

evening of August 17 she and three of her children had seen an orange oval-shaped object at a low altitude over the top of Morro do Vintem. It was shooting out rays in all directions, all the while rising and falling. After watching it for three or four minutes, Da Sousa drove off to tell her husband, who raced to the site only to find the object gone. Press accounts of the sighting encouraged several other persons to step forward to say they also had seen the object that evening.

In April 1980 American ufologist Jacques Vallee visited Morro do Vintem in the company of, among others, the first adult to see the bodies. Vallee noticed that for some reason "no vegetation was growing at the place where the bodies had been found. I asked whether the location was known with precision. The witness showed me the stake that enabled him to ascertain the exact spot" (Vallee, 1990).

Rio detective Saulo Soares de Souza, who had investigated the case in his capacity as an officer concerned with long-term unsolved homicides, told Vallee, "The expression *ingest the capsules* does not belong to the vocabulary of the victims. The note reads like a prescription dictated by somebody else."

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MOTHMAN AND OTHER WINGED ENTITIES

Reports of strange winged creatures comprise a whole other category of sightings of unidentified flying objects. Such accounts describe a wide variety of animals and entities, most of them of more interest to

cryptozoologists (Hall, 1988; Mackal, 1980) than to ufologists. But in some cases there is a link, explicit or implicit, with more conventional UFOs.

A sighting from April 1868 was chronicled in a Chilean newspaper and reprinted in *Zoologist*, a British scientific journal ("A Strange Bird," 1868). A mine operator wrote that late the previous afternoon he and his men had observed a "gigantic bird" flying rapidly along a straight course from northwest to southeast. According to him:

Its immense wings were clothed with a grayish plumage, its monstrous head was like that of a locust, its eyes were wide open and shone like burning coals; it seemed to be covered with something resembling the thick and stout bristles of a boar, while on its body, elongated like that of a serpent, we could only see brilliant scales, which clashed together with a metallic sound as the strange animal turned its body in flight.

This story sounds, and no doubt is, thoroughly unbelievable. Yet in the mid-nineteenth century pioneers on the Nebraska frontier claimed to have seen something generally comparable. A period folk ballad recorded its appearance "on a dark night in sixty-six": *It came a-roarin' in the sky/With lights along the side . . . /And scales like a serpent's hide* (Sandoz, 1966). Unfortunately little more is known about these alleged occurrences.

The *New York Times* of September 12, 1880, reported the following:

One day last week a marvellous apparition was seen near Coney Island. At the height of at least 1,000 feet in the air a strange object was in the act of flying toward the New Jersey coast. It was apparently a man with bat's wings and improved frog's legs. The face of the man could be distinctly seen, and it wore a cruel and determined expression. The movements made by the object closely resembled those of a frog in the act of swimming with his hind legs and flying with his front legs. . . . The object was seen by many reputable persons and they all agree that it was a man engaged in flying toward New Jersey ["An Aerial," 1880].

During the great spring 1897 wave of anomalous "airships," when unusual aerial objects were being reported in the thousands, a strange phenomenon passed over Mount Vernon, Illinois, on April 14. Mayor B. C. Wells described it as resembling "the body of a huge man swimming through the air with an electric light on his back" ("Airship's Travels," 1897). A group of children in Silver City, New Mexico, observed a gray-skinned, gray-suited humanlike figure floating at treetop level at dusk one day in 1938. Years later one of the witnesses remarked, "The thing I remember the most about him was that he seemed to be wearing a belt which was wide and had points sticking out of it. He also seemed to be wearing a cape" (Alley, 1980).

In the early modern era, on January 6, 1948, a woman and a group of small children allegedly observed a humanlike figure equipped with long silver wings fastened over his shoulder with a strap. Flying in an upright position, the figure manipulated the wings from controls strapped to his chest. After hovering and banking just over a barn in the woman's backyard, he resumed his flight. The following April 9 two Longview, Washington, citizens told of seeing three flying men circling the city. "They were dressed in khaki-colored flying suits with helmets over their faces," Viola Johnson Harris said soon afterwards in a tape-recorded interview with Kenneth Arnold (Arnold, undated), whose "flying saucer" sighting in June 1947 introduced the world to the UFO phenomenon. Arnold also investigated a case in which two similar figures were reportedly seen near Grassy Butte, Oregon, at dawn on September 16, 1948.

A persistent tradition in the Russian Far East concerns the *letayuschiy chelovek* ("flying human being"), often said to make howling sounds reminiscent of a woman's shrieks. Mostly this creature "exists" in venerable folktales, but some first-person, eyewitness accounts have been recorded. Near the mouth of the River Gobilli on July 11, 1908, explorer V. K. Arsenyev had this experience, which he recounted in a 1947 book whose title translates as *In the Sichote-Align Mountains*:

The rain stopped, the temperature of the air remained low, and the mist appeared over the water. It was then that I saw the mark on the

path that was very similar to a man's footprint. My dog Alpha bristled up, snarled, and then something rushed about nearby trampling among the bushes. However, it didn't go away, but stopped nearby, standing stock-still. We had been standing like that for some minutes. . . . Then I stooped, picked up a stone and threw it towards the unknown animal. Then something happened that was quite unexpected: I heard the beating of wings. Something large and dark emerged from the fog and flew over the river. A moment later it disappeared in the dense mist. My dog, badly frightened, pressed itself to my feet.

After supper I told the Udehe-men about this incident. They broke into a vivid story about a man who could fly in the air. Hunters often saw his tracks, tracks that appeared suddenly and vanished suddenly, in such a way that they could only be possible if the "man" alighted on the ground, then took off again into the air [Petrenko, 1973].

In the early 1990s Russian ufologist Alexander Rempel and some colleagues collected reports, some quite recent, in the provinces. Among the recent reports was one related by hunter A. I. Kurentsov. Kurentsov said he had fallen asleep one night next to his campfire, only to awaken later in a state of panic, convinced that someone was watching him. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw a huge, dark creature of humanoid shape, with webbed, batlike wings, descend on his campsite. He fled and hid himself in the trees until morning, when he emerged and searched the area without finding anything. If this encounter really happened, it may, of course, have a nonextraordinary cause: a large bat glimpsed briefly in darkness. In the 1908 story above, it is reasonable to speculate that foggy conditions prevented Arsenyev, who himself makes no extraordinary claim about the incident, from identifying the "large and dark" object as a bat.

The ufologists heard an older story which seemed, at least by implication, to link the creature with a UFO. One evening in 1944 two soldiers stationed in the Yekaterinovka region spotted a luminous sphere as it came out of the sky to land nearby. As it landed, the

two men heard horrifying howls, and they fled in panic. They were sure the howls were from the *letayuschiy chelovek* (Stonehill, 1992).

