

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,500

On this episode of Expedition X.

2

00:00:03,500 --> 00:00:07,000

Oh God, this is a graveyard.

3

00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:10,000

Jess and Phil journey to America's heartland.

4

00:00:10,000 --> 00:00:12,000

Oh check this out, job on.

5

00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:13,500

There's gold, another one.

6

00:00:13,500 --> 00:00:16,000

To investigate reports of a winged creature

7

00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:20,500

that began terrorizing the area over a century ago.

8

00:00:20,500 --> 00:00:23,000

He actually fires at the creature.

9

00:00:23,000 --> 00:00:28,000

Now residents around Van Meter, Iowa are claiming the beast is real

10

00:00:29,000 --> 00:00:30,500

and it's back.

11

00:00:30,500 --> 00:00:33,500

It was flying, had a real strange long body

12

00:00:33,500 --> 00:00:36,500

and a face that looked more like a reptile.

13

00:00:36,500 --> 00:00:38,500

It looked directly at us.

14

00:00:40,500 --> 00:00:42,500

Shhh, did you hear all that rustling?

15

00:00:42,500 --> 00:00:43,500

Right over there.

16

00:00:43,500 --> 00:00:45,500

Oh, look at that camera.

17

00:00:45,500 --> 00:00:47,500

Oh, holy sh**.

18

00:00:47,500 --> 00:00:50,500

And when the evidence leads underground.

19

00:00:50,500 --> 00:00:51,500

Oh boy.

20

00:00:51,500 --> 00:00:53,500

Oh, look at that.

21

00:00:53,500 --> 00:00:55,500

The team digs for the truth behind.

22

00:00:55,500 --> 00:00:58,500

Get the cameras in, get the cameras in.

23

00:00:58,500 --> 00:01:00,500

The Van Meter monster.

24

00:01:00,500 --> 00:01:03,500

My name is Josh Gates.

25

00:01:03,500 --> 00:01:07,500

In my travels I've experienced strange things that defy logic

26

00:01:07,500 --> 00:01:10,500

and made me question everything.

27

00:01:10,500 --> 00:01:11,500

Oh my God.

28

00:01:11,500 --> 00:01:17,500

Now I've put together a team to investigate the stranger side of the unknown.

29

00:01:17,500 --> 00:01:18,500

Let's go.

30

00:01:18,500 --> 00:01:23,500

Phil Torres is a scientist who hunts for rational explanations.

31

00:01:23,500 --> 00:01:27,500

This is the criminal who actually found the stationery.

32

00:01:27,500 --> 00:01:31,500

Jessica Chobot's paranormal research has made her a true believer.

33

00:01:31,500 --> 00:01:33,500

Sorry about that. I heard about it. Let's go.

34

00:01:33,500 --> 00:01:36,500

Together we're searching for answers.

35

00:01:36,500 --> 00:01:37,500

What is that?

36

00:01:37,500 --> 00:01:41,500

To the world's most extraordinary mysteries.

37

00:01:41,500 --> 00:01:44,500

This is Expedition X.

38

00:01:48,500 --> 00:01:52,500

When I say the name Van Meter, Iowa, what do you think of?

39

00:01:53,500 --> 00:01:55,500

I have nothing.

40

00:01:55,500 --> 00:01:56,500

Nothing.

41

00:01:56,500 --> 00:01:57,500

What?

42

00:01:57,500 --> 00:02:01,500

Not even you with your encyclopedic knowledge of weirdness?

43

00:02:01,500 --> 00:02:02,500

Knows about this story?

44

00:02:02,500 --> 00:02:07,500

This is like one of the most vivid and corroborated cryptid sightings of all time.

45

00:02:07,500 --> 00:02:11,500

First of all, Josh, Jess and I clearly study very different encyclopedias.

46

00:02:11,500 --> 00:02:13,500

But secondly, what are we talking about?

47

00:02:13,500 --> 00:02:15,500

We're talking about a flying creature.

48

00:02:15,500 --> 00:02:17,500

And the origin story for this is a doozy.

49

00:02:17,500 --> 00:02:19,500

It started with this mass sighting.

50

00:02:19,500 --> 00:02:24,500

When practically the entire town of Van Meter had a very close encounter

51

00:02:24,500 --> 00:02:26,500

with something that they couldn't explain.

52

00:02:26,500 --> 00:02:29,500

Something that has become known as the Van Meter Monster.

53

00:02:33,500 --> 00:02:36,500

1903 Van Meter, Iowa.

54

00:02:36,500 --> 00:02:38,500

Sitting along the idyllic Raccoon River,

55

00:02:38,500 --> 00:02:42,500

this small coal mining town becomes the battleground

56

00:02:42,500 --> 00:02:48,500

for a war between its residents and something that to this day remains unexplained.

57

00:02:49,500 --> 00:02:54,500

Local newspapers report that Van Meter becomes besieged for nearly a week

58

00:02:54,500 --> 00:02:58,500

by a giant flying bat-like creature.

59

00:02:58,500 --> 00:03:04,500

Night after night, it is said to terrorize the town folk with its deafening screech.

60

00:03:04,500 --> 00:03:09,500

The community rallies together to bring the monster down.

61

00:03:09,500 --> 00:03:14,500

But their bullets seem to have no effect on the beast.

62

00:03:14,500 --> 00:03:19,500

The days that follow, several of the town's most prominent citizens, including a banker,

63

00:03:19,500 --> 00:03:24,500

a doctor and several business owners, all put their reputations on the line

64

00:03:24,500 --> 00:03:29,500

by going on record with their extraordinary experiences.

65

00:03:29,500 --> 00:03:36,500

On the final night of the ordeal, the creature reportedly retreats into a nearby abandoned coal mine.

66

00:03:36,500 --> 00:03:42,500

The posse quickly seals the entrance, trapping it inside.

67

00:03:42,500 --> 00:03:49,500

Despite the story becoming national news, in time it fades to legend.

68

00:03:49,500 --> 00:03:55,500

Now, nearly 120 years after that week of terror, recent sightings in and around Van Meter

69

00:03:55,500 --> 00:04:02,500

are terrifying a new generation of witnesses, who all describe seeing something large and black

70

00:04:02,500 --> 00:04:08,500

with bat-like wings, triggering a groundswell of interest in the original case.

71

00:04:08,500 --> 00:04:16,500

What really happened in 1903 and are the recent sightings the key to solving the mystery of the Van Meter monster?

72

00:04:16,500 --> 00:04:18,500

This is so up your alley, Jess.

73

00:04:18,500 --> 00:04:20,500

I can't believe I've never heard of this before.

74

00:04:20,500 --> 00:04:21,500

It's amazing, right?

75

00:04:21,500 --> 00:04:26,500

It's pretty cool. I mean, the fact that this whole town saw this thing, I mean,

76

00:04:26,500 --> 00:04:31,500

mass sightings are incredibly rare, and now that we're getting more reports in modern day

77

00:04:31,500 --> 00:04:34,500

that match up with the previous reports, that's kind of next level.

78

00:04:34,500 --> 00:04:35,500

Phil?

79

00:04:35,500 --> 00:04:38,500

I just... it's so hard for me.

80

00:04:38,500 --> 00:04:43,500

It's night time. Something like a bat flies at you. You get scared.

81

00:04:43,500 --> 00:04:47,500

A bat? Phil, did you zone out during the package that I just prepared?

82

00:04:47,500 --> 00:04:53,500

The bottom line is we need to focus on what real animal people could have been seeing

83

00:04:53,500 --> 00:04:55,500

and still seeing today from the known natural world.

84

00:04:55,500 --> 00:04:59,500

Exactly. The known natural world. It expands all the time.

85

00:04:59,500 --> 00:05:02,500

Biologists are constantly finding new animals out there.

86

00:05:02,500 --> 00:05:04,500

Not 10 foot tall once.

87

00:05:04,500 --> 00:05:07,500

Okay, all right, I don't want this to come to blows. We're not going to settle this here.

88

00:05:07,500 --> 00:05:11,500

Your mission is to go to Iowa. Talk to these eyewitnesses.

89

00:05:11,500 --> 00:05:13,500

Figure out what they actually saw.

90

00:05:13,500 --> 00:05:16,500

Is this some sort of misidentification, Phil?

91

00:05:16,500 --> 00:05:19,500

Or is this some sort of unknown species, Jess?

92

00:05:19,500 --> 00:05:21,500

That's what you've got to figure out.

93

00:05:21,500 --> 00:05:25,500

And I think you have to investigate the original 1903 sighting.

