

# WONDERS

SEEKING THE TRUTH IN A UNIVERSE OF MYSTERIES

Vol. 7 No. 1

March 2002

## The Vampire Beast of Bladenboro

### Bladen Beast Still Prowls

BY JAY HALL  
Star Staff Writer

BLADENBORO, Jan. 5 — The bleeder beast of Bladenboro was still kill-hungry today, still the master of this jittery town waiting for its next strike.

Special To The Star  
BLADENBORO, Jan. 5 — A posse of "500 people" formed here late tonight to hunt the mysterious beast that has been terrorizing this town since Sunday, D. H. Armstrong, who said he

black one, and Pee-wee, a brown one, that's bigger.

Dogs Get Restless

"Me and my wife were sitting here in the living room. We heard the dogs get awful restless.

"My front light was on and Larry More (whose kitchen faces Clem-

### Bladenboro Beast Reported Seen Along Highway

BLADENBORO — The strange

### Guns, Dogs Circle Blood-Lusty Beast

BLADENBORO, (Thursday) Jan. 7 — Close to 1,000 people rambled through the freezing night enveloping Cotton Mill Village here last night in an "at search for Bladenboro's mysterious beast. self-invited hordes with shot-

### Strange 'Beast Of Bladenboro' Crops Up Again

BLADENBORO — The mysterious "beast of Bladenboro" has again started this area as he struck again last night, killing three more dogs.

### Zoologists Put Beast Down To Imagination

— RALEIGH, Jan. 10 (UPI) — As North Carolina are common, the cording to reports, a black pan-beast, themselves area t. they claims the shores of Lake. "Such reports almost always are

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## YES, WE'VE MOVED

Lock, stock, and barrel we have departed our native state of Minnesota for the attractions of Wilmington, North Carolina. We have made a new home here on the edge of the campus of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

## OUR FOOTPRINT ON THE WEB

For the latest information on our publications you can find us on the web at <http://home.att.net/~mark.hall.wonders>. The site is called "Mark A Hall Publications." There you can read a monthly feature called "Mystery Profile." Each month a different topic is outlined or updated. Those profiles are preserved on a separate web page as well (<http://home.att.net/~mhall.profiles>). Links to all the web pages are located at the bottom of the Publications page. A page called "Mysteries in History" presently contains our reviews of *The Farfarers* and *Vikings* and an excerpt from the book *Living Fossils* (<http://home.att.net/~mhall.mysteries>).

The two primary topics of exotic ornithology are featured at "Thunderbird and Bighoot" (<http://home.att.net/~mhall.bigbirds>). Be sure to check out this link and keep up with the news and commentary on these two native birds of North America, the soaring teratom and the giant owl.

At "Bigfoot Profiles" (<http://home.att.net/~mhall.bigfoot>) we have sorted out the names and types of primates behind the world-wide reports of "wildmen" and giant apes.

# The Vampire Beast of Bladenboro

by Mark A Hall

Almost a half century has gone by since North Carolina and the reading public in the USA were treated to the sensation of the Vampire Beast of Bladenboro. A community in Bladen County, fifty miles northwest of Wilmington, was the source of chilling stories of a monster. It was reported as a bloodthirsty demon that began killing the dogs of Bladenboro. A classic monster hunt took place in January of 1954. The hunt was accompanied by some typical anecdotes of human behavior and by the stirring up of other references to regional "monsters."

Here I will relate this episode as told primarily in the pages of the *Wilmington Star and News*, and for the first time I will identify as part of this record what the "Vampire Beast" truly was.

Bladenboro is located in the southwest corner of Bladen County. Bill Sharpe noted forty years ago in a popular geography of North Carolina that "much of the county is in swamps and bays, and of the 562,560 acres, forest lands cover 516,800 acres – making it one of the most forested counties in the state." Bladenboro he described as a "thriving community" and the home of Bladenboro Mills, the county's largest industry. The town had "a 1950 population of 796 and populous suburbs." [1]

The town was and still is surrounded by swamps. To the west is Big Swamp. Mill Swamp, Bryant Swamp, and others come up to the edge of town. From these swamps came the creature that made Bladenboro famous.

At the time of the first episodes of dog-killing no one could have predicted that the story would become the sensation that it did. It was only after three incidents that the newspapers began to take note of the activity. The local *Bladen Journal* in Elizabethtown came out once a week and so was only able to begin its coverage on January 7<sup>th</sup>. The first coverage in a daily paper in North Carolina came on January 4<sup>th</sup>. And then they were looking back to December 29<sup>th</sup> of 1953 for the beginning of it all.

Reconstructing events from conflicting newspaper accounts, the first incident of killings seems to have taken place at Clarkton southeast of Bladenboro on the evening of Tuesday, December 29, 1953. The report provided a good description, but those characteristics were not widely noted or accepted. From the beginning to the end of Beast's presence in Bladen County people were in doubt as to what the creature looked like and therefore what it might truly be.

A sleek and black cat-like animal was seen at Clarkton. It was five feet long and had a round face. It was observed pulling a dog into the brush. The dog was later found to be bloodless and to have been partially eaten. Two dogs belonging to Johnny Vause were killed.

Two days later on New Years' Eve two more dogs were killed at Bladenboro. They belonged to Woodie Storms. The night of Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the killer returned causing the dogs of the town to start howling. But that night the creature simply dragged away the carcass of one of the dogs it had killed two days earlier. [2]

The next night the animal was seen by Malcolm Frank. Here is how the *Wilmington Star* reported his sighting:

Malcolm Frank, a resident of this town, described the beast as about four and a half feet long, bushy, and resembling either a bear or a panther. (Editor's note: Sounds like a wolverine.) [3]

There you have it. It was like a bear, a panther, and a wolverine. Later the list of suspects gets longer.

Police Chief Roy Fores of Bladenboro tried to track the beast with the assistance of three coonhounds, but the dogs refused to track the animal. [4] This was the first but not the last failure of this kind. As other people have pointed out for many years, tracking dogs are trained to track particular animals. Here the nature of the animal to be tracked was unknown.

The mysterious creature was dubbed a "vampire" due to the bloodless condition of the remains of the dogs. The faces of the dogs were crushed. By January 5<sup>th</sup> at least six dogs had died.

The list of suspects grew. It read: panther, bear, alligator, wildcat, bobcat, mountain lion, wolf, wolverine.

A news spotlight was now being cast on Bladenboro. Events began to unfold at a rapid pace.

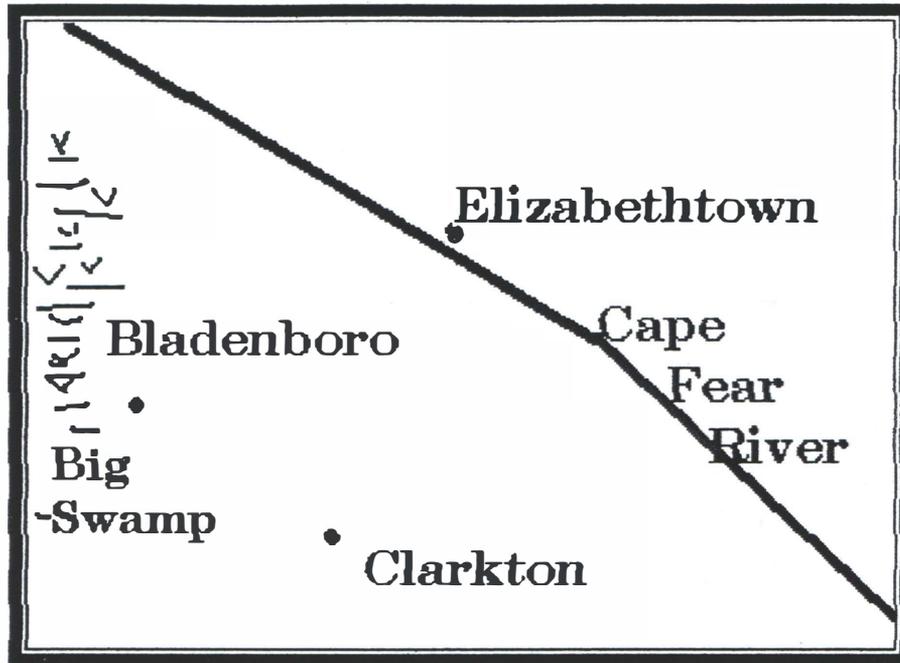


Fig. 1. Bladenboro and vicinity.

