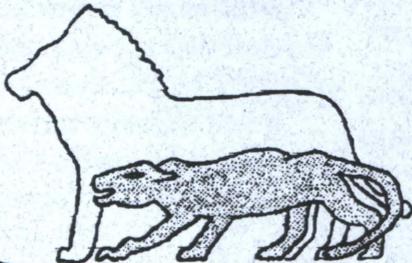


MARK A HALL'S GUIDE TO

NORTH AMERICAN MONSTERS

An introduction to North
America's hidden wonders.
Elusive and rare animals that
Cryptozoologists pursue.

LAND



AIR



WATER



WONDERS

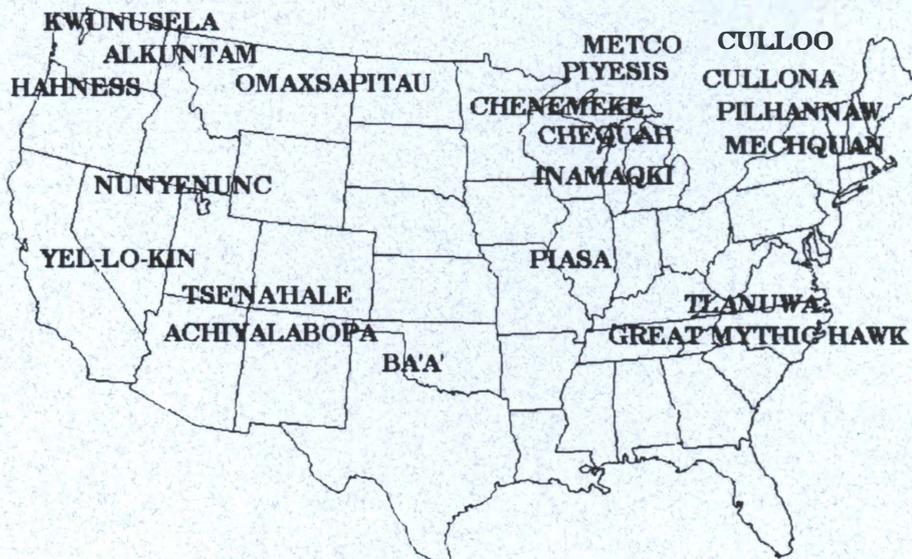
VOL.6 NO.1 MARCH 1999
MAHP BOX 3153 BUTLER
STATION MPLS MN 55403

LIVING

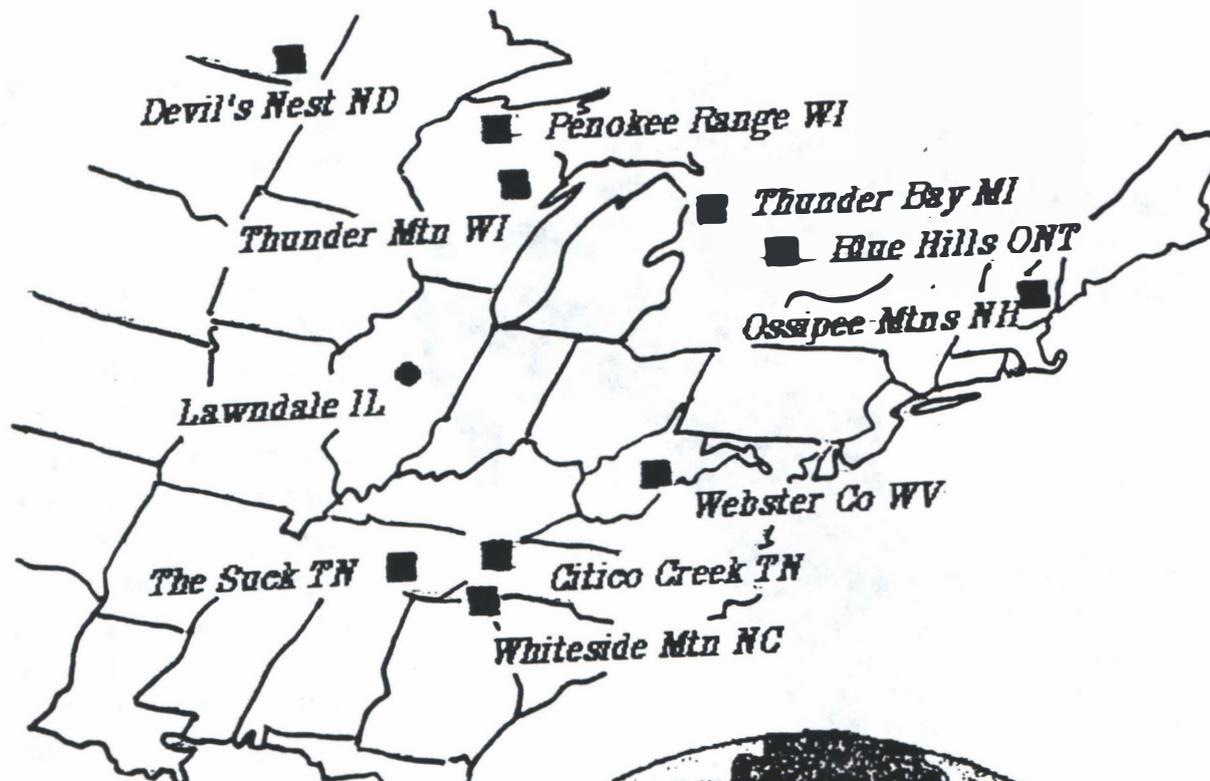


THUNDERBIRDS with wingspans of twenty feet and more have been seen for centuries by farmers, loggers, and campers in Pennsylvania. The reality of the giant birds was shown to residents of Illinois in 1977 when a ten-year-old boy was lifted off the ground in front of his family and friends. Professional biologists told them it could not have happened so it did not happen.

The American Indians have many names to identify giant birds that once were known in greater numbers than today. The birds were a menace to young and old Indians alike. But they commonly fed on bison, elk, deer, and moose. The nests of the birds were seen in the mountains and on high points of land in the Midwestern region.



THUNDERBIRDS

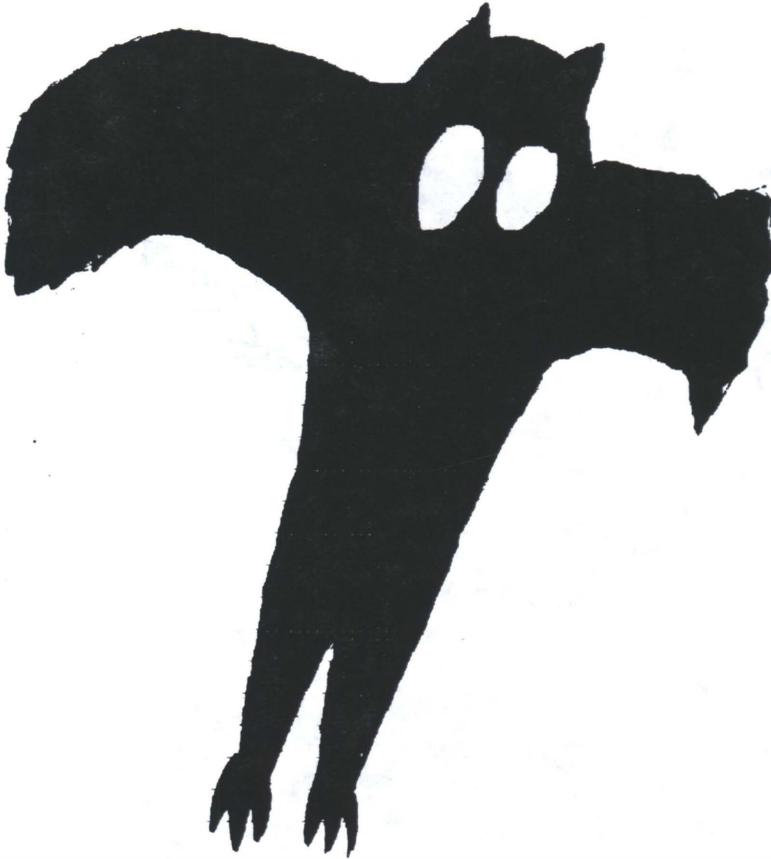


The squares indicate traditional nesting locations for the Thunderbirds in the East and Midwest. The birds migrate with the seasons, which helps explain why the most spectacular recent appearance of the birds was at Lawndale, Illinois, in 1977. Two birds were returning south from the Great Lakes. Probably these birds then fly to the Ozarks where they have been reported seen in this century.



For more: See *Thunderbirds: The Living Legend* by Mark A. Hall (1988, 1994) and "The Status of the North American Thunderbird" in *Wonders* Vol. 4.

BIGHOOT



Throughout the twentieth century people in southwestern West Virginia have been hearing about the "birdman" – something that was seen flying up and down the creeks at night. After World War II people said the thing flew over their cars and kept pace with them. The thing's exploits broke into the news in the 1960s. It was labeled "Mothman" in print and some even thought that it came from outer space. Its bird-like appearance and the history of reports all suggest that this thing is a giant owl.

The darkness in the rural North American countryside conceals the nocturnal activities of *Bighoot*, the Giant Owl. The American Indians knew this creature as "Big Owl" and the "Flying Head." The latter name was given because its fiery red eye-shine at night is a memorable sight and its wings made it appear to be a flying fire-eyed head with fierce talons. In rural parts of the Ozark Mountains it was known as the "Booger Owl."

While the flying head was a menace hundreds of years ago, today the birds are obviously fewer in number and less bold. They have been reported in scattered locations around the USA, and they might turn up anywhere.

THE GIANT OWL

From 1966 through 1968 reports of Bighoot were numerous in West Virginia and Ohio. The territory from Dixie, West Virginia, to Lowell, Ohio to the Scioto River was the background for encounters with the mysterious birds. They were said to be six feet tall and more, brown in color, and possessing wingspans of 10 feet. They were seen on the ground, in trees, and hovering over speeding automobiles. Their behavior suggests that they use the draft caused by a fast-moving car to help them fly at those times.

BIGHOOT COUNTRY



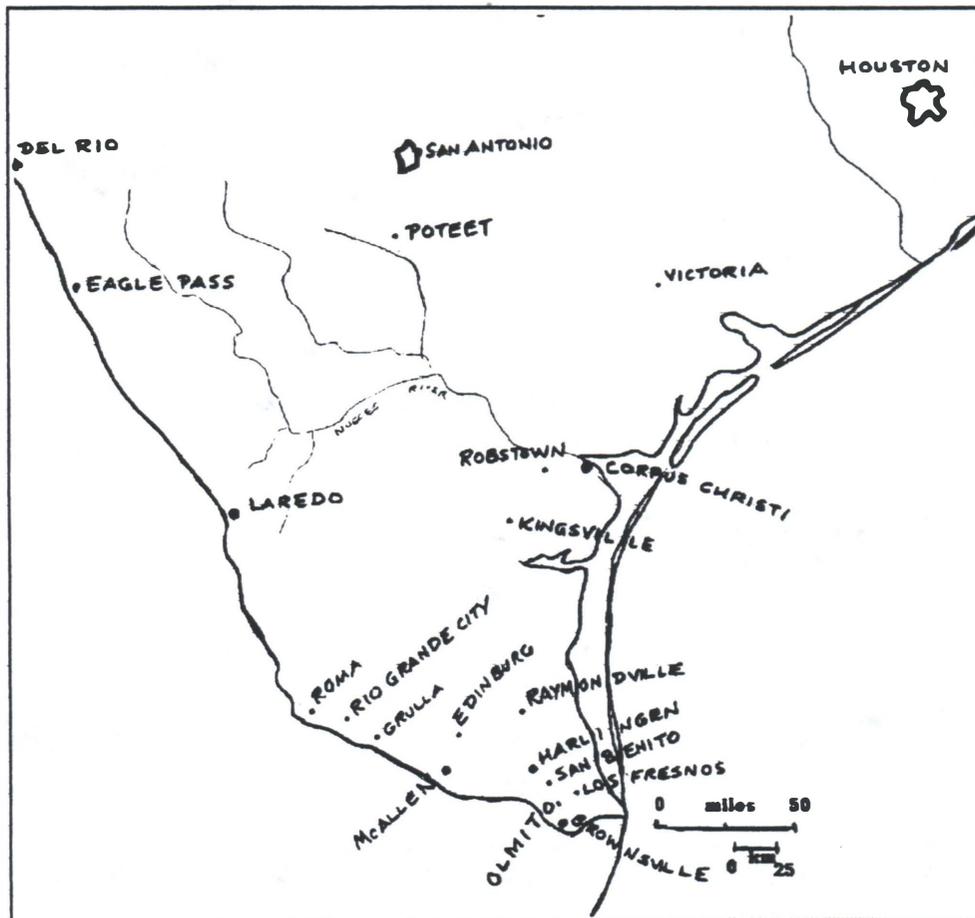
For more: See "Bighoot - The Giant Owl" in *Wonders* Vol. 5 (1998).

