance and observe them to learn more about them. ~~Any organized effort can only be an improvement over the neglect, the mis-naming, and the sensational nonsense that has been attached to the presence of these remarkable creatures. I recommend here as I have elsewhere a telebiological approach. Consider the serious possibility of the modern survival of this animal. Learn more about Bighoot by letting them live while we view them from a distance. With attention to human experience, patience, a study of the environment, and the use of modern technology we can be successful in adding to our knowledge without reducing the population of these rare birds.~~

~~We have focused on the apparent "Bighoot Country" along the Ohio River because the record there has come to light in this century. As the American Indian lore of "Flying Heads" and Big Owls indicated earlier, the owls were known elsewhere around North America. Ultimately we may find that these birds have a widespread though thin distribution, much as a concerted study of Thunderbirds has increasingly indicated a widespread presence past and present.~~

I have been told stories that suggest the owls have been seen in places like Minnesota and Pennsylvania in recent years. Stories on record already indicate that in the East they may have been seen in New York and Virginia.

Virginia M. Miller of Elma, New York, wrote to *Fate Magazine* about her father's experience of seeing a bird-like creature with a wingspan of 10 feet. Because it was the night of Halloween in 1974 he was out patrolling their property when he saw it. He thought of it as a "gargoyle." His daughter later read about "Mothman" and that is what she called it. [30]



Fig. 3. The protective mimicry used by the long-eared owl is employed by the giant owls to conceal their presence in the woods of North America.

John Keel has heard from a businessman from Arlington, Virginia, who saw something in the company of three others in the winter of 1968-69. On a farm in Prince William County near Haymarket they had investigated a strange rushing sound. They came upon a dark figure over 8 feet tall standing by a tree. Retreating and turning on their automobile lights, his report concluded: "All we saw was this huge thing with large red-orange eyeballs and wing-like arms. We couldn't get out of there fast enough." [31]

Again on a parallel with Thunderbirds, giant owls are probably not exclusive to North America. Through accidents of history their cryptozoological presence here has been exposed. These birds have the mobility, predatory nature, and survival skills to persist in spite of threats to them over time. They are night creatures which means their path and mankind's will not necessarily cross often.

Reports from the United Kingdom of a "Cornish Oilman" in 1976 and 1978 [32] and a Mr. Pollock's meeting with a bird while walking his dog in Yorkshire all hint at giant owls there too. Pollock said its wings were 8 feet or more across. It was four feet tall and displayed large talons and a huge beak. It shrieked and moaned. [33]

In Chile there is an undoubted similarity in folklore to the "Flying Heads" of the Iroquois. In the *Mythology of All Races* for Latin America we find this passage. "The Chon-chon, a vampire having the form of a human head whose huge ears serve as wings for its nocturnal flights is reminiscent of the traveling heads which form so important a group of bogeys on the North American continent." [34] Yes, there has even been a report from Chile in 1968 of peasants seeing "a man with arms like wings running in woods." [35]

Many questions could be posed about such birds. How much territory do they need to survive? What among the wildlife available do they eat? Do they move according to the seasons? We could only speculate on the answers. What is needed is careful observations of these birds and captures of them photographically. If we can put aside our terror and confusion, perhaps some curious souls will truly add to our knowledge of the bird world by a patient pursuit of these night creatures.

Here is a true challenge for birders. The passage of another 20 or 30 years will show us if there are people out there with grit and vision to pursue this mystery. If they do, we will gain new knowledge and they will find fame in the reality of Bighoot, the North American giant owl.

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IVAN SANDERSON AND THE WARREN COUNTY WOO-WOO

By Mark A. Hall

The name of Ivan T. Sanderson has come up often in the pages of *Wonders*. I wrote a tribute to him in *Wonders* for December 1992, noting the twentieth anniversary of his death. He was born in Scotland in 1911 and was living in the USA when he died in 1973. His early career as a naturalist and author was followed by many years of pursuing and expounding upon unexplained natural phenomena of all kinds.

A few months ago I participated in a radio discussion about Ivan and his forteen career on the Mike Jarmus show (*Reality and Beyond*) on the Omega Radio Network. Also participating were Robert Durant and John Keel.