94

00:05:25,500 --> 00:05:27,500

Separate fact from fiction.

95

00:05:27,500 --> 00:05:30,500

If you can do that, you might just be able to solve the entire case.

96

00:05:30,500 --> 00:05:31,500

Okay.

97

00:05:31,500 --> 00:05:32,500

All right.

98

00:05:32,500 --> 00:05:34,500

We've even got a cab waiting to take you to the airport.

99

00:05:34,500 --> 00:05:35,500

Really?

100

00:05:35,500 --> 00:05:36,500

Yeah. Right now.

101

00:05:36,500 --> 00:05:37,500

Right now? Yeah.

102

00:05:37,500 --> 00:05:39,500

The van meter is running.

103

00:05:39,500 --> 00:05:40,500

What?

104

00:05:40,500 --> 00:05:41,500

Oh my gosh!

105

00:05:41,500 --> 00:05:42,500

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

106

00:05:42,500 --> 00:05:43,500

There's no cab.

107

00:05:43,500 --> 00:05:45,500

Wait, you didn't get us the cab?

108

00:05:45,500 --> 00:05:46,500

No, it's just for the joke.

109

00:05:46,500 --> 00:05:48,500

Have a good trip.

110

00:05:48,500 --> 00:05:54,500

Phil and Jess fly from New York City to Iowa's capital, Des Moines.

111

00:05:54,500 --> 00:05:59,500

Then they drive east toward Iowa City.

112

00:06:03,500 --> 00:06:04,500

All right.

113

00:06:04,500 --> 00:06:06,500

So what you know about Iowa?

114

00:06:06,500 --> 00:06:09,500

That for every person there are eight pigs.

115

00:06:09,500 --> 00:06:10,500

What?

116

00:06:10,500 --> 00:06:12,500

Eight to one ratio of pigs to people?

117

00:06:12,500 --> 00:06:13,500

Eight to one.

118

00:06:13,500 --> 00:06:16,500

This is the pig and corn capital of the United States.

119

00:06:16,500 --> 00:06:17,500

There you go.

120

00:06:17,500 --> 00:06:18,500

I hope you like bacon.

121

00:06:18,500 --> 00:06:19,500

I do like bacon.

122

00:06:19,500 --> 00:06:20,500

I love bacon.

123

00:06:20,500 --> 00:06:22,500

Iowa's got a lot going for it, in my opinion.

124

00:06:22,500 --> 00:06:27,500

Well, we got farm to the right, farm to the left, but I'm not seeing...

125

00:06:27,500 --> 00:06:28,500

What?

126

00:06:28,500 --> 00:06:32,500

Any giant winged creatures flying around.

127

00:06:32,500 --> 00:06:36,500

Well, we're about to meet some people who have.

128

00:06:36,500 --> 00:06:42,500

We arrive at Terry Trueblood Park, where Josh has arranged for us to meet Joey Perales

129

00:06:42,500 --> 00:06:44,500

and Tia Stoffer.

130

00:06:44,500 --> 00:06:48,500

They say they would have never believed in something like the van meter monster

131

00:06:48,500 --> 00:06:54,500

until their terrifying encounter with a large winged creature.

132

00:06:54,500 --> 00:06:57,500

We saw it right here, but the grass was a lot taller.

133

00:06:57,500 --> 00:06:59,500

And how close were you to where it was standing?

134

00:06:59,500 --> 00:07:00,500

Right on the path.

135

00:07:00,500 --> 00:07:01,500

You guys were close.

136

00:07:01,500 --> 00:07:02,500

Very close.

137

00:07:02,500 --> 00:07:03,500

Very close.

138

00:07:04,500 --> 00:07:08,500

We were coming down to watch the stars on a clear night.

139

00:07:08,500 --> 00:07:10,500

We were walking down this path.

140

00:07:10,500 --> 00:07:12,500

There was no one out here.

141

00:07:12,500 --> 00:07:15,500

We heard rustling in the grass.

142

00:07:15,500 --> 00:07:19,500

Then it got progressively louder.

143

00:07:19,500 --> 00:07:23,500

And that's when we saw it.

144

00:07:23,500 --> 00:07:25,500

Bat-like, but gigantic.

145

00:07:25,500 --> 00:07:26,500

Bat-like wings.

146

00:07:26,500 --> 00:07:28,500

It looked directly at us.

147

00:07:28,500 --> 00:07:30,500

So we started running.

148

00:07:30,500 --> 00:07:33,500

It was parallel with us.

149

00:07:33,500 --> 00:07:34,500

We made it to the car.

150

00:07:34,500 --> 00:07:37,500

We looked back in a second time, and it was gone.

151

00:07:37,500 --> 00:07:42,500

I know you guys were ready to ditch, but were you able to glean any kind of details from it?

152

00:07:42,500 --> 00:07:45,500

It was tall, like seven...

153

00:07:45,500 --> 00:07:47,500

Significantly taller than that.

154

00:07:47,500 --> 00:07:48,500

Significantly.

155

00:07:48,500 --> 00:07:49,500

We were looking at that.

156

00:07:49,500 --> 00:07:50,500

It had like tucked in wings.

157

00:07:50,500 --> 00:07:54,500

Aside from the rustling around in the grass, did it make any other noises?

158

00:07:54,500 --> 00:07:55,500

Besides the grass, no.

159

00:07:55,500 --> 00:07:56,500

Any color?

160

00:07:56,500 --> 00:07:57,500

Black.

161

00:07:57,500 --> 00:08:01,500

The head was almost like a bird head, like a longer beak-snout kind of thing.

162

00:08:01,500 --> 00:08:06,500

I have to say, if you see a beak-snout bird-like head, wasn't a bird?

163

00:08:06,500 --> 00:08:08,500

Biggest bird I've ever seen.

164

00:08:08,500 --> 00:08:11,500

I don't think I know a bird with a head that size.

165

00:08:11,500 --> 00:08:13,500

I mean, I've worked at a zoo.

166

00:08:13,500 --> 00:08:16,500

I've done a lot of like biology research, too, and there's no...

167

00:08:16,500 --> 00:08:18,500

I can't think of an animal this thing looks like.

168

00:08:18,500 --> 00:08:19,500

You said you worked at a zoo?

169

00:08:19,500 --> 00:08:20,500

Mm-hmm.

170

00:08:20,500 --> 00:08:22,500

So you've been around all sorts of exotic animals?

171

00:08:22,500 --> 00:08:23,500

All sorts.

172

00:08:23,500 --> 00:08:25,500

I've done lots of animal observation.

173

00:08:25,500 --> 00:08:30,500

I've had to create all sorts of fact sheets on animal biology, and it just...

174

00:08:30,500 --> 00:08:34,500

I can't say I've ever seen anything that's even close to what I saw.

175

00:08:34,500 --> 00:08:36,500

I'm just trying to picture this thing.

176

00:08:36,500 --> 00:08:37,500

You can show them.

177

00:08:37,500 --> 00:08:38,500

I have the tattoo.

178

00:08:38,500 --> 00:08:39,500

You've got a tattoo of it.

179

00:08:39,500 --> 00:08:41,500

Yes, I've got a tattoo of it.

180

00:08:41,500 --> 00:08:44,500

So bird-like head, big pointy shoulders.

181

00:08:44,500 --> 00:08:46,500

They were that pointy, that tall?

182

00:08:46,500 --> 00:08:47,500

Yeah.

183

00:08:47,500 --> 00:08:49,500

And did the wings look leathery like a bat like that?

184

00:08:49,500 --> 00:08:50,500

Yeah.

185

00:08:50,500 --> 00:08:52,500

I just wanted to like recount my experience.

186

00:08:52,500 --> 00:08:53,500

Never forget it.

187

00:08:53,500 --> 00:08:54,500

Never forget.

188

00:08:54,500 --> 00:08:55,500

Never forget.

189

00:08:57,500 --> 00:09:01,500

Whatever Tia and Joey saw, it made a lasting impression on both of them.

190

00:09:03,500 --> 00:09:08,500

And their encounter was not far from Van Meter, the birthplace of the legend.

191

00:09:09,500 --> 00:09:10,500

Look at this place.

192

00:09:10,500 --> 00:09:13,500

Oh, it's so quaint and small and awesome.

193

00:09:13,500 --> 00:09:15,500

It's like we've just gone back in time.

194

00:09:16,500 --> 00:09:20,500

The town of Van Meter dates back to 1869.

195

00:09:20,500 --> 00:09:22,500

And not much has changed.