About eight o'clock on the evening of January 4<sup>th</sup>, Lloyd Clemmons had this experience which he related to Jay Hall, a staff writer for the *Wilmington Star*:

Me and my wife were sitting here in the living room. We heard the dogs [Niggy and Peewee] get awful restless. My front light was on Larry More (whose kitchen faces Clemmons' front porch) had his back light on. I glanced out the window and saw this thing. It had me plumb spellbound. It was about three feet long and 20 inches high. It had a long tail, about 14 inches. The color of it was dark. It had a face exactly like a cat. Only I ain't ever seen a cat that big. It was walking around stealthy, sneaky, moving around trying to get to Niggy and Peewee. I jumped for my shotgun and loaded it and went out to shoot it, but it moved into the darkness right away and I couldn't find him again. [5]

At this time the finding of tracks was being reported. They were seen on the sandy shoulders of roads, in yards of houses on Old Cotton Mill Hill, and on the banks of creeks. D. G. Pait was a Bladenboro man who was

assisting Police Chief Fores. (Pait's wife Pauline was a town clerk and in that role she was frequently quoted issuing statements to the press.) Pait had found two sets of tracks. Jay Hall reported:

Pait, who has been as relentless as Fores on the hunt for the killer animal, said two sets of tracks were plainly visible on a creek bank near one of the vampire's more recent attacks. He said one set was smaller than the other, running alongside the larger tracks, and both sets were identical in type. This led to speculation that the killer might be a mother animal with a young offspring or that it might be a male and female pair. [6]

In the area of the Clemmons' home at 1:30 a.m. on January 5<sup>th</sup>, Fores and Pait were out with other men looking for the beast when they heard the killer in action about 100 feet away from them. As Hall wrote:

While they stood at the corner of one house, they heard a dog crying in great pain, they said, and could tell he was going, or being dragged, into everglades-like growth immediately behind the houses. The dogs they put on the trail circled in and out of the undergrowth but found nothing. Meanwhile, the armed men uncovered tracks they could identify as belonging to no animal they knew and chalked them down as those of the "vampire." They said the tracks, resembling those of a dog or cat, were about the size of half the ordinary hand. [7]

In the evening of that Tuesday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, a major event in this story was to trigger an increase in the number of hunters for the killer. About 7:30 p.m. Mrs. Charles E. Kinlaw, a 21-year-old mother, was concerned about her dog and went out on her porch in Cotton Mill Village. She spied the beast and she thought it was stalking her. It was 20 feet away. She screamed and ran back into the house. She alerted her husband. When he came out of the house with his shotgun the animal was gone. The only description of the thing attributed to her was that it was "cat-like." [8]

Now it seemed that a person had been threatened by the beast. That night the posse hunting the beast grew to 500 men. The next night the number of hunters approached 1000.

At the forefront of these searches were three men from Wilmington. Two of them were recognized as avid outdoorsmen, S. W. Garrett and J. M. Gore. The third man was Charlie Cummings who drove the dogs provided by Garrett and Gore.

It was reported that "gigantic tracks of cat-like form" were found all over the yard of the Kinlaws. Garrett suggested that the animal was a black panther. He was quoted as saying, "And I would say he weighs at least 90 pounds, judging from the size of his footprints and the indentations of them."

D. G. Pait reported that someone heard the call of the beast on the morning of January 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:45 a.m. It was, in the words of reporter Jay Hall, "like the cry of an angry cat, except magnified to spine-tingling proportions." Garrett later told Hall that he too had heard the cry of the animal and it sounded to him like a panther, an animal which he had hunted. [9]

On the morning of January 7<sup>th</sup> it was left to Pauline Pait, in her role as town clerk, to report that the search the previous night for the "killer beast" was unsuccessful. Officials had, in fact, called off the hunt when the number of hunters became so great that they could not safely continue the search. It was reported in the *Wilmington News* that "a pack of Plotthounds refused to follow the trail of the creature into a field of tall grass last night after tracking him to the edge of the swamp. Hunters said the dogs followed the animal to the grass and stopped and bayed, but refused to go further." [10]

To this point in the monster saga six dogs had been killed and a seventh dog had vanished after being attacked. On January 7<sup>th</sup> another dog was found slain. It was found dead at the edge of a pasture by a swamp. The hunters and the hunt were now becoming as big a part of the story as the killings by the beast. Here is how Jay Hall reported the activities late in the day on January 7<sup>th</sup>:

Tonight more crowds flocked to the scene to take part in the hunt, threatening to equal last night's hunt in which nearly 1,000 people were participants or spectators. Bladen County Sheriff's Deputy Ernest Priest estimated the crowd at 800 to 1,000.

At least four packs of dogs were promised for tonight, [Police Chief] Fores said.

Whether or not some dogs would be tied out in a lonely area as bait for the animal before the hunt's end tonight was

undetermined.

Fores said the stakeout would go into effect whenever Bladenboro mayor W. G. Fussells [elsewhere identified as "E. C. Fussell" – MAH] gave the word.

Such a plan was meant to be carried out last night but was called off at the last minute. Disorganized movements of throngs of people invited touchy trigger fingers to shoot first and investigate later, hunt leaders said.

They felt that staked-out dogs would increase tension and attract too many spectators to the stakeout areas.

By today, there seemed to be a general opinion that the mysterious killer-beast was a mad panther, although some still clung to arguments that it was a wildcat, bobcat, wolf, wolverine, or some other creature of killer instincts. [11]

The morning of January 8<sup>th</sup> Pauline Pait announced that the hunters had tracked the beast the night before but did not corner him. At the same time it was reported that residents had described the animal's cries. They were said to sound like the "cries of a baby," "howls of a coyote," and the "wailing of a woman." [12]

As to the identity of the creature, United Press filed this item:

BLADENBORO -- Belief grew today that a mysterious, dog-killing beast reported in this area is a panther from the wilds of the Cape Fear swamplands. State wildlife officials said panthers, though extremely rare, still occur in the remote swamps and forests of the Cape Fear Valley. Veteran hunters said the panther theory is borne out by descriptions of those who have seen the animal and heard its scream. [13]

On the lighter side of events, the mayor of Bladenboro, W. G. Fussells, was also the operator of the local movie theater. He made a trip to Charlotte and returned with a film that he advertised by handbills declaring "Now you can see the 'Cat.' We have him on our screen! And in technicolor too! 'The Big Cat.' All day Saturday, Jan. 9." [14]

*The Big Cat* was a 1947 film directed by Phil Karlson and starring Forrest Tucker, Peggy Ann Garner, Preston Foster, and Lon McCallister. It

told a story about the hunt for a livestock-killing mountain lion lauded as “the biggest cougar ever spotted west of the Mississippi.” [15]

After a week of futile overnight monster hunts, the mayor called off such efforts waiting for another strike by the killer. The hunts were thought to have driven the creature deep into the swamps.

The night of January 8<sup>th</sup> only four people went out hunting, with a small crowd said to have awaited the results of their effort. The four were fraternity brothers of Delta Kappa Epsilon who had come down from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They were Dick Todd, Wade Coleman, Horace Ray, and Steve Owen. No results were reported, and their foray was the last. Jay Hall went so far as to title his January 9<sup>th</sup> article on the subject “Vampire Beast Wins Battle of Bladenboro.” [16]

Later we will consider how the hunters at Bladenboro did not know the task they had set for themselves. They failed just as many other people have failed to catch up with, let alone trap and kill, this kind of animal. They did not know what they were hunting for. It was not an animal in any of the lists that were put forth at the time.

