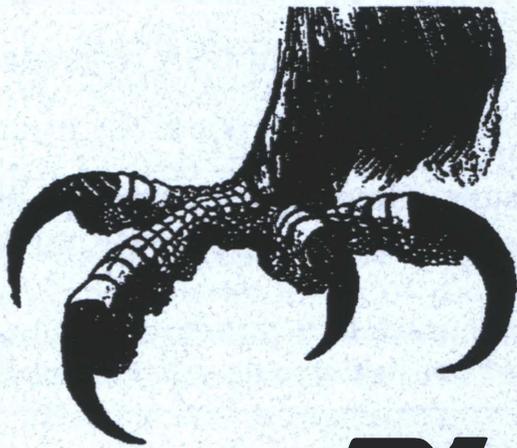


# WONDERS

SEEKING THE TRUTH IN A UNIVERSE OF MYSTERIES

Vol. 7 No. 3

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## ***Birds That Carry Off People***



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# WONDERS

**SEEKING THE TRUTH IN A UNIVERSE OF MYSTERIES**

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# BIRDS THAT CARRY OFF PEOPLE

by *Mark A. Hall*

Around the world there are traditions of the menace of giant birds that can pick up human beings and carry them off to their deaths. In the Middle East the Simurgh, the Imgig, and the Roc were such birds. In Northern Europe the Griffon and the Vuokho were said to be carrying off horses and human beings. In New Zealand the bird that swept down from craggy peaks was the Pou-kai. It seized men, women, and children and carried them off to be devoured. In northern Siberia the natives knew of the Thunderbird, just as it was called in North America in the Pacific Northwest and the Great Lakes region. The Thunderbirds were known throughout South America too. [1]

Here is one American Indian account of a large bird collected by Frank Speck among the Indians in Labrador. The person who gave him the story in 1919 was Marie Denis at Tadousac, Quebec.

## ME'TCO, THE EAGLE ABDUCTOR

A little boy was sent out by his mother to the shore of a lake to get a bark vessel full of water. An eagle flew down and seized him by the shoulders and carried him off. The boy cried for help but it was too late by the time the men reached the place. The men saw him being carried away. The eagle took him up to its nest on the great rocks and left him there. At first the little boy would not eat, but later when he saw all the little birds, rabbits, and mice that were brought to the young eagles, he did eat. Thus he stayed all summer and grew. At last, one day he took hold of the eagle's legs when the bird flew off the nest and the eagle carried him to the ground. Then the little boy got home safely. [2]

Ornithologists greet such accounts with a smile and a shake of the head. They do not see such things as lifting a young person at all possible for the largest birds of prey that they know. However, the unpleasant facts are that

there exist modern accounts of such things taking place. There is reason to think that even the known birds under the right circumstances can achieve remarkable feats of lifting. And the bulk of reports indicates the presence of a real Thunderbird, the living embodiment of a giant bird of prey otherwise acknowledged only by its fossils. These are the subjects we will now pursue.

A report from Norway in the year 1932 has become widely mentioned as an instance of a known bird, the gray sea eagle, being accused of carrying off a young girl. The incident has not been discussed in detail outside of Scandinavia. To correct this, here is a translation of an article from the newspaper *Aftenposten* in Oslo, Norway. The piece was written by the chief investigator of the incident, Steinar Hunnestad. A book resulted from his tireless investigation and was published in 1960. Its title is *Ørnerovet*, which translates to "Eagle's Prey." To my knowledge the book has not been translated into English. The following translation of Hunnestad's presentation in *Aftenposten* in 1976 was done by John Bengtson.

*Aftenposten* (Oslo, Norway) January. 21, 1976 page one

**"EAGLE'S PREY" -- CAN AN EAGLE LIFT 19 Kg?**

**The three-year-old Svanhild Hertavar (now Hartvigsen) weighed 19 kg. when in 1932 she was taken by an eagle and flown two kilometers through the air from the Kvaløyvik bogs to Haga Mountain on the island Leka in North Trøndelag. One hundred men searched for seven hours before three of them found her asleep on a rock shelf 20 meters under the eagle's nest. Fantasy or reality? Steinar Hunnestad writes about his book *Eagle's Prey*, which is the basis for a TV program tonight.**

**(From Page 12)**

**(Picture captions:)**

**(A) From the press conference when the book *Eagle's Prey* came out in 1960. Here the author is in conversation with Svanhild Hartvigsen, who was carried away by an eagle when she was a child.**

**(B) The eagle family at Kvingra had left this nest when Steinar Hunnestad found it. The nest was built of thick kelp stalks and old grass.**

**(C) The gray sea eagle is a good fisher, and manages with a day's ration of a**

kilo of fish. A full-grown rat or sea bird also serves the purpose of food. The eagle is a carrion bird, and provides itself also with, for example, remains of otter or bird. It also has the gall to take living lambs or kids.

(Editor's Note: In connection with the TV program of Jan. 21 and the film about the "eagle-napping" on Leka in North Trøndelag in 1932, we have received this article by the author of the book *Eagle's Prey*, which is the only collection of descriptions, documentation and argumentation in book form about the eagle-napping at Leka. Steinar Hunnestad's book came out in 1960. Later it was printed in four editions in Norway, translated to Swedish and Icelandic, and used for recitation on Norwegian and Icelandic broadcasting. Also, last fall, pieces have circulated in a number of newspapers which have cast doubt on the eagle-napping at Leka.)

## **PROOF AND WITNESSES TO THE "Eagle-napping"** by Steinar Hunnestad

Bird experts and scientists in Norway and other lands have constantly tried to cast doubt that the eagle-napping, in which little Svanhild was carried off by a big gray sea eagle, could have happened. Many have protested persistently. Even the biggest sea eagle cannot lift such a weight, it is claimed. The same arguments will probably turn up again after the TV film.

So what proof exists for the eagle-napping at Leka? And are there any witnesses to the event whom we can rely on? Here I will mention the following:

1. Close to 100 persons were along on a search after the missing Svanhild for several hours, and all were convinced that Svanhild herself could not have walked up from the Kvaløyvik bogs onto the precipitous mountain. The rock shelf where she was found was almost inaccessible for adults. Svanhild would not even have managed by herself to go through the tangled terrain of two kilometers from the Kvaløyvik bogs to where the mountain slope begins. While working on the book *Eagle's Prey* I walked the stretch myself and examined the bogs and the mountain. One of the rescuers was along and showed how they found her.
2. Svanhild had marks from eagle claws in her clothes and on her breast. Her scarf, dress and underwear were partly torn up. The dress is preserved, and a picture of it is reproduced in the book. That she was so well and thickly

**dressed saved her life. Otherwise the three-inch-long eagle claws would have pierced deeply into her chest.**

**During the work on the book I corresponded with the district physician, Dr. K. Fossum, who was on Leka when this happened. In a letter he confirmed that he was on the scene right after Svanhild was brought down from the mountain. He examined the child thoroughly, treated the marks on her breast, and weighed her. I still have Fossum's letter on file.**

**3. During the flight Svanhild lost first one shoe and then a handkerchief. The searchers found this below the mountain - but not along a beeline from where she was taken to where she was found. This establishes that the eagle undertook a so-called "cover flight" and followed the mountainside, where the air rises swiftly and thereby makes it easier to carry a weight. The handkerchief was found a little closer to the mountain, showing that it was taken by the weak breeze and carried with the wind.**