In the post-World War II period Ivan took up residence in New Jersey and became a television and radio personality. At his farm in the northwestern county of Warren he had a few odd experiences of his own. In 1958 he observed an unidentified flying object over the Delaware Water Gap as detailed in his book *Uninvited Visitors* and in NICAP's *The UFO Evidence* (p.52, edited by Richard Hall, 1964). He briefly encountered a puzzling animal in his own swimming pond, as I have told the story in *Wonders* (December 1992). The farm setting described in that account is the same location given in the story told below.

A third incident took place in the twenty years that Ivan was a New Jersey resident. It was a longer experience than those previously mentioned and must have made the greatest impression of all upon him. He wrote this story down in the form of a letter to the local newspaper, the *Blairstown Press*, which was a weekly

publication around since 1877. The letter was published on 13 April 1968. Below is Ivan's account in his own words of what took place in June of 1965. He was in the company of his friends and colleagues Walter McGraw (author of *The World of the Paranormal* — NY: Pyramid Books, 1969) and Tom Allen (author of *The Quest: A Report on Extraterrestrial Life* — Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1965).

This occurrence demonstrates as well as any anecdote how difficult it can be to deal with genuine mysteries in nature. Here something extraordinary happens but how can it be recorded, reproduced, investigated, and solved? There is a need here for an extended and patient approach to search and research, one that I have termed "telebiology." With Ivan's letter to the *Press* he was carrying out just such an effort to gather more information and further the pursuit of a difficult study.

The letter starts with Ivan introducing his interest in and knowledge of the local folklore, history, and oddities in history. And telling of his own founding of a small society dedicated to pursuing the mysteries of science. He then writes "I wish to speak of even more out-of-this-world things." Here is the recitation that follows those words.

There is one that has sort of popped back again recently through a chance remark that one of us happened to make when Raldo Mattioli, a most progressive staff writer for your opposite number over the river — the *Easton Express* — was visiting us. Being a good reporter in the proper sense, he picked on this and made it his lead to a story he wrote on us. This gave us rather a shock; but simply because we handle so many curiosa that any personally experienced one of this nature tends to get lost in the shuffle. The "story" is as follows; and this is where we would like to ask your readers' help.

In mid-June of 1965, three of us rolled into my place in Polkville at dawn. We had driven all night from Washington, D.C., where we had been for several days on business. This business was the news business. Both my friends were longtime, professional newsmen. Tom Allen, Senior Feature writer for the *Sunday New*

York News for ten years, and Walter McGraw, audio (meaning using tape for interviewing) reporter for Westinghouse Radio and TV, the AMA [American Medical Association], and the Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Federal Government, among other things. Such boys are really hardboiled cookies and not to be fooled by any kind of "kookery."

It was one of those almost mystically beautiful mornings, with the birds singing, the frogs frogging, and insects "insecting" — I suppose you would call it. As we had an enormous load of equipment — tape recorders, film cameras, cases filled with office equipment, typewriters, and all the other assorted junk that working newsmen have to lug around — I drove up around the house to the back lawn. Backing in to the back door makes life so much easier when unloading such a load. Also, it just so happened that all three of us have what I can only describe as "sensitive backs," due to "incidents" in what is now called WW II. We put down the back flap of the station wagon and started to unload. But the morning was so absolutely glorious, with its clean fresh Warren County air, and the rising sun, and the boids and the bees and the flogs and so on, that we just sat on the flap and breathed. Tom Allen had just remarked upon this glory compared to the rat-race in the capital when.....

Absolutely without warning of any kind that we could detect, every bird, frog, insect, and all else alive just simply, absolutely, and completely "dropped dead" as it seemed. The resulting silence was so absolute it would have scared even an Eskimo on a still night on an arctic icecap, where the absence of sound is so profound that it almost hurts.

We all looked at each other for a few seconds.

Then it came.....WOOOooo-WOOooo-WOOOooo.....three times in quick succession. Than a pause; then again three; and so on for about seven minutes.

I've searched for the collected animals all my life all over the world, and I'm not given to panic nor am I impressionable or much impressed by any "unexplained," but I can tell you that vast, enormous, terrific noise which welled up from Walnut Valley sent ~~the proverbial cold shiver through my spine and, as we used to say~~

in the old country, "with bloody knobs on." But the thing that impressed me most was that it seemed to have the same effect on my two colleagues — hard boilder, hardnoseder, and more sceptical than whom I have never met. Besides, both are Vets and both happen to have quite some experience with wildlife as well.