While on guard duty at Camp Okubo, Japan, one night in 1952, U.S. Air Force Pvt. Sinclair Taylor heard flapping sounds and looked up to see what he at first took to be an enormous bird. As it got closer and hovered above him, he put a cartridge into the chamber of his rifle. It started to descend, and Taylor could now see it "had the body of a man. It was well over seven feet from head to feet, and its wingspread was almost equal to its height." Taylor fired at it repeatedly and thought he heard it hit the ground, but when he went to look, it was gone. To his surprise the sergeant of the guard believed his story; a year earlier, he said (according to Taylor), another guard had seen the same thing (Taylor, 1960).

A Falls City, Nebraska, man underwent a traumatic experience one autumn afternoon in 1956. The family had just returned from an outing, and everyone but the husband/father had gone inside. John Hanks (a pseudonym) stayed outside to load some work equipment into his pickup. While engaged in this effort, he happened to notice something in the air about three blocks away. He thought it was a loose kite, but as it got closer, to within a block of him, it began to look like something else: a large, winged human form. As the distance between it and him continued to decrease, he saw its "very frightening, almost demonic" face.

"Its eyes were very large, blue in color," he recalled years later. "They were shaped on his face almost like horse's eyes. The skin on his face was like tan leather. It was very wrinkled and seemed to overlap in folds. I had a good look at his face—he was only about 25 feet away, and hovering maybe 15 feet above the ground. He was between eight and nine feet tall."

Suddenly it wobbled and plummeted, then recovered just before it hit the street. It flew toward Hanks, who found himself unable to move, as if somehow he had become paralyzed. As it passed overhead, the witness got a good view of its wings. Fifteen feet from tip to tip, they were two feet wide at the closest points to the figure's body and three feet wide at the outer extremities. They looked like polished aluminum, with grids on their upper surfaces. Four or five four-inch

colored lights, moving outward from blue to yellow, orange, and red at the tip, stretched along each underside. The wing, Hanks said, "was fastened to him by a shoulder harness, which seemed to have a breast plate of some sort with dials on it. He seemed to touch and move these dials, but his hands, if that's what they were, looked more like a white dove's wings, all opened up." A sound like hissing air seemed to be coming from the rear of the wings.

The creature disappeared from sight behind some trees two blocks away. As soon as it was gone, Hanks could move again.

The episode haunted him for the next 23 years. He grew to dread sleep because of recurring nightmares in which the figure appeared. He threw himself into work in an effort to redirect his thoughts. Only in the late 1970s, through a conscious act of will, was he able to free himself of the disturbing memories. In the mid-1980s he told an investigator, "I still don't understand it, but it doesn't matter anymore" ("Winged Wonder," 1986).

On May 10, 1968, just after 10 P.M., Grant Callison of Galesburg, Illinois, went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. While standing at the sink, he gazed out the window and observed something that looked like a giant bird illuminated by a streetlight just below it. Callison and his wife Wilma ran out the back door to get a better look. According to his account:

To our amazement there were three of them, in a "V" formation, moving away from us. They were clearly visible flying at an approximate height of 500 feet. They were moving from 25 to 35 mph. They had gone over our house moving in a southeasterly direction. They would have had to approach from the northwest.

They looked like they had either feathers or scales with a metallic appearance that glowed fluorescent with the light reflected on them. They didn't seem to have a neck, just a head. Their tail was short and seemed to be cone-shaped. The wing spread was approximately 15 to 20 feet. It was really an unbelievable sight, and frightening. As they moved away we stood and watched them. Their flight was not that of an ordinary bird—but instead a graceful, flut-

tering motion that was breathtaking because of their size.

We then saw two objects to the south with pulsating red lights moving in the same direction at the same speed. The objects appeared to be at about the same height as the "birds." They were moving west, on a course to intercept the "birds." One of the objects turned out its lights and the other either circled or reversed itself to a point where they could meet.

A few days later, while visiting his brother, who lived three blocks away, Callison learned that he and his wife had not been the only witnesses. Ward and Louise Callison had also seen the strange creatures the same evening.

On May 20, around 9 P.M., Grant and Wilma Callison had a second sighting:

This bird-like creature was moving east to west. When my wife and I first saw the "thing" it was approaching us at approximately 60 degrees, and it flew directly over us. Since it was higher (500 to 1000 feet) the reflection of the street lights did not make it appear quite as luminous. This one was by itself but the description was the same as the others. However, it seemed to be having trouble as the right wing was slightly lower than the left wing. Both wings were barely moving, and in an erratic manner. Its head (again, no neck) turned as if it had spotted us looking at it. The head continued to look toward us as it went over. We sighted no UFOs that night, but there had been other reports in the area on previous nights. This really scared us and we went inside for the rest of the night [Callison, 1986].

An even more unlikely manifestation is said to have shown up near Da Nang, South Vietnam, at one o'clock one morning in August 1969. The witnesses included a young U.S. Marine private named Earl Morrison, who happened to be related by marriage to ufologist Don Worley. Morrison told Worley that he and his fellow guards, sitting in a bunker and talking, noticed something flying in from the west. It turned out to be an incredibly bizarre apparition:

We saw what looked like wings, like a bat's, only it was gigantic compared to what a regular bat would be. After it got close enough so we could see what it was, it looked like a woman. A naked woman. She was black. Her skin was black, her body was black, the wings were black, everything was black. But it glowed. It glowed in the night—kind of a greenish cast to it. . . . She started going over us, and we still didn't hear anything. She was right above us, and when she got over the top of our heads, she was maybe six or seven feet up. . . . We watched her go straight over the top of us, and still she didn't make any noise flapping her wings. She blotted out the moon once—that's how close she was to us. And dark—looked like pitch black then, but we could still define her because she just glowed. Real bright like. And she started going past us straight towards our encampment. As we watched her—she had got about 10 feet or so away from us—we started hearing her wings flap. And it sounded, you know, like regular wings flapping. And she just started flying off and we watched her for quite a while.

Worley was certain that his step-nephew, whom he had known all his life, was telling the truth. "He has no interest in the unusual, no knowledge of the paranormal," Worley wrote, "and he had never before in his life heard of anything such as he experienced" (Worley, 1972).

Mothman. Driving on Route 2 on the West Virginia side of the Ohio River one day in 1960 or 1961, a socially prominent woman and her elderly father passed through a wooded area known as Chief Cornstalk park. Suddenly a figure they first took to be a man appeared on the road in front of them.

As the woman recalled several years later, "I slowed down, and as we got closer, we could see that it was much larger than a man. A big gray figure. It stood in the middle of the road. Then a pair of wings unfolded from its back, and they practically filled the whole road. It almost looked like a small airplane. Then it took off straight up . . . disappearing out of sight in seconds. We were both terrified. I stepped on the gas and raced out of there" (Keel, 1975).

At the time of her sighting, the witness had no name to attach to the weird apparition. Neither did four English young persons when they encountered a similar creature on the evening of November 16, 1963. The incident, which took place in Sandling Park, near Hythe, Kent, began when John Flaxton, 17, noticed a moving "star" above some woods along the side of the country road he and three companions were walking.