196

00:09:22,500 --> 00:09:30,500

There's one main street, and nearby lie the remnants of Van Meter's coal mining and brick manufacturing past.

197

00:09:30,500 --> 00:09:33,500

I've arranged for Phil and Jess to meet Chad Lewis.

198

00:09:33,500 --> 00:09:38,500

Chad is a researcher who studies the relationship between people's fears and beliefs.

199

00:09:38,500 --> 00:09:39,500

Hi.

200

00:09:39,500 --> 00:09:40,500

Good to see you.

201

00:09:40,500 --> 00:09:46,500

I've written several books, including an in-depth examination of what happened here in the fall of 1903.

202

00:09:46,500 --> 00:09:49,500

So Chad, what got you interested in this mystery?

203

00:09:49,500 --> 00:09:55,500

I had done several books on odd newspaper stories from the 1800s, came down here.

204

00:09:55,500 --> 00:09:58,500

And originally I thought it was going to be very quick stop.

205

00:09:58,500 --> 00:09:59,500

Had to be a hoax.

206

00:09:59,500 --> 00:10:03,500

And the beauty of this town is it hasn't changed in a hundred and some years.

207

00:10:03,500 --> 00:10:06,500

This right here is the spot of the week of terror.

208

00:10:06,500 --> 00:10:11,500

First night a local implement dealer was coming back about 1 a.m.

209

00:10:11,500 --> 00:10:16,500

Something flew across the street and then disappears.

210

00:10:16,500 --> 00:10:18,500

And what happened night two?

211

00:10:18,500 --> 00:10:21,500

A local doctor was sleeping behind his office.

212

00:10:21,500 --> 00:10:24,500

Something or someone woke him up.

213

00:10:24,500 --> 00:10:30,500

So he grabs his weapon and he starts looking out the window and he sees this great form of some monster or creature.

214

00:10:30,500 --> 00:10:33,500

But he can't make out the details, but it's huge.

215

00:10:33,500 --> 00:10:38,500

He actually fires at the creature, but it has no effect.

216

00:10:38,500 --> 00:10:46,500

According to newspaper reports, two nights later the town's hardware store owner also shoots at the beast.

217

00:10:46,500 --> 00:10:49,500

But it doesn't seem to make any impact.

218

00:10:49,500 --> 00:10:52,500

Well now the town's on high alert.

219

00:10:52,500 --> 00:10:56,500

And out at the Brick and Tile factory right next to the abandoned coal mine,

220

00:10:56,500 --> 00:10:59,500

the plant manager's been hearing weird noises for several nights.

221

00:10:59,500 --> 00:11:06,500

He finally gets the courage to walk over about 200 yards to the old abandoned coal mine.

222

00:11:06,500 --> 00:11:10,500

And he sees this creature descending into the old abandoned coal mine.

223

00:11:10,500 --> 00:11:12,500

And the town quickly boarded it up.

224

00:11:12,500 --> 00:11:14,500

That's where the story ends.

225

00:11:14,500 --> 00:11:17,500

Nobody's ever gone out there to try and dig it up.

226

00:11:17,500 --> 00:11:20,500

It's been boarded up since the last sighting.

227

00:11:20,500 --> 00:11:21,500

Nobody's touched it.

228

00:11:21,500 --> 00:11:24,500

The coal mine today you wouldn't know you were on top of it.

229

00:11:24,500 --> 00:11:32,500

If the 1903 story is true and the town's people trapped whatever this thing was inside that mine by blocking the entrance,

230

00:11:32,500 --> 00:11:36,500

then it's possible there are physical remains left behind.

231

00:11:36,500 --> 00:11:38,500

And what about the recent sightings?

232

00:11:38,500 --> 00:11:44,500

Chad tells us that just like back in 1903, there have been several reported encounters around the abandoned brick factory.

233

00:11:44,500 --> 00:11:49,500

Well tell you what, we would love to be able to check out the old brick factory.

234

00:11:49,500 --> 00:11:50,500

Yeah, I know the owner.

235

00:11:50,500 --> 00:11:51,500

You mind giving your friend a call?

236

00:11:51,500 --> 00:11:53,500

Yeah, I'll do that right now.

237

00:11:54,500 --> 00:12:00,500

As the sun begins to set, we get word the property owner has given us permission to check out the old factory.

238

00:12:00,500 --> 00:12:07,500

This abandoned complex, next to a thick forest and a stream, would make a great hidden shelter for a large creature.

239

00:12:11,500 --> 00:12:16,500

Most of the alleged sightings happened at night, so this is the best time to investigate.

240

00:12:16,500 --> 00:12:19,500

This whole thing's collapsed.

241

00:12:20,500 --> 00:12:25,500

I can't really tell if we're on the outside of a building or on the old inside of a building.

242

00:12:25,500 --> 00:12:28,500

Perfect place to hide, and nobody would see you.

243

00:12:28,500 --> 00:12:35,500

First, we want to search the old factory's main office building, or at least what's left of it.

244

00:12:35,500 --> 00:12:36,500

We'll check this out.

245

00:12:36,500 --> 00:12:43,500

That's where, in 1903, the manager of the brickyard said he heard strange noises coming from the nearby coal mine.

246

00:12:44,500 --> 00:12:45,500

Here we go.

247

00:12:50,500 --> 00:12:55,500

This is full of barnswallows.

248

00:13:02,500 --> 00:13:03,500

Oh, Jesus!

249

00:13:08,500 --> 00:13:10,500

This is full of barnswallows.

250

00:13:13,500 --> 00:13:14,500

Oh, Jesus!

251

00:13:15,500 --> 00:13:16,500

Fat!

252

00:13:17,500 --> 00:13:19,500

These are the calmest ones out on the whole.

253

00:13:19,500 --> 00:13:20,500

Definitely is.

254

00:13:21,500 --> 00:13:23,500

Oh, hey, look, there's an upstairs.

255

00:13:29,500 --> 00:13:31,500

Looks like the floor is somewhat intact.

256

00:13:31,500 --> 00:13:35,500

It's all covered in hay, so I can't really tell if there's holes in the wood or not.

257

00:13:37,500 --> 00:13:39,500

Oh, yeah, look at that right there.

258

00:13:47,500 --> 00:13:49,500

Careful, where's stepping?

259

00:13:49,500 --> 00:13:50,500

Yeah.

260

00:13:50,500 --> 00:13:53,500

Oh, what is that pile back there?

261

00:13:54,500 --> 00:13:56,500

We got one here, another one there.

262

00:13:56,500 --> 00:14:01,500

So what do you think that this, whatever's living up here, is using this as like a nest home?

263

00:14:01,500 --> 00:14:02,500

Something like that.

264

00:14:02,500 --> 00:14:06,500

It's clearly eating up here and dropping up here.

265

00:14:06,500 --> 00:14:09,500

There's tens of pounds of feces up here.

266

00:14:09,500 --> 00:14:12,500

Yeah, this doesn't look like bird poo to me.

267

00:14:12,500 --> 00:14:13,500

This is big scat.

268

00:14:13,500 --> 00:14:14,500

That's gotta be a big animal.

269

00:14:14,500 --> 00:14:15,500

Could it be coyote?

270

00:14:15,500 --> 00:14:18,500

This doesn't really look like coyote poo, but it's usually more tapered.

271

00:14:18,500 --> 00:14:23,500

And I just don't see how a coyote can take the stairs every single day to get up here.

272

00:14:25,500 --> 00:14:27,500

That's gotta be a decent pot of snow.

273

00:14:33,500 --> 00:14:35,500

Oh, dead animal.

274

00:14:35,500 --> 00:14:38,500

Why are there so many dead things up here?

275

00:14:38,500 --> 00:14:40,500

Dead animals? Something was eating up here?

276

00:14:40,500 --> 00:14:44,500

We definitely know this thing is getting used heavily by some things.

277

00:14:45,500 --> 00:14:50,500

Whatever is using this space is big enough to carry prey the size of rabbits and possums.

278

00:14:50,500 --> 00:14:53,500

Yeah. Why don't we bust out the trail cat?

279

00:14:53,500 --> 00:14:58,500

Do you want to try putting it right there so that it covers the stairs and kind of just anything that might come up here?

280

00:14:58,500 --> 00:15:01,500

That's a good idea, because if something's crawling up here, it has to take the stairs.

281

00:15:01,500 --> 00:15:04,500

If something's flying in here, it will catch a flying ant.

282

00:15:04,500 --> 00:15:05,500

One of these will be out.

283

00:15:08,500 --> 00:15:11,500

Alright, Jeff, let's get out of here.