This event had several aspects that I will elaborate upon, in a minute, but I must tell you what happened with us. Here we had probably the best and most elaborate recording equipment then available and two real experts in its employment whose whole life depended upon "grabbing the mike" as they say when an unexpected event took place. Yet the three of us just stood with our mouths open, gaping and turning our heads from side to side. None of us so much as thought of flipping open the battery-recorder and throwing just one switch. But how often does one fail to do the right thing in an emergency? How many times have you kicked yourself, saying: Why the heck didn't I take a photo of that? This seems to be a universal trait; but professional reporters have trained themselves to try and overcome this reaction — or lack of it. Yet, here we were, three very longtime pros, just standing there with our mouths open!

This was a purely psychological reaction. What might be called the intellectual one came later, but too late. It probably hit me first because of my lifetime in the field spent studying animals. In fact, so extraordinary were some aspects of this sound and its "behavior" that I completely forgot the tape recorders and just about everything else. The reasons were as follows.

First, I had never heard any noise or sound like this before in my life. Second, the only times when I have heard ALL noises made by all types of animals stop suddenly and at the same instant like that, has been before major earthquakes — and I have witnessed half a dozen of these all over the world. Third, the sheer volume of sound was absolutely unbelievable; in decibels I would say that it equaled a four-jet plane taking off, as registered from about a quarter of a mile. Fourth, it seemed to start somewhere up about the region of the Blairstown-Millbrook Rd., but in a couple of minutes if not less it was manifestly west of us, which put it over (or beyond) Hainesburg; and in another couple of minutes the calls

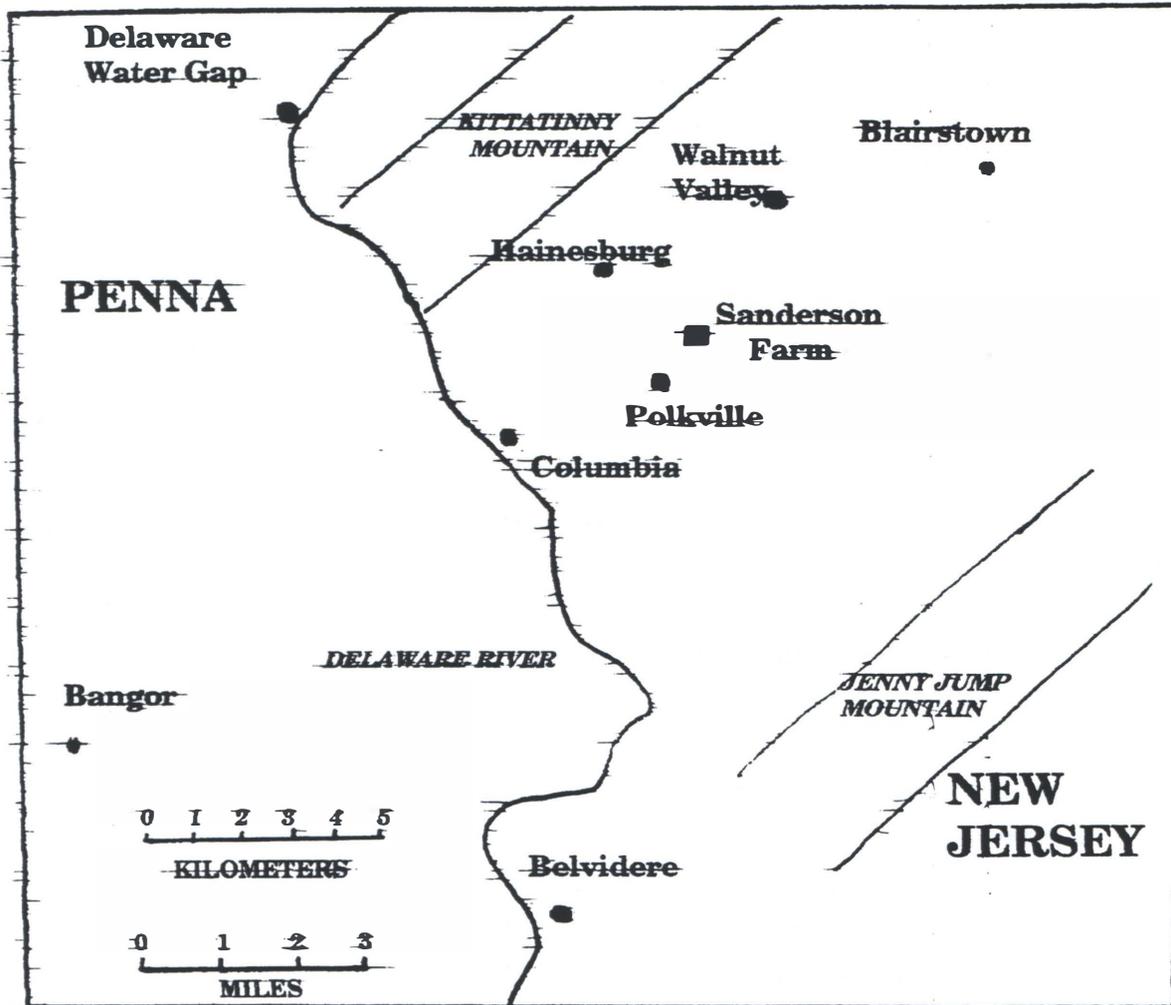
were definitely coming from the direction of Columbia and the Gap. This is about 12 miles in a maximum of four minutes — probably less, because even an experienced radio man's timing goes all off in an emergency. But most of all there was both an echo AND an answering call of exactly similar nature from, apparently about west of Bangor, across the river!