"It was uncanny," Flaxton said. "The reddish yellow light was coming out of the sky at an angle of 60 degrees. As it came towards the ground, it seemed to move more slowly. I grew cold all over as it vanished behind a clump of trees."

Moments later a bright, golden light was seen in a field. "It was about 80 yards away," according to Flaxton, "floating about 10 feet above the ground. It

seemed to move along with us, stopping when we stopped as if it was observing us. The light was oval, about 15 to 20 feet across, with a bright, solid core.

"It disappeared behind trees, and a few seconds later a dark figure shambled out. It was all black, about the size of a human but without a head. It seemed to have wings like a bat on either side and came stumbling towards us. We didn't wait to investigate."

"It was like a bat with webbed feet and no head," Mervyn Hutchinson, 18, recalled. Jenny Holloway, 16, said, "I've never been so frightened. I didn't believe in ghosts until then."

The group fled. Subsequently other witnesses came forward to report strange lights and giant footprints, two feet long and nine inches across, in the woods ("The Saltwood Mystery," 1964).

This particular variety of flying entity would get a name, Mothman (after a villain in the *Batman* television series, popular in the mid-1960s), when approximately 100 witnesses reported seeing it. Nearly all of the sightings occurred in the Ohio River Valley, on the Ohio-West Virginia border, but the first known encounter seems to have been reported in Scott, Mississippi, on September 1, 1966. Several individuals told a newspaper reporter that they had seen what looked like a flying man maneuvering over a local plantation.

On November 1 a National Guardsman near Point Pleasant, West Virginia, was startled to see something that looked like an oversized manlike figure with wings. It was standing on a tree limb. But the report that set off the Mothman scare was not to happen until the late evening of November 15, when two young couples driving through an abandoned World War II munitions complex known as the TNT area, seven miles from Point Pleasant, had a terrifying experience.

Around 11:30, as they passed an old generator plant, the four saw two glowing red circles two inches in diameter and six inches apart. The circles moved away, and it immediately became clear that they were eyes attached to a larger object. The object, Roger Scarberry reported, "was shaped like a man, but bigger. Maybe six and a half or seven feet tall. And it had big wings folded against its back." The eyes



Between 1966 and 1967 dozens of persons along the Ohio-West Virginia border reportedly encountered a bizarre winged entity with eyes described as "terrifying" and "hypnotic." It was dubbed Mothman after a character on the *Batman* television series.

"were hypnotic. For a minute we could only stare at it. I couldn't take my eyes off it." Gray in color, it had manlike legs and moved in a shuffling manner toward the door of the plant.

Having seen as much as they wanted to see, the witnesses fled, only to see the same or a similar creature on a hill near the road. As they passed it, it spread batlike wings and rose straight into the air. Within moments it was pursuing the car, keeping pace with the vehicle even when Scarberry had it moving at 100 mph. All the while its wings were not flapping. "It squeaked like a big mouse," Rita Mallette, one of the witnesses, would recall.

At the Point Pleasant city limits they noticed the body of a large dog lying by the side of the road.

Though the creature did not follow them into town, they did not stop driving until they got to the Mason County Courthouse, where they told their story to Deputy Millard Halstead. Halstead, who had known them all their lives, did not doubt them. He could see how frightened they were.

The deputy followed Scarberry to the TNT area. Though he saw nothing out of the ordinary, he heard an unusual signal on his police radio. Loud enough to blot out the voice of the Point Pleasant dispatcher, it sounded like a phonograph record being played at a high speed (Keel, 1975).

One hour before the Scarberrys and Mallettes had their encounter, a strange occurrence befell a rural Salem, West Virginia, man named Newell Partridge. Partridge, a building contractor, was watching television with his wife when the screen blanked out. A "fine herringbone pattern appeared on the tube," he told investigator Gray Barker, "and at the same time the set started a loud whining noise, winding up to a high pitch, peaking and breaking off, as if you were on a musical scale and you went as high as you could and come back down and repeated it." Meanwhile, outside, the family dog, Bandit, was howling eerily.

Partridge, feeling uneasy, even frightened, reluctantly picked up a flashlight and went outside to see what was going on. Bandit was 150 yards away, facing the hay barn. When he shined the light in that direction, he saw "two red circles, or eyes, which looked like bicycle reflectors," though larger. They did not look

like animal's eyes, Partridge thought, and they sent "cold chills" down his spine. At that moment, with no prompting from his master, Bandit snarled and charged. Partridge called for him to come back, but the dog paid no heed.

He stepped inside, intending to pick up a gun, but once inside the door, he found that he had not the will to leave the house. He went to bed. The next morning he realized that Bandit had disappeared. He examined his tracks in the mud. "Those tracks were going in a circle, as if that dog had been chasing his tail—though he never did that," Partridge said. "There were no other tracks of any kind." The following day he read a newspaper account of the Scarberry/Mallette encounter with what the reporter dubbed "Mothman." He took particular note of the mention of a dead dog.

On the evening of the sixteenth, less than 24 hours after the Scarberry/Mallette and Partridge incidents, two women and a man in the TNT area saw a "big gray thing, bigger than a man," rise off the ground. It had no head, but two glowing red eyes were positioned at the top of its trunk. One of the women, Marcella Bennett, was carrying an infant, and the sight so startled her that she dropped it. The creature was unfolding its wings as the male witness scooped up the child. The three ran into the house they had just left. Over the next few minutes they could hear the creature moving about on the porch and see it staring through the window. By the time the police arrived, it was gone, but Mrs. Bennett would be troubled for a long time to come, until finally she sought medical attention.

The sightings continued sporadically for months afterwards. The descriptions were strikingly similar. According to a composite description put together by John A. Keel, the principal investigator of the Mothman episode, witnesses spoke of a creature five to seven feet tall, gray or brown, broader than a man, with humanlike legs and a shuffling walk. Its wings, which resembled a bat's, did not flap, and the creature typically ascended "straight up, like a helicopter." It made a squeaking sound. According to Keel, the eyes, always set near the top of the shoulders, "seemed to have been more terrifying than the tremendous size of the creature" (Keel, 1970).

Though the Mothman scare took place in the midst of a dramatic upswing in UFO reports, including **close encounters of the third kind** and **men in black** claims (Keel, 1968a, 1968b, 1975), only one sighting linked the bird-man with a UFO: a May 19, 1967, case from the TNT area, where a woman allegedly saw a flying creature with luminous red eyes approach a luminous object and vanish (Keel, 1970).

By November 1967 the scare had run its course. The last significant sighting took place on the seventh, in Chief Cornstalk park, when four hunters observed a giant gray manlike figure with red eyes. The thing was gliding along the ground. The witnesses were too frightened to raise their guns.