284

00:15:15,500 --> 00:15:17,500

The factory building?

285

00:15:17,500 --> 00:15:20,500

I think that thing was huge. There's just so many walls that fell down.

286

00:15:20,500 --> 00:15:22,500

It's all crumbled.

287

00:15:24,500 --> 00:15:28,500

We also set up multiple cameras around the perimeter of the brickyard.

288

00:15:28,500 --> 00:15:31,500

You want to put one right here so it's facing the main entrance?

289

00:15:31,500 --> 00:15:32,500

Alright.

290

00:15:36,500 --> 00:15:38,500

If something crosses, I'll get a notification on my phone.

291

00:15:38,500 --> 00:15:39,500

I thought.

292

00:15:44,500 --> 00:15:47,500

We decide to cover more ground by splitting up.

293

00:15:47,500 --> 00:15:53,500

Any animal out here is going to need water to drink, so I head toward the large stream at the edge of the lot.

294

00:15:57,500 --> 00:15:59,500

I got water.

295

00:16:02,500 --> 00:16:05,500

Right here, it gets pretty thick forest.

296

00:16:05,500 --> 00:16:10,500

So I'm going to get out the flare camera so we can pick up on any heat signatures of anything moving in here.

297

00:16:22,500 --> 00:16:25,500

Look at this. There's something in the tree up there.

298

00:16:26,500 --> 00:16:28,500

There's definitely a hot spot right there.

299

00:16:30,500 --> 00:16:31,500

Seems like it's moving.

300

00:16:31,500 --> 00:16:35,500

That is not a small animal.

301

00:16:39,500 --> 00:16:41,500

I lost it. I don't see it.

302

00:16:45,500 --> 00:16:48,500

Ever picked up up here, steps and moved on.

303

00:16:48,500 --> 00:16:50,500

So I'm going to try to set up a camera trap.

304

00:16:50,500 --> 00:16:54,500

I think we have a really high chance of picking up a wild life coming off this tree.

305

00:17:01,500 --> 00:17:06,500

While Phil checks out the stream, I focus on the area around the abandoned buildings.

306

00:17:06,500 --> 00:17:11,500

I'm searching for any evidence that might help identify what creature is living here.

307

00:17:12,500 --> 00:17:16,500

Whoa, just wires, storage, some more nests.

308

00:17:19,500 --> 00:17:21,500

Let's check the back.

309

00:17:23,500 --> 00:17:25,500

Oh, look at this. Come here, come here, come here.

310

00:17:25,500 --> 00:17:30,500

Look, you can tell it got ripped out because all the hairs on the bottom half, like the roots still attached to it.

311

00:17:31,500 --> 00:17:34,500

Could be anything, cow, coyote, monster.

312

00:17:35,500 --> 00:17:37,500

Let me take a picture of this for Phil.

313

00:17:39,500 --> 00:17:42,500

And then I'll also collect a sample so we can test any DNA.

314

00:17:44,500 --> 00:17:46,500

He saw something up in the tree.

315

00:17:46,500 --> 00:17:48,500

Is that a person out there?

316

00:17:48,500 --> 00:17:54,500

Witnesses have described a bat-like creature, so I brought along some bat tech that would even impress Bruce Wayne.

317

00:17:56,500 --> 00:18:00,500

Bats navigate by echolocation, which means they vocalize a high-pitched noise,

318

00:18:00,500 --> 00:18:05,500

then pick up the sound waves as they bounce back off objects in the environment.

319

00:18:05,500 --> 00:18:08,500

Those sounds are beyond the range of the human ear,

320

00:18:08,500 --> 00:18:16,500

but the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro is designed to record those bat sounds and identify the specific species all in real time.

321

00:18:16,500 --> 00:18:26,500

I just got my first bat in. It was a horny bat.

322

00:18:28,500 --> 00:18:32,500

We're getting hits on the bats, but the wingspan is probably only about this big.

323

00:18:34,500 --> 00:18:37,500

The only action I'm getting here are relatively small bats.

324

00:18:39,500 --> 00:18:40,500

That's a matter.

325

00:18:41,500 --> 00:18:46,500

I'm not entirely ruling out bats, but I'm also thinking there could be large raptors in this spot,

326

00:18:46,500 --> 00:18:48,500

like vultures, eagles, or owls.

327

00:18:48,500 --> 00:18:56,500

But eagles and vultures aren't nocturnal, and owls have round, flat faces that don't match the descriptions we've heard of the creature.

328

00:18:56,500 --> 00:18:58,500

So far, nothing really adds up.

329

00:19:02,500 --> 00:19:04,500

Let me see if I can zoom in a little bit more.

330

00:19:05,500 --> 00:19:07,500

I just got a hit on one of the cams.

331

00:19:07,500 --> 00:19:09,500

It's a cam by the brickyard.

332

00:19:09,500 --> 00:19:10,500

I'll meet you over there.

333

00:19:10,500 --> 00:19:11,500

Let's go.

334

00:19:14,500 --> 00:19:16,500

Check it out. Check it out.

335

00:19:16,500 --> 00:19:17,500

Look at this.

336

00:19:19,500 --> 00:19:20,500

Look at that.

337

00:19:20,500 --> 00:19:22,500

See, it's dropping, and it's kind of flying away.

338

00:19:22,500 --> 00:19:23,500

What the hell is that?

339

00:19:23,500 --> 00:19:26,500

There's all the bricks, so that's that camera over there, that first building that we went to.

340

00:19:26,500 --> 00:19:27,500

Let's go.

341

00:19:29,500 --> 00:19:30,500

You see the camera?

342

00:19:30,500 --> 00:19:32,500

That camera's right there. It looks okay.

343

00:19:32,500 --> 00:19:37,500

We got cameras here in the barn down by the river.

344

00:19:39,500 --> 00:19:41,500

Did you hear all that rustling?

345

00:19:43,500 --> 00:19:44,500

Right over there.

346

00:19:44,500 --> 00:19:47,500

It sounds like it's on the other side of this wall.

347

00:19:52,500 --> 00:19:54,500

Be careful, because that's all loose.

348

00:19:57,500 --> 00:19:58,500

Oh, God.

349

00:19:59,500 --> 00:20:00,500

What, what, what?

350

00:20:00,500 --> 00:20:01,500

Dead animal. Another one.

351

00:20:01,500 --> 00:20:02,500

Is that another one?

352

00:20:02,500 --> 00:20:03,500

Maybe two.

353

00:20:03,500 --> 00:20:05,500

Looks like a dead box or something.

354

00:20:05,500 --> 00:20:07,500

Something's been eaten up here.

355

00:20:07,500 --> 00:20:09,500

I'm going to try to get it closer.

356

00:20:11,500 --> 00:20:12,500

Careful, cover cover.

357

00:20:18,500 --> 00:20:20,500

Looks like something's been eaten up here.

358

00:20:21,500 --> 00:20:23,500

I'm going to try to get it closer.

359

00:20:25,500 --> 00:20:26,500

Careful, cover cover.

360

00:20:28,500 --> 00:20:29,500

Oh, holy s***.

361

00:20:31,500 --> 00:20:35,500

While climbing over the crumbling wall, our cameraman, Ryan, falls onto his shoulder.

362

00:20:37,500 --> 00:20:38,500

He's shoulder s*** up.

363

00:20:39,500 --> 00:20:40,500

A little bit. Let me see.

364

00:20:41,500 --> 00:20:42,500

I feel it.

365

00:20:42,500 --> 00:20:43,500

Look at that.

366

00:20:43,500 --> 00:20:44,500

You've grabbed your shoulder?

367

00:20:45,500 --> 00:20:46,500

Oh, s***.

368

00:20:47,500 --> 00:20:49,500

Seems like it's a little dislocated right now.

369

00:20:49,500 --> 00:20:50,500

Do you want to try to pull it back?

370

00:20:50,500 --> 00:20:51,500

What?

371

00:20:51,500 --> 00:20:52,500

Put it back in?

372

00:20:52,500 --> 00:20:54,500

Have you done that for somebody before?

373

00:20:54,500 --> 00:20:56,500

I've seen it done for somebody before.

374

00:20:56,500 --> 00:20:57,500

Well, I've seen it done too on Karate Kid,

375

00:20:57,500 --> 00:20:59,500

but I'm not going to f***ing do it to somebody.

376

00:20:59,500 --> 00:21:00,500

Okay, let's pull it back in.

377

00:21:00,500 --> 00:21:01,500

Hold this. Lay down.

378

00:21:01,500 --> 00:21:02,500

You can keep it.