GIANT

The night skies of North America are visited by *Giant Bats*. This most widely-spread mammal, second only to mankind according to the textbooks, has populated the world on both continents and islands. A giant form has been suspected in places like Africa, Asia, and on Pacific islands. It remains uncatalogued and so unknown.

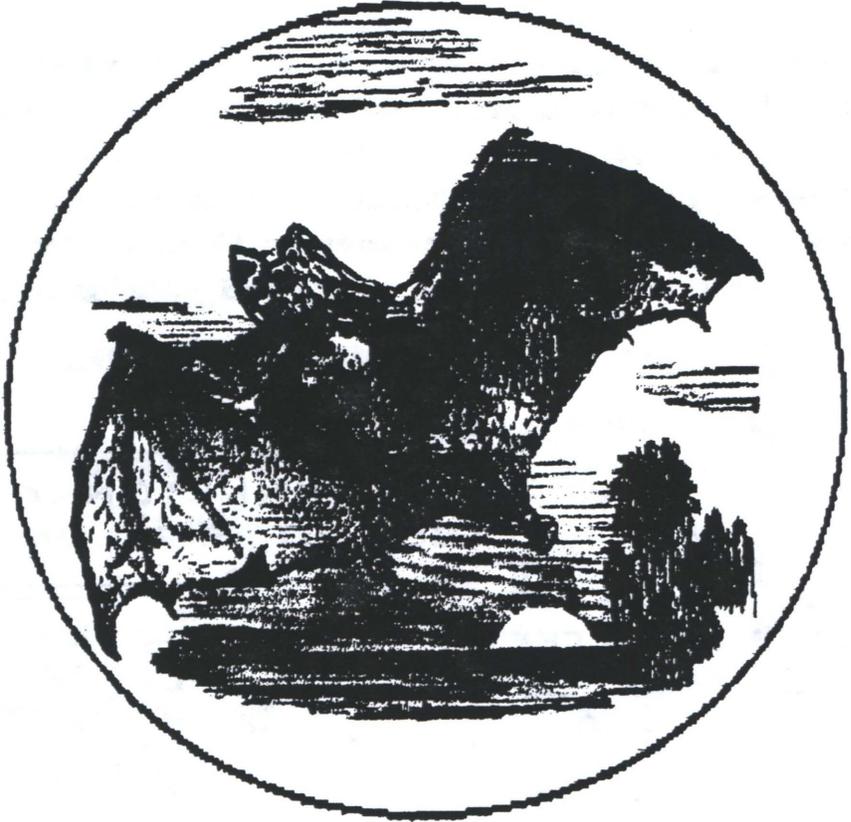
Rare reports in modern times have suggested its presence in the Americas as well. A series of reports in southern Texas has given the best evidence of its survival here.

The fuss over "Big Bird" in south Texas in the mid-1970s extended from Corpus Christi to Brownsville to Del Rio. Other than many misidentified birds, the reason for the excitement was actually very large bats.



BATS

Starting in late 1975 and on through January 1976 there were many reports of large flying creatures in southern Texas. Some were identifiable as sandhill cranes, pelicans, and other birds. But a few were something else. This thing was landing on the roofs of dwellings and leaving strange excrement. One man reported a face-to-face encounter with it. He described an attack by something in his yard at 1:40 a.m. on 21 January 1976 in Eagle Pass, Texas.



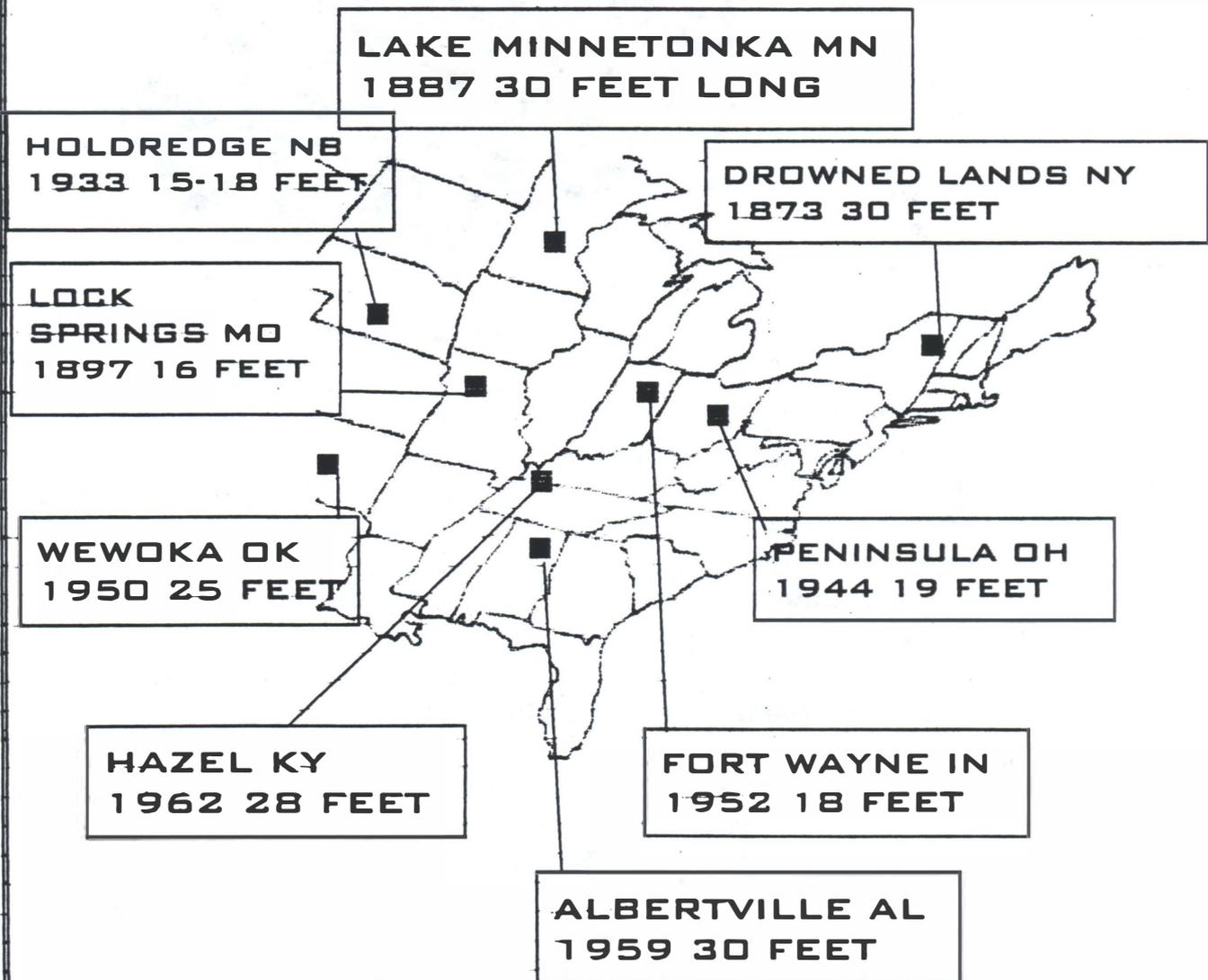
Twenty-one-year-old Francisco Magalles was later hospitalized and sedated. He was found to have long scratches on his shoulders. A strange "quill" was found at the scene but – since there is no lasting concern for or official preservation of cryptozoological evidence – nothing came of this physical clue. The man said he stepped out the back door of his house to find something "six feet tall, with large red eyes on a bat-like face, having a six-foot wingspan." It was "featherless and had skin like a bat." His experience recalls that of people in Java who have reported encounters there with a giant bat, the Ahool. (The name derives from the sound the creature makes.) Those people have reported being "hacked by an Ahool."

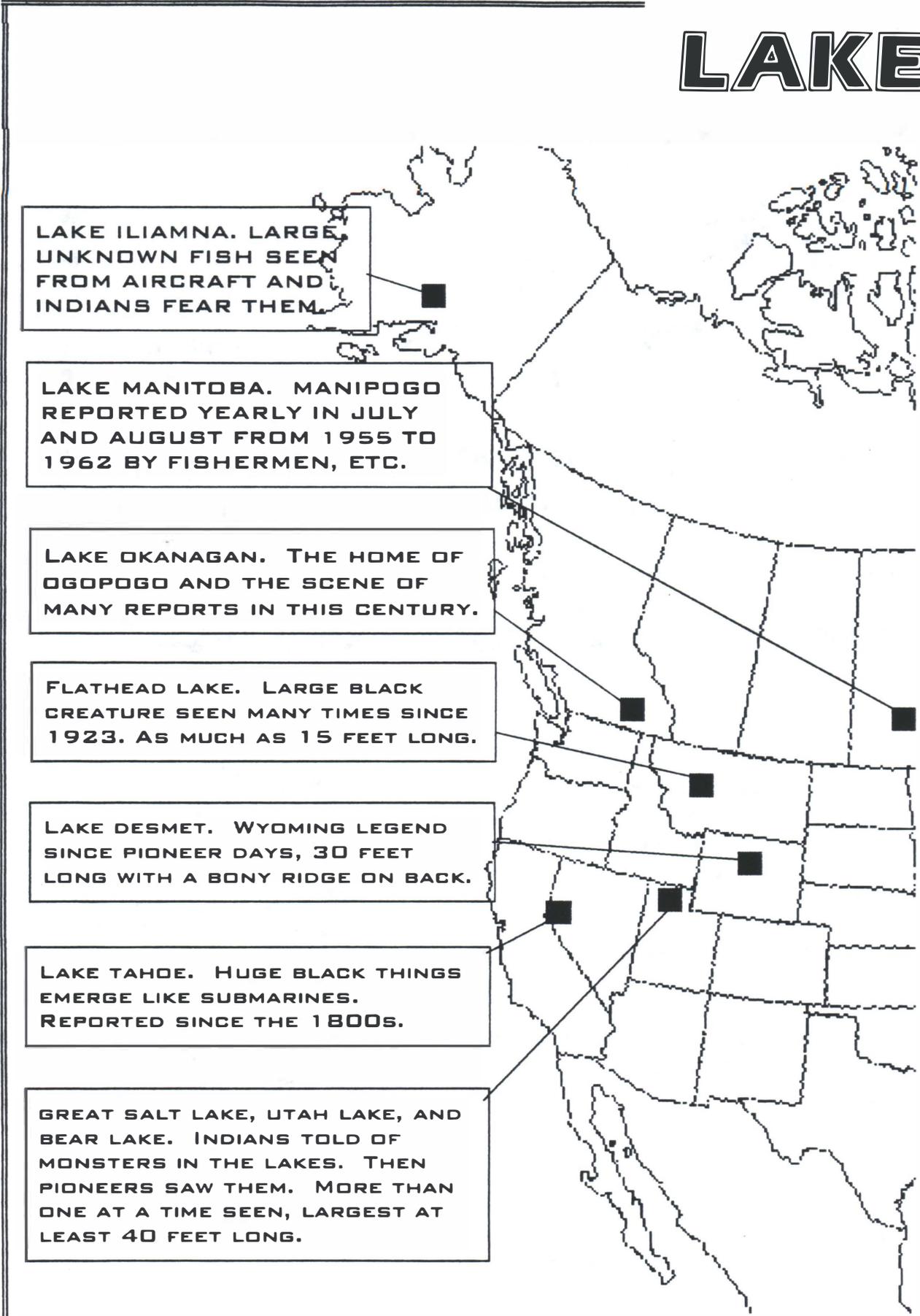
But he was the only one to report such a serious result of seeing the unusual animal. Many of the reports at the time were quite vague, and his was one that indicated that something truly extraordinary could be found at the time in the Rio Grande Valley.