In May 1976 representatives of the Ohio UFO Investigators League reinterviewed several witnesses, all of whom stuck to their stories. Some added intriguing details. Virginia Thomas, who had seen the creature in the TNT area on November 2, 1967, recalled how "it took over my thinking, like it could pick it up and take it away from me." She felt paralyzed, unable either to move or to take her eyes off the creature. All the while her ears cracked and popped.

They also spoke with a mother and a daughter who had separately seen Mothman. The daughter was Linda Scarberry, Roger's wife, whose original sighting has already been mentioned. Linda claimed that had not been her and her husband's only encounter. "It seemed like there for two years that it would follow us everywhere we went." They saw it "hundreds of times." She had been as close to it as three or four feet. She went on:

It seems like it doesn't want to hurt you. It just wants to communicate with you. But you're too afraid when you see it to do anything. You think about getting away. I keep wanting to go back to find out what it is, but I don't want to see it again. Every time it's mentioned to go back I usually go, but still I'm afraid to go.

We rented an apartment down on 13th Street, and the bedroom window was right off the roof. It was sitting on the roof one night, looking in the window, and by then I was so used to seeing it I just pulled the blinds and went on. I felt kind of sorry for it [because] it gives you the feeling

like it was sitting there wishing it could come in and get warm because it was cold out that night.

She said she had last seen it standing inside a doorway at the old generator plant (Raynes, 1976).

Fantastic as the reports undoubtedly were, not even scoffers rejected them as **hoaxes**. Instead efforts were made to account for them in prosaic terms, as misinterpreted or misperceived owls or sandhill cranes. The former are too small, and the latter are native to the Canadian plains. Nonetheless birds which sound very much like sandhill cranes were sighted in Lowell, Ohio, 70 miles north of Point Pleasant, on November 26, 1966 (White, 1967). The description, however, does not match that offered by Mothman witnesses, who uniformly rejected the theory. "I have seen pictures of a Sand Hill Crane, and what I saw definitely was not a Sand Hill Crane," one stated emphatically and typically (Ury, 1969). For a conventional explanation to work, it must first reject just about everything the witnesses say they saw. It would probably be easier to call them all liars and be done with it, but the manifest sincerity and terror of those who reported encounters do not exactly encourage such wholesale dismissal.

Batsquatch. Nothing precisely like Mothman has been reported in many years, though there are occasional sightings of strange winged creatures, including one in Elma, New York, in October 1974. The report is vague and secondhand; the witness is supposed to have seen an "immense birdlike creature with a wingspan of about nine or 10 feet, a humanlike body and large grotesque head" (Miller, 1976).

Like the Mothman witnesses, Brian Canfield seems both sincere and sincerely frightened. And what he claims to have seen is no less absurdly unlikely than Mothman. At 9:30 P.M. on April 23, 1994, Canfield, 18, was driving home to a remote settlement, Camp One, in the foothills of Washington's Mount Rainier, when his engine abruptly died. Sitting helplessly in the middle of the road, between the edge of the forest and a clearcut field, he caught something in his headlights. The something was descending, and it was large.

It hit the ground with a thud, raising dust, and stood 30 feet away. It was a grotesque sight: a beast nine feet

tall with a muscular humanlike torso and arms ending in clawed hands. Its feet were like a bird's. It was covered with bright bluish fur and had yellowish eyes, "shaped like a piece of pie with pupils like a half-moon," Canfield said. "The mouth was pretty big. White teeth. No fangs. The face was like a wolf."

He told *Tacoma News Tribune* reporter C. R. Roberts, "It was standing there staring at me, like it was resting, like it didn't know what to think. I was scared. It raised the hair on me. I didn't feel threatened. I just felt out of place."

After a few minutes its fingers twitched, and its batlike wings, as wide as the road, unfolded. Then, according to the witness, "It turned its head and looked back at me and started flapping its wings." Amid turbulence sufficient to rock the truck, it rose and flew off toward the mountain. A short time later the truck started on its own.

The young man raced home and breathlessly informed his parents about the bizarre encounter. He was shaking, his mother Sandra Canfield recalled. "His mouth was dry, he was pale, his hair was still standing on end." Brian, his father, and a neighbor went to the site, but no evidence of the visitation could be found.

Brian's friends later dubbed the creature "Batsquatch." Roberts wrote on May 1, "This past week I've spoken both with neighbors and with Canfield's family. I believe his story. I believe he saw something that night a week ago. I have no idea what he saw. I've spoken with experts on legends and creatures and none knows of a being such as this." (Benjamin, 1995; Roberts, 1994)

All that connects this claim with UFOs as ordinarily understood is the apparent association between the creature's appearance and the vehicle's engine trouble.

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MUNROE FALLS CE3

At 2:25 A.M. on March 28, 1967, David Morris, 20, heading home to Munroe Falls, Ohio, after finishing his shift at an electrical plant in Kent, sighted a strange object in a wheat field less than 100 yards off the south side of the road. Hovering just above the ground, the UFO cast off a soft reddish-orange glow with a translucent quality, as if the light were being filtered through frosted glass. Twelve feet wide at the base and 25 feet high, it was shaped like an inverted cone. A ball-shaped object rested on, or was attached to, the UFO's pointed tip. The witness noticed an acrid smell so powerful that he could taste it.

Morris, who was driving slowly because of foggy conditions, redirected his gaze to the road. At that moment, about 50 feet in front of him, he spotted four or five short, stocky figures "like midgets." They cast off a glow much like that on the UFO. Because they were clad in suits which covered their entire bodies, their features could not be discerned, though Morris could see that their heads appeared disproportionately large for their bodies. They were moving rapidly back and forth, seemingly oblivious to his presence even though they were close enough that Morris feared that he would hit them.

He slammed on his brakes, but it was too late. He felt a thump against the right front corner of his car and saw an arm with a thumbless mitten fly up, then down. His car came to a stop 10 feet later, and Morris automatically reached for the handle, intending to step outside to render assistance. Then a sense of the unearthliness of the situation overcame him, and he decided to get away as fast as possible. As Morris sped away, he looked in the rearview mirror to see the beings gathered in a group as if positioned around something lying on the road.

Once home (where he lived with his parents and siblings), he found he was too upset to sleep. Finally he dozed off on the floor. When he woke up, he told his mother what had happened. At first she thought he was joking and responded accordingly. When he broke into tears, she realized how serious he was.

In the daylight Morris examined his car and noticed three dents in the front bumper and right headlight ring. Because he washed his car every day, he knew the marks were fresh. That afternoon he and a friend went to the site but found nothing out of the ordinary.

Carol Clapp, a reporter for the *Ravenna Record-Courier*, got word of the incident indirectly, after Morris told several co-workers about his experience. Morris at first would not discuss it with her but eventually agreed to an interview once she promised not to ridicule him in print. Without telling them about the reasons for her interest, Clapp spoke with persons who lived close to the encounter site. Most, not surprisingly, said they had been sleeping at the time. One woman reluctantly reported seeing a reddish glow "some night" that week; she could, or would, not be more specific (Clapp, 1967).