379

00:21:02,500 --> 00:21:03,500

Lay down.

380

00:21:07,500 --> 00:21:08,500

Okay, you ready?

381

00:21:08,500 --> 00:21:09,500

Yep.

382

00:21:09,500 --> 00:21:11,500

One, two, three.

383

00:21:12,500 --> 00:21:13,500

No!

384

00:21:21,500 --> 00:21:22,500

How's it feeling?

385

00:21:22,500 --> 00:21:23,500

I feel better.

386

00:21:26,500 --> 00:21:31,500

Ryan says he's okay, but he shouldn't lug around that heavy camera rig on his shoulder.

387

00:21:31,500 --> 00:21:35,500

Plus, all this commotion is likely scared off any wildlife in the area.

388

00:21:35,500 --> 00:21:37,500

It's time to call it a night.

389

00:21:37,500 --> 00:21:40,500

There's definitely something preying on animals here.

390

00:21:40,500 --> 00:21:44,500

We'll leave our trail cams running so we can capture a shot of whatever it is.

391

00:21:47,500 --> 00:21:53,500

According to historical records, the Brick Factory is just a stone's throw away from the old coal mineware.

392

00:21:53,500 --> 00:21:58,500

Back in 1903, the townsfolk supposedly trapped and then buried the van meter monster.

393

00:21:59,500 --> 00:22:04,500

Now the current landowner has given us permission to be the first to access the mine.

394

00:22:04,500 --> 00:22:09,500

If we can find it hidden under more than a century of dirt, we're going to need some help.

395

00:22:10,500 --> 00:22:11,500

Hey guys!

396

00:22:11,500 --> 00:22:12,500

Hey Josh!

397

00:22:12,500 --> 00:22:13,500

Josh, how you doing?

398

00:22:13,500 --> 00:22:16,500

I'm good. Have you figured out what's terrorizing the skies over Iowa?

399

00:22:16,500 --> 00:22:22,500

Not yet, but oh my God, the story of the van meter monster is next level.

400

00:22:22,500 --> 00:22:26,500

Yeah, that 1903 encounter is an insane story.

401

00:22:26,500 --> 00:22:28,500

So what's happening there now?

402

00:22:28,500 --> 00:22:33,500

Well, we did investigate the old Brick Factory and we actually found a lot of stuff.

403

00:22:33,500 --> 00:22:37,500

We found scat, found dead animals everywhere, chunks of fur.

404

00:22:37,500 --> 00:22:41,500

And then we ended up setting up some trail cams and we actually got a hit.

405

00:22:41,500 --> 00:22:43,500

It looks kind of like, I don't know, like a wing.

406

00:22:43,500 --> 00:22:44,500

Wing-ish.

407

00:22:44,500 --> 00:22:48,500

Wow, okay, well send it all to me. The fur, the all of it.

408

00:22:48,500 --> 00:22:50,500

I'll make sure it gets analyzed.

409

00:22:50,500 --> 00:22:54,500

In the meantime, what's going on with that mine? Any luck with getting in there?

410

00:22:54,500 --> 00:22:58,500

Yes, we got permission from the owner to come on his property and look for it.

411

00:22:58,500 --> 00:23:03,500

The problem is we don't know where it is and it's probably all covered up according to the history

412

00:23:03,500 --> 00:23:04,500

and who knows what's in there.

413

00:23:04,500 --> 00:23:05,500

Yeah.

414

00:23:05,500 --> 00:23:08,500

Alright, it sounds like the first challenge is just finding this place

415

00:23:08,500 --> 00:23:11,500

and then excavating old mines is no joke.

416

00:23:11,500 --> 00:23:15,500

I mean, real risks of cave-ins, collapses, toxic gases, you name it.

417

00:23:15,500 --> 00:23:18,500

So I know a geologist in Des Moines.

418

00:23:18,500 --> 00:23:19,500

Let me call him.

419

00:23:19,500 --> 00:23:23,500

Maybe he can help you pinpoint this place and then hopefully help you explore it safely.

420

00:23:23,500 --> 00:23:24,500

Cool.

421

00:23:24,500 --> 00:23:25,500

Works for me.

422

00:23:25,500 --> 00:23:28,500

Oh, and I've got another new lead for you as well.

423

00:23:28,500 --> 00:23:34,500

I was able to track down a recent eyewitness who had an experience in a place called Colfax, Iowa,

424

00:23:34,500 --> 00:23:36,500

which is less than 40 miles from Van Meter.

425

00:23:36,500 --> 00:23:38,500

Awesome, okay, well I'll go talk to him.

426

00:23:38,500 --> 00:23:41,500

Alright, good luck and don't get eaten by a flying monster.

427

00:23:41,500 --> 00:23:42,500

See you, Josh.

428

00:23:42,500 --> 00:23:43,500

Bye.

429

00:23:47,500 --> 00:23:50,500

While Jess heads out to talk with her new eyewitness,

430

00:23:50,500 --> 00:23:54,500

I meet up with John Youngman, the third-generation owner of the property

431

00:23:54,500 --> 00:23:57,500

that housed a coal mining operation in the late 1800s.

432

00:23:57,500 --> 00:24:02,500

That mine is now supposedly the unmarked grave of the Van Meter monster.

433

00:24:02,500 --> 00:24:08,500

For the first time ever, he's allowing an excavation operation to search for the entrance to the mine.

434

00:24:08,500 --> 00:24:10,500

I would say it's in this area right here.

435

00:24:10,500 --> 00:24:12,500

Hopefully we can find it.

436

00:24:12,500 --> 00:24:14,500

There he is right now.

437

00:24:14,500 --> 00:24:17,500

Josh's geologist contact is Ryan Clark.

438

00:24:17,500 --> 00:24:23,500

He works with the Iowa Geological Survey and has spent years studying the state's coal mining past.

439

00:24:23,500 --> 00:24:24,500

Thanks for coming out.

440

00:24:24,500 --> 00:24:25,500

Alright, thanks for having me.

441

00:24:25,500 --> 00:24:30,500

He can help us pinpoint where to dig, so we don't make Swiss cheese out of John's land.

442

00:24:30,500 --> 00:24:34,500

Do you have an idea of how wide the entrance would have been?

443

00:24:34,500 --> 00:24:36,500

Probably 10 feet by 10 feet.

444

00:24:36,500 --> 00:24:39,500

So that doesn't exactly narrow it down in this area.

445

00:24:39,500 --> 00:24:43,500

Yeah, but luckily I brought along some maps that we can take a look at.

446

00:24:43,500 --> 00:24:44,500

What you got for us?

447

00:24:44,500 --> 00:24:50,500

What we've got here is this is a map that shows you really high resolution land surface elevation.

448

00:24:50,500 --> 00:24:57,500

Your property sits right in this area here, and these green symbols are mine locations.

449

00:24:57,500 --> 00:25:01,500

So this structure here, that's the abandoned brick factory.

450

00:25:01,500 --> 00:25:05,500

Yup, hill's right, kind of back behind us there.

451

00:25:05,500 --> 00:25:09,500

Ryan's maps indicate that the mine opening is close to where we're standing,

452

00:25:09,500 --> 00:25:15,500

but there's no sign of it from the surface, so we're going to need some heavy-duty equipment to locate it.

453

00:25:15,500 --> 00:25:20,500

John, are you sure we can make a giant hole in your property? You're okay with this?

454

00:25:20,500 --> 00:25:21,500

Let's give it a go.

455

00:25:21,500 --> 00:25:22,500

Let's give it a go!

456

00:25:22,500 --> 00:25:23,500

Alright.

457

00:25:23,500 --> 00:25:27,500

While Phil digs in, I'm driving to the nearby town of Colfax.

458

00:25:27,500 --> 00:25:28,500

Hey Mike!

459

00:25:28,500 --> 00:25:29,500

Hey, how are you?

460

00:25:29,500 --> 00:25:34,500

Local minister and avid bird watcher Mike Evans grew up in Iowa.

461

00:25:34,500 --> 00:25:40,500

He says what he saw in the sky a few weeks ago was unlike any wildlife he's ever seen here.

462

00:25:40,500 --> 00:25:45,500

I'm hoping this new sighting will give us a clue about where the creature is now.

463

00:25:45,500 --> 00:25:47,500

Tell me what happened that night.

464

00:25:47,500 --> 00:25:54,500

I was driving down the road and looked off into the distance and I could see the top of the hill was flying.

465

00:25:54,500 --> 00:25:55,500

What did this thing look like?

466

00:25:55,500 --> 00:26:01,500

It had a real strange long body with a tail and a face that looked more like a reptile.