The monster hunt caused Chief Fores to get a telegram from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Asheville. They were concerned about the risk to a dog being staked out as bait. That was something that was considered but never actually attempted.

The Society then received an unsigned letter identified as coming from the beast itself. The unknown humorist wrote: “It shoz how littel you no about vampires. I don’t eat no beef, horse, fishes, turtels, rabbits, snakes, weezels, or burd. All I want is dog!” [17]

The *Wilmington News* reported upon the most unusual victim of the monster vigil.

**BLADENBORO** – The “beast of Bladenboro” has caused at least one youngster here to lose the use of his bicycle. It has just come to light that while most of the population was out attempting to track down the critter one citizen remained at home to guard the premises against invasion by the sulking phantom of the swamps. All was quiet until his dog suddenly started barking and the neighborhood canines joined in the chorus. Grabbing his trusty shotgun the man rushed outside and, seeing a shadowy shape against the side of the house, blazed away. His child’s

bicycle crumpled to the ground with the tires in shreds and the seat ripped with buckshot. The beast apparently continued to roam uncaught. [18]

The next sign of the beast came on January 12<sup>th</sup>. Motorists reported sighting it on Highway 211 four miles outside of Bladenboro. How they would know the animal was the killer was not made clear. Jeff Evers told Police Chief Fores that the animal that crossed the road was four feet long, two feet high, and a "brownish or tabby color." The chief heard the same description from another driver. [19]

Speculations on the identity of the killer were what next made news. People had a lot of ideas. On Wednesday the *Wilmington Star* reported that a man in Lumberton thought it was Big Boy, a dog he had given away 16 months earlier to someone who lived on the edge of Big Swamp, on the border between Bladen and Robeson Counties. The man told how the dog had often escaped from him and run off to kill chickens. A veterinarian from Lumberton added he thought Big Boy could be the killer. [20]

Then animals began to turn up that people wanted to identify as the monster. Luther Davis found a bobcat in a trap in the Big Swamp at 6 a.m. on January 13<sup>th</sup>. He dispatched the animal and displayed it for a newspaper photograph. The cat was grey-brown, had a stumpy tail, was 30 inches long, and weighed about 35 pounds. But the same day Bruce Soles, the operator of a gas station in Tabor City, was driving out of Bladenboro when he ran over what he called a "leopard cat." He tossed the dead animal into his truck and drove home to Tabor City. It was described as 20 to 24 inches high with a tail 8 inches long, and its weight was in the range of 75 to 90 pounds. Days later it was concluded that this animal was a Mexican ocelot that had escaped from a wild animal show at Lumberton the previous fall. [21]

The next to venture their views were "zoologists" at the State Museum of Natural History in Raleigh. Except for one name, they remained anonymous. The United Press story carried the headline "Zoologists Put Beast Down To Imagination." It contained this advice:

If Bladenboro is alarmed, officials of the State Museum of Natural History advised today that while reports of strange beasts in North Carolina are common, the beasts themselves aren't.



Fig. 2. Locations in North Carolina.

“Such reports almost always are highly imaginative,” zoologist F. B. Meacham said. Very few of them appear sufficiently authentic to be investigated by naturalists. The truth is that if there were evidence that the “beast of Bladenboro” were a panther or even a gray wolf, museum officials would be highly interested.

No authentic panther or mountain lion has been found in North Carolina in nearly 50 years. The last was seen near Highlands, N.C., in 1905. But as recent as 1923 and 1937 panthers were seen near Shady Valley, Tenn., and at Roan Mountain, Tenn., just across the border from North Carolina.

The last panthers officially reported in coastal North Carolina were at Lake Ellis in Craven County, near New Bern, and at Rose Bay in Hyde County in the 1880s.

The specimen of mountain lion which is stuffed and on display at the museum as “native fauna” actually came from Montana.

The gray wolf, which like the bison was once native to North Carolina, disappeared from the mountain counties shortly after the turn of the century. There are no reports of wolves in the coastal sections.

Among the reports classified by museum officials as "hoaxes" included the story of a black panther being seen in the Dare County wilds near Stumpy Point several years ago. Naturalists who searched frantically for it never got a glimpse.

Investigations of frightening beasts which local residents called a "waumpus cat" near Raleigh and also near Hickory in recent years indicated the creature was actually an otter.

Zoologists here offered no explanation for the "beast of Bladenboro," but doubted that two suspects slain this week would have attacked dogs unless they had hydrophobia. [22]

Before engaging in any analysis of the monsters of North Carolina, we have to continue with the record of the "Beast of Bladenboro." The thing was soon back in the news. There was a day when it appeared that more dogs had been killed. A report on Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, carried in the *Wilmington News* said that three dogs had been killed the night before. [23] The next day the *Wilmington Star* printed a second report that this was denied by the mayor and the police chief in Bladenboro. [24]

The next report was not denied. On the morning of January 19<sup>th</sup> farmer Berry Lewis found one of his hogs dead. Its remains were found in a pasture near Big Swamp, three miles southwest of Bladenboro. Up to that point, he told the *Wilmington News*, he had been skeptical about the reported activities of a beast in the area. But his half-grown shoat had been mauled and most of it eaten. Its bones were crushed. A neighbor, J. C. Shaw, observed, "The 'beast' must have just jumped the hog right there, ate what it wanted and then left."

Again tracks were found. The *Wilmington Star* reported :

Tracks found at the scene filled the description of tracks found earlier when dogs were killed. Hunters who examined the tracks believed the killer-beast had inch-long claws and possibly was a large cat.

Again "state wildlife officials in Raleigh" whose names were not given opined that "there is no evidence that a panther or a wolf existed in coastal North Carolina." Berry Lewis in Bladenboro gave this opinion: "I've been skeptical. But now I know there's something on the loose." Those were the

last words quoted on the subject in the Wilmington newspapers. The beast disappeared without further excitement. [25]

In the decades since 1954 the Beast of Bladenboro has been recalled only a couple of times. Joseph F. Gallehugh Jr. wrote a good summary of all the attacks of the beast as reported in the Charlotte, Raleigh, and Elizabethtown papers. He was then a student at North Carolina State. He went on to a career in journalism. His paper was published in the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* in 1976. [26] In 1980 Richard Walser included a page on the beast in *North Carolina Legends*. [27]

We have seen in the record of 1954 that one "monster" fright brings recollections of others. If we knew more about the Stumpy Point "black panther" and the "waumpus cat" reports from Hickory and Raleigh we might find records as engaging as the Beast's history. But these episodes have been neglected and have been retained only as museum gossip.

Another story was recalled as having taken place in Wilmington.

### *The Wilmington "Squeezer"*

Among the memories stirred up by the saga of the Beast was the recollection of the mysterious Wilmington "Squeezer." Jay Hall, the reporter for the *Wilmington Star-News*, recalled it in the Sunday edition for 10 January in the midst of the Bladenboro excitement.

Here are his words on this specter from the past:

...Bladenboro at the moment has top priority on the choice ingredients of yarn-spinning on cold dark nights. The town is situated so that the hoot of lonely owls, the mournful cadence of a baying hound, the strange nether-land noises of the swampland drift in with just the right atmospheric touch.

Rarely do the residents of a single town have such an opportunity to chill en masse, hearts catapulting at strange sounds, stifling terror whoops their own voices are straining at a dozen times a night.

Rareness of it is illustrated in the fact that Wilmington hasn't been so blessed for some 20 or 30 years. When it came,

Wilmingtonians made the most of it, of course.

There, it was "The Squeezer." Some formless thing accosted human beings in the pitch of night, put its nebulous tentacles around the body and squeezed until the victim was unconscious.