**4. When the rescuers (Leif Andersen of Leknesbuta, Karl Haug of Bodø, and Jentoft Svensen of Leka) found Svanhild asleep on the edge of the rock shelf and wakened her, all three heard her say, "The big gull was bad. The big gull took me!" From Hortavaer (her home) Svanhild was well acquainted with big gulls, so it was completely natural that she used this name for the eagle.**

**5. No one witnessed the eagle taking Svanhild, or the flight itself. But all who experienced that intense search for about seven hours on Kvaløy on Leka, know that nothing but the eagle could have abducted her. It must have happened like this:**

**The eagle rose to about 250 meters height and held her in its claws at least two kilometers from the Kvaløyvik bogs to Haga Mountain. The eagle's goal was the nest with the hungry young. But the catch was too heavy. The eagle lost height and had to set the child down on a mountain shelf about 20 meters lower than the nest. A gnarled birch on the outermost edge of this shelf hindered the eagle from fetching her again. Moreover it is my theory that when Svanhild began to weep and scream for her parents, the eagles became both frightened and angry. Svanhild was taken around 3:30 p.m. and found by her rescuers about 10:30 -- seven hours later. Despite great effort and a very capable rescue operation, they did not come down to the settlement with her until after midnight.**

**6. The eagle that took Svanhild flew ever after with its stretched legs**

hanging straight down. It often flew over Kvaløy on the way to its fishing ground out at sea. Several whom I have talked to told me that they called it the "Svanhild-eagle."

7. While working on the book I was also briefed by Erik Torvik of Leka, who was sheriff (lensmann) in the district where this happened. In a letter he has explained details of the event to me.

8. The Hansen family and Svanhild were staying with Nikoline and Lorentz Benjaminsen the day that she was taken by the eagle. Widow Benjaminsen narrated vividly and simply about everything in connection with that eventful day. Some of the remarks and details in the presentation in the book I have from the talks with Nikoline. She is dead now.

9. The zoologist, Dr. Hartvig Huitfeldt-Kaas, was sent by *Aftenposten* in the fall of 1932 to research the matter further. Among other things, he writes in an article (*Aftenposten*, Aug. 20, 1932): "Since several persons have uttered strong doubts as to the accuracy of the reported eagle-napping on Leka, I wish to declare that I, after the research I have undertaken, must regard the reported event as completely reliable. That which made the event very doubtful for me was the child's size. She weighed, as mentioned before, 19 kg. My opinion of our largest bird of prey's ability to transport heavy burdens has, after this investigation, undergone a significant change. Perhaps with my story I can get some of my skeptical colleagues to go along." Huitfeldt-Kaas stayed on Leka a whole month while conducting his research.

10. The zoologist, science graduate Edvard K. Barth, curator at the Zoological Museum, Oslo University, has himself written about the eagle-napping in Norway's *Animal Life* and the periodical *Fauna*, no. 1, 1954. In a postscript to the book *Eagle's Prey*, Barth says, among other things:

"Science cannot deny the facts, and as far as I can see there is no doubt as to the accuracy of the kidnapping on Leka, as the author of the book *Eagle's Prey* has described the course of events."

The record of events in Norway in 1932 indicates that a large bird such as the gray sea eagle is capable of lifting a 42-pound weight (that is, 19 kilograms) under favorable conditions such as mountainous terrain. Such would have been the conditions for the celebrated case of five-year-old Marie Delex. She was lifted from in front of a playmate and carried off. This occurred in 1838 in the Swiss canton of Valais. Her dead body was found on a mountain ledge two months

later. The records suggest that cases where eagles achieve such feats are rare.

Those who would entertain further accounts of children and even adults being swept off their feet are subjected to the complaints of eagle-defenders. They view such discussions as intended to slander eagles. But such is not the case. Those who think such events can happen are proposing that a larger bird exists that is capable of such feats on a relatively frequent basis. When the word "eagle" appears in the following discussion it is simply a necessary adherence to the historical record. The knee-jerk reaction of many people over the years has been to blame eagles and to identify any large bird as an eagle. That is something I would agree is unfair. The reference to an eagle is probably a misidentification. For me to expunge the word from the historical records when reprinting them would only open up this discussion to the charge of having concealed what was said of the event at the time it occurred.

The larger bird that would be capable of such feats is the teratom called *Argentavis magnificens*. It is known from fossils found in Argentina in 1980. [3] The bird possessed a wingspan of some 25 feet. Modern relatives of this bird would be the likely culprits in those cases where people have been carried off. Ornithologists are reluctant to entertain that possibility. Those people who are not reluctant maintain that some giant birds have survived into the modern day in forested mountains in North America and -- by similar evidence -- elsewhere around the world.

The giant teratom is the obvious explanation for the Thunderbird reported throughout the Americas. The native peoples of North and South America have given anthropologists their diverse names for these birds. The name "Thunderbird" has simply been the most descriptive and has become the most famous among them. [4]

Thunderbird sightings have been making news for the past forty years. The most recent reports have come from Alaska in 2002. I first heard about them in midyear when a correspondent wrote me that the Eskimos had seen the giant birds and a bush pilot had seen one but lost it in the clouds. Later in October of 2002 the birds broke into the news when an Anchorage newspaper reported on the report of a pilot and his passengers who saw a giant bird with a wingspan they estimated to be fourteen feet [5].

Other sightings in recent years have come from Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. All these states have traditionally been a source of Thunderbird lore. But my intention here is not to consider the latest sightings or to repeat all the material already published in book form in *Thunderbirds: The Living Legend!*. I am focusing on the threat the birds might pose to people in the modern day.

Several colorful stories of the Thunderbird were put into print by Jack Pearl writing in a popular men's adventure magazine in 1963. The editors of *Saga Magazine* chose to title his work "Monster Bird that carries off human beings!".

With a few exceptions Pearl's sources cannot be traced. He may well have heard many of his accounts by word of mouth. That does not make them untrue, but the likelihood that we will ever learn more about them and be able to assess their validity seems slim.

Those that can be traced are the story of a private pilot flying in the Hudson River Valley and the recollections of Hiram Cranmer from Pennsylvania.

In May of 1961 newspapers carried a dispatch telling the story of an anonymous pilot seeing a large bird. He was flying in a Piper Cub plane when he encountered a bird he emphasized was very large, bigger than an eagle. He did not give a specific estimate of its wingspan, lacking any reliable scale as both he and the bird were in the air. It followed his plane for about ten minutes. Unfortunately no one seems to have extracted details about the bird's description from the pilot at the time his report was publicized.

Pearl also cited Hiram Cranmer, a resident of central Pennsylvania. Cranmer sent a series of letters to *Fate Magazine* in the 1950s and 1960s. Pearl quoted Cranmer on his own sightings of giant birds in the Keystone State.

Pearl invoked the storied names of frontiersmen Jim Bridger and Daniel Boone as having seen the birds. Somewhere among the lore told of these men there may be such accounts, but such events would be easily dismissed as tall tales told by them or added to their biographies by others. According to Pearl:

The famous scout Jim Bridger described how a "giant bird, too big for either an eagle or a vulture," attacked a tethered mule and lifted it off the ground. Bridger and a companion held onto the animal's legs, and eventually the bird loosened its grip and flew away.

Daniel Boone claimed to have seen a Thunderbird carry away a five-year-old Indian boy. A dozen arrows and a volley of shots were supposedly pumped into the creature without effect.

Pearl himself noted that "campfire tales . . . cannot be taken too seriously."