467

00:26:01,500 --> 00:26:03,500

Like more pointed in the...

468

00:26:03,500 --> 00:26:04,500

Yeah, more pointed with the snout.

469

00:26:04,500 --> 00:26:05,500

Okay.

470

00:26:05,500 --> 00:26:08,500

It was probably six to eight foot and bat-like wings.

471

00:26:08,500 --> 00:26:10,500

I grew up doing bird watching, hunting.

472

00:26:10,500 --> 00:26:14,500

You know what to look for around here versus what is something that is out of place.

473

00:26:14,500 --> 00:26:15,500

Yes, I grew up here.

474

00:26:15,500 --> 00:26:17,500

This wasn't something normal.

475

00:26:17,500 --> 00:26:19,500

So what direction was it flying in?

476

00:26:19,500 --> 00:26:22,500

I was flying southeast, maybe towards like Red Rock.

477

00:26:22,500 --> 00:26:23,500

There's a river with some bluffs.

478

00:26:23,500 --> 00:26:27,500

There's a lot of marshy area that something like this could hide in.

479

00:26:27,500 --> 00:26:30,500

Okay, well thank you so much for sharing your story with me.

480

00:26:30,500 --> 00:26:31,500

This was super informative.

481

00:26:31,500 --> 00:26:33,500

A little bit more, a little more.

482

00:26:33,500 --> 00:26:35,500

Let's get digging.

483

00:26:42,500 --> 00:26:44,500

Look who it is.

484

00:26:45,500 --> 00:26:47,500

What are you doing?

485

00:26:47,500 --> 00:26:48,500

We're digging a hole.

486

00:26:48,500 --> 00:26:49,500

Do you want to go gear up?

487

00:26:49,500 --> 00:26:50,500

Yeah, I will.

488

00:26:53,500 --> 00:26:54,500

Okay, we're going right there.

489

00:26:56,500 --> 00:26:59,500

Hey Ryan, do you mind taking a look at this?

490

00:26:59,500 --> 00:27:00,500

What do you got?

491

00:27:00,500 --> 00:27:04,500

So why is this dirt so much darker than everything else?

492

00:27:04,500 --> 00:27:06,500

Is that coal next in?

493

00:27:06,500 --> 00:27:08,500

Yeah, this looks like it could be coal.

494

00:27:08,500 --> 00:27:09,500

We found coal already?

495

00:27:09,500 --> 00:27:13,500

Yeah, I mean if you think about it, mining coal is kind of a dirty business.

496

00:27:13,500 --> 00:27:16,500

And they didn't grab every single little grain and gram of it.

497

00:27:16,500 --> 00:27:18,500

So there would have been coal scattered all over the place.

498

00:27:18,500 --> 00:27:22,500

We got this brick layer on top, which happened after the coal mine.

499

00:27:22,500 --> 00:27:25,500

This is evidence that they're filling this in with whatever they had laying around.

500

00:27:25,500 --> 00:27:30,500

One of the pieces of evidence that we're looking for if this is a mine shaft that's been filled in

501

00:27:30,500 --> 00:27:32,500

is we don't want to see normal soil.

502

00:27:32,500 --> 00:27:36,500

We want to see evidence of junk that shouldn't naturally be there.

503

00:27:36,500 --> 00:27:37,500

Yeah.

504

00:27:37,500 --> 00:27:39,500

So we're onto something. Let's keep digging.

505

00:27:48,500 --> 00:27:50,500

We are getting deep now.

506

00:27:50,500 --> 00:27:52,500

Did you hear that scrape?

507

00:27:52,500 --> 00:27:54,500

Oh boy. Look at that.

508

00:27:54,500 --> 00:27:57,500

Get the cameras in! Get the cameras in!

509

00:28:02,500 --> 00:28:03,500

Holy crap!

510

00:28:06,500 --> 00:28:08,500

Look at that plank over here!

511

00:28:08,500 --> 00:28:10,500

Holy s***!

512

00:28:10,500 --> 00:28:12,500

Look at that right angle.

513

00:28:12,500 --> 00:28:15,500

That is absolutely cut!

514

00:28:15,500 --> 00:28:18,500

The beam is intact, but soft and crumbling,

515

00:28:18,500 --> 00:28:22,500

meaning it has likely been deteriorating underground for a long time.

516

00:28:22,500 --> 00:28:25,500

Could have been part of the framework that supported the mine.

517

00:28:25,500 --> 00:28:28,500

So that timber came out of there and then it would have come out.

518

00:28:28,500 --> 00:28:31,500

This could have been the entrance, right on this side.

519

00:28:31,500 --> 00:28:33,500

That's what it looks like to me.

520

00:28:33,500 --> 00:28:35,500

And then he's been pulling up really big slab.

521

00:28:35,500 --> 00:28:36,500

Oh yeah.

522

00:28:36,500 --> 00:28:40,500

That tells me they really didn't want somebody going through there.

523

00:28:40,500 --> 00:28:42,500

We're coming out.

524

00:28:42,500 --> 00:28:43,500

We're coming out.

525

00:28:43,500 --> 00:28:46,500

That's an awful lot of work just to cover up a hole.

526

00:28:46,500 --> 00:28:48,500

Let's keep digging.

527

00:28:49,500 --> 00:28:52,500

I'll admit that what we're finding is compelling,

528

00:28:52,500 --> 00:28:56,500

but I'm not seeing any evidence of a creature buried here.

529

00:28:57,500 --> 00:28:59,500

We're still getting brick down here.

530

00:29:04,500 --> 00:29:06,500

That looks like a lot of fill.

531

00:29:06,500 --> 00:29:08,500

Who knows how far we'd have to dig to get anywhere here.

532

00:29:08,500 --> 00:29:09,500

That's true.

533

00:29:09,500 --> 00:29:11,500

Probably not going to see much more.

534

00:29:11,500 --> 00:29:15,500

Judging by the moisture in the soil and the deterioration of the wood beams,

535

00:29:15,500 --> 00:29:18,500

it's possible that after 100 plus years,

536

00:29:18,500 --> 00:29:23,500

any physical remains like animal bones would have completely disintegrated,

537

00:29:23,500 --> 00:29:26,500

leaving nothing but a questionable legend behind.

538

00:29:26,500 --> 00:29:29,500

This is all still just junk fill that was dumped in here.

539

00:29:29,500 --> 00:29:34,500

We now know that at least one part of the van meter monster origin story is true.

540

00:29:34,500 --> 00:29:38,500

There was an old mine shaft next to the brick factory and it was closed up.

541

00:29:38,500 --> 00:29:42,500

As for the rest of the legend, we've hit a historical dead end,

542

00:29:42,500 --> 00:29:45,500

but there are still recent sightings to be investigated.

543

00:29:45,500 --> 00:29:47,500

So we say goodbye to Ryan and John.

544

00:29:47,500 --> 00:29:48,500

Thank you.

545

00:29:48,500 --> 00:29:49,500

See you.

546

00:29:49,500 --> 00:29:52,500

And while there's still daylight, we head towards Lake Red Rock.

547

00:29:52,500 --> 00:29:55,500

In the direction that our new witness said the creature flew.

548

00:29:55,500 --> 00:30:01,500

This lake is not only the largest in all of Iowa, it's a massive wildlife habitat.

549

00:30:02,500 --> 00:30:07,500

Looking at a map, it sits in between the recent sightings and the town of Van Meter.

550

00:30:08,500 --> 00:30:11,500

I'm thinking my original instinct about this case is correct.

551

00:30:11,500 --> 00:30:15,500

That the eyewitnesses are misidentifying flying wildlife.

552

00:30:15,500 --> 00:30:17,500

Look at the size of this lake.

553

00:30:17,500 --> 00:30:18,500

This is where we're going.

554

00:30:18,500 --> 00:30:21,500

This is where we're going, but first we got a little stop to make, Jess.

555

00:30:21,500 --> 00:30:26,500

I've been hung up on trying to figure out who our prime suspects are around here

556

00:30:26,500 --> 00:30:28,500

as far as native wildlife.

557

00:30:28,500 --> 00:30:31,500

So I got a guy.

558

00:30:31,500 --> 00:30:32,500

You got a guy.

559

00:30:32,500 --> 00:30:33,500

I got a guy.

560

00:30:33,500 --> 00:30:34,500

Who's your guy?

561

00:30:34,500 --> 00:30:36,500

Let's just say he's slightly obsessed with bats.

562

00:30:36,500 --> 00:30:38,500

Ooh, so he's a batman.