Our timing may, as I say, have been way off, because the whole thing was so shocking that none of us even pulled out our stop-watches, though all of us had one in our pocket on a chain. (This is standard equipment for radio persons.) It could have been of much shorter duration, but it certainly could not have been any longer. The point I am trying to make is that 12 miles in even four minutes is 180 m.p.h. What animal, I ask, can travel at that speed?....

I should point out that we don't know, of course, if this "Thing" did travel that far in that time. Nevertheless, it could not have been a land animal, and especially a Gray Fox which, as several experienced local hunters and woodsmen have pointed out, does make a "who whhooing" noise sometimes — at least so it is believed. Of the angle of travel we are quite sure as all three of us cupped our hands behind our ears which is standard practice for pinning down direction. This angle, from where we stood, was no less than, believe it or not, 180 degrees!

Then again, the echoes absolutely confirmed that the darned thing — the first and loudest one — was over our ridge and in, or beyond, Walnut Valley. There would have been no ring-back if it had been close enough to be in our little valley; and you can get a pretty close estimate of distance by the time of an echo, as in thunder. This time lag decreased until the thing was due west (i.e., the closest) to us and then increased again as it went south. In other words, it was a noise so enormous that, at a minimum of five miles, it made our eardrums ring!

However, the most incredible aspect of this whole business was that the birds, frogs, and insects stopped all their noise, and suddenly, all together, BEFORE the first call, or whatever it was. What is more, they remained absolutely silent until at least five minutes after the two callers appear to have met and gone on south



Shown here are locations mentioned in the story of the passage of the "Woo-Woo" over New Jersey. Warren County is in the northwestern corner of the state. The Delaware River separates the state from Pennsylvania. The Sanderson farm was located in the middle of the Great Valley, a major geological feature of the Eastern states that runs through this part of New Jersey between Kittatinny Mountain and Jenny Jump Mountain. Thirty years ago Hainesburg, Walnut Valley, and Polkville were simply the locations of crossroads. For example, Walnut Valley consisted of a feedstore and a Dairy Queen. The larger communities were Blairstown, Belvidere, and Columbia. In the early 1970s Interstate 80 was completed through the middle of this region roughly from east to west, bringing commuters and new homes to house them.

together, their calls blending and then getting fainter and fainter! Thousands of animals all together don't behave like this, except in some very exceptional circumstances. And, what circumstances, in this case but the forthcoming WOOOoooo-WOOOoooo?

So out-of-this-world was this experience that the three of us talked about it all day and finally decided that it was just too way-out even for me to mention. However, I did make a lot of somewhat discreet inquiries of every and all the experienced naturalists that I knew, from Game Wardens to scientific collectors; but, apart from the Gray Fox belief, none had anything even near a suggestion after he had heard a playback of a recording we made immediately after the incident on which we gave an imitation of the sound.

Then come Raldo Mattioli with his story and, no sooner does it hit the stands, than the phone calls start coming in. As it happened, I was talking to the combined Warren County PTAs [Parent-Teacher Associations] in Belvidere that evening and the matter came up there as a result. About five minutes after I got home that evening the phone rang and a citizen of Belvidere was on the line. (I'll give you his name next week, if you want it, and if he gives me his permission.) And this is what he had to tell us.