He went on to give a detailed account of a doctor reporting a family's encounter with a Thunderbird in southeastern California. According to this unnamed physician, in 1933 a family near a mining camp at Ivanpah was attacked by a giant bird. At one point the father protecting his wife and child was lifted ten feet into the air while battling the bird. One wing alone on this bird was estimated to be 14 feet long. The bird was wounded and eventually flew away.

Pearl is also responsible in large part for the hunt for a Thunderbird photograph that has been discussed for many years. A simple paragraph by Pearl claimed that a photograph exists showing a giant bird nailed to a wall. He

dated his story to 1886. It has been apparent for some time that this is a garbled version of a genuine story that dates from 1890. But that story is itself exaggerated in a newspaper account of a large flying monster, not a bird, reported in 1890 in the Arizona Territory. The non-bird account is sorted out from the bird stories in chapter 9 of my book *Thunderbirds*.

Pearl offered a second story dated from 1889 about saloon drunks going out in the desert where one of them is carried off as his companions hear him calling for help. This has been dismissed with good cause as likely no more than a version of a chestnut about the boy who disappears into the air when going to a well to fetch water. These Old West tales of Pearl's are one reason to suspect that he incorporated twice-told tales into his article.

Pearl's longest story told of people disappearing from an internment camp in California. Here is Jack Pearl's account:

One of the most eerie Thunderbird incidents occurred in 1944, in a California internment camp where Nisei, Americans of Japanese origin, were held during World War II. Over a period of months, more than a half-dozen internees disappeared from this camp, and it was thought they had escaped. In the course of the thorough investigation that followed, to figure out how the Nisei had escaped and who had helped them, the only thing investigators could get out of the internees was that a "giant bird" had carried off the missing men. The angry soldiers assumed that they were being "taken" by the Japanese Americans, who had been fraternizing with local Indians working around the camp. These Indians habitually told wild stories about a monster bird lurked in the lofty mountain peaks. The opinion was reinforced when two of the Indians rushed into camp one morning, shouting excitedly that they had seen a Thunderbird kill and carry off a man the night before.

The camp had previously been lightly guarded, but after that incident the guard was reinforced along with searchlights on the camp perimeter. The disappearances stopped. Pearl concluded his account with these paragraphs.

Usually when Japanese American internees escaped from the camps, they would be picked up again in days or weeks, while trying to sneak in or out of the homes of friends or mingling self-consciously in Chinese sections, hoping they would be accepted by their brother Orientals. It rarely worked.

Strangely, none of the internees who escaped from the camp ever turned up again – during the war or after. They had, literally and figuratively,

disappeared into thin air! So claimed their fellow inmates – and the Indians.

“Jack Pearl” was a pseudonym of Jacques Bain Pearl (1923-1992). He was a prolific author under various names. I tried to contact him when I was writing *Thunderbirds*. I talked with someone at his phone number and left a message about my interest in discussing Thunderbirds with him. I simply never heard back from him.

He was coming to the end of his career and life at the time. His last works were a couple of mass-market romances under the name “Stephanie Blake” published in 1988 and 1990. He had turned to writing romances in the mid-1970s obviously because that’s where the money was. (I recall Hans Stefan Santesson telling me in 1972 that if I wanted to make money as a writer that romances were the thing to write.) By that time Pearl may have been unwilling or even unable to recall his one venture into the arena of cryptozoology. His colorful stories have been well remembered by those who did read them. He kicked off the modern era of popular discussion of Thunderbirds with his article in *Saga*. But the merits of most of what he put into circulation remain hard to assess.

Another prolific author who wrote something on Thunderbirds was Gladwell Richardson (1903-1980). Richardson’s pseudonyms included “Maurice Kildare.” He was the son of a rancher and trader, and he attended the Oklahoma Mechanical and Technical College (which became Oklahoma State University). He wrote personal reminiscences about growing up in Oklahoma using the “Kildare” name. Among them were the experiences of rural folk in Coal County who encountered giant birds before the Civil War. Two men even battled one. Another man shot and killed one. Richardson described the unearthing of the rotting corpse of that dead bird in an article in *True Frontier* magazine in 1972. He was still a boy at the time. [6]

So did strange things happen at a California internment camp? I don’t know. If they did, it would be a natural flow of events for the reports of giant birds to have been dismissed just as Pearl described.

Ornithologists and bird-lovers have been vigorously dismissing reports of giant birds bothering people in North America during the twentieth century. Their complaints were summed up by David Jacobsen writing in 1948.

Officials of the Audubon Society are fed up with these rumors depicting the bald eagle, the American national emblem, as an air pirate with a penchant for making off with children, destroying sheep, pigs, and other wild as well as domesticated animals much larger and heavier than itself. They repeat and repeat that eagles simply are not given to carrying children away, if for no other reason, although there are plenty, than the

bird simply is unable to lift more than its own weight – even if it wanted to, which it most probably does not. [7]

Jacobsen began his list of so-called “rumors” by citing “a rumor that a 3 ½ year old child, weighing about forty-two pounds, had been carried aloft by an eagle for more than two hours” in Norway. He was, of course, referring to the case of Svanhild Hertavar so thoroughly investigated by Steinar Hunnestad.

An example of an upset eagle-defender is Lee W. Arnold of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He expressed his displeasure with the way journalism was treating eagles by way of an article in *Audubon Magazine* for July-August 1948. [8]

He began by mentioning goblins, fairies, supermen, Santa Claus, “men from Mars,” and “flying disks.” He then turned to “super-eagles.” He presented what he termed “an outstanding example of the intermittent crop of eagle stories.”

His example was a story reported from Carlsbad, New Mexico. He reproduced newspaper headlines such as “Eagle Slain Grabbing Boy” and “Eagle Killed in Attempt to Carry Off Tot.” The press coverage was widespread and erroneous. The true story turned out to be the case of a captive bird that was harassed by children. One of them finally picked up the bird, an immature golden eagle, and tossed it onto the head of another child.

As indicated earlier, I can agree that “super-eagles” do not exist. The historical records that follow here do not have anything to do with actual eagles. They could be explained by Thunderbirds. I have to offer as evidence an outstanding example of Thunderbirds attacking a young man in 1977. This is the one case where we have been able to take a contemporary look at the claim of a young person menaced by giant birds. The other cases pre-date that event by decades, going back to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are being slowly unveiled to us because they were ignored for their importance at the time they occurred. *We are fortunate to possess the information that we do have about them.* I will present them chronologically and finish up with the latest and best case.

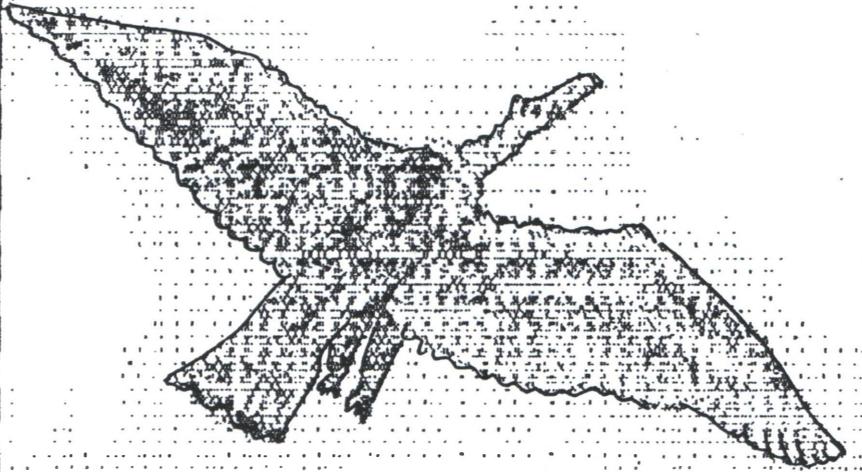
Our earliest North American case of someone carried off comes from among the Blackfoot Indians. The date of its occurrence was some time in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The source is Claude Schaeffer at the Museum of the Plains Indians in Browning, Montana. He received an account of the life of White Bear, a conjurer and eagle trapper, who married into the Blood tribe. White Bear died in 1905 around the age of 83. Schaeffer heard the story of White Bear and giant birds from Harry Under Mouse, White Bear’s grandson. [9]

When hunting with three other people, White Bear was picked up by a giant bird that carried him to a nest on Devil’s Head Mountain. The peak is located northeast of the present site of Banf in Alberta. He escaped the nest and

**Devil's Head  
Mountain**

**Ivanpah, CA**

**Coal  
Co.,  
OK**



returned to his family who had given him up for dead. This story is told with much greater detail by Schaeffer and in my book *Thunderbirds*.