Despite a long list of victims nobody ever saw "The Squeezer." His tactics, however, rate right up there with Jack the Ripper, Frankenstein, The Invisible Man, and the real upper-crust of the goose-pimple clique. [28]

Such reports remind us of the Mad Gasser of Mattoon, Illinois and other haunting presences thought by many to be tricks of the mind only. When hysteria strikes a population in this way, the issue of whether any real menace existed is debated and usually cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. (See Chap. 20 of Loren E. Coleman's *Mysterious America*.)

In Bladenboro there was a sensational series of episodes, but it was not a case of mass hysteria. Something was certainly dispatching dogs and that thing made a meal of one hog. We can find the cause of these particular events. We first need to recognize the place of the hunt for the Beast in its proper historical context. And the answer will be found among the known causes of that history.

### *The Monster Hunt*

Bladenboro was the host town for a spectacle with a long history in the USA of the twentieth century. The record of "monster hunts" is so extensive that we can only touch upon a few of them here. We could go back even further -- as far as 1829 -- when a band of armed men set off into the Okefenokee Swamp on the Georgia-Florida border to seek out the maker of giant footprints that had been reported in the swamp. Their misfortune was to find their quarry. It was afterward reported that several of the hunters died in a confrontation with what has come to be known as a True Giant. Their rifles did kill something that was measured to be 13 feet tall as the creature lay dying. The survivors quickly fled out of fear that more of the same might show up and take vengeance. And so John Ostein and three

companions lived to tell the tale. Of the nine men who set out, only four returned. [29]

The records in the twentieth century are better known. In the last century people began to collect and preserve such adventures. My own research in Indiana some years ago turned up numerous "varmint hunts" that took place in that state in the 1940s. Farmers turned out armed to the teeth, usually looking for some creature of an uncertain nature that had become a nuisance.

For notoriety few hunts have exceeded the Michigan forays that took place in 1964 and 1965. Those events took place first in the southwestern corner and then the southeastern corner of Michigan. The proximity to the large urban areas of Chicago and Detroit certainly contributed to the numbers of people that turned out .

At Sister Lakes, Michigan, the story began in June of 1964. Something seven feet tall and hairy was seen at night when a woman snapped on a yard light. A dozen other people were willing to admit they had seen or at least had heard something strange in the area. The hunt was on.

Gene Caesar, who wrote up the events in *True Magazine*, described what happened next:

Just at darkness, the sheriff's men set out on their intended search of the lonely back roads. But all of a sudden, those roads weren't lonely any longer. An estimated 200 carloads of uninvited auxiliaries had jammed them like Long Island freeways on a Sunday afternoon. Every available lawman in Cass County and half the force of neighboring Van Buren County had to be called out that night -- not to hunt unknown creatures but to direct traffic.

"Somebody's going to get killed out here!" the amazed deputies kept calling in. "These half-wits have deer rifles!"

It was the noisiest night the Sister Lakes had ever known. Horns were sound incessantly where automobiles had been left blocking the narrow byways. Men were pounding on the doors of the scattered farmhouses to demand directions and were shouting back and forth in the darkness as they swarmed

through orchards and over fences. [30]

In August of the following year the scene of armed monster hunters was repeated near Monroe, Michigan. Again they were lured into the woods by a hairy unidentified presence. Again fences were destroyed and crops were trampled. Nothing was caught in either instance.

Monster hunts after suspected cats have also been prominent. In 1977 Allen County, Ohio, became the place to go in search of a sheep-killing black cat that left suitable tracks. The influx of monster hunters got so bad the authorities simply announced that everyone should stay away and let them do the hunting. I happened to be traveling through Ohio at that very time. I arrived in the county just in time to hear this announcement. The killings eventually stopped. And people in a nearby county quietly observed that the large black cat they were used to seeing in the wild had returned to their neighborhood where it had never caused them any trouble!

From June to November of 1999 a mysterious "black panther" was seen repeatedly and even photographed northeast of Minnesota's Twin Cities. No one had lost such a cat. But it was seen near Hugo, and later in the same area for months. At one point lawmen thought they had the animal surrounded in some trees but the cat was elusive and got cleanly away.

The Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* looked into their archives and discovered that the state had a long history of such appearances. Animals seen in 1951, in 1959, and in the 70s, 80s, 90s they identified simply as "big cats." In 1955 a "big black panther" had been reported in Hopkins, Minnesota. [31]

### *Another Hunt with the Same Result*

As noted above, the pursuit of strange beasts is an American tradition. In the course of monster hunts there is a history of stirring up the local wildlife and bringing to attention of the public animals previously unnoticed. Those animals do not explain the need for the hunt except for those people who want the whole subject to go away and give them back their normalcy. Law enforcement personnel and politicians are the first to enter this camp. It is also traditional for authorities in the sciences to make statements from far away that dismiss the need for a monster hunt. They

also value their normal status as presumed experts.

People come out in force to look for monsters. Many with good motives in their concern for their homes and families. Some are on a lark looking for their kind of sport. A few are known and accomplished hunters who feel they are rising to a call for their expertise. This last category has been represented time and again by specific hunters who naturally draw attention because they raise hopes that a solution to the mystery of the moment will surely now be found. Their record is dismal. Whether they arrived in search of the "Brown County Monster," the "Norristown Serpent" or the "Beast of Bladenboro" did not matter. The handicap for each has been the same. They did not truly know what they were hunting, even though they all seem to have thought that they did.

The failure of dogs to track the creatures is found in the same problem. Dogs are trained to track particular animals. No one has trained dogs to hunt these animals that are rare and still unrecognized by biologists.

The people who want to say there is nothing there to find are legion. But some of us have been keeping records on these hunts. We find that the animals being sought are around all the time. Once in a while they get noticed and create a fuss for a brief period. Then they quietly return to their normal lives being present but unnoticed in any sensational way. The advantages are all with a creature that knows its natural world versus hunters who have not studied the nature and habits of their quarry.

### *Identifying the Beast*

Among the animals biologists have not recognized as surviving in North America is *Panthera atrox*. This animal is known from fossils to have lived in North America in the Pleistocene era. Its survival into the modern day has been put forward by myself and author Loren Coleman as the answer to historical reports of "black panthers" (probably the females) and their larger mates with manes (the males). [32] This cat is known to have been as large as the cougar (*Felis concolor*). The males were even larger.

The persistence of the Eastern cougar is a contentious issue in itself that has occupied naturalists and nature-lovers for the last half of the twentieth century. [33] The cougar was declared to be extinct in the East with various allowances made for places like Louisiana and Florida. When this view was being codified people like Bruce Stanley Wright (1912-1975)

objected in print and presented counter-views. His work culminated in a book titled *The Eastern Panther: A Question of Survival* and published in 1972. [34]

The sad bottom line to the debate is that people demand an actual presentation of dead bodies to resolve the challenge, and few people care for that as the sole criterion. The debate has deteriorated to the point where one biologist, Harley Shaw, has written of Wright: "A cult has developed around his writings – looking, waiting, hoping for a cougar confirmation. I think his adherents' lack of experience causes them to hope that something that may never have existed has now returned." [35] Within two more sentences he has also charged "...they seem to represent a mysticism based on yearnings for species lost..." Few people have managed to pack so many cheap tricks of dishonest debate into so short a space.

To charge those who disagree with you as being "cultists" should be an obvious flaw in anyone's argument. However, as one gross example, the University of Iowa sponsors a web-site where many ideas are charged as being "Cult Archaeology." Topics outside of archaeology are featured there too. But whoever disagrees with the people who manage the site are deemed to be cultists.

Interest in the survival of the Eastern cougar has not centered on Bruce Wright, another false charge. He is one person of stature among professional biologists who dared to speak up for the facts of natural history as he knew them in his own experience.

The use of the word "mysticism" is another attempt to brand people to discredit them rather than discuss facts.