He pinned down the date pretty well because he was married seven years ago and was then still a-courting. One fine summer night he was so courting on a lovers' lane up the mountains west of Bangor. The lane was in the woods and there was only star-shine, there being no moon that night. Suddenly, as he tells it, just this same enormous, ghastly, hair-raising sound rang out right ahead of the car. The gentleman tells me that, although an ex-Navy man and having seen much war-time action, he had never been so scared in his life, and he said that he still does not like to talk about it. So scared was he at the time, he said, that he was sort of paralyzed and to the extent of simply being unable to switch on the car lights. He estimated that whatever made the noise could not have been more than twenty paces ahead up the road. It continued to "WOOOoooo-WOOOoooo" just as ours did at regular intervals and then took off and faded away.

But more followed. This gentleman told me that a couple of

years later he was helping as a volunteer to do some digging for a school project in his township and at a lunch-break got to talking of funny things hereabouts, and no less than three others finally admitted that they had heard, and even "encountered" at close range, the same thing. One, whose name I have, and whom I happen also to have met personally, has been a very keen sportsman-hunter all his life in this area and is definitely not given either to tall tales or, more so, the jitters; but he also just does not like to talk about it.

So what do we make of all this? I have my ideas, but then, my ideas tend to be taken with more than just one grain of salt, so I shall continue to keep my mouth shut for now! What I want is your ideas; and, more so, any similar accounts that any of you might be prepared to give me. Your names will not be published unless you give express written permission. However, your names I would like, in confidence as I would be most grateful if I could meet you — also in confidence and ask some questions that you may not have thought of. I am very sincere in this request as this is a purely scientific enquiry.

And I am not suggesting GHOSTS. I will have no part of such.

We are all left waiting for an answer at the end of these recollections. We would all hope for more information to surface from any brave enough to overcome their reluctance and speak of these unusual things. Only with such pieces of the puzzle — with the fragments of description and behavior captured by surprised witnesses — can we hope to advance beyond the glimpses here.

By other records entirely we know of flying creatures such as the giant owl Bighoot and the powerful predatory Thunderbird. But neither of these avian wonders has yet been associated with such powerful vocalizations as described above. Perhaps the "Woo-Woo" is one of these types. Or is it still another winged creature? For there are other "things with wings" about which we know very little for lack of a larger body of reports. All this is a mystery still, even to all those who, like Ivan Sanderson, say they have heard for themselves the rare passage of the Warren County Woo-Woo.

Twentieth Century Forteanism

By Mark A. Hall

Many reflections are being published upon the twentieth century as it will soon slip away into history books and fading memories. Some look-backs endeavor to tell us who was important in our own era. I have my own candidates who will, I think, be remembered far better at the end of the *twenty-first* century than many of the names you are likely to read as the outstanding influences cited in the popular media. And I will get to a discussion of my candidates in due course.

My own special interest in the past one hundred years lies in the rise of *forteanism*. Forteanism can be said to be the pursuit of unexplained natural phenomena and the exploration of historical anomalies. Charles Hoy Fort (1874-1932) was a compiler of unexplained data. He filled several books with neglected reports taken from scientific journals and newspapers since 1800. Today we have our own categories for such things. Examples are psychic phenomena, unidentified flying objects, and cryptozoology (the pursuit of "monster" reports and the survival of fossil primates).

At the end of the twentieth century we can detect an active curiosity in the world about the elusive nature and perplexing features of our physical world. There is also a healthy suspicion of the statements by authority on what can and cannot be. To be sure these particular behaviors are not as widespread we would like them to be. The most popular publications and the most far-reaching media remain captives of pedestrian viewpoints. They revere icons of intellectualism who when they speak can be seen to be apparent frauds by those who never stop learning and asking good questions. Life is thus never without challenge for those who want good answers and would like to share their wonder at the world's true makeup.

A sea-change for the dull media is in progress. The advent of the Internet puts more sources of information into the hands of many. Those who will learn how to employ the Internet well will reap the most benefit. The noise-to-signal ratio on the Internet is heavily in favor of the noise so the benefits are not gained without some effort.