A historical record from Mississippi made its way into a translation of Felix Pouchet's book *The Universe* published in 1871. The English translator added a footnote telling the then-recent account from a schoolteacher in Tippah County, Mississippi. Large birds dubbed "eagles" had been carrying off pigs and lambs in the county for some time. Then one day an eight-year-old boy named Jemmie Kenney was picked up and carried to a great height. The bird dropped the boy and he did not survive. The teacher wrote that either the fall or the injuries from the bird's talons would have been enough to have killed the boy. [10]

The earliest account that has so far come to light from newspaper files is the following from the Carleton Place (Ontario) *Herald* of 21 July 1886. Credit for finding this item goes to one of the champions of newspaper research, Benoit Crevier of Montreal. He found this under the headline "A Heavy Lift for an Eagle."

The "Bruce Telescope," of Walkerton [Indiana], says, Washburn Wright, seven years old, was going through a pasture near Mulberry Grove, Illinois, the other day, when a big bald eagle swooped down, grabbed him by the jacket and actually lift[ed] him from the ground. The boy yelled, the clothes ripped, and the boy's father, rushing to the rescue, drove away the king of birds, who wanted to make a Ganymede out of the youth.

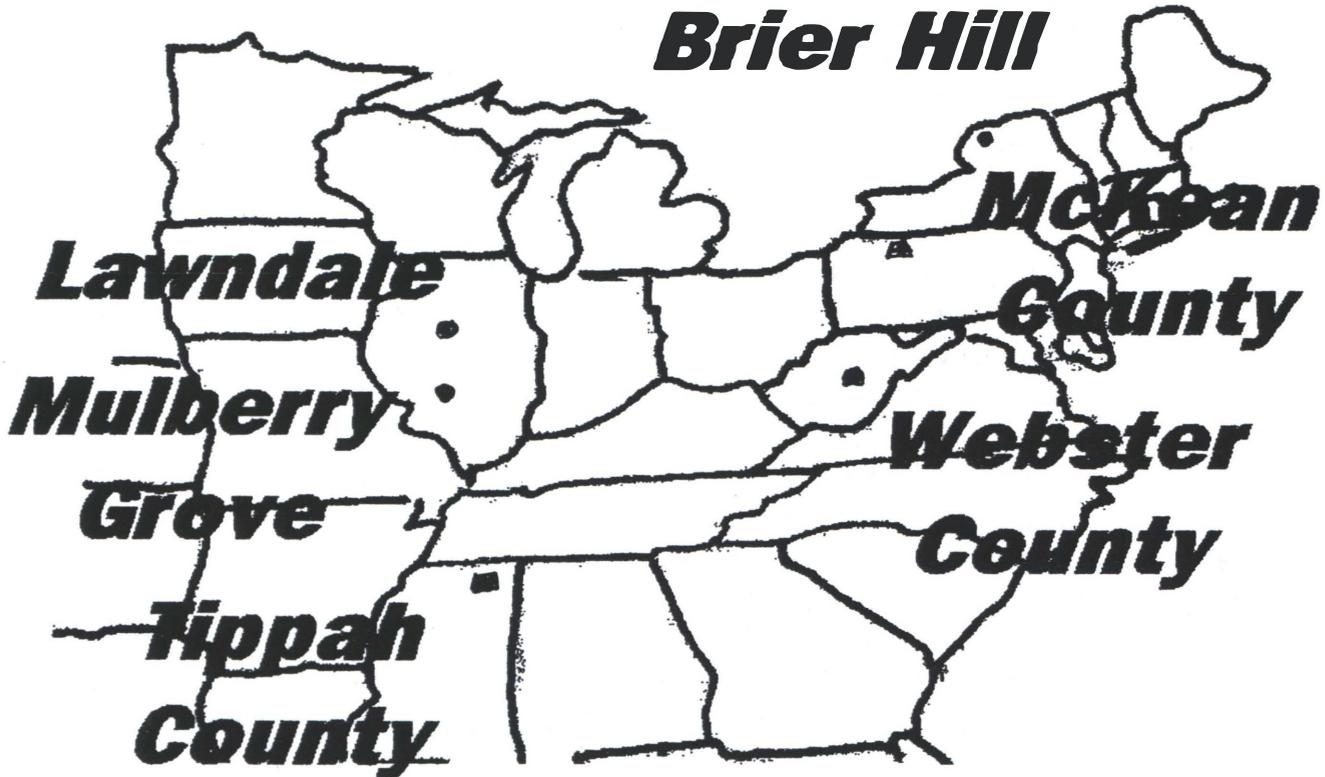
As Benoit Crevier notes, "there is no way a Bald Eagle (a well-known bird species) could lift a 7-year-old child. Impossible. Thus another unknown bird species?"

The next report was also turned up by Benoit Crevier. The headline was "Attacked by an Eagle" in the weekly *The Equity* from Bryson, Quebec dated 17 May 1888.

The Ogdensburg [New York] "Journal" says: "On Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> inst., Georgie the seven-year-old son of George Rickards, of Brier Hill, in this county, was attacked while out in the field by a very large bald eagle. When the boy saw the eagle swooping down upon him, he armed himself with as large a club as he could wield and fought the bird, which continued its efforts to get hold of him with its talons. When first seen by Burton Rickards, an older brother of George, the eagle was endeavoring to pick up the lad. Burton went to the rescue and drove off the eagle.

"Later Burton set a steel trap in the field where there had been thrown

**Brier Hill**



**Thunderbirds:**



**The Living Legend!**

some deacon [perhaps a misprint for "dead"] carcasses and caught the eagle by the middle claw of one of his talons. Some green sticks were cut and ropes obtained, and a most vigorous fight initiated to capture the eagle alive. When the rope was thrown over his head, he would take it off with his free leg almost in an instant. He would bite off pieces from the green sticks, which were an inch in diameter, and fought a brave and determined battle. He was finally overpowered by superior force and had to succumb. He was captured alive, and is now in possession of Mr. Rickard [sic].

"The fight and capture took place on the farm of Enoch Young, supervisor of Morristown. The eagle is represented to be a very large one. This is the first instance in which one of these voracious birds has attempted to carry off a child in St. Lawrence County."

A now famous case of carrying off a child is the 1895 instance of giant birds reported harassing people and livestock in Webster County, West Virginia. A ten-year-old girl, Landy Junkins, disappeared on 1 February 1895. Later reports, including sightings of two giant birds and an attack on a bear hunter, Peter Swadley, indicated she was probably carried away. The birds were observed to have nested on Snaggle Tooth Knob, at an inaccessible location. The full text of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* article for 24 February 1895 is reprinted on six pages in *Wonders* Volume 4.