For more: See *More Natural Mysteries* by Mark A. Hall (Forthcoming Dec 1999). For Giant Bats in Asia see: *Man and Beast* (1993, Readers Digest Assoc., p.33) and Ivan T. Sanderson, *Investigating the Unexplained* (1972, Prentice-Hall, 39-54).

GIANT

Giant snakes have figured in the ancient rock art of North America and the inherited oral stories of the American Indians. The record of encounters with them in the 1800s is extensive. In the 1900s they have popped up only sporadically, suggesting that their numbers are in decline along with the wetland habitat that would have supported them into modern times. Escaped pets cannot explain this history.



LAKE


LAKE ILIAMNA. LARGE UNKNOWN FISH SEEN FROM AIRCRAFT AND INDIANS FEAR THEM.

LAKE MANITOBA. MANIPOGO REPORTED YEARLY IN JULY AND AUGUST FROM 1955 TO 1962 BY FISHERMEN, ETC.

LAKE OKANAGAN. THE HOME OF OGOPOGO AND THE SCENE OF MANY REPORTS IN THIS CENTURY.

FLATHEAD LAKE. LARGE BLACK CREATURE SEEN MANY TIMES SINCE 1923. AS MUCH AS 15 FEET LONG.

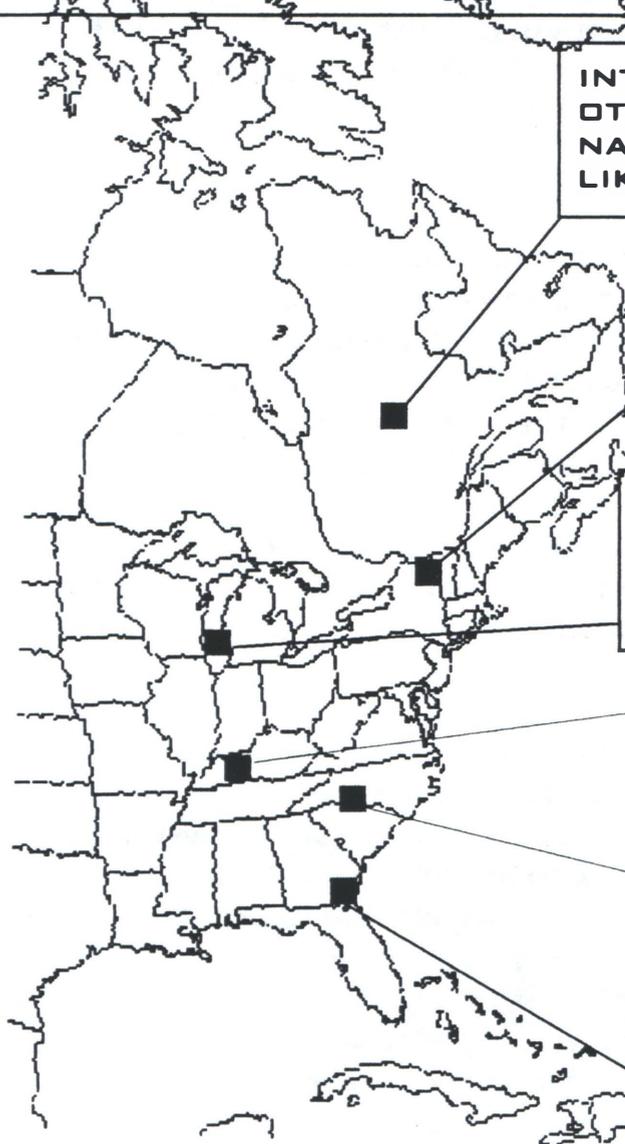
LAKE DESMET. WYOMING LEGEND SINCE PIONEER DAYS, 30 FEET LONG WITH A BONY RIDGE ON BACK.

LAKE TAHOE. HUGE BLACK THINGS EMERGE LIKE SUBMARINES. REPORTED SINCE THE 1800s.

GREAT SALT LAKE, UTAH LAKE, AND BEAR LAKE. INDIANS TOLD OF MONSTERS IN THE LAKES. THEN PIONEERS SAW THEM. MORE THAN ONE AT A TIME SEEN, LARGEST AT LEAST 40 FEET LONG.

MONSTERS

Lake Monsters have been reported all across Canada and the USA in lakes, ponds, and marshes. Not because they are in those locations all the time to be seen but because of the mobility of the unknown reptiles, amphibians and mammals behind the reports. They were probably more numerous in the past when the American Indians gave them names and feared their appetites. Their numbers have declined for centuries. Here are examples.



INTERIOR LAKES OF LABRADOR. AN OTTER OF GREAT SIZE REPORTED BY NASKAPI INDIANS. ALSO AN ANIMAL LIKE A SEAL TEN FEET LONG.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN. A LONG HISTORY OF REPORTS HERE AND IN LAKES IN QUEBEC TELL OF LARGE UNKNOWN ANIMALS.

LAKE MICHIGAN 1867 WHEN A 50-FOOT THING WAS SEEN BY MANY AND CLOSE UP BY JOSEPH MUHLKE WHO GAVE DETAILS.

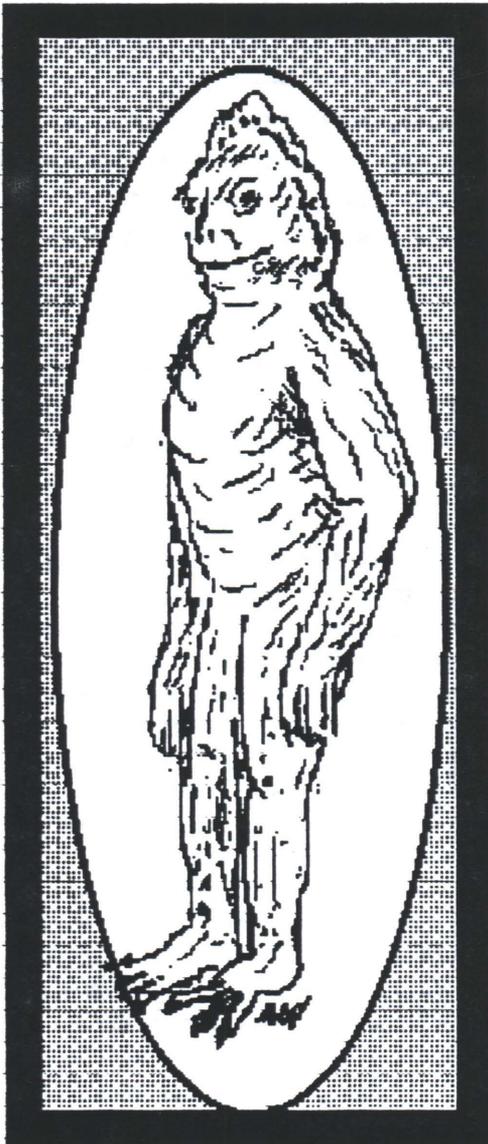
GREEN RIVER KY 1902-1904 IN A PERIOD OF DROUGHT A HUGE BLACK THING WITH THE SHAPE OF A HORSE WAS REPORTED.

LAKE JAMES NC 1981 REPORT IN MAN-MADE BURKE CO. LAKE. FISHERMEN SAW "DRAGON-LIKE" THING THE SIZE OF A CAR.

ALTAMAHA RIVER GA 20-FOOT SNAKE-LIKE WITH TWO BROWNISH HUMPS REPORTED IN DEC 1980.

MER -

Mermaids have become the very symbol of something that cannot be. It will be very hard to put aside this well-taught prejudice against them. They are an unavoidable part of the cryptozoological landscape of North America. Again the American Indians knew the *Mer-Beings* (see the box on the next page). Encounters with them over the past two centuries have popped into and out of the news sporadically. The most recent reminder took place near Bishopville, South Carolina, in 1988. Sightings and tracks of "Lizardman" were briefly a news sensation.

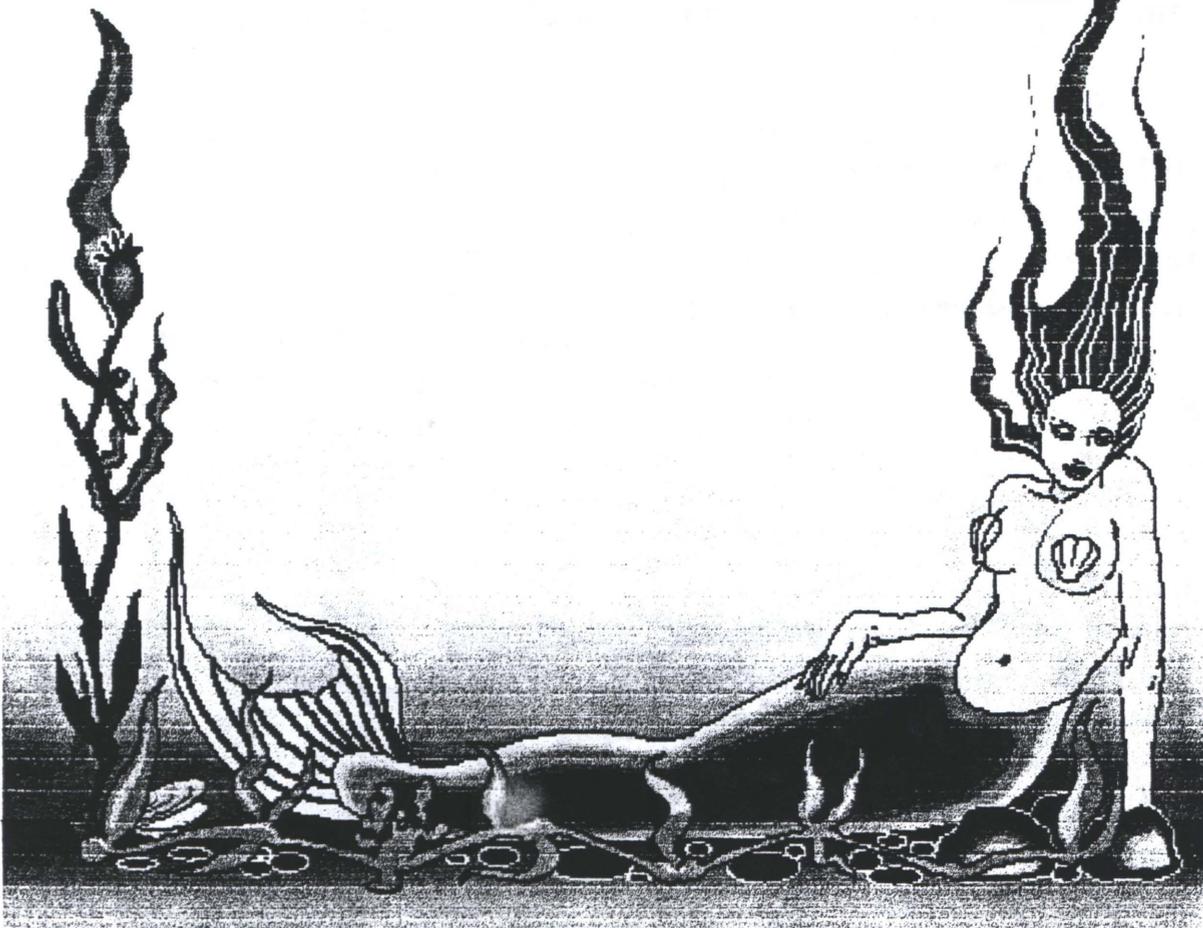


Over centuries intensive settlement and farming on continents like Europe and North America have drastically reduced the areas occupied by wetlands (see the map on page 9 showing a sample of the Great Swamps). Both continents have many traditions of mer-beings (mermaids and mermen) who were the eerie denizens of streams, ponds, and swamps. Could such things be?