Nevertheless, over the coming years the growing presence of the Internet is likely to create greater polarization between those who are informed via the Internet versus those who rely exclusively on dead trees and television sound bites. For evidence of this, contrast the results of on-line

polling and the results of the traditional polling on current issues. You will find viewpoints swinging 180 degrees between the two.

We find ourselves in recent years surrounded by conspiracy-mongers. Their noise is not welcome because they muddy the waters and they cause good people to bemoan the loss of respect for authority.

The modern ability to successfully conspire is laughably poor. To find it at work we must make a brief aside into the world of politics. No better example is needed than the current political administration in the USA's White House. Their most spectacular and feeble attempt to cover their own machinations is nothing less than to make a flagrant charge that a vast conspiracy is working against *them!* Those wise to the Internet can go to the "Clinton Scandal Summary" archive at any time and find a week-by-week catalog of reports by working journalists on the genuine scandals of today. You don't have to wait ten years to read someone's research in book form to learn what the big-media is filtering out of your life. If you have nothing better to do, you could write that sorry history yourself.

But this too shall pass. Hopefully sooner rather than later, to coin a phrase. Young people and newly-sworn citizens should be told that the current style of political administration is an anomaly that has not been seen in recent decades and hopefully will not be repeated.

To maintain our respect authority must be honest. Authority will never be perfect, but it should offer an honest day in court to its subjects. Those who offer controversial views on the tough questions such as are explored here in *Wonders* are looking for an honest exchange. Without that honest day in court authority does not deserve respect.

The last half of the twentieth century has been marked by a polarization between professional scientists and those seeking some attempt to answer the tough and neglected questions in science. This stems, I think, from the creation again of two groups as mentioned above. Those who possess knowledge will be at odds with those who do not. Those who make themselves better informed on these obscure topics will be at odds with those who are less informed but feel their positions permit them to set the boundaries of what can and cannot be.

If you take the time to become well-informed on one of these tough questions of controversy and express a positive view of it you can find yourself at odds with a variety of people. They include self-proclaimed "skeptics," journal editors, scientific dabblers into the strange, and a large body of too-busy-to-bother-with-nonsense scientists who will say you are wrong while unable to make an honest case why you are wrong.

~~Here is a good example of what I mean. In 1986 the work of Henry H.~~

Bauer on the subject of the Loch Ness Monster was published. The result of his study of the topic is *The Enigma of Loch Ness: Making Sense of a Mystery*. [1] The cover of the 1988 University of Illinois Press edition of his book identifies him as a professor of chemistry and science studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

After compiling a thorough record of the controversy as demonstrated in his book, Bauer had to express a personal belief in the existence of "actual living animals" of an unknown type in Loch Ness. With this he ran afoul of Martin Gardner who took Bauer to task for this view and for Bauer's criticisms of Gardner in another book by Bauer, *Beyond Velikovsky: The History of a Public Controversy*. [2] Bauer is arguing that critics of controversial topics need to make themselves fully informed and engage in fair discourse. He finds Gardner employing an "ends justify the means" approach because, after all, the target is just "pseudoscience." In *Beyond Velikovsky* Bauer cites Gardner for wishful thinking, qualifying his statements "to virtual meaninglessness," and translating an estimate of probability into a certitude. [3] Part of their exchange can be found in Gardner's *The New Age*. [4]

The "skeptics" are merely simple-minded people who deny that anything truly extraordinary remains to be discovered. They are believers who put their belief — unquestioning loyalty — in traditional academics.

The scientific journal editors are playing it safe, don't know any better, and have no reasons to take chances. Disagreements are expressed in the peer review process that is sure to weed out any paradigm busters. The dirty work is done upon the troublesome few by the anonymous reviewers.

The scientific dabblers are those who see themselves as rebels while maintaining the trappings of their professions. If they have an idea it is a good one. If someone else has an idea they see it as an opportunity — an opportunity to shore up their own credibility by shooting it down.

The too-busy-to-bother scientists are the ones who cheat everyone in the worst way. Their words are relied upon by the ordinary citizen. Their guidance is accepted by their students. They perform the peer review stealth bombing of ideas, take cheap shots at new ideas in their textbooks if they mention them at all, and make pronouncements at the drop of a reporter's hat on the viability of ideas upon which they have not done solid research.

Worst of all they cheat themselves out of a meaningful contribution to their field of study. I don't doubt that they have convinced themselves that they cannot make a major contribution. And that is the chief reason they will not.