Hiram Cranmer of rural Pennsylvania, mentioned earlier, is the source for two incidents of people dying at the claws of Thunderbirds in his state. He wrote to *Fate Magazine* in their March 1966 issue, claiming to know of seven deaths but citing only two cases he knew from personal experience.

Its victims range in age from 75-year-old Barney Pluff who was devoured in 1941 to a four-year-old girl in McKean County, Pa., who was snatched in 1937 while her family was picking berries.

David Jacobsen, who wrote in 1948, had heard of several cases of bird-people encounters but put into print no more details than the following:

Some years ago the New York "Herald Tribune" reported that in Kentucky a bald eagle lifted a 50-pound boy over twenty feet into the air. In Mississippi another eagle was shot, supposedly because the bird, having a seven-foot wingspread, flew away with a 50-pound calf. A 4-year-old boy was reportedly attacked and lifted off the ground by an eagle in Florida. [11]

At the time of all of these occurrences few people were willing to consider that something other than eagles was around to be responsible for the acts. There was no scrutiny of people's stories or records kept.

This attitude changed by the time the next case of attempted abduction by a bird appeared in the news headlines. The case of Marlon Lowe, a ten-year-old boy in 1977, has become the most celebrated and scrutinized instance of its kind. The first three chapters of *Thunderbirds* are devoted to describing that event and putting it into a context of reports made from Illinois in July and August of 1977. One of the culprit birds was even caught on film by T. J. Huffer shortly after the reported attack on Marlon Lowe. That such an event can make only a small splash in the modern day and then be driven into obscurity by the reluctance of ornithologists to apply themselves honestly to the issue demonstrates how difficult this entire subject has become.

In the evening hours of 25 July 1977 Marlon Lowe was playing with two friends in the backyard of his home in Lawndale, Illinois. Two large birds approached them. The birds flew low, and one of them picked up Marlon by his sleeveless shirt. He was carried about 40 feet. He weighed sixty-five pounds. The boy struck at the bird with his fists and was dropped. His parents rushed onto the scene in time to see the boy dropped and the birds fly away into the trees along a nearby creek.

The story caused a sensation. No one could get away with writing about these birds as eagles. The scrutiny and demand for detail were too great for that. However, the birds bore some resemblance to condors so they were suggested. But the most popular and equally unlikely candidates put forth were turkey vultures. For the turkey vulture crowd, all the people who had seen the boy picked up were just imagining that.

This response is absurd, but people who weren't there at the time all thought they knew better than the people who were there.

So if you are asking yourself how such a story would be treated if it happened today, you can expect this same kind of absurd dismissal after the initial excitement.

There are reasons to think we might be seeing this kind of story back in the headlines in the next few years. Let us take a look back at this history. The timing and the placement of events both have some importance.

The record that we have here of people being attacked does not have to be complete. There may be other stories still overlooked. But the record we have shows birds attempting to carry off people, especially children, every twenty to forty years. Perhaps these events have some link to cycles in nature, particularly to the abundance of wildlife. Part of the story of White Bear in Alberta is that his people were experiencing a time of famine when his abduction took place. Hard times among the normal prey of the Thunderbirds might contribute to the birds

seeking human beings, just another meal to them, when other prey is scarce. Biologists take a particular interest in food sources so I will once again list the prey reported for Thunderbirds: deer, moose, elk, caribou, whales, dogs, horses, sheep, antelope, pigs, cattle.

The reports of accomplished and attempted abductions fall along two geographical routes that I have been pointing to for many years. These are the likely migration routes of the giant birds in the Central and Eastern USA.

As to the Western half of the USA, little has been attempted in the way of gathering reports in that vast area. It is also possible that less density for the human population and more natural resources for prey would affect the record of Thunderbirds even if more effort was made to study the birds there.

The likelihood of the birds migrating north to south and back again in the Central and Eastern states brings the birds into contact with populated areas. The birds are associated with the Ozarks and the hills of Oklahoma and would be migrating through Missouri, Illinois, and Wisconsin to the Great Lakes. No one is suggesting the birds are commonplace. But the few that have survived into recent centuries would be following habit patterns established thousands of years ago when the land was less populated by people and animals like the bison were commonplace.

In the East the birds are reported along the Appalachian Mountains up to northern New York and in Quebec. The reported sightings and the reported attacks fall along this line of migration.

So it is that Marlon Lowe and Washburn Wright some ninety years earlier were menaced in the month of July in Illinois when the birds were returning south as they probably do every year. In New York in early May of 1888 Georgie Rickards was the victim of a bird that would have been flying north into Quebec had it not been captured.

Captures, by the way, are not unheard of. The American Indians were reported to sometimes capture the birds. Robert Lyman Sr. reported that such a bird was once caged in Pennsylvania. But such incidents are so rare as to have done nothing to establish the modern existence of Thunderbirds.

Who, then, might be menaced by such birds in the modern day? Where the bird has not been dismissed out of hand, such as in central Pennsylvania and in Alaska, people are likely to take more precautions if there is a hint of giant birds on the prowl in their area. An expression of concern for young people was one of the first things to be reported when a Thunderbird was seen in Alaska in October of 2002. So, while not immune, these people are likely to be more cautious and therefore be free of injury.

The most vulnerable people, in my opinion, are those persons in Illinois and the state of New York. The history here indicates that. Where the prospect of giant birds appearing will not be seriously considered the danger will be greater.

People in those areas will not be on their guard until the danger has been realized by some new serious incident coming into the news. Time will tell where the birds will strike next.

North America is not alone in possessing a danger from giant birds. This subject has been largely neglected around the world. People have, in my opinion, unwisely ignored the indications that giant birds still survive in remote and out-of-the-way places and are capable of approaching modern population centers. They too are vulnerable to an incident where someone is menaced by a giant bird.

One of the historically recent examples would be the Big Bird of West Yorkshire in England. In 1982 and 1983 a giant bird of prey was observed many times. Of course, the bird eventually left the area of North Bradford, and people went back to the complacency of thinking nothing existed that could threaten them. [12]

In Norway in 1991 Lapp herders of reindeer complained to their government that giant birds were carrying off their stock. About 1,300 animals in one year alone. They were publicly ridiculed. Their ancestors had long ago named such a bird the Vuokho. [13]

In Iran in 1967 two large birds appeared over the village of Jagelan. Two children were picked up by the birds. One was three years old and the other five. Both died when the birds dropped them to the ground. Their ancestors called such birds the Imgig, the Simurgh, and the Roc. [14]

I shudder to think of the tragedy had Marlon Lowe been successfully carried away in 1977. His lifeless body might have been found later, or he might have disappeared entirely. What would people have made of the episode then? And if that event occurs again with tragic results, will we see a long and pathetic repeat of the famous case in Australia where a dingo killed a child but people would not accept that conclusion for many years?

There are those today who will laugh at the very issue I have raised. But if history repeats itself as it has a tendency to do, in the next few years the day will arrive when the laughter will stop. We are likely to encounter giant birds once again in a serious and seemingly in an unavoidable manner.