It appears that in the distant past a primate with similarities to the line of human evolution took to the waters and became highly successful in adapting to the aqueous environment. These beings are not half-human and half-fish. One explanation for this idea is that some (but not all) of these beings wear a kind of swimming costume that resembles the tail of a fish. This is much like the conduct of human beings who wear swim fins, goggles, and other devices.

BEINGS

The Underwater Man was known to the Naskapi Indians in Quebec as the *Tambe'gwilou*. To the Montagnais he was *Tambe'gwi'nu*. To the Ojibwe in Minnesota he was Nibanabe or Netaunaubay. Folklorist Albert Gatschet has noted their presence in Maine and Nova Scotia. And among the Miami Indians in Ohio where the merman is *Mansanzhi* and his female companion is *Mansanzhi kwa*. They are also clearly described in the Pacific Northwest and in Central America.



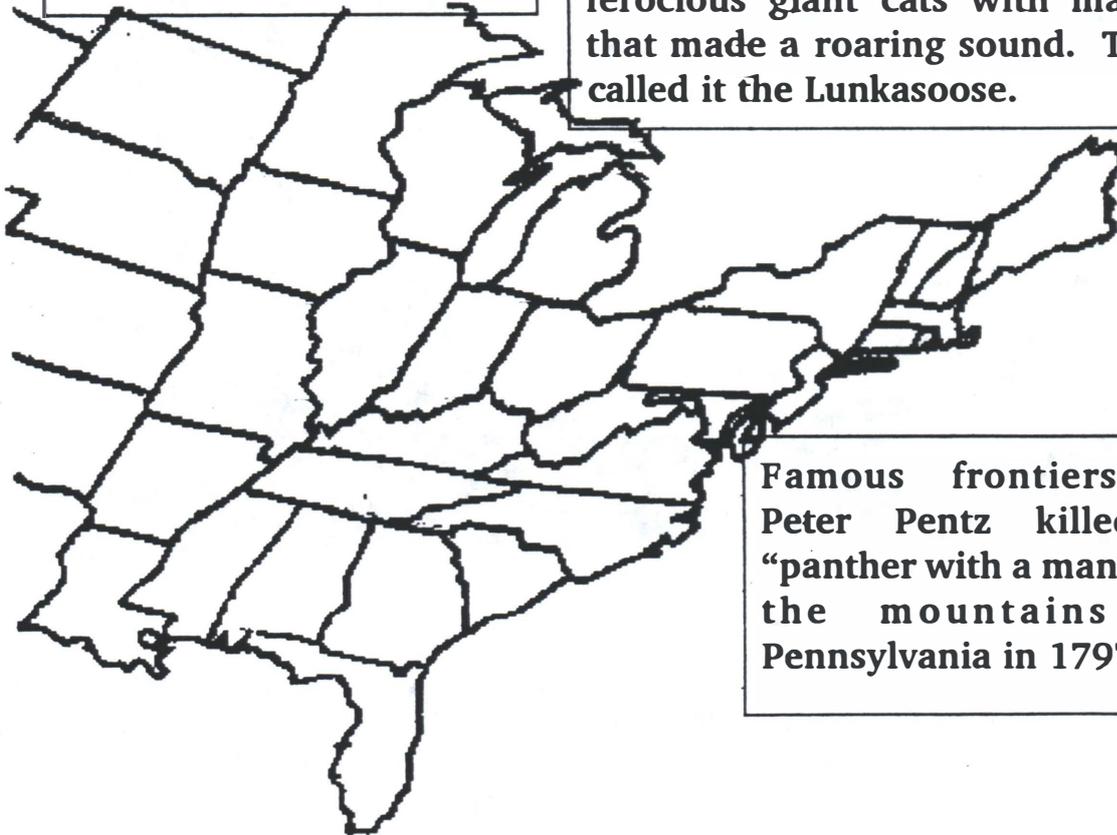
For more: see "A Primer on Mermaids" in *Wonders Vol. 6* (1999); *A Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe (Avon, 1999); *See Enchantress: The Tale of the Mermaid and Her Kin* by Gwen Benwell and Arthur Waugh (NY: Citadel Press, 1961, 1965).

GIANT

One of the most common of unusual animal reports in the Eastern states of the USA is the appearance of "black panthers" so-called because they are large cats and all black. The same reports occur in Western states but fewer are on record. They have been seen in the company of large brown-colored cats with manes. The maned cats appear to be the males and the black ones the females of the Pleistocene fossil cat *Panthera atrox*. These cat reports have been dismissed as feral house cats, fishers, "black pumas," and escapees from captivity...as anything but what they truly appear to be.

In 1948 a large maned cat and a black panther traveled through SE Indiana and nearby OH.

Indians in Maine in 1836 told of ferocious giant cats with manes that made a roaring sound. They called it the Lunkasoose.

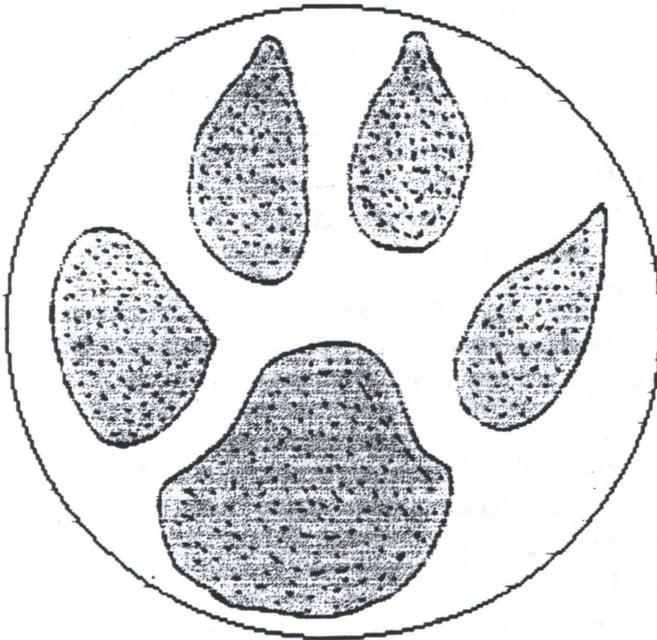
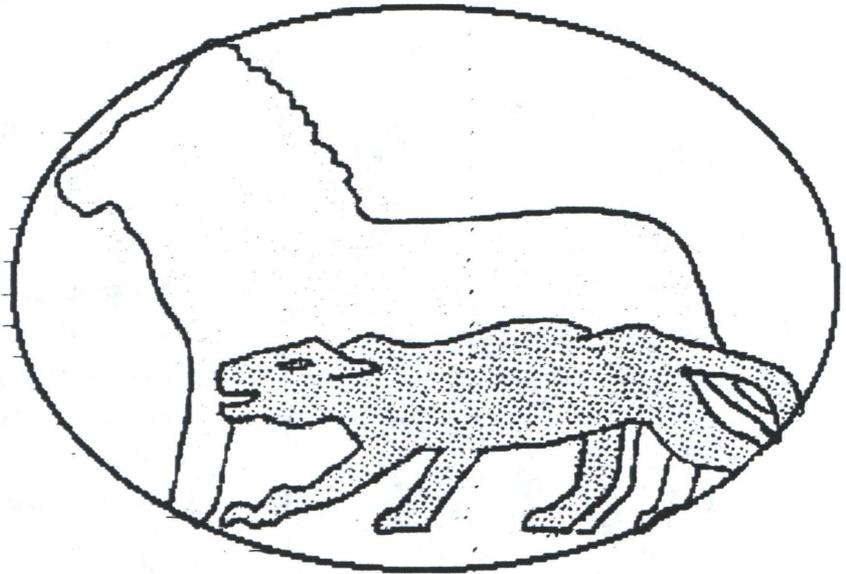


Famous frontiersman Peter Pentz killed a "panther with a mane" in the mountains of Pennsylvania in 1797.

CATS

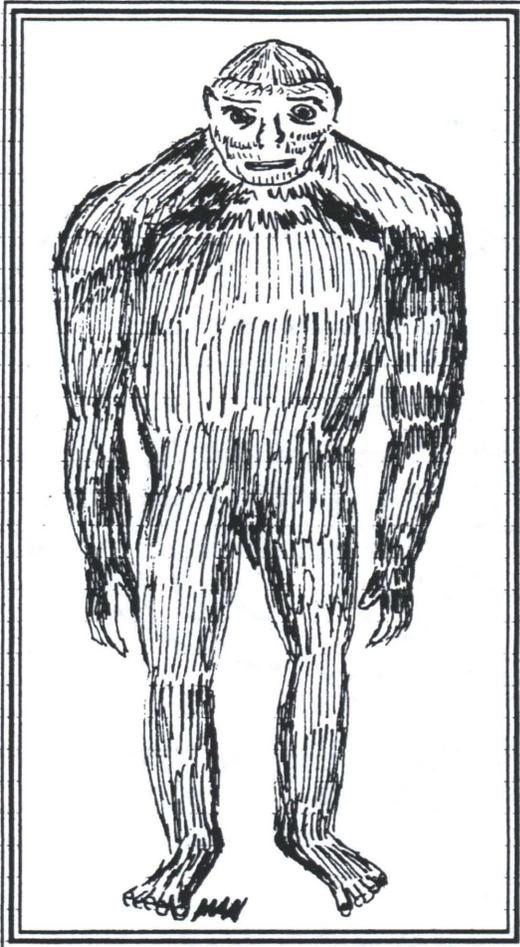
Panthera atrox, the American Lion, is the largest cat ever known to have lived in the Western Hemisphere. It appears to have survived as the *Lunkasoose*. The males are rarely seen but when they are they surprise witnesses with their size and with their

manes that make them look like African lions. They are called "TV lions" by people who are used to seeing such cats only on television.



The tracks of the males are huge. They are compared to dinner plates. The female track is smaller, about 5 inches by 4.5 inches and so has been casted and photographed more easily. Biologists advise people to dismiss any track with claw marks as that of a dog. It has become apparent that the female cat track does display claws. It probably has been incorrectly dismissed as a dog for this reason.

For more: See "The American Lion (*Panthera atrox*)" in *Wonders* Vol. 3 (1994).