Writer Chris Bolgiano has probably given the best summary of the underlying politics of this issue. She has written:

Until the 1990s, state and federal wildlife officials routinely dismissed eastern cougar sightings. People who reported seeing cougars were often subjected to rude treatment as cranks or drunks. There's no telling what good evidence was trashed by closed-minded bureaucrats unwilling to take the risk that cougars might actually be there. Finding cougars would mean some unpleasant work for public wildlife agencies. The eastern cougar subspecies is listed on the federal Threatened and Endangered Species List (as *Felis concolor couguar*), giving

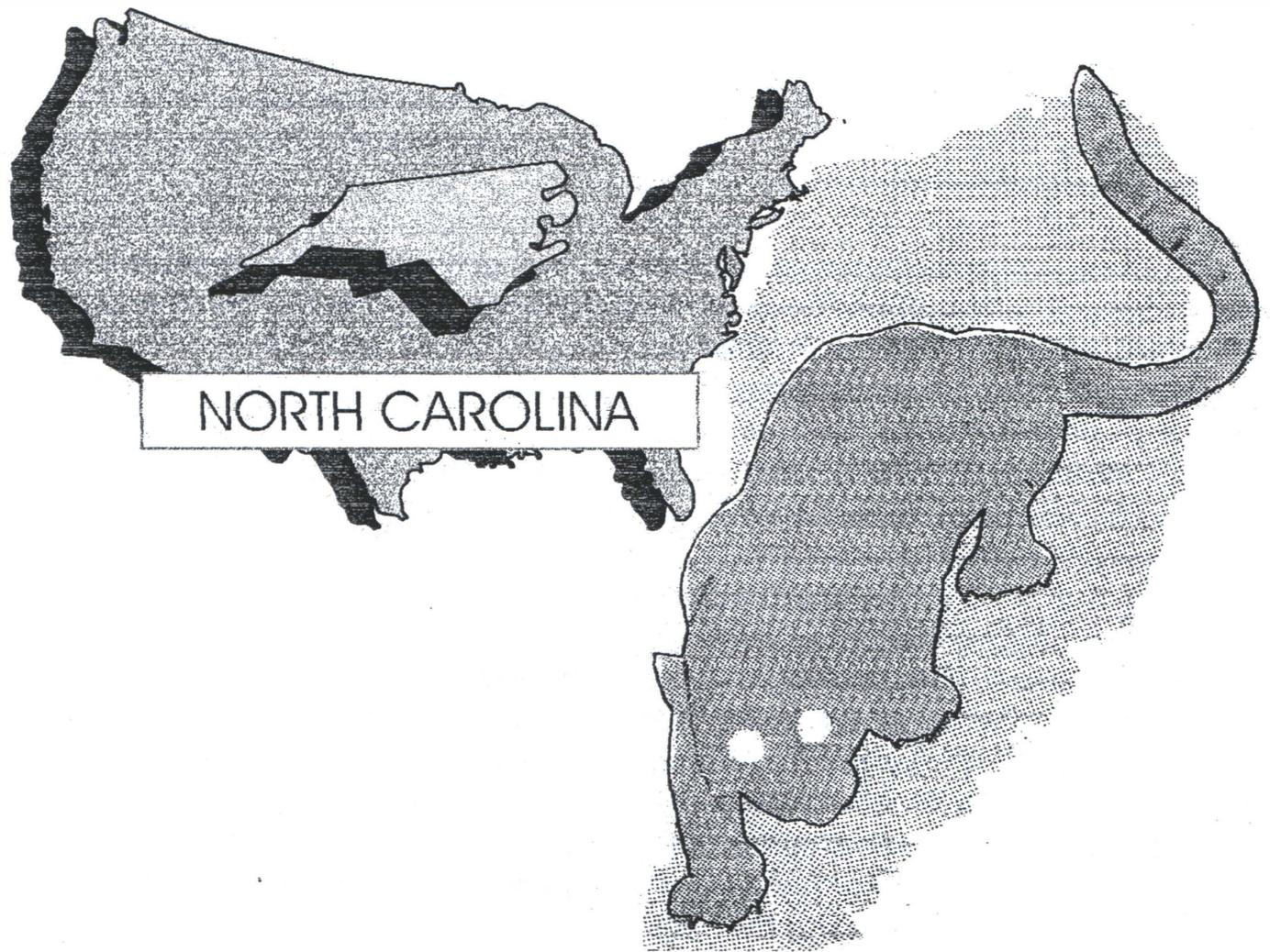


Fig. 3. The activities of the "Beast of Bladenboro" in 1954 were atypical behavior of the surviving Pleistocene cat *Panthera atrox*. This type of cat has been extensively reported in North America during the twentieth century. Its survival has not been acknowledged by any authority however.

it certain protections, at least on federal land. Agency officials would need to review the uses of public land and call into question those, like the still-popular tradition of hunting with dogs, that might injure cougars. Officials of all kinds would also have to undertake an educational campaign to teach people how to live with an animal that can, and occasionally does, eat humans. [36]

There will be little surprise that the presence of tawny mountain lions and all-black felines have been entangled by many writers. Some people have written that the many black cats reported must be a "black phase" of the cougar. But no such thing exists except as an excuse on paper to explain away the black animals. Cougars do not explain the distinctive tracks, different behavior, and unique appearance of the blacks. The survival of *Panthera atrox* explains all of these. I have already published at length on this explanation. [37]

Melanism is a rare condition, and no such case of a black cougar has been shown. The historical record has only a couple of reports of black cougars. Even those should now be questioned if *Panthera atrox* survives.

Charles R. Humphreys of Wilmington, North Carolina, has collected accounts of cougars in his *Panthers of the Coastal Plain*. [38] He has also gathered many accounts of "black panthers." Accounts of both kinds of cats are all within 40 miles of Wilmington. Whenever this kind of studious effort is made to collect panther-encounters black cats turn up in great number.

The evidence suggests that both cats are doing well in eastern North Carolina.

#### *Events at Bladenboro*

When the famous Beast was afoot, the first report was made at Clarkton. That suggests to me that the cats that were seen around Bladenboro may have arrived from Green Swamp, which is found in Columbus and Brunswick Counties. They could have followed the swamps that wind northward past Whiteville to the east and connect to the Clarkton area.

The tracks of two cats were detected, one large and one smaller. It does appear, as some suspected, that an adult cat was teaching an offspring

how to stalk and kill its prey. The dogs and at least one hog in the Bladenboro area became their victims. The cats probably returned to their normal haunts in the Green Swamp.

Two distinctive species of large cats are indicated as surviving in the pocosins of the Carolinas. The swamps and bogs are refuges for deer, bear, and the big cats. As naturalists have observed, this is not because the habitat is ideal, but rather because that land is the last to be cleared away for exploitation by humans.

The people who listen to the reports of human encounters with the large cats seem to share a common concern for the well-being and survival of such animals. The cats appear to be numerous and to have done well without creating much notoriety. Episodes such as the Beast of Bladenboro appear to be the exception. Such an episode demonstrates the formidable abilities of the black cats. But it also illustrates that such happenings are uncommon.

Other episodes may have occurred in the Carolinas. We have little go on when hearing about these incidents many decades after the fact. In any case, the big cats do not often resort to killing livestock and dogs. They must be finding sufficient food in the natural environment.

With a concern for North Carolina's native wildlife in mind, we must conclude by noting that the official view from all the constituted authorities remains that large native cats are not found in North Carolina outside of the state's western mountains. There are no mountain lions in the coastal plain (wink, wink). And the large black cats that appear to be *Panthera atrox* are officially extinct. Therefore no "black panthers" are roaming around there either (wink, wink).