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# MYSTERY PROFILES - 2002

## *Ape Canyon, Washington - 1924*

In July of 1924 five miners appeared at Kelso, Washington, telling of their encounters with "ape-men" at their mine. It was located two miles east of Mt. St. Helens. The area became known as "Ape Canyon" following this incident. One of them had fired three times at an "ape-man." During the next night their cabin was stoned by several ape-men. The miners told journalists they saw four ape-men and described them as about seven feet tall, weighing about 400 pounds, and walking erect. They also found tracks 13 to 14 inches long. The physical description and the revenge-seeking behavior all indicate the "ape-men" were the Taller-hominids (*Homo gardarensis*). These primates were identified locally as the Seeahtic Tribe. People who went to the cabin verified that it had been destroyed by up to two hundred large rocks.

In recent years people have used this incident for their own purposes. One old logger claimed that he watched his uncle roll a rock down on the miners' cabin and that explained the story. The last survivor of the miners, Fred Beck, published a booklet with his son that tried to equate the "ape-men" to "Bigfoot." In 1966 Fred Beck told Roger Patterson that the creatures weighed 600 or 800 pounds, were "eight foot tall, maybe taller" and left tracks 19 inches long. Whatever the motivation, the fact remains that the story told by Fred Beck in the 1960s differed from the description given in 1924. The new version made them out to be what was then expected of "Bigfoot."

*Homo gardarensis* is the most thoroughly documented of the mystery primates. They are not the same as "Bigfoot" and are reported all across North America. Bones have been exhumed in Greenland; they are associated with archaeological sites all over eastern Canada; detailed sightings date from 1862 and continue to the modern day; they have been described in ethnographic studies, especially those done among the Eskimos. Even their modern use of natural resources has been detailed in one source. For more about *Homo gardarensis* see the book *Living Fossils*.

## *Atlantis*

**If you are not already living near a place where Atlantis has been claimed to have stood, just wait. In theories, at least, Atlantis gets around. People have been posing lots of locations for it. Crete, Thera, and Cuba have been popular claims recently. The latest has been made for a tiny island between Spain and Africa.**

**Plato's account of Atlantis makes clear that the island was destroyed by a cataclysm. Until then it had stood as a large island to the west of Spain. The timing of its destruction happens to fall at a point in prehistory when we now know that our entire planet was changing drastically. Rockfalls in caves and shelters around the world date to the same time as the legendary end of Atlantis. A so-called ice age was ending. The present regimes of climate and vegetation then became established in a post-Pleistocene world.**

**If the island of Atlantis truly vanished in a cataclysm and is buried beneath thousands of years of silt, can proof of its existence ever be found? Proof would be found in archaeological sites around the western end of the Mediterranean Sea -- in remains dating to 12,000 years ago at the height of the prosperity of Atlantis. The cultural influence of the Atlanteans was widespread according to the legend. It could be detected in the Atlantean hinterland or, if you like, its sphere of influence. We are still waiting for someone to find such traces of that considerable age and thereby to define what were Atlantean traits.**

## *Carolina Water Guns*

**On 13 December 2001 at 6:45 p.m. the latest example of the unexplained Carolina Water Guns took place. A booming sound was heard over New Hanover and Brunswick Counties in southeastern North Carolina. Such reports go back at least to 1871 when the following report was made in Wilmington on July 19th of that year between 8 and 9 p.m.: "We were very much startled by a blaze of light, followed by a hissing sound like a fire roaring. Our first thought was that the house was on fire, but, in a second, a large ball of fire came rolling through the air, immediately over the house, from the south toward the north, and broke into the northern heavens, throwing**

off three large stars of crimson fire. Almost a minute after, there came a loud report, as of a cannon, only followed by a roll too long for a gun and not quite long enough for thunder."

Up the North Carolina coast from Cape Fear similar occurrences are the Guns of Vandemere at Pamlico Sound. The Carolina guns are likened to the Seneca Guns at Seneca Lake in New York, to the Barisal Guns of India, and to numerous other water guns (or waterguns) known around the world. These phenomena are known as brontides (from an Italian word meaning "like thunder"). Their origin has been much disputed. The most likely explanation seems to be that they are natural releases of some gas such as methane (sea burps, if you will) that are the natural order for a restless Earth.

To study these questions a Duke University seismologist Peter Malin is helping to install a second seismograph in North Carolina to be operational in 2002 at the Fort Fisher Historic Site. As one puzzled observer of the Carolina Water Guns noted, "They are unexplained and largely ignored."

## *The de Loys Hoaxed Photograph*

One of the most feeble hoaxes of the 20th century has nevertheless been one of the most enduring of modern hoaxes. A black and white photograph of a common spider monkey from South America has been passed off as an "unknown giant ape." Clearly we will not soon hear the end of this photograph. It has been repeatedly debunked. We will have to be content with repeated warnings to newcomers to observe for themselves the feeble qualities of it. I published one warning ten years ago. The time seems right for another.

There exists but one picture of this dead animal wherein all objects of obvious scale have not only been omitted but removed. The bank of a river was stripped and the monkey propped up with a stick. The monkey was seated on a box. The box is the only source for estimating scale. Ivan Sanderson pointed out forty years ago that with his experience traveling in South America he recognized it as a common container for two gasoline cans. He wrote that they were "fitted into cheap wooden cases, measuring exactly 20 1/2 inches long, by 10 1/2 inches from front to back, and 15 1/2 inches high. The better grade boxes are bound with metal tape around the two ends." The horizontal lines on the box in the photo are the metal tape bound around the box. He

also noted stenciling in the photograph that was "standard and is usually stamped over two of the four 4-inch bits of board of which the sides are invariably constructed" (*Abominable Snowmen*, Chilton Books, 1961). That scale allowed an estimate of the height of the dead monkey -- all of 27 inches!

The photographer not only lied about the size of the animal but about it not having a tail and about the number of its teeth. Of course no part of this specimen survived to be examined -- another incredible part of the story. There is only this pathetic picture. It might have been done as a practical joke by the photographer. But it was certainly exploited by others and has achieved the status of a remarkable nuisance ever since. Here is a drawing with approximate measurements -- approximated because the obvious intention of this posing was to make measurements difficult.



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## *The Eastern Bigfoot or Homo gardarensis*

For three quarters of a century the bones of the fossil man *Homo gardarensis* have been on record. They were dug up in Greenland from a 12th century Norse graveyard. The unusual size and shape of the skull were immediately noted and set this find apart from the other remains from Gardar in Greenland. Prof. F. C. C. Hansen in Copenhagen wrote of this find

in 1931 that it suggested something of the jotun or troll race. And it just might be a troll of the type known to the Greenlanders and mentioned in the Norse sagas.

Based upon drawings and photographs Sir Arthur Keith declared the find to be a case of acromegaly, a deformation of the skull caused by disease. Hansen replied that the features of the skull were quite regular. They bore a resemblance to Rhodesian Man. But after Hansen died, there was no one to defend the uniqueness of this fossil. Keith's hasty view became the excuse to store away the bones at the Panum Institute in Copenhagen where they are labeled a pathological specimen. Today some people still repeat the erroneous findings of sixty years ago as if they just couldn't have been wrong. This is what happens to the evidence for the mystery primates. It is mishandled by professional scientists. There are other examples as pointed out in the book *Living Fossils*.

This find needs to be reexamined for it appears to one of the carriers of the Dorset Culture of Canada and to be the creature still seen alive so often in North America as a seven-foot-tall hairy giant – known as the Taller-hominid and Marked Hominid to some, and as the Eastern Bigfoot to others. This creature bears only a superficial resemblance to the genuine Patterson's Bigfoot of the Pacific Northwest. You can read all about this creature in the book *Living Fossils*. For more about the importance of the Dorset Culture and their interactions with Europeans see Vol. 6 of *Wonders*.