TALLER -

The modern existence of *Homo gardarensis* (popular names for the same primate are the Taller-hominid and the Marked Hominid) is supported by substantial skull fragments removed from the soil of Greenland in 1926 by Danish archaeologists. The kin of this near-human appear to have been the Dorset culture. The Greenland Norse knew them as "trolls" and the Eskimos identified them as the *Tunnit*. A modern history of encounters with these same cultured primates goes back to 1862 in Michigan and continues up to the present day. This is not "Bigfoot" even though reports are mistakenly labeled as such. The Taller-hominid has its own origins among the fossil primates. Modern reports have been frequent in Ohio and Pennsylvania, but the evidence suggests they are still found across North America and around the world in smaller numbers than in the past.

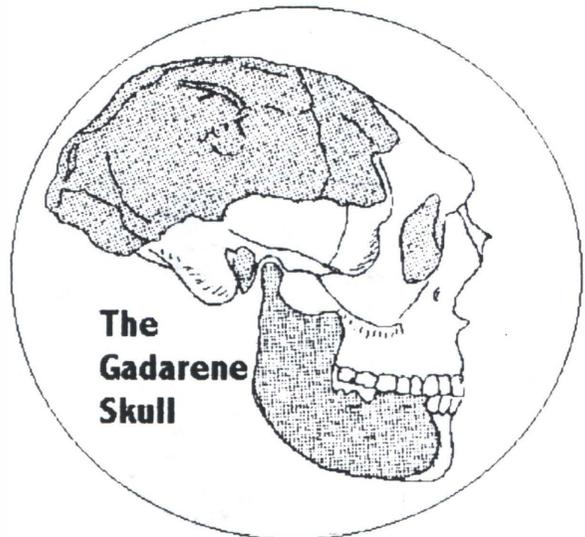
Typically the male Taller-hominid is about seven feet tall and very muscular. They are swift runners, and know their way around the forest environment like no other creature. Their tracks, which they try to conceal most of the time, are slightly larger than a human's.

HOMINID

THE LONG-SOUGHT BONES OF "WILD MEN"

The skull fragments exhumed in Greenland ended up in a museum in Copenhagen labeled as merely a "pathological specimen." It was described by Prof. F.C.C. Hansen who recognized it as something extraordinary. But after his death there was no one to speak up for it and argue for its importance. Others quietly stored the bones away and they were forgotten. These Gardarene bones show what happens to the physical evidence of "Wild Men" in the modern day. Other bones have met a worse fate. The "Minaret Calverium" found in California was shuffled into a university warehouse and lost track of. Similarly, bones found in northern Minnesota were shipped to the Smithsonian Institution where they were lost. These modern losses are a matter of record. But full descriptions of these lost bones were not made public before they were lost to museum oblivion.

In Labrador and Greenland are stone ruins attributed to the *Tunnit*. The remains of houses, monuments, and bear traps can still be seen today. The Taller-hominids had the brains to work and use tools, and they lived beside the Eskimos and hunted with them. Over time they came to blows and the Eskimos killed the Tunnit one by one in an effort to wipe them out. Eskimos in this century have said there are still some surviving Tunnit living at the back of fjords in Greenland in underground homes.



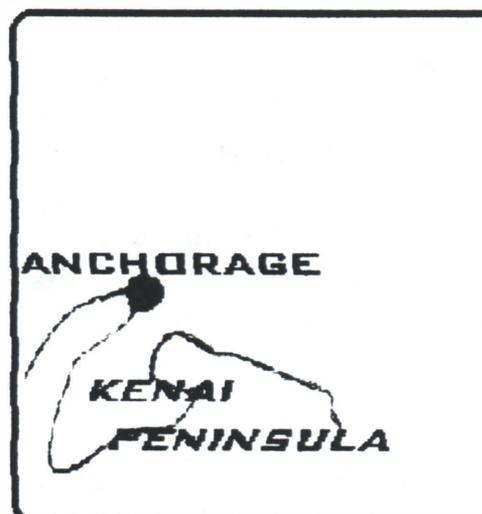
The
Gadarene
Skull

For more: See "*Homo gardarensis: A Different Kind of Bigfoot*" in *Wonders* Vol. 5 (1998) and *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren E. Coleman and Patrick Huyghe (Avon Books, 1999).

NEANDERTAL

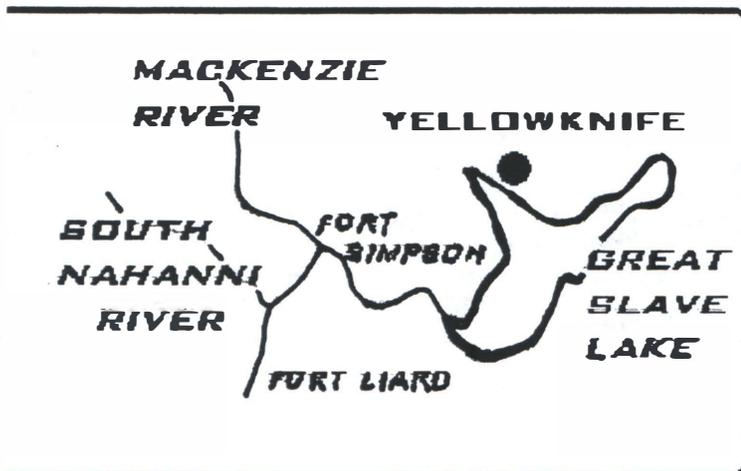
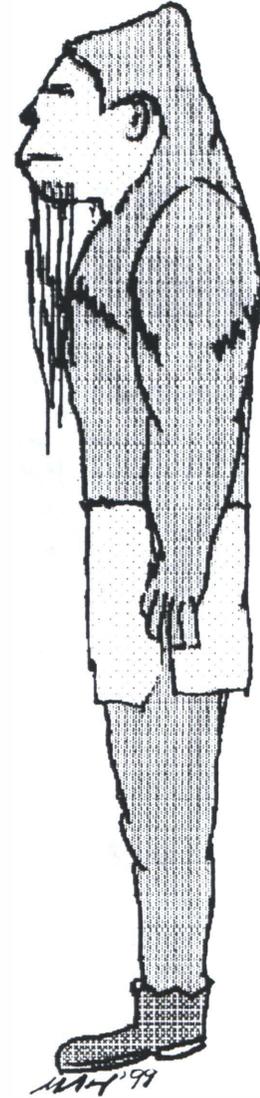
From Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories of Canada to the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska the American Indians have told visiting anthropologists about the Nakanni/Nahanni Indians. They are said to be "Bushmen" who appear in the summer months and are seen always at a distance. During the winter they retire into camouflaged pit-lodges. The drawings on this page and the next are based upon the eyewitness observation and description of a "Nuk-luk" (Man of the Bush) seen outside of Fort Simpson in the fall of 1964.

These Bushmen sometimes wear cast-off human footwear as this one and some clothing – and sometimes they have no clothing. The tracks left by their bare feet are unique and help to identify them – along with their physical description, behavior, and crude culture – as survivals of Neandertal Men and Women. The nearest recognized fossils of Neandertals have been found in Asia, but the persistent reports of Bushmen indicate the Neandertals found their way into the New World. Tracks reported in Asia suggest Neandertals might survive there also.



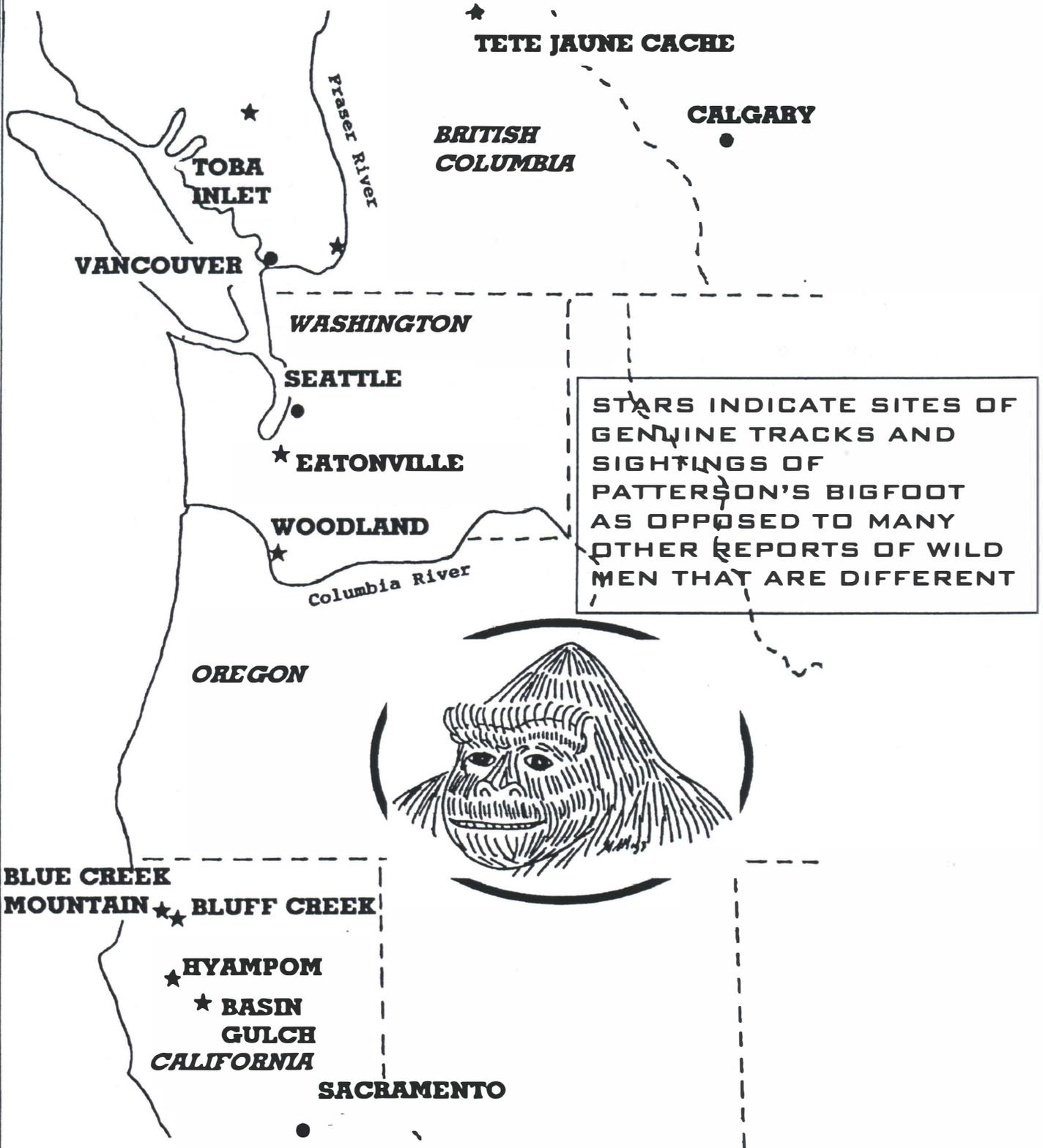
MAN

The sorting of the primates described here – Neandertals, the Taller-hominids, Patterson's Bigfoot, True Giants, and Mer-beings – has not been accomplished by any simple criterion such as size or tracks. Rather, each of them has been defined by several categories of evidence that support each other. The evidence derives from centuries of human observations made of these beings and their traces. There are: Modern reports of physical descriptions and behavior; Accumulated knowledge of their appearance and activities preserved as folklore; Unique tracks that have been attributed to the figures in the prior two categories; Matching of fossil tracks, presumed behavior, and associated culture for primate fossil types with the reports of something reported living in places where they are feasible.