The Washington-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) learned of the incident when Clapp called the organization on the morning of March 31. NICAP immediately alerted its Pittsburgh subcommittee to the site, and a representative, Charles E. Toner, Jr., arrived the next day. Toner interviewed Morris and looked at the dents on his car. He also spoke with several locals. "Nothing occurred [sic] or was said . . . which reflected adversely on Morris or cast doubt on the veracity of what he said," he reported to NICAP. "I was very impressed

with Morris' sincerity and straightforwardness in relating his experience."

Four days later, another Pittsburgh NICAP investigator, S. Roy Wiley, came to Munroe Falls to conduct a series of interviews. The town's police chief spoke well of Morris and his family, as did two officers from nearby Stow, where Morris had grown up. The young man also received high marks from his employer. The only negative comments came from a Stow high-school administrator who had already denigrated Morris (as well as other members of his family) to Clapp. As had Clapp, Wiley concluded that the man bore a grudge; moreover, the man said he would not believe *anyone* who told a UFO story.

Wiley spent some time with the Morriszes that afternoon. "Dave impressed me as a very sincere and honest boy," Wiley would write. He checked Morris's car with a Geiger counter, paying special attention to the area of the dents, but detected nothing out of the ordinary. A check at the encounter site also came up with negative results.

Morris sought no further publicity and refused subsequent interviews. Later an unfounded rumor held that he had suffered a mental breakdown. No evidence of a **hoax**, either by or on the young man, would come to light. Nor would the authorities receive any reports of a conventional hit-and-run

accident in the area during the early morning hours of March 28.

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Mothman

Mothman is possibly the weirdest creature ever to grace (or terrify) the UFO era. Though this winged monstrosity only rarely has been linked directly with UFOs, its most celebrated manifestations – the ones that gave it its name – coincided with a series of UFO reports and other strange events (including men-in-black visitations) in the Ohio River Valley in 1966 and 1967.

Late on the evening of November 15, 1966, as they drove past an abandoned TNT plant near Point Pleasant, West Virginia, two young married couples spotted two large eyes, two inches wide and six inches apart, attached to something that “was shaped like a man, but bigger. Maybe six or seven feet tall. And it had big wings folded against its back.” The eyes were “hypnotic,” the witnesses agreed. When it started to move, heading toward the plant door, the four panicked and sped away. In short order they saw the same or a similar creature on a hillside near the road. It spread its batlike wings, rose into the air, and followed the car, which by now was doing 100 miles per hour.

“That bird kept right up with us,” Roger Scarberry, one of the group, said to investigator John A. Keel. “It wasn’t even flapping its wings.” The witnesses told Deputy Sheriff Millard Halstead it made a sound like a “record played at high speed or the squeak of a mouse.” It followed them on Highway 62 right to the Point Pleasant city limits.

The two couples were not the only persons to see the creature that night. Another group of four claimed to have seen it not once but three times. A third report is of particular interest.

At 10:30 on the evening of the fifteenth, Newell Partridge, a building contractor who lived outside Salem, West Virginia (approximate ninety miles northeast of Point Pleasant), was watching television when suddenly the screen blanked out, a “fine herringbone pattern appeared on the tube, and at the same time the set started a loud whining noise, winding up to a high pitch, peaking and breaking off, as if you were on a musical scale and you went as high as you could and came back down and repeated it.... It sounded like a generator winding up.” The Partridges’ dog Bandit began to howl on the porch, continuing even after they turned the set off.

Partridge stepped outside, where he saw Bandit facing toward the hay barn 150 yards away. “I shined the light in that direction,” Partridge said in an interview with West Virginia writer Gray Barker, “and it picked up two red circles, or eyes, which looked like bicycle reflectors,” but apparently much larger. Something about the sight deeply frightened him. They were not, he was certain, an animal’s eyes.

Snarling, Bandit, an experienced hunting dog, shot off toward the figure. Partridge called to him to stop, but the dog paid no heed. At this point Partridge went inside to get a gun but then decided not to go outside again. He slept that night with the weapon by his side. By morning he realized Bandit had disappeared, and the dog had not shown up two days later when Partridge read a newspaper report of the Point Pleasant sightings.

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Monstrous Serpent

The story that follows exists only as an anecdote told to folklorists decades ago, but it was told as a true story, and it is by any standard as strange as any tale ever related about a fabulous beast. Even harder to believe than many of the accounts related in these pages, it is repeated here not because it is convincingly documented – it isn't – but because of its eerie, even mindboggling, character.

It allegedly occurred sometime in the late nineteenth century in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, at a country schoolhouse. The new school had been built near the crossroads in Jenner township to replace an older, more remote one far from any road. William Johnson, then sixteen, and other students and parents often attended nighttime functions in the building. These functions, however, were anything but routine because to enter the door one had to step over the long, scaly body of ... something.

The something had the body of an immense snake, though neither its head nor its tail was ever visible. It was assumed that these were under the schoolhouse. Its body was a foot in diameter, and it had sharp scales on which it was unwise to step. Anyone who did so was instantly hurled to the ground.

The snake appeared only at that time of the month when there was no moon in the sky. Not everyone could see it, according to Johnson, but even those who didn't would be thrown if they stepped on it unknowingly.

The original owner of the land became so frightened that he sold the property and left. The man who purchased it raised a large family there, apparently having made his peace with the monster. Sometimes other men, often under the influence of alcohol, would attack it with sharp stakes and other weapons, to no avail. When Johnson moved away from the area at age thirty, the snake was still making appearances.

Johnson's testimony has led Fortean writer Michael Winkle to wonder what such a creature – assuming for one giddy moment the truth of this literally monstrous yarn – could be. "A multi-dimensional reptile, perhaps?" he speculates. "Such a creature might project part of its body into our universe while other parts – its head and tail, say – would remain in a higher spatial dimension."

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Mothman, seen in
West Virginia,
1967.
(Courtesy Fortean Picture
Library.)

John A. Keel

John Alva Keel, born Alva John Kiehle in Perry, New York, on March 25, 1930, is one of the most widely read, influential, and controversial writers on anomalous phenomena.

His professional writing career began at the age of sixteen. In his adult life he wrote extensively for radio and television on a variety of subjects. An early science-fiction enthusiast, he read the popular pulp *Amazing Stories* and there was introduced to the "Shaver mystery," promoted as a true account of Pennsylvania welder Richard S. Shaver's interactions with teros and deros, good and evil beings who live in vast caverns under the Earth and who are the remnants of a supercivilization that thousands of years ago populated the surface. (This theory is described more thoroughly in the Hollow Earth entry in chapter 8.) Keel, who moved to New York City at an early age, met and befriended artists, writers, bohemians, psychics, and others who in one way or another had been influenced by the writings of satirist and anomaly collector Charles Fort.