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# LIVING DINOSAURS

*by Mark A. Hall*

Yes, Virginia, there are living dinosaurs. Some people will try to tell you that large reptiles from tens of millions of years ago could not have survived into the modern day. Don't listen to them. Not all the dinosaurs are extinct. A curiosity about the world around us is extinct in those people who will deny the presence of any animal they cannot easily put into a zoo. The dinosaurs aren't found in zoos. They survive in swamps, lakes, and oceans. Many survive in the tropics. But some might be found not far from where you live in North America or in other temperate zones. You can truly say that dinosaurs live free!

People have been noticing traces of the dinosaurs for hundreds of years. We are fortunate to live in an age when we can more easily gather together and study the traces of them. For centuries the clues to surviving dinosaurs were scattered and uncollected experiences taking place all over the world. Over one hundred years ago a few people (such as Philip Henry Gosse [*The Romance of Natural History* - 1860] and A. Cornelius Oudemans [*The Sea Serpent* - 1893]) began to assemble the many and diverse "sea serpent" encounters. In the last century collections of other kinds suggested that large dinosaur-like creatures were still around, especially in Africa. As examples, William Hichens, Ivan T. Sanderson, Bernard Heuvelmans, and Roy Mackal went on record in support of them. I will come back to Mr. Hichens later.

Ivan Sanderson wrote an article titled "There Could Be Dinosaurs" in 1948 in the *Saturday Evening Post*. It was reprinted in the book *More 'Things'* in 1969. Here early notice was taken of Mokele-mbembe, a creature that would become celebrated in the 1980s. Another chapter in that book tells of dinosaur-like tracks found along a river in Mozambique. And the African mystery beast known as the Chipekwe is recalled.

At the same time as Sanderson was telling of his own experience with

the Mokele-mbembe, Willy Ley was recalling an earlier reference to it in an unpublished manuscript of a German officer, Captain von Stein, in *The Lungfish, the Dodo, and the Unicorn* (1948). Also in *Exotic Zoology* (1959).

Heuvelmans discussed the Chipekwe, the Mokele-mbembe, and the Lau in the book *On the Track of Unknown Animals* (1955, 1958). He also wrote a modern treatment of "sea serpents" with his *In the Wake of the Sea Serpents* (1968).

Roy Mackal took up the hunt for Mokele-mbembe and told his story in *A Living Dinosaur?* (1987, E. J. Brill). Africa, Mackal found, is still the place for reports of different large reptilian beasts. He recorded what he heard of five other different kinds of dinosaurs in Africa and a giant unknown bird.

If you see one of these books be sure to snap it up as the treatments of living dinosaurs tend to become scarce and go out of print.

To get you started, Virginia, here is an article by Captain William Hichens from 1927. The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are when the modern record of dinosaurs begins. He wrote here under the pseudonym of "Fulahn." I have added three notes of my own. Ten years later another article by Hichens (more often cited) covered the same subjects in a journal called *Discovery*.

From *Chambers Journal* (7th Series, Volume 17)

## **On the Trail of the Brontosaurus**

Encounters with Africa's Mystery Beasts

by Fulahn

A big-game hunting expedition now engaged in Central Africa under the leadership of Lieut-Col. H. F. Fenn, D.S.O., intends to film gorillas in the as-yet-unpenetrated depths of the Belgian Congo; it hopes to secure a full-grown male gorilla for the Natural History Museum in London.

That capture in itself would provide enough adventure for most folks to go on with. There are few seasoned big-game hunters whose hearts would not go pit-a-pat were they to get the great chance of coming face to face with a full-grown gorilla. "But," says Col. Fenn, "the most thrilling part of our expedition will be our attempt to solve the long-existing problem of certain unknown species of animals which the natives say live in unexplored areas."

That is putting it modestly; for Colonel Fenn has met a hunter who has told him what every big-game hunter worth the name has heard. That there is a monster in Lake

Edward -- a mysterious beast called the irizima; and irizima means "the-thing-that-may-not-be-spoken-of."

This mystery animal, the irizima, is said by some to be like a gigantic hippopotamus with a gigantic horn like a rhinoceros upon its head. Not long ago a madcap fellow trekked up from the Cape and plunged into the Congo forests to catch it. He declared that he saw it crashing through the reeds of a swamp, and that it was the brontosaurus -- a huge marsh animal, ten times as big as the biggest elephant. In the Cape Town clubs they called him a liar; but a famous American scientific institute guessed better and sent out an expedition to capture this "brontosaurus." It was never caught. Mishaps dogged the expedition and spoiled all chance of capturing the mystery monster. [See Note 1]

Others declare the irizima to be a marsh monster with a hippo's legs, an elephant's trunk, a lizard's head, and an aardvark's tail. No less a personage than Lewanika, King of the Barotse, saw the beast in the marshes of his land, and set a special warrior watch to capture it. "A monster," says he in his official report to the British Government, "with a head like a snake, making a huge track in the reeds as large as a full-sized wagon would make were its wheels removed." He speaks, of course, of the old Boer trek wagon, a big, lumbering concern pulled by twenty or more oxen.

Under the name of the "lau," perhaps the same animal has been seen, not only by black hunters, but by white men as well, in the great swamps of the Nile valleys below Malakal to Rejaf, and in the region of Lake No to Shambe.

This may be a different mystery beast, for it is said to be like a gigantic cobra, striped dark brown and yellow, covered with thick, wiry hairs; upon its head it has large tentacles, with which it seizes its human prey. Measuring forty to a hundred feet in length, its body is as thick round as a bullock's. By night it is said to make a loud, terrifying, booming cry; by day, as it well might, it makes a rumbling noise like the digestion noises of a herd of grazing elephants. [See Note 2]

From Lakes Bangweolo, Mweru, and Tanganyika every hunter of experience has heard inexplicable reports of a huge pachyderm similar to a hippopotamus, but with a large horn rising from its head; this may be the same or a different mystery monster -- the brontosaurus or some other.

The level-headed man at home will be tempted to exclaim, "But this is rubbish, this talk of undiscovered monsters."

So at first thought it may seem; but it must be borne in mind that such an obvious animal as the okapi, a beast that looks as though it had escaped from a jigsaw Zoo, remained undiscovered up till the beginning of the present century, when Sir

Harry Johnston startled the scientific world by sending home the skin and skeleton of one. Scientists gasped; this cannot be, they said. They said the same about the man who first reported the giraffe; in fact, they tortured him for a downright romancer of the worst description. But there were children feeding giraffes in the London Zoo this week.

The famous chimiset or Nandi bear is perhaps the most notorious of all Africa's mystery monsters.

Speaking of it, Captain A. Blayney Percival, the famous authority on big game, who has lived his life amongst Africa's wild animals and who for twenty-three years was Gamer Ranger in Kenya, makes a remarkable assertion. "I do but assert my belief," he says, "that some strange animal lurks in the Nandi forests, awaiting discovery and a name."

Were there no other tittle of evidence to support the real existence of the mysterious chimiset, the word of this famous hunter would be difficult to get round; but nearly every hunter who has safaried through the Masai and Nandi Reserves of Kenya and Tanganyika has been implored at the many attas or villages to track down and shoot the chimiset. Often the weird tracks of this mysterious animal have been found -- queer five- or three-toed tracks -- the tracks of no known animal.

Fear and superstition have embroidered the native accounts of this uncanny beast; but, while allowances must be made for the exaggeration to which savages are prone, it must also be borne in mind that both the Masai and the Nandi are courageous and warlike tribes, not easily dismayed by dangerous animals. It is the proud and truthful boast of many of their warriors that they have walked boldly up to a savage lion on the veld and pulled it backwards by the tail! Such is the test of their manhood, and it will be plain that in the face of such foolhardy bravery that there must be some good reason to make the Masai and Nandi stand in abject terror of the chimiset, which they look upon as a monster infinitely more savage and terrible than a lion at bay.