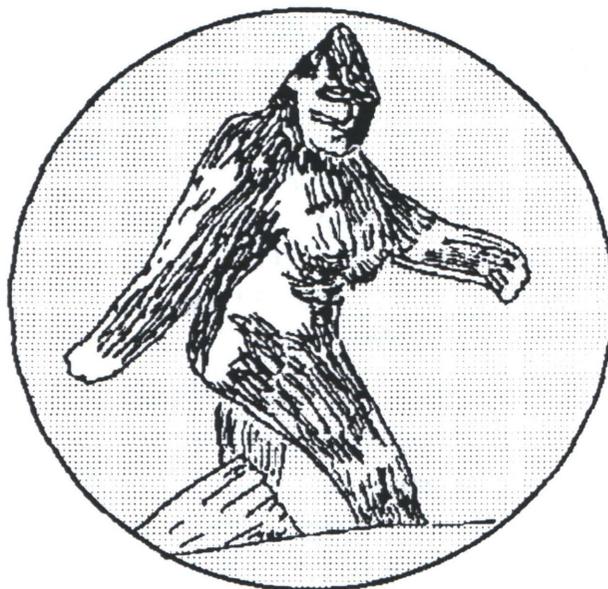
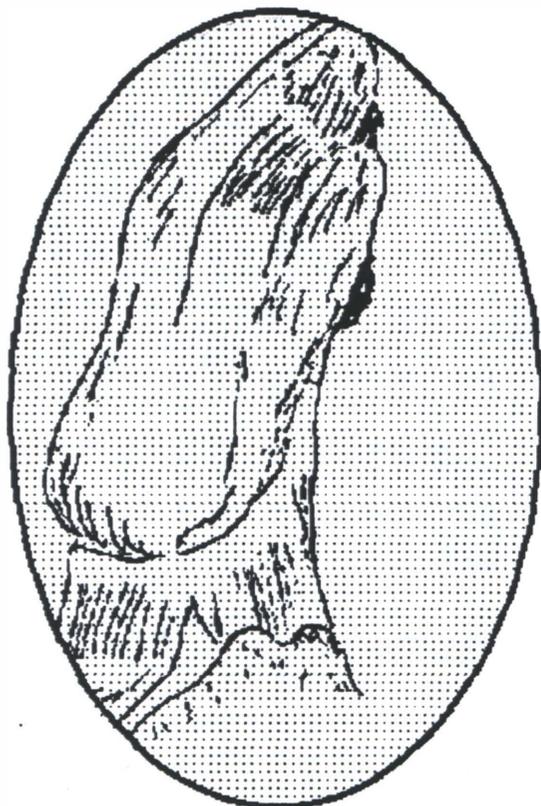


For more: See *Living Fossils* by Mark A. Hall (Forthcoming in June 1999); *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe (Avon, 1999).

PATTERSON'S



BIGFOOT



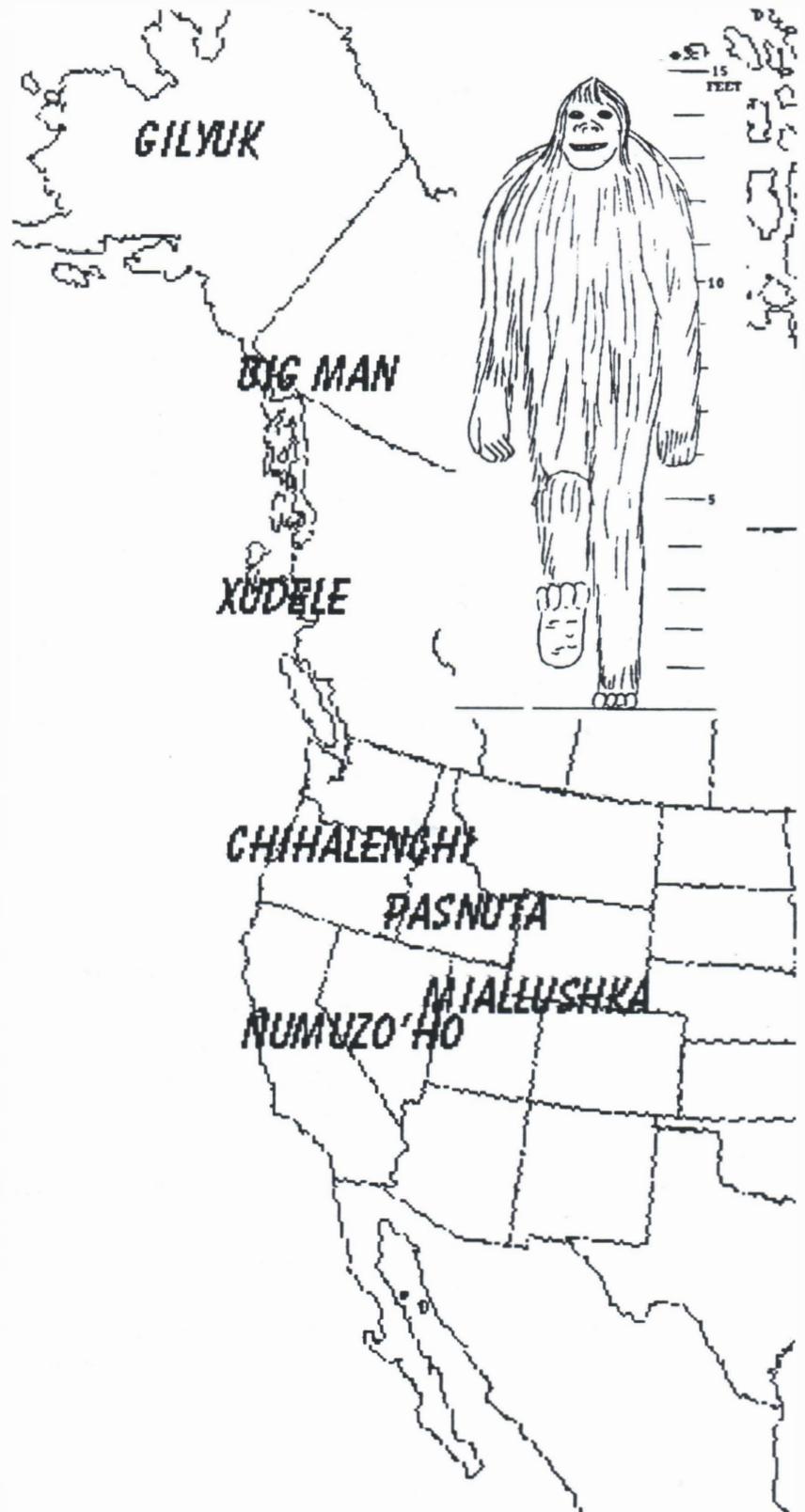
The forested mountains of the Pacific Northwest have been the source of many reports of large hairy primates. Loggers and miners began the stories in the 1800s. In 1958 the name of "Bigfoot" was applied to these mysterious figures. In 1967 motion film taken by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin showed a hairy female over six feet tall. That encounter provided visual proof and particular tracks that define the image of Patterson's Bigfoot. These shy forest giants reaching 8 feet in height have been wrongfully assumed to be behind all reports of hairy giants in North America. They appear to be the living descendants of the fossil primate *Paranthropus*. Similar survivors have been reported in Asia -- the Bear-Men of China and creatures seen by Slavomir Rawicz in the Himalaya. They are well-adapted to steep mountain slopes and thick forests from which they rarely venture. Their distinctive tracks exhibit sexual dimorphism.

For more: See *The Yeti, Bigfoot & True Giants* by Mark A. Hall (1994, 1997) and *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren Coleman & Patrick Huyghe (Avon, 1999).

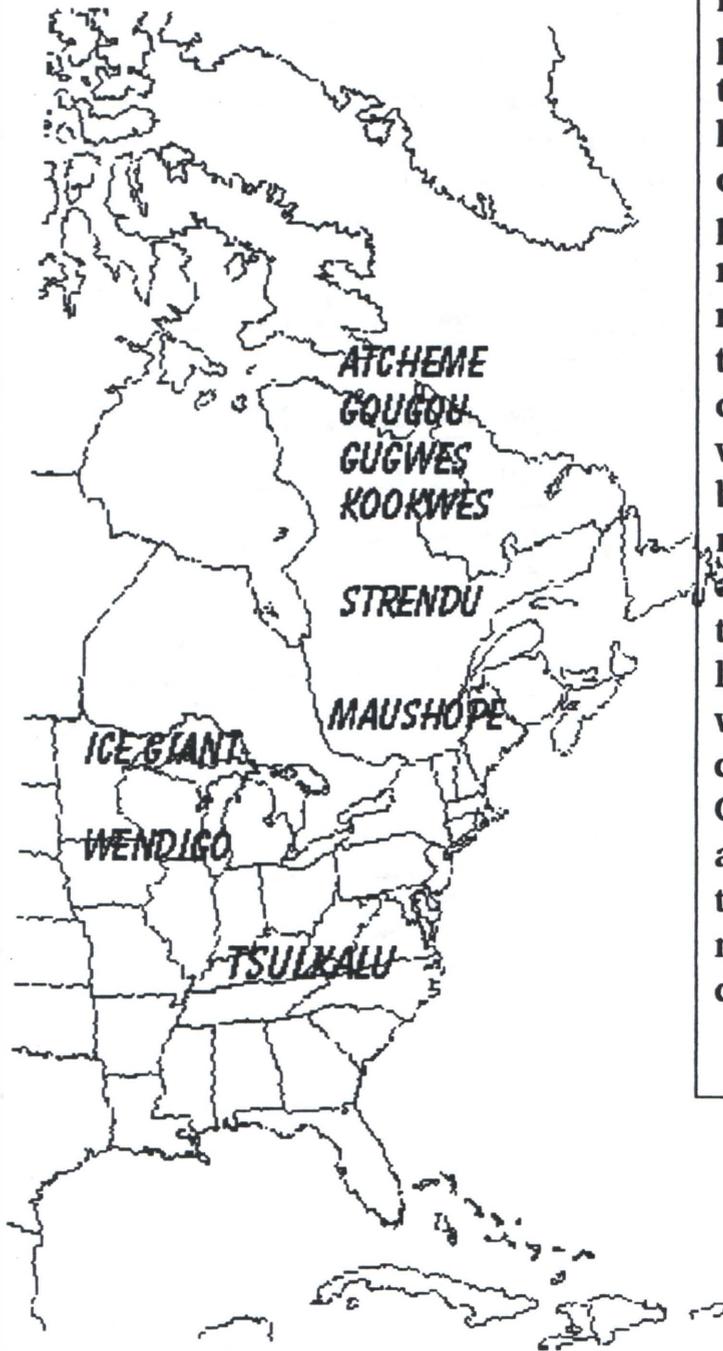
TRUE

Storybook giants as tall as trees have their origins in the existence of the *True Giants*. More than twice the height of human beings, these distant relatives of man seem to be the survivors of the fossil known as *Gigantopithecus*. They inhabit North America just as they are reported all around the world. They have retreated into mountainous regions and tall forests where they could avoid the giant-killers that our ancestors became when they could no longer live next to these giant primates that sometimes ate human beings. Names given to True Giants appear here.

The tracks left by the modern True Giants are distinctive. While they are enormous – measuring typically over 20 inches long – they show only four toes. This suggests that a fifth toe is vestigial, or has degenerated so that it no longer shows. It is not needed in a foot that is broad and flat and must serve to support and balance the great height of the owner. True Giants differ from the other unknown primates in their physical appearance, behavior, tracks, and success.