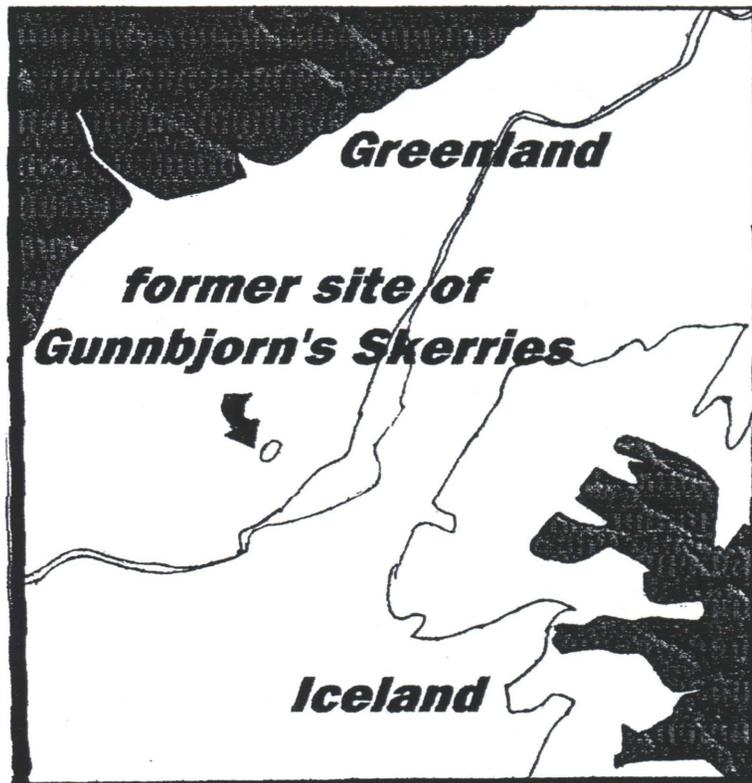
## *Gunnbjorn's Skerries* - *A Miniature Atlantis*

The correct site of Gunnbjorn's Skerries has been a puzzle for the scholars reading the Icelandic Sagas. The common wisdom today is that they should be identified with islands on the eastern coast of Greenland. However, records that place the rocky islands of Gunnbjorn midway between Greenland and Iceland have been confirmed by modern bathymetric charting of the ocean floor.

Their history begins around 876 when Gunnbjorn Ulfsson was driven beyond Iceland. He came upon some islands. Thereafter the islands were identified for him. He thought he could see land to the west of them. It was following this clue that caused Eric the Red to reach Greenland in 982. A report written by Ivar Bardarson in the fourteenth century puts the Skerries midway between Iceland and Greenland. They were visited and 18 farms had been established on them by 1391 according to Icelandic

records.

The destruction of the islands is noted on a map published in 1508. In 1456 a volcanic eruption consumed them. Afterward dangerous shoals were noted in that area. Today the latest bathymetric mapping shows an elevation on the seabed at the very spot where Gunnbjorn's Skerries were once reported. But the islands themselves are gone in a manner similar to the destruction of the legendary island of Atlantis.



## *The Kennewick People*

The latest US federal court ruling on 30 August 2002 gives scientists the right to study the skeletal remains of Kennewick Man. Found in Washington State in 1996, these fossils were found to be around 9000 years old. This find has led to the recognition that the few skeletons that ancient and even older in North America are not the bones of the ancestors of the American Indians. A revolution in New World archaeology is taking place. It is becoming clear that the ancestors of the American Indians fought and replaced an older version of Homo sapiens whom we might as well call the "Kennewick People."

Many American Indian groups have told anthropologists about a prior race of people with white skin who once lived beside their ancestors. Those people either moved away or became the losers in a battle for possession of the land. The bones of Kennewick Man and like finds suggest that a race very like the Ainu of Japan were those people who lived beside and then fought the Indians. The ancestors of the Kennewick People were likely to have been a people called the Amurians who lived in Asia 30,000 years ago.

Kennewick Man himself was found to have an archaic spear point in his hip bone -- a sign of the conflict that probably took his life. Finds in South America are indicating the same transition took place there. Some of the descendants of the Kennewick People might still turn up alive on that continent in remote areas. As for North America, there is even the possibility that some of them might have survived into the twentieth century. You can read more about the Kennewick People in the book *Living Fossils*.

## *The Kensington Runestone of Minnesota*

The Kensington Runestone was in the news in late 2000 and twice in 2001. This large stone shaped like a rectangular tombstone was unearthed in 1898 and contains an inscription in 14th century Scandinavian runes. It was raised as a memorial to slain Norsemen who had made their way in 1362 into the area that would become the state of Minnesota. At first it was denounced as a fraud because scholars assumed it was dated to one thousand years earlier. Only when the full inscription was translated was it realized that language used was proper for the 14th century.

The claims to have found fatal flaws in the use of language since then have been refuted. The stone's detractors have fallen back on making their own fraudulent claims that a deathbed confession has proven the stone false. But when that claim is examined you find that no one confessed to a hoax and no one even died at the time! Those people are trying to save their reputations at all cost to the truth.

In 2000 a geological finding was announced. A core from the dressed surface of the runestone was examined for its mica degradation. The results were that the stone had to have been buried for at least 50 years and probably for centuries. In August of 2001 a claim to have found a second runic inscription in Minnesota was made. Some said at

the time that this had been noticed before and dismissed as a fake. Later in 2001 two pranksters came forward saying they had made this fake years earlier. Their credentials as pranksters were enough to have journalists respectfully quote their words condemning the validity of the 1898 stone. What a world we have made! You can read more about the Kensington Runestone in *Wonders* Vol. 5.

We can report progress on the Kensington Runestone. The Smithsonian Institution (SI) is now in a pickle. The supporters of the stone have been bolstered by Richard Nielsen's long and polished defense of the stone in *Scandinavian Studies* for Spring 2001 (see a copy at <http://www.byu.edu/sasslink/pdf/krs.pdf>). For a plain English discussion of new developments try the *Ripsaw News* (at <http://www.ripsawnews.com/2001.08.15/feature.html>). Also you can visit Michael Zalar's site at (<http://www.geocities.com/thetropics/island/3634/index2.html>) and check out his links on chasing the SI for its treatment of the stone in its book *Vikings: the North Atlantic Saga*.

There has been a long silence in the SI camp on this subject. Will the Smithsonian now take a bath, cleanse itself of its many mistakes on this subject, and embrace a proper study of the stone? Not likely. Organizations -- after they have made a bad investment -- cannot admit their mistakes. Look at the National Geographic's well-financed but ineffective defense of the hoaxes of Robert Peary as an example. But what can the SI do now that the runestone has been demonstrated to have a solid linguistic construction? They are hiding in their bunker. If they come out at all, they will probably do what the runestone's detractors have traditionally done. They will widen the scope of their suspects. They will find some dead person upon whom they can cast suspicion as a demented genius with runes. And they will make their charge with a blast of publicity, for that is what they are all about in these matters. They are propagandists who hope you won't notice their lack of substance.

In December of 2002 it has been reported in the *Ripsaw News* that the SI is responding to enquiries about the Runestone by sending out a list of authorities who have come out against the stone's validity. They can no longer make the old arguments about the merits of any part of the inscription. Now they are showing a disdain for the facts and relying on the false premise that "authorities" are never wrong. As Max Planck (1858-1947) put it, the opponents of a new scientific truth have to die off, they are not won over by the facts.