Until the mid-1960s, however, he remained an obscure figure to most enthusiasts and investigators of the unusual. All that changed when a lucrative book contract, commissioned by a publishing house that expected him to produce the definitive work on the UFO phenomenon, enabled Keel to devote much of his time to probing strange events in New York and elsewhere. The latter location was in large part the Ohio River Valley, where he spent a good portion of 1966 and 1967. The direct result was two books (*UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* [1970] and *The Mothman Prophecies* [1975]) and numerous articles in *Fate*, *Flying Saucer Review*, and men's adventure magazines such as *Saga*, *True*, and *Male*. There would be other books as well; all but one of these (*The Eighth Tower* [1975]), however, are essentially collections of magazine articles of varying degrees of interest.

Though much of his writing deals with UFOs, Keel denies that he is a ufologist. His speculations, in fact, are closer to occultism than to science. He is

One detail in particular struck him: Roger Scarberry's statement that as they entered Point Pleasant's city limits, the two couples had seen the body of a big dog by the side of the road. A few minutes later, on their way back out of town, the dog was gone. They and Deputy Halstead, who was following them in a separate car, had even stopped to look for the body. Partridge immediately thought of Bandit, who was never to be seen again. All that remained of him were his prints in the mud. "Those tracks were going in a circle, as if that dog had been chasing his tail – though he never did that," his master recalled. "There were no other tracks of any kind."

nothing so much as a demonologist. In *Trojan Horse* he writes, "The Devil's emissaries of yesteryear have been replaced by the mysterious 'men in black.' The quasi-angels of Biblical times have become magnificent spacemen. The demons, devils, and false angels were recognized as liars and plunderers by early man. These same impostors now appear as long-haired Venusians."

Whereas traditional ufologists took a relatively conservative approach, seeking testimony from trained observers and putting a premium on radar/visual and multiply-witnessed sightings, and viewed exotic claims with suspicion, Keel vigorously championed everything from Mothman to contactees. Many ufologists doubted that the former – a monstrous birdlike entity reported over a several-month period by persons living along the Ohio River – had anything to do with UFOs, and they had long ranked the latter (individuals who claimed ongoing communications with friendly extraterrestrials) among the crooked and the crazy. Keel, however, argued that "ultraterrestrials" – supernatural "transmogrifications" of paranormal energy from an unimaginable other reality – have been pestering, frightening, manipulating, and even destroying human beings from the beginning of mankind's history.

According to Keel, humanity's long interaction with the supernatural, as well as the timely intervention of enigmatic strangers in the lives of such historical personages as Thomas Jefferson and Malcolm X, testifies to the continuing presence of the gods of old, including God, who dwell in the superspectrum. Its manifestations include UFOs and their occupants, monsters, demons, angels, poltergeists, ghosts, and voices in the head.

As he recounted his and others' adventures with the denizens of the superspectrum, Keel heaped abuse on conservative ufologists, whom he routinely characterized as "cultists," "buffs," and worse. Though he saw himself as an heir to

In another interesting point of correspondence between Partridge's experience and that of the Point Pleasant witnesses, Deputy Halstead experienced peculiar interference on his police radio when he visited the TNT area. It was loud and sounded something like a record or tape played at high speed. He finally had to turn the radio off.

The next day, after a press conference called by Sheriff George Johnson, the story hit the press wires. A reporter immediately dubbed the creature "Mothman" after a villain on the *Batman* television series.

John A. Keel (continued)

Fort, temperamentally he was more akin to Tiffany Thayer, the contentious, quarrelsome, opinionated founder of the Fortean Society.

Still, some younger ufologists took him seriously and, following his lead, rejected ufology's venerable extraterrestrial hypothesis. Until Keel's appearance on the scene, the only alternative UFO interpretation had been the skeptical one — in other words, outright rejection of the UFO phenomenon. Now a "new ufology," as its practitioners called it, grew out of Keel's emphasis on high-strangeness (or, as its critics countered, low-evidence) claims.

To most mainstream American ufologists, however, Keel remained an anathema. To them his speculations seemed extravagant, even absurd, and critics complained of factual inaccuracies and uncritical acceptance of suspect claims and claimants. Yet outside ufology, Keel in time developed a reputation as a colorful character; some observers even mistook him for a species of skeptic, apparently unaware that his denunciation of extraterrestrial UFOs masked even stranger personal beliefs.

After some years of relative inactivity, Keel reemerged in the mid-1980s to denounce the new generation of extraterrestrial hypothesizers and the revived interest in alleged official UFO cover-ups. At the same time European ufologists, who had begun with the parapsychical theory and ended with the psychosocial hypothesis (which holds that UFOs and other anomalous phenomena are culturally shaped hallucinations), hailed him as a pioneer.

Today Keel's major forum is a monthly column, "Beyond the Known," in *Fate*.

From that time to November 1967 a number of other sightings occurred. On the evening of November 16, 1966, for example, three adults, one carrying an infant, were walking back to their car after calling on friends. Suddenly something rose slowly up from the ground. One witness, Marcella Bennett, was so frightened that she dropped her baby. A "big gray thing, bigger than a man," it had no discernible head, but it did have two large glowing red circles at the top of its trunk. As huge wings unfolded from behind it, Raymond Wamsley snatched up the child and ushered the two women inside the house they had just left. The creature apparently followed them to the porch because they could hear sounds there and, worse, see its eyes peering through the window. By the time the police arrived, it was gone. Mrs. Bennett was traumatized for weeks afterwards and, like other Mothman witnesses, eventually sought medical attention.

Keel, the major chronicler of the Mothman episode, wrote that at least 100 persons saw the creature; from their accounts, he compiled a composite description. According to the reports, it stood between five and seven feet tall, was broader than a man, and walked in a halting, shuffling manner on humanlike legs. It emitted a squeaky sound. The eyes, which Keel said "seemed to have been more terrifying than the tremendous size of the creature," were set near the top of the shoulders; its wings were batlike but did not flap when it flew. It typically ascended, as one observer put it, "straight up, like a helicopter." Witnesses described its skin color as gray or brown. Two observers said they heard a mechanical humming as it flew above them.

After 1967 Mothman faded back into the twilight zone – only one subsequent report, from Elma, New York, in October 1974, is known – but Keel found a West Virginia woman who said she had encountered it on a highway one evening in 1961 at the edge of Chief Cornstalk Hunting Grounds on the West Virginia side of the Ohio River. She told Keel that "it was much larger than a man. A big gray figure. It stood in the middle of the road. Then a pair of wings unfolded from its back, and they practically filled the whole road. It almost looked like a small airplane. Then it took off straight up ... disappearing out of sight in seconds."

Big bird?