GIANTS

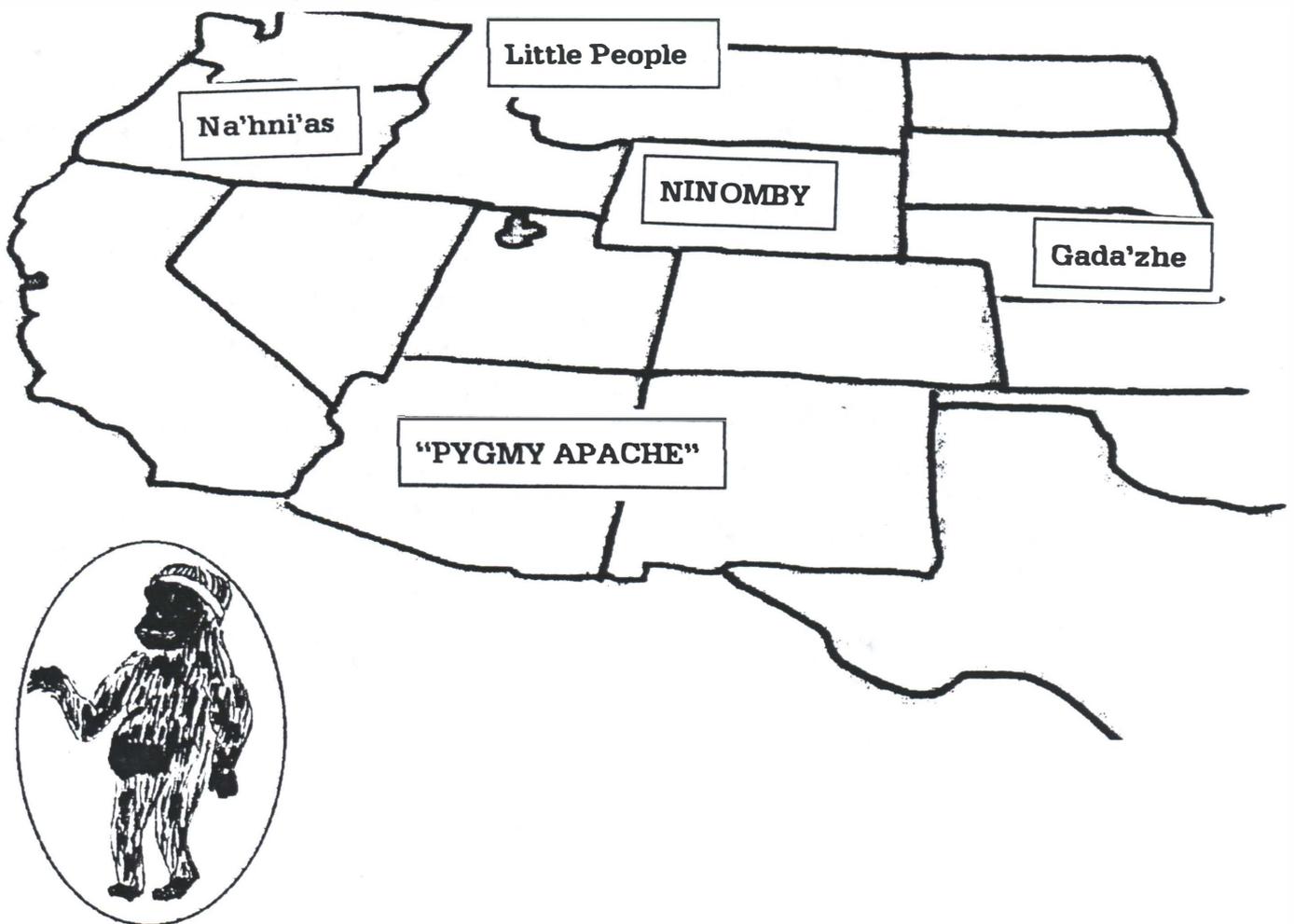


The finds of *Gigantopithecus* fossils in Asia consist of only partial jawbones and many teeth. For reasons perhaps having to do with the makeup of the bones of these huge primates, they are not well represented in the fossil records. When looking only at the fossils of record it is not clear what kind of creature it was so some think it must have been a giant gorilla. But the many accounts of True Giants around the world argue that this primate stands on its hind legs and resembles humans while certainly coming from a different line of evolution. Giant bones have been reported as found in the New World but those finds of decades ago were not preserved so that we can determine their origin.

For more: See *The Yeti, Bigfoot & True Giants* by Mark A. Hall (1997 2nd ed, MAHP Publications). Also *The Field Guide to Bigfoot...* by L. Coleman & P. Huyghe (1999).

LITTLE

North America joins the other major continents in being home to many local populations of *Little People*. The American Indians knew them well. But even they dealt with them through shamans such as told in Cherokee traditions. In parallel with European traditions there came a time when the Little People in North America decided to withdraw from human contact. They live apart and are seldom reported today perhaps as much from our fear to say what has been seen as from their scarcity. The most well-known tradition of them survives in Hawaii as the "Menehune."



The Menehune are the Little People of the Hawaiian Islands.

PEOPLE

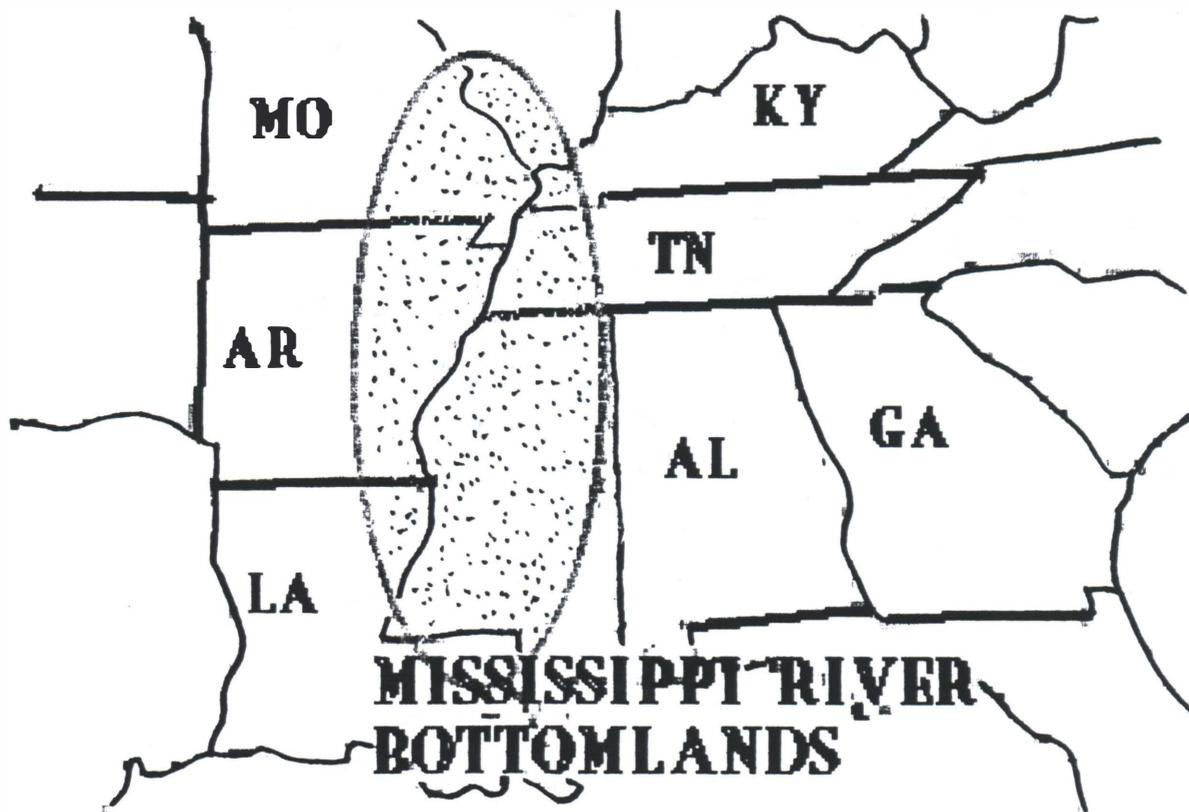
Little People typically grow to about three feet in height. They work together to accomplish great feats despite their small size. Their origin is uncertain, but they appear to have been around longer than human beings and so to have accumulated great wisdom. They have their own culture and survive concealed on islands and in mountains all around the globe.



For more: See *Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe (Avon, 1999).

AMERICAN

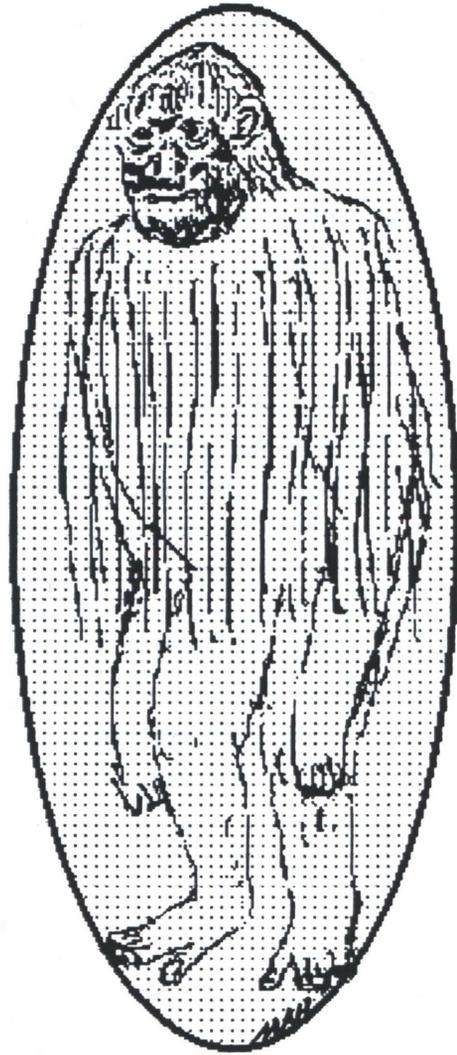
Surprising though it may be, the famous Yetis of the Himalaya have relatives in North America. While rare and perhaps never numerous, they have been long known in the swamplands in the South. The reports and traditions seem to cluster in and around the Mississippi River bottomlands. Modern reports have come from there and on the tributaries further north. The long presence of these primates is shown in the knowledge of them among the Choctaw Indians. They gave them the name of *Kashehotapalo* ("Calls like a woman") for the screaming sound that they make. They have the appearance of a large gorilla, long hair on the upper body, and leave tracks that are very much like the tracks identified with the Yeti in Asia.



YETI

The American Yeti is like its relatives in Asia and Africa in its physical appearance. American reports tell of a height of 5 feet. It is seen sitting in trees, swimming, and chasing people in a playful rather than a sinister fashion. It is capable of killing livestock for food. We have slight knowledge of them that derives from a few detailed encounters and many brief ones.

They are reported outside of the bottomlands of the South, especially in states bordering the Ohio River such as Indiana, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. And some have turned up in such far flung points as Oregon and Minnesota suggesting that the Yeti is adaptable to many environments. Cryptozoologist Loren E. Coleman found and photographed its track in Illinois in 1962. Further findings caused him to propose the existence of what he termed the "North American Ape" or NApe. The appearance and widespread distribution of the Yetis make them likely to be descendants of the genus *Dryopithecus*. Fossil finds in Africa, Europe, and Asia indicate such a successful ape.