## *The LaVerendrye Stone*

The Kensington Runestone of Minnesota has elbowed its way to respectability after a century of flawed scrutiny by supposed experts who have been proven wrong. (See the entry in *Mystery Profiles* for the Kensington Stone.) Another inscription said to be made up of rune-like characters was found in 1738 in North Dakota. It was removed to French Canada by Sieur de la Verendrye. The stone itself has been lost, and only a meager characterization of what it contained survives. It contained a short message made up of letters like runes.

A search for the stone itself made in the twentieth century failed to locate it. Now that the Kensington find is seen to be genuine, the likelihood that there is a companion stone of equal importance should prompt at least a renewed search for a copy of the inscription. Somewhere, in the French Canadian archives or even in France, there ought to be a record of what was on the La Verendrye Stone.

If the stone contains runes, it would have been carved by the same explorers who made their way into the Minnesota/North Dakota region in the 14th century. The evidence for such an achievement is already in hand in the form of the Kensington Runestone. What remains to be done is to fill out the story of the exploration by relocating the La Verendrye Stone or a copy of its content. You can read more about this mysterious artifact in *Wonders* Vol. 5.

## *The Minnesota Iceman*

In recent years a couple of bodies have been found naturally preserved for centuries. In 1991 one turned up on the Austrian-Italian border that was several thousand years old. More recently the remains of an American Indian turned up in Canada. They were termed "Icemen." But before their fame there was the Minnesota Iceman, a body artificially preserved in ice. It was exhibited around the USA in 1967 and 1968 by Minnesotan Frank Hansen. The exhibitor had the ice shaved down around the upper contours of a body in a block of ice. At the end of 1968 it was given a cursory examination in its icy coffin by Ivan Sanderson and Bernard Heuvelmans. They announced the following year that it appeared to be the corpse of a primitive type of man that was once living. It had died a violent death and then had been quickly frozen

into a block of ice. The original exhibit disappeared and a model was put on display in 1969 and years after.

A debate has raged ever since about the identity and the origin of this Iceman. The best hypothesis is that the exhibit was the body of the type of man called *Homo erectus*. That type has a long history of being captured alive, probably because of its lesser intelligence when compared to its surviving relatives (*Homo sapiens*, *Homo gardarensis*, and Neandertal men). Some day when a living *Homo erectus* is captured and properly studied the similarity with the Minnesota Iceman will be realized. Sanderson and Heuvelmans both published detailed descriptions of what they saw, though few people seem to have bothered to read them.

Here is the best speculation on its origin. Since *Homo erectus* has been described only in Asia, even among the modern accounts of mystery primates, it appears the Iceman would have been captured there some time around 1966 in China. It was transported alive to a place where it could be frozen and then it was killed with bullets through the chest and the head. The block of ice turned up in Hong Kong. There it was purchased by a wealthy Californian who approached Hansen to exhibit the thing. The only secret Hansen has retained over the years, and is likely to keep secret forever, is the identity of the true owner of the Iceman. The Iceman was returned to the owner in 1969 and was probably disposed of as it had become a legal hot potato. You can read more of this history in the book *Living Fossils*.

## *Mothman -- West Virginia's Famous Mystery*

There does exist a creature made famous as Mothman. But it is a new kind of bird. The hackneyed phrase “soon to be a major motion picture” applies here. Early in 2002 “The Mothman Prophecies” will be in theaters starring Richard Gere. It was John Keel who made the moniker Mothman famous in his 1968 articles appearing in *Flying Saucer Review* and *Saga Magazine* (the latter was then a popular monthly men's magazine). Please note that I am not saying he invented the name, I am saying he made it famous. Later his book *The Mothman Prophecies* told in detail his journalist's search for understanding the UFO reports and other strange tales that have circulated around the Ohio River and Pt. Pleasant, West Virginia.

A flying creature had startled many people in the 1960s. Keel made the creature out to be something from outer space. But he did not tell the whole story. It had been reported for many decades earlier. It was called Birdman then. After World War II it was reported to hover over people in their automobiles just as was reported in the 1960s. What people have described is a Giant Owl, or Bighoot. This bird has been reported on the Appalachian Plateau and elsewhere. In the Ozarks it was called the Booger Owl. The Iroquois Indians feared this creature also. They called it the Flying Head. You can read more about Bighoot in Vol. 5 of *Wonders*. The very latest news can be found at the site "Thunderbird and Bighoot" on the web. Link to it from Mark A. Hall Publications or the Monsters and Wonders Store.

## *Sea Monster Johnny*

Sea Monster Johnny is a journalist's recent invention of a name for another little-noticed monster. It is as obscure now as Mothman/Bighoot was obscure thirty years ago. This name hadn't been invented when I wrote up Johnny ten years ago in *Wonders* for 1992. Years separate the reports of this large pink thing seen in the estuary of the St. Johns River in Florida. When it pokes its head out of the water or comes on land it resembles the creature called *Thescelosaurus*, a late-Cretaceous dinosaur.

Some comments published since my 1992 article have confused these reports with things resembling large salamanders. Those reports were made elsewhere entirely. And they describe something quite different. This is like confusing a dog with a hot-dog. Ignore them. You can read more about the St. Johns monster in *Best of Wonders Volumes 1-3* where the original article from *Wonders* is reprinted.

## *Sky-Lines Explained*

Thirty years ago reports began to appear of something dubbed "sky-lines." Odd strands of plastic were found to be stretched across trees and buildings for long and undetermined lengths. Efforts to track the sources of the lines were thwarted when the lines snapped leaving the trackers with coils of plastic. The lines were noticed more than once over Caldwell, New Jersey. They were reported over Manhattan and once in the state of Georgia. No kites or kite fliers were in evidence at those sites to explain the finds.

In 1978 near Akron, Ohio, a classic case of such a find took place. People living at Greensburg found lines extending over their yards. One person hauled in thousands of feet of line. Another tracked a line for thousands of feet before losing it. In this instance the maker of the "sky-line" came forward. A man in Canal Fulton explained that he had spliced together three 6,000-foot rolls of fishing line and launched a kite. He lost sight of the kite even using a telescope. The line then dropped over his neighbors.

All these kite fliers seem to have been unaware that flying a kite higher than 150 feet is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration. The reason is that kites can be a hazard to small aircraft.

## *Whiteman's Land*

Modern scholars have sought the storied locations mentioned in the Norse sagas. They were Vinland, Markland, Helluland, and Whiteman's Land. The last named is the most mysterious. The Vikings did not want to go there because they would be killed or held captive for life. This last fate befell such historical figures as Ari Marson and Bjorn Asbrandson. The feared place was also called Greater Ireland for it was considered to be inhabited by Irishmen.

The sagas, historical references, and modern archaeological finds place Whiteman's Land in Newfoundland and New Brunswick. The famous L'Anse aux Meadows site makes perfect sense as a remnant of Greater Ireland, but it has been declared to be Vinland and "a staging area on the way to Vinland" by people who refuse to consider Whiteman's Land at all. Its dismissal by scholars dates from a century ago when all these lands mentioned in the sagas were dismissed as fabulous. That baggage still inhibits modern search and research into the issue of Whiteman's Land.

Large tower beacons found across eastern Canada help to identify the travels of the people of Whiteman's Land. They maintained a successful New World colony of Europeans for several centuries before Columbus just as Norsemen did the same in Greenland. Like the Norse colonists, they also failed before the shores of America were visited in a new age of discovery that began in the fifteenth century. You can learn more about Whiteman's Land in *Wonders* Volume 6.