Whatever it may or may not have been, Mothman was no hoax, in the unanimous opinion of those who investigated the sightings. The most publicized conventional explanation came from West Virginia University biologist Robert Smith, who suggested the witnesses had seen sandhill cranes. Such cranes are not native to Ohio or West Virginia, but theoretically some could have migrated down from the plains of Canada. On November 26, 1966, a small group of people near Lowell, Ohio (seventy miles north of Point Pleasant), reported seeing a group of oversized birds in some trees. When approached, the birds flew away and settled on a nearby ridge. From the descriptions (four or five feet tall, with long necks, six-inch bills, and a "reddish cast" in the head area) these are, arguably, sandhill cranes, but they bear no resemblance to what the Mothman witnesses say they observed. All of them, in fact, rejected the sandhill identification.



Anomaly investigators (clockwise from left) John Michell, Bob Rickard, and John Keel, in 1992. (Courtesy Fortean Picture Library.)

On the other hand, Keel suspects that in a tiny minority of cases excitable observers, spooked by the stories they had heard, may have mistaken owls encountered briefly on dark country roads for something more extraordinary. Even so, Mothman, the most improbable of beasts, resists easy accounting. Unlike some other monsters this one has much going for it, most notably an impressive number of multiple-witness sightings by individuals whom investigators and police officers deemed reliable. Any "rational" explanation for Mothman must first disregard all the testimony as wildly in error. Only a radical revision of the witnesses' descriptions can transform Mothman into a respectable inhabitant of the consensus universe.

In 1976 members of the Ohio UFO Investigators League reinterviewed some of the principal witnesses. All stood by their earlier stories, and a few offered some intriguing further details, such as (as one put it) "it took over my thinking" during the encounter. Another witness said she had seen the creature on numerous other occasions. "It seems like it doesn't want to hurt you," she claimed. "It just wants to communicate with you. But you're too afraid when you see it to do anything."

Mothman elsewhere

A Mothman-like figure allegedly appeared in England, along a rural road near Sandling Park, Hythe, Kent, on November 16, 1963. Four young people saw a "star" ascend from the night sky and disappear behind trees not far from them. Frightened, they took to their heels but stopped soon afterwards to watch a golden, oval-shaped light floating a few feet above a field eighty yards from them. The UFO moved into the wooded area and was lost to view.

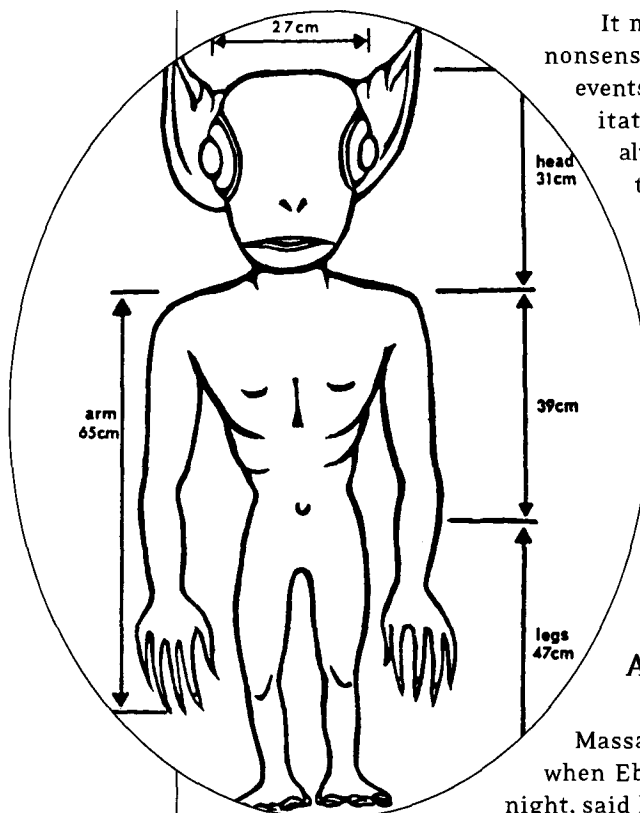
Suddenly the witnesses saw a dark shape shambling toward them from across the field. It was black, human-sized, and headless, and it had wings that looked like a bat's. At this juncture the four chose not to linger further at the scene.

Other persons sighted a similar UFO over the next few nights. On the twenty-third, two men who had come to investigate found a "vast expanse of bracken that had been flattened." They also claimed to have seen three huge footprints, two feet long and nine inches wide, pressed an inch deep in the soil.

The island of Puerto Rico has played host to a variety of terrifying creatures over the past decades. In 1989 rumors of "vampire birds" circulated, and six years later a bizarre winged creature is said to have attacked an elderly cane cutter, who suffered a heart attack as a consequence. One secondhand, unverified story has it that in November 1995, as they drove home late at night, employees of a U.S. government facility in the El Yunque Rain Forest on the island encountered a "giant bat." The creature descended on the car's hood, stretched itself over the windshield, and stared with red eyes at the terrified occupants. As if this were not bad enough, the car engine stalled. Somehow escaping, they made their way to an area restaurant and related the tale to the owner.

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Sketch of a UFO
entity seen in 1955
at Kelly, Kentucky.
(Courtesy Fortean Picture
Library.)

It must also be said that the irrational, even nonsensical nature of the Mattoon and Botetourt events leads us to conclude that whatever its limitations, the hysteria solution seems the only alternative to the far more extraordinary one, that the "mad gassers" stepped out of the Goblin Universe. Which is not to say there is no Goblin Universe, only that if there is one, we can reasonably demand of its residents that they provide us with more robust indications of their existence. In all but a scattering of instances, individuals believed to be responsible for the gassings were only briefly glimpsed, and even here ordinary prowlers or transients may have been mistaken for strangers from the twilight zone.

An army of apparitions

In the summer of 1692, at Cape Ann, Massachusetts, an odd series of events began when Ebenezer Babson, returning home late one night, said he saw two men step out of his house and dash into a cornfield. When he ran inside to check on his family's welfare, his wife and children were nonplussed by his questions; no intruders had entered the house, they insisted.

Babson grabbed a gun and went outside, where he spotted the two men bolting up from behind a log. As they escaped to a nearby swamp, one was overheard saying to the other, "The man of the house is now come; else we might have taken the house."

The family repaired to a military garrison not far away, and Babson then sneaked outside, where he encountered the two men again. The following day he came upon them a third time, and they chased him into the garrison. Over the next week or two Babson, sometimes alone, sometimes in the company of others, had further encounters with mysterious strangers, suspected to be French-Canadian scouts in league with hostile Indians.

On July 14 the entire garrison watched half a dozen of the strangers. A pursuit party, with Babson in the lead, got within gunshot range. Babson fired on them, and three fell to the ground, only to rise to their feet with no apparent signs of injury. As they fled, one turned to fire on Babson; the bullet narrowly missed him and lodged in a tree, from which its intended victim subsequently retrieved it. A few minutes later the garrison group trapped one of the strangers. Babson shot

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Thunderbird Photograph

In April 1890 two riders sighted an enormous flying creature — which Indians would have recognized immediately as a thunderbird — alighting on the Arizona desert. The beast had the body of a serpent, immense wings, two clawed feet, and an alligatorlike face with saucer-sized eyes. The men got as close to it as their terrified horses would allow. They proceeded on foot, rifles in hand, but the creature saw them and flew away, only to land again not far away. This time it came down on one of its wings and so was unable to escape as the men pumped bullets into it.