How far have we come in the past one hundred years? After all, we have not invented any mysteries, only tried to record, organize, and

sometimes explain difficult questions that have always been with mankind. So previous generations have dealt one way or another with these issues.

For a benchmark at end of the nineteenth century I will refer here to the 1895 edition of *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia* published in eight volumes. [5] I will use it not as a record typical of its day because it contrasts with other editions of the same encyclopedia that I have seen. The others appear to offer dull entries that read like a large dictionary. The 1895 edition dares to discuss issues that were alive in the American culture at the end of the last century.

This is likely to have come about because the edition was assembled under the chief editorship of Charles Kendall Adams (1835-1902), then the President of the University of Wisconsin. A Vermont-born educator, he taught history at the University of Michigan from 1867 to 1895. He was president at Cornell from 1885 to 1892 and then at Wisconsin from 1892 to 1901. Perhaps this work was an expression of Midwestern populism. It included issues that perplexed and intrigued ordinary people as opposed to the stiff and dry academic spirit that usually worked its will on reference books edited in the Eastern seats of learning.

We find in this edition such historical views as a discussion by Frank Moore Colby (1865-1925) of the questions surrounding Madoc, the Welsh prince. Here is that entry.

Madoc: a Welsh prince; son of Owen Gwynedd; flourished in the twelfth century. According to some annalists he sailed westward with a fleet A. D. 1170, discovered a vast and fertile continent, returned to Wales, sailed again with ten vessels, and was never after heard of. Many passages in Welsh bardic and historical writings have been cited in support of the story, but these passages are, for the most part, extremely vague, and their reference to Madoc's alleged discovery is a matter of mere conjecture. The earliest extant narrative of Madoc's voyage in the work of one Humfrey Llwyd, or Lloyd, who wrote in 1559. The new land was supposed to be Nova Hispania or some part of Florida, since the Spaniards are said to have found there the traditions of a previous settlement by a strange race which had honored the cross. Substantially the same account of the discovery was given in the writings of Powel, Herbert, Howell, Haklyut, Raleigh, Purchas, and many

others, and to this evidence was added the testimony of travelers who professed not only to have found traces of the Welsh settlement in Mexico, but to have learned of a certain tribe of Indians that spoke the Welsh tongue. All these claims, which created among patriotic Welshmen a widespread belief in the story of Madoc's voyage, have been subjected to a careful and critical analysis by Thomas Stephens in *Madoc, an Essay on the Discovery of America by Madoc op Owen Gwynedd in the Twelfth Century* (1893). After a thorough presentation of the evidence relating to the subject, the author decides against the theory of Welsh discovery. For arguments in favor of the theory, see the publications of the Llangollen Eisteddfod, held in September, 1858, and for a bibliography of the subject, see R. B. Anderson, *America not Discovered by Columbus* (1874).

There are entries on Leif Ericson and Vinland written by Rasmus B. Anderson (1846-1936). There is an entry on Andrew Crosse (1784-1855) and his peculiar experiments. Hwei-Shin and the description of Fusang are covered. Also almost half a page is given to the Chinese practice of Fung-Shui, while acknowledging that "little has been written on the subject by foreigners."

Certainly one of the most remarkable entries is that on "Clairvoyance." A full page is taken by none-other-than Hudson Tuttle (1836-1910) of Berlin Heights, Ohio. His peculiar career as a spiritualist and writer can be found in the *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*. [6]

The wonder-animals talked of in that day are discussed. Rasmus Anderson gives a succinct treatment of the Kraken. Half a page is taken by naturalist Frederic Lucas (1852-1929) to give some sea-serpent reports. He goes on to make the point that, while "a few scientific men are inclined to believe that there is some huge marine animal," we know that "the majority of zoologists, however, deny the existence of the sea-serpent *in toto*." He gives A. C. Oudemans and P. H. Gosse among his references.

While the subjects such as Madoc and Vinland are not forgotten today, people are not going to get worked up about them without solid archaeological findings to put on the table along with interpretations of historical records. Some might wonder, though, if research might not be

what will lead us to that new archaeological evidence.

One hundred years ago psychic research was very much in vogue. For all the continuing interest throughout the twentieth century, we seem to have gained little ground in this area. Hundreds of volumes studying the anecdotes of experience, the laboratory testings, and arguments pro and con have neither dismissed the topic nor validated with clarity the several areas of psychic expression. Here are questions among the most challenging for humankind.