Kitapmetit Kipet, the headman of a Nandi village to which I was sent to investigate raids on stock and children by a chimiset, described the monster to me in these words, which I quote from my report. "The chimiset is a devil which prowls the nganasa (hut settlement) on the darkest nights, seeking people, especially children, to devour; it is half like a man and half like a huge, ape-faced bird, and you may know it at once from its fearful howling roar, and because in the dark of night its mouth glows red like the embers of a log (i.e., a log-fire)."

During my stay in his village Kipet showed me a hut, in the mud-and-lattice wall of which a large hole had been battered; through that hole the chimiset had dragged a six-year-old girl who had been sleeping in the koimaut or living-room of the hut. On

the earth outside the hole were claw furrows. Calves had also been stolen from Kipet's cattle boma. Besides the palisade of poles which surrounds all Nandi cattle kraals, Kipet's men had piled up thorn-bush to a height of six feet in a solid wall eight feet thick. Burrowed through this wall was a tunnel big enough for me, not a small man, to crawl through, and on the bottom of this tunnel were more claw marks. But they were the claw marks of no known animal, unless maybe the aardvark. But then the aardvark does not eat young girls or burrow big tunnels through thorn zarebas, nor does it prey on calves; it is content to eat white ants.

Kipet informed me that the chimiset seemed to come from a small forest-clad kopje or boulder hill some five miles from his nganasa. I circled that kopje with spearmen, and, gradually closing in, beat every bush and twig on it till we got to the summit. We put up baboons, rock-rabbits, some mongooses, some dik-dik antelopes, a bush-buck and its does, we put to flight owls, hawks, bats, and guinea-fowls. We found the lair of a porcupine family and a hyaena hole; we dug both out. We put up some wart-hogs, and the dogs turned out innumerable rats, mice, and lizards, and not a few scorpions and snakes. But we found no chimiset; nor trace of it. Nor did we find a trace of the spoor of lion or leopard, which might have been the culprits.

I thought of a score of such hunts after the chimiset, all of which had proved futile, and decided to make quite sure. A huge forest, some twenty miles square, stretched away from the kopje. I could not search that forest, but I could make certain if any beast came to the kopje from the forest and then left the kopje by night for the village.

Around the kopje ran several sandy bush-tracks, which led to the water-holes. Cutting down the bush between, Kipet's men joined these paths until they made a sandy track completely encircling the kopje. We brushed this track clean and smooth, so that even a beetle walking over it would leave its trail.

Then I went to bed. I had a small khaki-coloured pi-dog named Mbwambi with me, a mongrel, but a ferocious, plucky, little beast, and I tied him up to the door of my tent.

It was well after midnight when he gave a sharp, alarmed, whiny growl and woke me. But before I could get out of bed the whole tent rocked; the pole to which Mbwambi was tied flew out and let down the ridge-pole, enveloping me in flapping canvas. At the same moment the most awful howl I have ever heard split the night. The sheer demoniac horror of it froze me still, and not for some seconds did I hear the clatter of poles in Kipet's nganasa, which told of his men, having been aroused, unbarring their hut doors.

I heard my pi-dog yelp just once. There was a crashing of branches in the bush,

and then thud, thud, thud of some huge beast making off. But that howl! I have heard have a dozen lions roaring in a stampede-chorus not twenty yards away; I have heard a maddened cow-elephant trumpeting; I have heard a trapped leopard make the silent night miles a rocking agony with screaming, snarling roars. But never have I heard, nor do I wish to hear again, such a howl as that of the chimiset.

A trail of red spots on the sand showed where my pi-dog had gone. Beside that trail were huge footprints, four times as big as a man's, showing the imprint of three huge clawed toes, with trefoil marks like a lion's pad where the sole of the foot pressed down. But no lion, not even the giant 9 feet 4 1/4 inches long which fell to Getekonot, my hunter, at Ussure, ever boasted such a paw as that of the monster which had made that terrifying spoor.

At the first streak of dawn we followed those tracks; they led to the kopje. Over our sandy path they showed as plain as the print on this page; on the farther side of the kopje were more footprints leading to the forest, where, searching with our hearts in our mouths every day for a week and more, we found and lost and lost and found them. But we found no chimiset. Such is the mystery beast, hunted by many a hunter who has trekked the big-game trail in Africa; a beast which the Game Ranger who lived amongst beasts for twenty-three long years believes to be "awaiting discovery and a name" ! [See Note 3]

Another mysterious animal -- seen, shot at, spooed, but never killed or captured -- is the nunda, the giant cat of East Africa's coast. Not long ago a reign of terror gripped a small fishing-village on the coast of Tanganyika, where I was stationed as a native magistrate.

It was the custom for native traders to have their belongings in the village market every night, ready for the morning's trade; and to prevent theft and also to stop stray natives sleeping in the market-place, an askari or native constable took it in turns with two others to guard the market on a four-hour watch.

Going to relieve the midnight watch, an on-coming native constable one night found his comrade missing. After a search he discovered him, terribly mutilated, underneath a stall. The man ran to his European officer, who went with me at once to the market. We found it obvious that the askari had been attacked and killed by some animal -- a lion, it seemed.

In the victim's hand was clenched a matted mass of greyish hair, such as would come out a lion's mane were it grasped and torn in a violent fight. But in many years no lion had been known to come into the town.

We were puzzling the problem at the boma next morning when the old Arab Liwali or native governor of the district hurried into our office with two scared-looking

men at his heels. Out late the previous night, they said, they had slunk by the market-place lest the askari should see them and think them evil-doers; and as they crept by they were horrified to see a gigantic brindled cat, the great mysterious nunda which is feared in every village on the coast, leap from the shadows of the market and bear the policeman to the ground.

The Liwali, a venerable and educated man, assured us that within his memory the nunda had visited the village several times. It was an animal, not a lion nor a leopard, but a large cat as big as a donkey and marked like a tabby. I had heard this tale, and had put it down as silly superstition, but the Liwali's assertions put a different light on things.

That night we kept watch with two armed askaris at the market; nothing happened. On parade next day we read the native constables a lecture on the stupidity of superstitions.

It seemed that we were slightly premature. That same night another constable was torn to pieces, and clutched in his hands and scattered about the buckles of his uniform was more of that grey, matted fur. The terrified villagers meantime had paid a famous medicine man to work "dawa" or magic-medicine to scare the nunda off, and the village, between fear and rage and witchcraft, was in a ferment. I sent the hair to headquarters for expert examination. They replied, asking me what animal it came from, "as it was a fur and not a hair as you state: probably cat."

Followed a month of tragedies at small villages up and down the coast; worried headmen trekked in to say that a huge, grey-striped animal like a cat, but as big as a donkey, was seizing men by night. Traps and poison were set, and armed police scoured the district. Then, as suddenly as they began, the raids of the nunda stopped. The mysterious beast was never found. As in the case of the chimiset many a hunt has been made for it; but, though seen and fought with, it has never been killed or caught.

Of other mystery animals, such as the ngoloko, the man-ape of the Isansu hills, a weird creature that prowls the dismal stretches of Yaida Lake, I will not tell, for the certainty of being disbelieved. But such are the mystery animals. There are others – the mpisimbi, the leopard-hyaena, which eats sugar-cane, and which I have hunted many a weary night without success; the yiya, a tiny elephant unknown to science; and, a bit farther abroad, the orang pandak, the man-bear-ape of Malay – seen, hunted, spooed, but never caught; the migu or snowman-monkey of Tibet – half animal, half man, who preys on yaks.

Perhaps Colonel Fenn may discover and bring home one or more of these mystery monsters. At Ngoholi, not far from Lindi on the Tanganyika coast, in a huge valley, dropping sheer two thousand feet from a plateau top to the primeval jungle

down below, I have stood in a graveyard of brontosauri, and other mighty monsters of the long-dead past; stood and kicked up the turf and seen in the pale green earth below, only a few inches down, their might bones; stood and watched a great tree, perched perilously on the cliff edge, totter and sway and slowly fall, tumbling and hurtling root over branches into the abysmal depths below, rocking the silent grandeur of that mighty valley with the splintering of branches, raising the raucous calls of toucans, the hoarse barking of baboons. So has the valley been crumbling to slow decay for eons past, since the days when the pterodactyl, the megatherium, the hideous dinosaur, and that long-necked nightmare beast, the brontosaurus, hunted and fought, mated and died, on that very spot.