563

00:30:38,500 --> 00:30:39,500

He's a batman.

564

00:30:39,500 --> 00:30:40,500

We're going to meet Batman, Jess.

565

00:30:40,500 --> 00:30:42,500

Does he talk like this?

566

00:30:42,500 --> 00:30:43,500

Oh, yeah.

567

00:30:43,500 --> 00:30:47,500

Look at that license plate.

568

00:30:47,500 --> 00:30:49,500

That's our Russ.

569

00:30:49,500 --> 00:30:50,500

I think we found him.

570

00:30:52,500 --> 00:30:57,500

Russ Benedict is a biologist with more than 25 years of experience

571

00:30:57,500 --> 00:31:00,500

exploring the prairies and woods of the Midwest.

572

00:31:00,500 --> 00:31:02,500

So we're looking for the Van Meter monster.

573

00:31:02,500 --> 00:31:06,500

And essentially what people were reporting is this seven, eight foot creature

574

00:31:06,500 --> 00:31:09,500

with leathery bat-like wings.

575

00:31:09,500 --> 00:31:13,500

So the biggest bat that we have around here has a wingspan of about 18 inches.

576

00:31:13,500 --> 00:31:17,500

So small, but yet play huge role in ecosystems.

577

00:31:17,500 --> 00:31:19,500

I'd love to see one up close.

578

00:31:19,500 --> 00:31:20,500

Is that possible?

579

00:31:20,500 --> 00:31:24,500

We have 40 to 60 bats up in the roof of above us.

580

00:31:24,500 --> 00:31:25,500

Right up here?

581

00:31:25,500 --> 00:31:26,500

They're there now.

582

00:31:26,500 --> 00:31:29,500

They're hidden within the spaces up above us.

583

00:31:29,500 --> 00:31:33,500

So what we're going to do is we'll string up a couple of what are called mist nets.

584

00:31:33,500 --> 00:31:37,500

Once it gets dark, they'll start flying around and we'll see if we can catch them.

585

00:31:37,500 --> 00:31:40,500

We set up these soft nylon nets in front of the window.

586

00:31:40,500 --> 00:31:46,500

We don't have long to wait until dusk when the bats wake up and start flying in search of their bug breakfast.

587

00:31:51,500 --> 00:31:53,500

I got one.

588

00:31:54,500 --> 00:31:57,500

They're all over the place up there.

589

00:31:57,500 --> 00:31:58,500

The bats just...

590

00:31:59,500 --> 00:32:00,500

There's one, there's one.

591

00:32:00,500 --> 00:32:02,500

Oh boy.

592

00:32:06,500 --> 00:32:08,500

Look at how pretty she is.

593

00:32:08,500 --> 00:32:10,500

Look at that fur.

594

00:32:10,500 --> 00:32:12,500

That's a big brown bat.

595

00:32:12,500 --> 00:32:14,500

The second biggest bat in Iowa.

596

00:32:14,500 --> 00:32:18,500

I don't see how anyone could confuse this with a flying monster.

597

00:32:18,500 --> 00:32:21,500

The wingspan is impressive, but that body is so tiny.

598

00:32:21,500 --> 00:32:22,500

Oh, tiny.

599

00:32:22,500 --> 00:32:23,500

Oh my gosh.

600

00:32:23,500 --> 00:32:25,500

So when you light her up...

601

00:32:25,500 --> 00:32:27,500

That shadow is huge.

602

00:32:27,500 --> 00:32:29,500

Wow.

603

00:32:29,500 --> 00:32:37,500

The shadow of the bat cast against the wall of the barn makes me think that maybe back in 1903, this is what people saw.

604

00:32:38,500 --> 00:32:43,500

That looks like it could potentially be a seven foot creature with bat wings.

605

00:32:43,500 --> 00:32:48,500

During that time, they had just brought electricity and street lamps into the town.

606

00:32:48,500 --> 00:32:49,500

Okay.

607

00:32:49,500 --> 00:32:52,500

So potentially they weren't used to seeing shadows that strong.

608

00:32:52,500 --> 00:32:57,500

It would also explain why the bullets the townspeople fired had no effect on the monster.

609

00:32:57,500 --> 00:32:59,500

They were firing at a shadow.

610

00:33:00,500 --> 00:33:03,500

But I don't think witnesses today would be confused by a bat shadow.

611

00:33:03,500 --> 00:33:07,500

I think they're seeing a bigger winged animal, a large species of bird.

612

00:33:07,500 --> 00:33:12,500

Walter, I think we can, thanks to you, cross bats off the suspect list.

613

00:33:12,500 --> 00:33:13,500

Yeah.

614

00:33:13,500 --> 00:33:14,500

Excellent.

615

00:33:14,500 --> 00:33:18,500

Now that it's night, we continue on our mission to check out Lake Rue.

616

00:33:18,500 --> 00:33:25,500

It seems like a perfect home for a giant flying monster with plenty of water, shelter and prey.

617

00:33:25,500 --> 00:33:26,500

Going in.

618

00:33:26,500 --> 00:33:27,500

All right.

619

00:33:27,500 --> 00:33:28,500

Woo hoo.

620

00:33:30,500 --> 00:33:32,500

This lake is a massive habitat.

621

00:33:32,500 --> 00:33:38,500

Several large predatory birds nest here like eagles, herons and even cranes that migrate through the area.

622

00:33:38,500 --> 00:33:41,500

See how close the force gets to the rock formations here?

623

00:33:41,500 --> 00:33:42,500

Yeah.

624

00:33:42,500 --> 00:33:48,500

So that's the type of place where the bird that feeds on the lake by day would have rused at night.

625

00:33:48,500 --> 00:33:50,500

I think we need to get up there, Jess.

626

00:33:50,500 --> 00:33:52,500

Okay, another gear.

627

00:33:52,500 --> 00:33:53,500

Thank you.

628

00:33:53,500 --> 00:33:56,500

All right, everybody, let's be real kind of ready to go.

629

00:33:56,500 --> 00:33:57,500

Okay.

630

00:33:57,500 --> 00:33:58,500

All right.

631

00:33:58,500 --> 00:33:59,500

All right.

632

00:33:59,500 --> 00:34:00,500

All right.

633

00:34:00,500 --> 00:34:01,500

All right.

634

00:34:01,500 --> 00:34:02,500

All right.

635

00:34:02,500 --> 00:34:03,500

All right.

636

00:34:03,500 --> 00:34:04,500

All right.

637

00:34:04,500 --> 00:34:05,500

All right.

638

00:34:06,500 --> 00:34:09,500

All right, everybody, let's be real careful on this edge.

639

00:34:09,500 --> 00:34:10,500

Oh, whoa.

640

00:34:10,500 --> 00:34:11,500

You're not kidding.

641

00:34:11,500 --> 00:34:12,500

Oh, no.

642

00:34:12,500 --> 00:34:14,500

Oh, check this out.

643

00:34:14,500 --> 00:34:15,500

Jaw bone.

644

00:34:15,500 --> 00:34:16,500

Oh.

645

00:34:16,500 --> 00:34:19,500

Teeth are flat like an herbivore.

646

00:34:19,500 --> 00:34:21,500

Maybe a deer.

647

00:34:21,500 --> 00:34:23,500

Oh, I remember one right here.

648

00:34:23,500 --> 00:34:28,500

So a lot of birds of prey will have an area that they take their food to and then eat it,

649

00:34:28,500 --> 00:34:32,500

perched up high so that they can keep an eye on anything else coming to steal their food.

650

00:34:32,500 --> 00:34:34,500

They're feeding grounds.

651

00:34:34,500 --> 00:34:36,500

Is that another bone?

652

00:34:36,500 --> 00:34:38,500

This is a graveyard out here.

653

00:34:38,500 --> 00:34:43,500

This is the most bones I think I've ever found in a single place on the planet.

654

00:34:43,500 --> 00:34:46,500

Another skull.

655

00:34:46,500 --> 00:34:49,500

So we've got beaver, deer, and fox.

656

00:34:49,500 --> 00:34:56,500

It would have to be a big bird to be able to carry something the size of these all the way up here to feed.

657

00:34:56,500 --> 00:35:02,500

Why don't you take the fox pro, see what you can blast out, and then I'll go take the fleer over in that area,

658

00:35:02,500 --> 00:35:04,500

and I'll scan to see what you might bring in.

659

00:35:04,500 --> 00:35:05,500

Okay.

660

00:35:05,500 --> 00:35:06,500

Cool?

661

00:35:06,500 --> 00:35:08,500

Let me know if you get attacked.