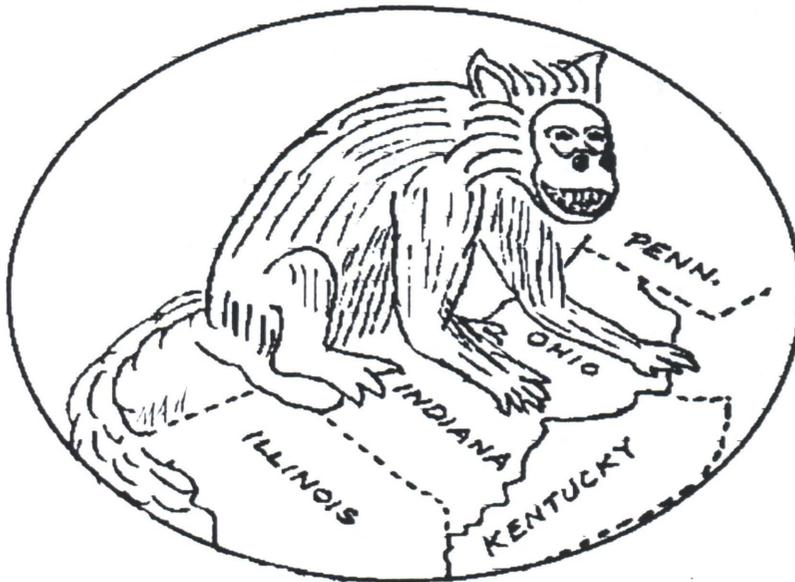


For more: See *The Yeti, Bigfoot & True Giants* by Mark A. Hall (2nd ed. 1997); *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe (Avon, 1999).

GIANT

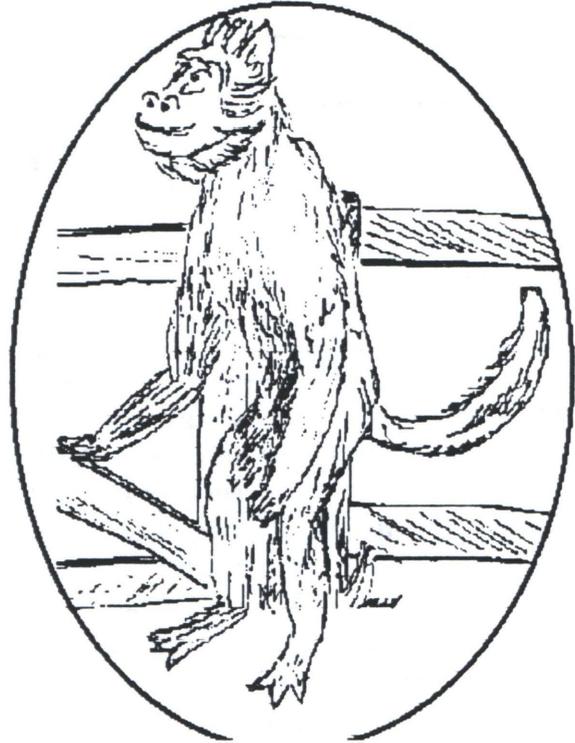
The largest and most formidable monkey in the world is now among the most rare and retiring among the primates. *Simopithecus* was once an enemy of humankind. Humans and these *Giant Monkeys* once fought battles for which there is fossil evidence. Now, however, these monkeys survive by being cautious and living in such places as the mountains in Asia. Some are scattered across North America, remnants of a prior success in moving out of Asia. *Simopithecus* is a giant baboon, a larger version of the Gelada Baboons of Ethiopia in Africa.

The young of these Giant Monkeys resemble small marsupials, and like their elders they get around by saltation, leaping in the manner of kangaroos and wallabies. For these reasons reports of kangaroos in the wild in North America have behind them the presence of these Giant Monkeys. The young are playful and less cautious, it seems, and so are more likely to be observed. Caution is probably instilled in them as they grow older. Their elders have been seen fleetingly, and observed to make great leaps. They look more like baboons as they grow up. There were numerous reports of them in the twentieth century in states from Illinois to Pennsylvania but they are known elsewhere.



MONKEYS

There are a couple of American Indian names on record that appear to have been applied to these monkeys. The Choctaw in Louisiana called them "Nalusa Falaya" or "The Long Evil Being" that dwelled in the swamps. In Alaska Indians gave it a name rendered in English as "Sdonalyasna." It was said to be very good at imitating the sounds of animals and birds – also something reported about the Midwestern monkeys on record in recent years.



Modern reports of the giant baboons indicate that they survive in small family units and they move about constantly, perhaps through the same large and familiar territory. Sometimes they are noticed and cause a stir in the newspapers. But soon they are moving on again, and the fuss that no one understood anyway is forgotten. Many indications of them are brief encounters. But there is enough information to indicate their presence in states all across North America and in many parts of Canada. Their tracks are sometimes found. The adult track is distinctively broad with three large toes indicated. They are formidable creatures and are not to be trifled with for their individual capabilities. Clearly they have learned to be retiring in their daily habits to avoid detection and molestation by well-armed human beings. Their ancient enemy has now nearly forgotten them.

For more: See *Devil Monkey: The Survival of the Giant Baboon* by Mark A. Hall (forthcoming in 2000); *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* by Loren E. Coleman and Patrick Huyghe (Avon Books, 1999).

MORE

Giant Bear. One specimen of *Velularctos inopinatus* was killed in June of 1864. No other NWT "Macfarlane's bear" yet found.

Sea Serpents. Many sightings of "Cadborosaurus" and other marine unknowns continue to be made on the West Coast.

Giant Freshwater Scorpions. Lakes in Oklahoma and elsewhere have been the abode of large tentacled creatures that drown people and cause whirlpools.

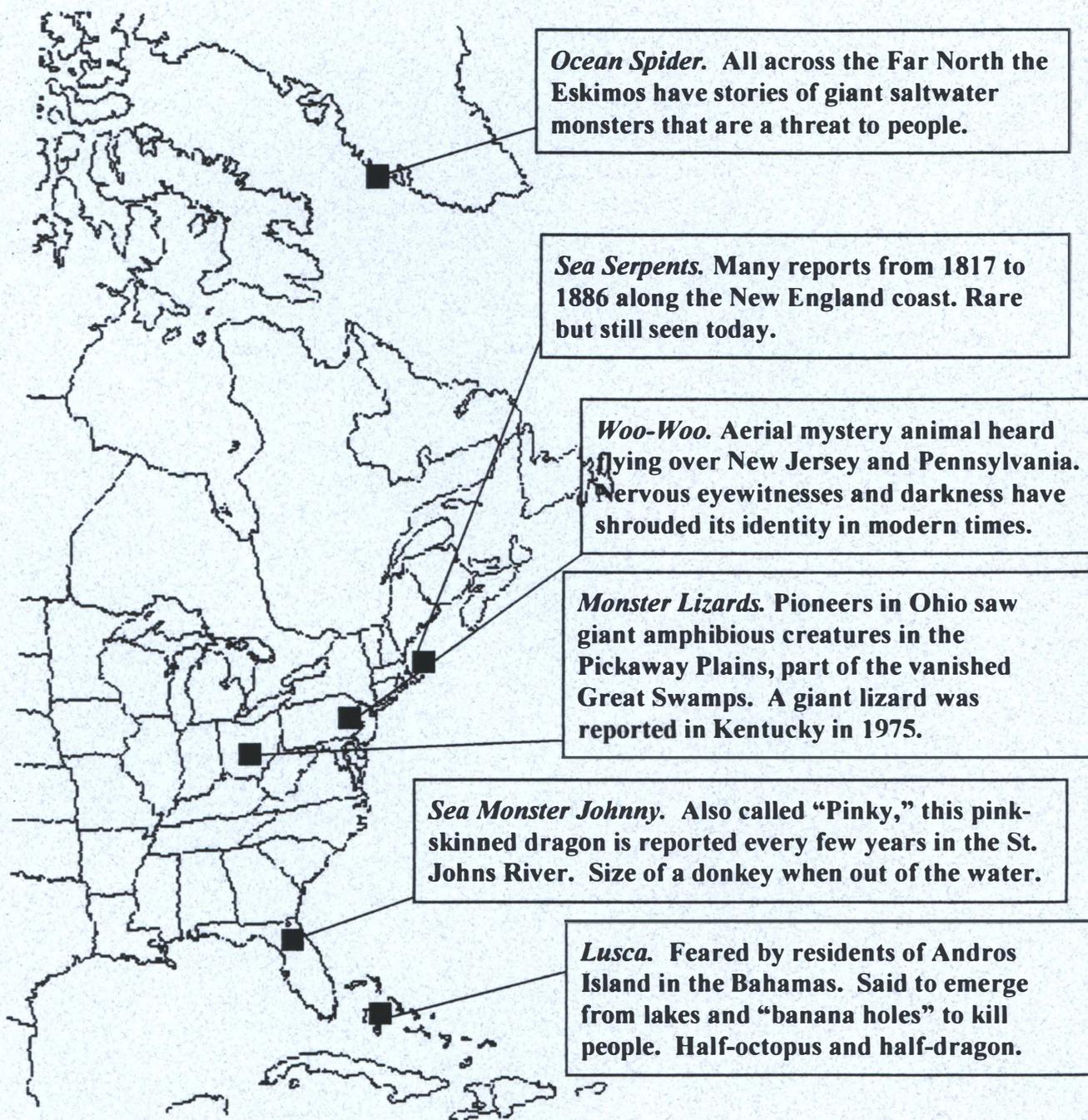
Carlsbad Creature. In New Mexico in 1938 a thing with the body of a large horse, a long neck, and the head of a snake attacked a dog.

Pterodactyls. Seldom reported but still on record in the Southwest are Pterodactyl-like flying creatures. The most famous was seen in Arizona Territory in 1890. It was not killed as told in an exaggerated newspaper account. Possibly visitors from Mexico or points further to the south.

Giant Crocodiles. Known to the Indians and reported from lakes in central states. In 1750 one emerged from Lake Espantosa and dragged a woman into the lake.

HAVE YOU SEEN OR HEARD OF A MONSTER? PLEASE WRITE AND TELL US ABOUT IT AT MAHP, BOX 3153 BUTLER STATION, MPLS MN 55403 USA.

UNKNOWNNS



For more: See "Pinky- The Forgotten Dinosaur" in *Wonders* Vol. 1 (1992).

PURSUING MONSTERS

The wonderful thing about real live "monsters" is that they don't scare us. Instead they intrigue us. They are elusive and rare. They draw our curiosity and we want to learn more about them. Monsters are found all over the world. North America has its share. Monsters occupy the diverse ecological environments all around the continent. They are nature's insurance that capable forms of life will fill the available and changing niches for living things through the geological ages.

The American Indians knew of them. They passed along this knowledge by word of mouth rather than by itemized lists of animals. So it has been all too easy to dismiss their knowledge as mere stories. Recent centuries of deforestation (and some re-forestation), draining of swamps for farmland, mining, and city-building have driven the monsters into remote locations, deeper waters, and largely out of sight. They are especially active at night when we are active the least. At such times they come closest to us and then disappear into the darkness. Left behind are a few witnesses convinced the monster exists while many people who were not there say such things cannot exist.

To learn more about monsters requires special effort. Two methods exist that work best when combined. They are *search* and *research*.

Research includes reading the best discussions you can find of the history and folklore of monster reports. Also begin with basic reading in an allied field of natural history. For example, if you are interested in giant snakes, read basic books in the field of herpetology, the study of reptiles and amphibians. Move on to your own study of folklore, the collection of newspaper accounts, and the gathering and evaluation of anecdotal evidence. The personal experiences and recollections of witnesses to monster encounters will reveal a lot about unusual animals and how people respond to them. Study what you find in the context of nature and in the context of the geography where monsters are said to exist.

Search will take you into the field – to the scene of monster reports, to meet new people, and possibly to see the traces of a monster or the monster itself. The more you have prepared yourself with research the better are your chances of going to the right places and finding the traces that you seek to add to your knowledge.

Nature holds many wonders. Among them are the rare creatures we call "monsters" only because we have remained ignorant of them. Pursue them and you will not be sorry. You will be surprised at what they can do, and you will learn a lot about how human beings behave as well.

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