As science counts the years that was but yesterday.

Who knows but that, in the unpenetrated depths of the vast mysterious continent, there may yet linger some of those grim monsters of an age when men grew hair for covering, and swung, long-armed, from trees?

Note 1. The brontosaurus hunting reported in 1919 is hard to take seriously. The first report made in November 1919 told of a Monsieur L. Le Page who worked on building a railroad in the Belgian Congo. While hunting in October of 1919 he was charged by a creature estimated at 24 feet in length. However, this report from the *Times* of London was recycled in December as the story of M. Gapelle, a scrambling of the original name, with false information about an expedition added. This false report was widely published (as in the *New York Times* on 13 December 1919) and has put a dark cloud over the entire business. The *New York Times* contributed to the confusion by misprinting the name "Gapelle" as "Capelle" on 15 December 1919 and carrying that misprint forward into 1920 in later commentaries on their original version of the story.

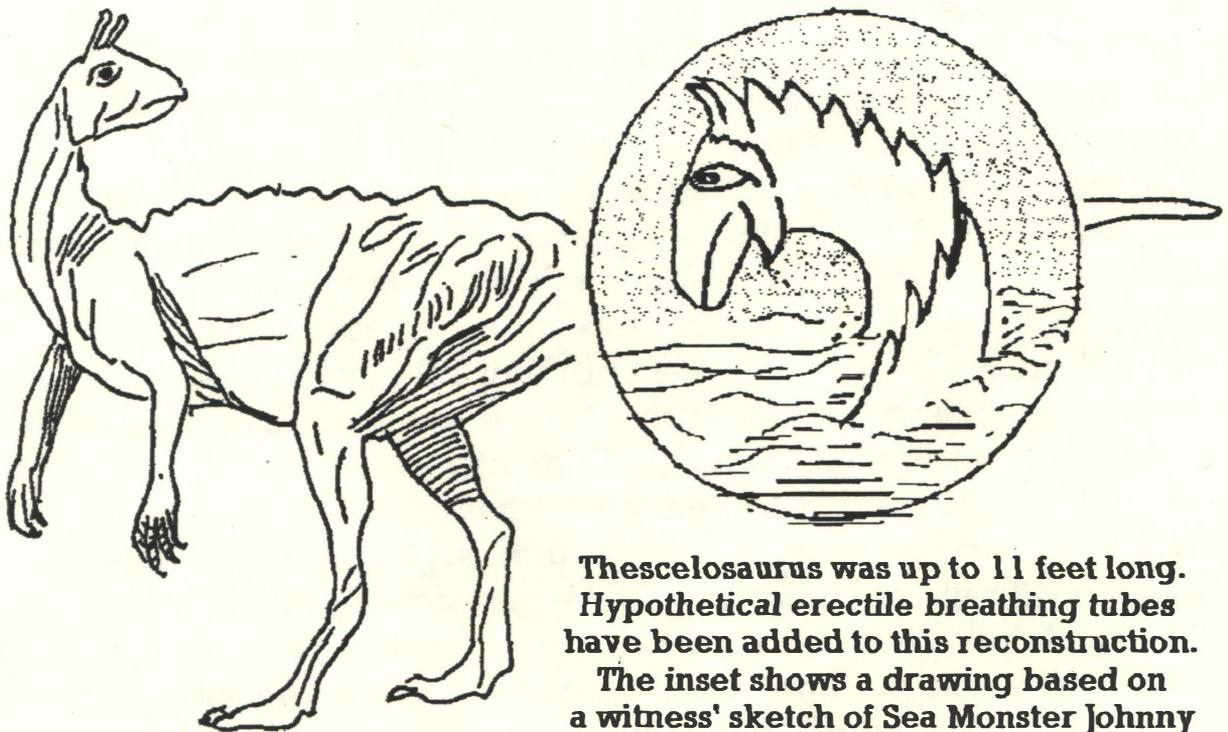
Note 2. Menacing creatures with tentacles have been reported in freshwater locations scattered around the world. They suggest the survival – especially in large lakes, but also in rivers – of descendants of the sea scorpions, known from the fossil record to have occurred both in freshwater and marine environments.

Note 3. The stories of the *chimiset* suggest something unique to Africa about the animal behind the mystery. First of all, the stories might best be explained by the survival of the Giant Baboon, known to science only from

its fossils as *Simopithecus*. (Some people want to discontinue the use of this particular name, but that would be foolish because the animal survives and is unique.) Secondly, this animal can be found outside of Africa, but it has not demonstrated such a menacing presence elsewhere. Where the surrounding environment allows the animal to elude human attempts to eradicate it (as in Africa) the Giant Baboon seems not to have adopted the fear of human inter-action that characterizes its behavior elsewhere.

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Those dinosaurs most suitable to survive the geological upheavals over tens of millions of years have hidden away in dense swamp-lands, large bodies of water, and in vast oceans. As the geological periods have come and gone the numbers of dinosaurs have been reduced as only a few types have been able to move from place to place to adjust to the gross changes in the geological landscape. (For the surprising reasons for the frequent periods of drastic changes see *Path of the Pole* by Charles Hapgood.) Some of the survivors might have met their ends only in the past one hundred or so years. But life is tenacious and an allowance should be made for the possible survival of any creatures that have persisted for so long.



**Thescelosaurus was up to 11 feet long. Hypothetical erectile breathing tubes have been added to this reconstruction. The inset shows a drawing based on a witness' sketch of Sea Monster Johnny**

I have been writing in recent years about some of the strange water animals that appear in lakes and swamps even in North America.

The Great Lakes were the habitat for extraordinary things seen as recently as 1867 which I detailed in *Wonders* Vol. 2 under the title "Lake Michigan Monsters." The most recent reports have told only of giant snakes in those lakes. And an occasional giant snake turns up where the remnants of the Great Swamps around the Great Lakes remain or where other wetlands survive. Those stories appeared in *Wonders* Volumes 3 and 4.

Lake monsters were often reported all across North America in the 1800s. The problem with all lake monsters is that they are well concealed in a water environment. A so-called "sighting" of one usually involves some part of the creature projecting out of the water, giving few details. Lake monsters are still reported in Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa.

In the St. Johns River in Florida people have repeatedly sight something large and unusual. It is now known as Sea Monster Johnny. It could be *Thescelosaurus*, a late Cretaceous dinosaur. Some people have tried to dismiss these reports by confusing them with reports made elsewhere entirely. On the East coast large pink salamander-like creatures have been seen by people who were well-versed in natural history and were certain those things were not ordinary salamanders.

In Ohio people used to see "Monster Lizards" two hundred years ago. A similar monster was reported in Kentucky in 1975. I wrote about them all in my book *Natural Mysteries*.

Seeing the living dinosaurs can be an unpopular event. Even now people see strange things in lakes and swamps and they have no place to go with their observations. It is still not acceptable to be seeing survivors of Earth's past until someone else has approved its presence. You are branded a fool or worse if you speak up. But seeing such things is a rare and lucky event for anyone. Some people have lived near a swamp in Africa for years before getting one glimpse of a monster.

Well, Virginia, you might think that I have said all there is to say on such a strange topic as surviving dinosaurs, but I have not. When I write you again I will tell you about some lake monsters in North America that look like duck-billed dinosaurs, about some soaring pterosaurs that you might see on a family-outing if you are lucky, and about the one place in the world where there might be some surviving relatives of the awful velociraptors that thrilled you in *Jurassic Park*.