Sea-serpents continued to be reported in the twentieth century. And the interest in them resulted in Bernard Heuvelmans' *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents* [7] published in America in 1968. Therein something in the way of classes of sea creatures is created by way of physical descriptions and geography. Having classified them at last, it almost seems that people have largely stopped talking about them.

But other cryptozoological wonders have moved to the fore in the twentieth century. We know them to have been around a hundred years ago. For example, the Bighoot was known as a "Booger-owl" in rural America; the Thunderbird in Pennsylvania was called that by those residents in touch with the American Indians. We have newspaper accounts of True Giants going back to 1829; the 1849ers and the lumbermen ran into the ancestors of today's famous "Bigfoot" but that name had not been popularized for that purpose back then. They used terms like "wild man" or just "monster."

UFOs have always been around, but they came into newspaper archives under the label of "flying saucers" only after 1947. Here is another subject on a par with psychic phenomena. A half century of concern has not produced the clarity that people want to see before they can understand what is happening. With this subject we face not only the difficulties inherent in the subject matter but also the human reluctance to face the probable meaning of holding an inferior place in the universe. We want to see ourselves in control; to go boldly into a future where we are the equals if not the masters of intelligent life. But the facts suggest all too well that we are a primitive planet. We are visited by others who will not greet us as equals because we are confused and unable to comprehend or accept their presence on our humble planet. And a state of confusion works to the benefit of the visitors. If we collectively recognized them as an un-Earthly presence we might unite against them and hinder their aims whatever they might be.

We are one hundred years further down the road. And we are very much full of ourselves for our technological advances. But we seem to be

still framing the questions on some very fundamental concerns about our existence. Where are we in relation to the rest of the universe? What are the powers of the human mind and how do they relate to things we call spiritual? What life forms — what living fossils — share our planet in the seas, in the night-time, and in places we seldom go? What is the truth of our own past on this small planet where views of our ancestors -- both recent and distant -- change with each archaeological surprise?

Helping us down the road through the twentieth century have been two men of particular influence whose names have come up frequently here in the pages of *Wonders*. They are Charles Fort and Ivan Terence Sanderson (1911-1973). Both were collectors of odd facts who struggled to make sense of them. They both tried hard to make those facts entertaining because otherwise their publications would have been ignored more than they have been in the history of the twentieth century.

You can and should read about their lives in the sources I will put into a footnote. [8] But more importantly you should read their works to experience their struggles with mankind's difficult dilemmas.

The several books of Charles Fort have been in print since 1974 in an omnibus edition from Dover Books, *The Complete Books of Charles Fort*. But beware lest you end up like Richard Ashby. He sat down to read them, and spent two days reading them non-stop except for meals. Then, as he told it:

Indirectly, Charles Fort cost me my job in advertising. My values had altered strangely, and large areas of my thinking were replaced by doubts, suspicions. Copywriting became a trivial chore. My disappointed employer and I had words. And I was out. [9]

The works of Ivan Sanderson are more numerous and cover natural history in addition to the fortean works that occupied his later years. His life as a naturalist is covered in such books as *Animal Treasure*, *Caribbean Treasure*, *Living Treasure*, *Book of Great Jungles*, and *Green Silence*. Be sure to read his fortean works *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life* (1961) and *Uninvited Visitors* (1967). Other titles are "Things ", More "Things", *Invisible Residents*, and *Investigating the Unexplained*.

Charles Fort leavened with humor the scattered and neglected facts that the twentieth century wanted to leave behind. He dusted them off and annoyed his generation with them. Ivan Sanderson carried on that work and caught the attention of many us with his demonstrations that the uncomfortable facts were simply part of nature. What some people wanted

to declare impossible were things possible and even commonplace if one took the perspective of centuries rather than that of one's own brief lifetime.

We are fortunate to have been influenced in this century by Fort and Sanderson. I encourage you to add their experiences to your own.

NOTES

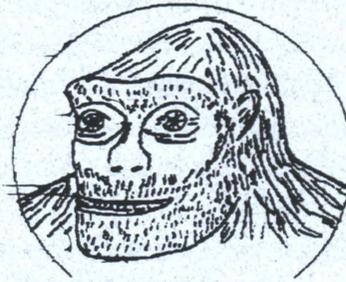
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