662

00:35:08,500 --> 00:35:09,500

You got it.

663

00:35:09,500 --> 00:35:17,500

While Jess searches the tree line along the cliff, I'm going to try drawing out whatever may have been snacking on parts of some big animals.

664

00:35:17,500 --> 00:35:20,500

The fox pro mimics the mating calls of wildlife.

665

00:35:20,500 --> 00:35:25,500

Let's just hope whatever the van meter monster really is, it's feeling a little frisky tonight.

666

00:35:25,500 --> 00:35:28,500

I've got some of the birds on it up on here.

667

00:35:28,500 --> 00:35:31,500

Alright Jess, I'm about to call out a great blue heron.

668

00:35:31,500 --> 00:35:38,500

Great blue herons are huge birds, up to four and a half feet tall with wingspans up to six and a half feet.

669

00:35:38,500 --> 00:35:41,500

They fish and sometimes small mammals as well.

670

00:35:41,500 --> 00:35:43,500

You ready?

671

00:35:43,500 --> 00:35:48,500

Yeah, I'm ready. I think we're in a good spot.

672

00:35:48,500 --> 00:35:50,500

Alright, stand by.

673

00:35:50,500 --> 00:36:00,500

I'm not getting anything.

674

00:36:00,500 --> 00:36:03,500

Anyone try it again?

675

00:36:03,500 --> 00:36:07,500

Alright Jess, next up is turkey vulture.

676

00:36:16,500 --> 00:36:18,500

It's going this way.

677

00:36:20,500 --> 00:36:22,500

Jess, you heard that?

678

00:36:22,500 --> 00:36:24,500

Yeah, I hear that.

679

00:36:24,500 --> 00:36:26,500

Can you pick it up on your flashlight?

680

00:36:26,500 --> 00:36:36,500

I'm looking, but it's flying by.

681

00:36:36,500 --> 00:36:40,500

Whatever flew by us, I think scared the crap out of me.

682

00:36:40,500 --> 00:36:42,500

At night, if you weren't a...

683

00:36:42,500 --> 00:36:43,500

Oh!

684

00:36:50,500 --> 00:36:54,500

It's a little bit similar to a prehistoric pterodactyl.

685

00:36:54,500 --> 00:37:00,500

But since they went extinct about 66 million years ago, they probably aren't making a comeback.

686

00:37:00,500 --> 00:37:02,500

Or are they?

687

00:37:02,500 --> 00:37:06,500

Present-day birds are living descendants of dinosaurs.

688

00:37:06,500 --> 00:37:14,500

And some scientists believe it may be possible to manipulate poultry DNA to turn back the evolutionary clock.

689

00:37:14,500 --> 00:37:22,500

Inside an egg, an unborn chick could theoretically be engineered to grow teeth, a long tail, and a prehistoric beak.

690

00:37:22,500 --> 00:37:26,500

Such a creature could give us a greater understanding of evolution.

691

00:37:26,500 --> 00:37:29,500

Or it might break out of its cage and kill us all.

692

00:37:29,500 --> 00:37:36,500

So even if the van meter monster turns out to be a legend, keep your eye on the skies for chickenosaurus.

693

00:37:36,500 --> 00:37:41,500

I'm not sure if it's a bird or a bird.

694

00:37:41,500 --> 00:37:44,500

Is that thing scared the crap out of me?

695

00:37:44,500 --> 00:37:45,500

At night, if you weren't a...

696

00:37:45,500 --> 00:37:46,500

Oh!

697

00:37:48,500 --> 00:37:50,500

Is he okay?

698

00:37:50,500 --> 00:37:54,500

Something's flapping around over here.

699

00:37:54,500 --> 00:37:55,500

F***!

700

00:37:58,500 --> 00:38:02,500

I definitely had something going berserk over on this side.

701

00:38:02,500 --> 00:38:03,500

Was it big?

702

00:38:03,500 --> 00:38:05,500

Come tell what it was.

703

00:38:05,500 --> 00:38:11,500

I'm going to climb a little further into the woods just to see if I can scare up whatever it was that was freaking out in the bushes.

704

00:38:11,500 --> 00:38:13,500

Why don't you hit that call one more time?

705

00:38:13,500 --> 00:38:14,500

Alright, let me know what you find.

706

00:38:14,500 --> 00:38:16,500

I'm going to call out some other birds.

707

00:38:16,500 --> 00:38:17,500

Gotcha.

708

00:38:19,500 --> 00:38:22,500

Next stop is Sandhill Crane.

709

00:38:22,500 --> 00:38:28,500

Sandhill cranes are big, with wingspans of over seven feet.

710

00:38:36,500 --> 00:38:40,500

Jess, you getting anything on the flare?

711

00:38:40,500 --> 00:38:43,500

Nothing.

712

00:38:50,500 --> 00:38:53,500

Then look at this.

713

00:38:53,500 --> 00:38:55,500

I just found something.

714

00:38:55,500 --> 00:38:57,500

Okay, on my way.

715

00:38:59,500 --> 00:39:01,500

Check this out.

716

00:39:01,500 --> 00:39:02,500

What?

717

00:39:02,500 --> 00:39:04,500

Right here.

718

00:39:05,500 --> 00:39:07,500

That's...

719

00:39:07,500 --> 00:39:08,500

That's got to be turkey vultures.

720

00:39:08,500 --> 00:39:10,500

That is huge.

721

00:39:10,500 --> 00:39:11,500

Okay, alright.

722

00:39:11,500 --> 00:39:12,500

Huge, yeah.

723

00:39:12,500 --> 00:39:13,500

Yeah, look at this.

724

00:39:13,500 --> 00:39:14,500

Another bird.

725

00:39:14,500 --> 00:39:18,500

So just come here with their takeout and then take off.

726

00:39:18,500 --> 00:39:21,500

Turkey vultures don't usually fly at night.

727

00:39:21,500 --> 00:39:29,500

So even a witness who is familiar with the bird might misidentify one in the dark if they stumble across it and startle it into flight.

728

00:39:29,500 --> 00:39:34,500

So when you think of witnesses in modern times seeing things, I just can't help but think.

729

00:39:34,500 --> 00:39:36,500

Think of birds.

730

00:39:36,500 --> 00:39:43,500

When it's this quiet and still out and something flies by, I mean, you're not expecting it.

731

00:39:43,500 --> 00:39:44,500

You jump.

732

00:39:44,500 --> 00:39:48,500

And brains will see things as bigger when you're terrified.

733

00:39:51,500 --> 00:39:56,500

It's hard to put too much stock in the original news report of the van meter monster.

734

00:39:56,500 --> 00:40:01,500

A flying, screeching beast that's allegedly impervious to bullets.

735

00:40:01,500 --> 00:40:07,500

Living in a local coal mine, it's a wild tale that just doesn't really seem to fly.

736

00:40:07,500 --> 00:40:13,500

Phil and Jess did dig up what could be a terrified town's attempt to eradicate something threatening.

737

00:40:13,500 --> 00:40:16,500

This could have been the entrance right on this side.

738

00:40:16,500 --> 00:40:18,500

That's what it looks like to me.

739

00:40:18,500 --> 00:40:28,500

As for the modern day sightings of this flying horror, the cameras my team left running in the old brick factory captured several more images of what look like wings.

740

00:40:28,500 --> 00:40:30,500

We got the horns of scat up here.

741

00:40:30,500 --> 00:40:37,500

The droppings Phil found there were identified as raccoon, the hair that Jess collected, domestic cattle.

742

00:40:37,500 --> 00:40:42,500

So what animal is the most likely culprit when it comes to the van meter monster?

743

00:40:42,500 --> 00:40:51,500

While the largest bat in Iowa only has an 18 inch wingspan, its eerie shadow stretching across a wall could definitely bring a monster to mind.

744

00:40:51,500 --> 00:40:56,500

That looks like it could potentially be a seven foot creature with bat wings.

745

00:40:56,500 --> 00:41:06,500

Five foot tall sand hill cranes were once rare in Iowa, but their numbers have increased in recent years, right along with new sightings of the van meter monster.

746

00:41:06,500 --> 00:41:16,500

Turkey vultures are big, black, have featherless faces, a six foot wingspan, and they'll scavenge carcasses as big as a deer.

747

00:41:16,500 --> 00:41:25,500

Put it all together on a dark quiet night, add a dash of imagination and a pinch of panic, and the result could seem monstrous.

748

00:41:25,500 --> 00:41:30,500

For more information on Expedition X, head to Discovery.com slash Expedition X.