When measured, the wings were found to span an incredible 160 feet. The body, ninety-two and one-half feet long, was smooth and featherless, more like a bat's than a bird's. The men cut off a portion of the wing and brought it with them to Tombstone.

That, at least, is how the *Tombstone Epitaph* told the story in its April 26, 1890, issue. That was the extent of its coverage; there was no follow-up article. To all appearances this is simply yet another of the tall tales with which newspapers on the American frontier regularly regaled readers. What distinguishes it from many others, however, is that it gave rise to an odd modern legend.

The story was revived in a 1930 book, Horace Bell's *On the Old West Coast*. Thirty-three years later, in a sensationalistic article in the men's action magazine *Saga*, Jack Pearl wrote that in 1886 the *Epitaph* had "published a photograph of a huge bird nailed to a wall. The newspaper said it had been shot by two prospectors



theories, from those claiming to explain it “scientifically” (as the consequence, in one speculation complete with charts, of “geomagnetic fluctuations”) to those positing frankly occult causes (the internalization of destructive psychokinetic impulses). The leading proponent of SHC is a Pennsylvania man of New Age sympathies, Larry E. Arnold, who links such events with a variety of paranormal phenomena. Elsewhere SHC has little support today even among maverick scientists. If it is a real phenomenon, a convincingly documented case of it has yet to be recorded.

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The charred remains of an elderly woman, found in November 1963, present a possible instance of SHC. Very little damage was done to the room itself.

(Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library.)

and hauled into town by wagon. Lined up in front of the bird were six grown men with their arms outstretched, fingertip to fingertip. The creature measured about 36 feet from wingtip to wingtip."

Pearl further claimed that in 1889, after being ridiculed in a Tombstone saloon, one of the prospectors challenged his harassers to go after the bird themselves. "There's plenty more of 'em nesting in the tops of them mountains," he is supposed to have said. The drunks set out into the desert, but when one went into the bushes to relieve himself, his companions heard him screaming, "It's got me!" They ran to investigate and found his footsteps had vanished in the middle of a clearing. All they could hear was his anguished voice coming from above them and finally fading out.

(The second half of this story is clearly patterned after another nineteenth-century yarn [sometimes set in 1889], the Oliver Lerch disappearance, in which a young man is snatched up by an unseen something, his footsteps suddenly ending and his screaming voice exclaiming, "It's got me!")

In any case, in a letter published in the September 1963 issue of *Fate*, H. M. Cranmer of Renova, Pennsylvania, mentioned the photograph, which he said was taken "about the year 1900." The creature's thirty-six-foot wings were "nailed against the wall of the Tombstone *Epitaph*. . . . A picture showed six men, with outstretched arms touching, standing under the bird. Later, a group of actors dressed as professors were photographed under the bird, with one of them saying, 'Shucks, there is no such bird, never was, and never will be.'" In another letter in the March 1966 issue, Cranmer indicated he had received his "splendid account" from a "lady in Tombstone." In neither this nor the previous letter does Cranmer indicate that he had actually *seen* the photograph, though now he declared, "This picture was circulated in papers all over the United States."

Ivan T. Sanderson, a biologist and writer on natural anomalies, now claimed that he once possessed a photocopy of the picture but had lent it to two associates, who lost it. Soon others began to "remember" that they, too, had seen it somewhere. The editors of *Fate* thought they may have published the picture in an early issue (the magazine started in 1948), but a search through all existing issues indicated otherwise. Meanwhile, after the original *Epitaph* story (which mentions no photograph) was revived in a 1969 issue of *Old West*, reader Harry F. McClure wrote in to say he had personally known the men who saw the thunderbird; he said the *Epitaph* had made up the part about their having killed it.

Responding to numerous letters from inquirers, the *Epitaph* conducted a thorough search that uncovered no such photograph in any issue of the newspaper. An extended survey of other Arizona and California papers of the period came to similarly negative results.

Still, as late as 1990 writer John A. Keel insisted, "I *know* I saw it. And not only that – I compared notes with a lot of other people who also saw it. . . . It was either in one of the tabloids or one of the men's magazines. . . . It looked like a pterodactyl or something. . . . The guys were all wearing cowboy boots and cowboy hats

Fortean Times

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Fortean Times came into the world as *The News*, a bimonthly, in November 1973. In an introductory note editor Robert J. M. Rickard wrote that the "core of our readers will be researchers and others interested in extrapolating the ideas of Charles Fort." From modest beginnings as little more than a catalogue of summaries from newspaper clippings, it would go on to become (as *Fortean Times*, the title it took with its June 1976 issue) a widely read and widely respected magazine. Unlike any other Fortean periodical, it is no mere catalogue of wonders—though as such it is without parallel—but is richly humorous, often in a self-mocking way that echoes Fort's own sense of the ridiculous. In that vein Hunt Emerson contributes cartoons that often feature a character named "Gully Bull," who bears a suspicious resemblance to Rickard.

In 1979 the magazine (a quarterly since the Spring 1977 issue) underwent something of a format change and took on a subtitle, *The Journal of Strange Phenomena*, as it tried unsuccessfully to transform itself into a large-circulation newsstand periodical. The experiment lasted one issue (Summer 1979), after which *Fortean Times* returned to its traditional subscription-only status. Technical and editorial improvements continued, however. In the mid-1980s, exhausted by overwork and grief from the death of a young son, Rickard took a fifteen-month leave of absence and put the magazine in the hands of Paul R. A. de G. Sieveking. Rickard returned with the Spring 1986 issue. After that he and Sieveking edited alternating issues.

Under the rubric Fortean Tomes, the magazine oversaw publication of several books in trade-paperback format. These include *Lake Monster Traditions* (1988), by Michel Meurger with Claude Gagnon; *Lost Lands and Sunken Cities* (1988), by Nigel Pennick; *Monstrum!* (1990), by Tony "Doc" Shiels; and *UFOs 1947-1987* (1987), edited by Hilary Evans with John Spencer.

In July 1991 *Fortean Times*, on a bimonthly schedule again, returned to the newsstands in a handsome, slick-paper format.

and they were all kind of scrungy, like they had been out riding the range." That same year W. Ritchie Benedict swore that he had seen Sanderson displaying the photograph on a Canadian television show. "As I recall," he wrote, "the creature had a very pointed head and its eyes were closed."

In a review of the episode, Mark A. Hall wrote, "The simple description of the photo — the six men posed to show the size of the dead bird — seems to create a