

## Summary

Sunday, March 6, 2022 1:48 PM

In [West Virginia folklore](#), the Mothman is a humanoid creature reportedly seen in the [Point Pleasant](#) area from November 15, 1966, to December 15, 1967. The first newspaper report was published in the [Point Pleasant Register](#), dated November 16, 1966, titled "Couples See Man-Sized Bird ... Creature ... Something".<sup>14</sup> The national press soon picked up the reports and helped spread the story across the United States.

From <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mothman>>

- First sighted by a bunch of gravediggers in Nov 12th 1966
- Scarberry & Mallette sighted Nov 15th 1966 @ TNT area
- More like a large humanoid owl than a moth
- Possibly a Sandhill Crane or Barn Owl
- Sightings = mass hysteria?
- Herald of disaster?
- Silver Bridge Collapse Dec 15th 1967



Artist's impression of the Mothman	
Other name(s)	Winged Man, Bird Man
Country	United States
Region	<a href="#">Point Pleasant, West Virginia</a>

**Mothman**

From <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mothman>>



# Mothman

Saturday, March 19, 2022 10:21 PM

## The True Story Behind The Legendary Mothman Said To Terrorize West Virginia

By All That's Interesting | Checked By Jaclyn Anglis

Published October 2, 2021

Updated October 6, 2021

As legend has it, the flying Mothman mortified countless Point Pleasant residents in the late 1960s. And when a bridge collapsed, the creature was blamed for the deaths of 46 people.

On November 12, 1966, in Clendenin, West Virginia, a group of gravediggers working in a cemetery spotted something strange.

They glanced up from their work as something huge soared over their heads. It was a massive figure that was moving rapidly from tree to tree. The gravediggers would later describe this figure as a "brown human being."



Wikimedia Commons An artist's impression of the Mothman of Point Pleasant.

This was the first reported sighting of what would come to be known as the Mothman, an elusive creature that remains as mysterious as it was on the night that a few frightened witnesses first laid eyes on it.

## The Legend Of The Mothman Of Point Pleasant



Charles Johnson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Wikimedia Commons The small town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, along the bank of the Ohio River. Just three days after the gravediggers' initial report, in nearby Point Pleasant, West Virginia, two couples noticed a white-winged creature about six or seven feet tall standing in front of the car that they were all sitting in.

Eyewitnesses Roger Scarberry and Steve Mallett told the local paper, *The Point Pleasant Register*, that the beast had bright red eyes about six inches

## Mothman



Artist's depiction of the Mothman



Point Pleasant, WV, on the map

## Background

Type	Humanoid
First Sighting	November 12, 1966
Last Sighting	Unknown
Country	United States
Habitat	Point Pleasant, West Virginia
Possible Population	Small (possibly singular)

## Description



Mountain Monsters Mothman

Mothman is described as a bipedal, winged humanoid. Despite his name which was given to him by newspapers, he is in no way moth-like, and has an appearance more like that of a large humanoid owl. His coloration varies from Black, gray, to even brown, although it is usually the darker shades. He is often reported to be about 7 feet tall, with a wingspan of about 10 to 15 feet or more, plus the ability to fly over 100 mph. Sometimes he is described as not having a head with the two huge red eyes set in the chest. These eyes are reported to be glowing, or at least reflective. The details of his face and his feet have never been adequately described. One witness who saw the face clearly, could only say that the details were horrible and monstrous. She had terrible nightmares and nearly suffered a nervous breakdown.

Anyone who gets a close look at the Mothman seems to suffer from extreme fear and psychological distress, sometimes lasting for months or years afterwards. In particular, people say that a sense of pure evil overcomes them when they see Mothman's eyes.



Creature Feature- The Mothman

He can fold his wings and walk with a weird shuffle that many witnesses compare to a penguin. When he flies, he unfolds his wings and shoots straight up with great speed, then levels out to go wherever he wants to go. He is rarely observed flapping his wings except for on take off. Witnesses often described his flight pattern as "Straight up, like a helicopter". He can fly much faster than any bird should be able to fly, as measured by those victims who suffered from what seems to be Mothman's favorite activity: chasing cars. He'll fly in front of them and even sometimes hit at the roof.

From <https://cryptidz.fandom.com/wiki/Mothman>

apart, a wingspan of 10 feet, and the apparent urge to avoid the bright headlights of the car. According to the witnesses, this creature was able to fly at incredible speeds — perhaps as fast as 100 miles per hour. All of them agreed that the beast was a clumsy runner on the ground. They knew this only because it allegedly chased their vehicle to the outskirts of town in the air, then scuttled into a nearby field and disappeared. Knowing how absurd this must have sounded to a local paper in a small, Appalachian community in the 1960s, Scarberry insisted that the apparition couldn't have been a figment of his imagination. He assured the paper, "If I had seen it while by myself, I wouldn't have said anything, but there were four of us who saw it."

More Spooky Sightings Across West Virginia



marada/Flickr A statue of the infamous Mothman in Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

At first, reporters were skeptical. In the papers, they called the Mothman a bird and a mysterious creature. However, they did print Mallett's description: "It was like a man with wings."

But more and more sightings were reported in the Point Pleasant area over the next year as the legend of the Mothman took shape.

[The Gettysburg Times](#) reported eight additional sightings in the short span of three days after the first claims. This included two volunteer firefighters, who said they saw "a very large bird with large red eyes."

Newell Partridge, a resident of Salem, West Virginia, [claimed that he saw strange patterns](#) appearing on his television screen one night, followed by a mysterious sound just outside of his home.

Shining a flashlight toward the direction of the noise, Partridge supposedly witnessed two red eyes resembling bicycle reflectors looking back at him. This anecdote remains a popular one in the Mothman mythos, especially since it allegedly led to the disappearance of Partridge's dog. To this day, some still believe that the fearsome beast took his beloved pet.

From <<https://allthatsinteresting.com/mothman>>

# Scarberry and Mallette's Mothman Sighting

[VIEW SOURCE](#)

*"I wish we had never seen it, I wish someone else had seen it." - Linda Scarberry, Mothman Witness, 1966*



## About

One of the most famous Mothman stories is the Scarberry and Mallette sighting which is said to have occurred on **November 15th 1966** in Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

The story was the first to make news in the area and generate public attention, stories of [prior encounters](#) in the area were only discovered afterwards.

It was this sighting that was first got writer of The Mothman Prophecies, [John Keel](#) interested in the creature.

## The Sighting:

On November 15th 1966, two young couples were joyriding around in a [Black 1957 Chevy](#) to a remote hangout spot north of Point Pleasant known as [The TNT Area](#). One of the couples was Linda Scarberry and Roger Scarberry, the other was Steve Mallette and Mary Mallette.

When they got there next to the abandoned [North Power Plant](#) they suddenly saw two large red eyes which reflected the light from the car's headlights. Steve noticed it first and pointed it out to the group. That is when they are said to have noticed that the glowing red eyes belonged to a strange creature. They claimed to have seen a grey man-like figure with wings go around the corner at the old power plant. They said that the creature didn't run, but wobbled like it couldn't keep its balance. Linda described the creature as having circular fiery red eyes and a body like a man but with wings. They said the creature was about 6 or 7 feet tall with wings folded against its back. Half Man, Half Monster. She said "You could see muscles in its legs".



1966 Newspaper Photo

The couples couldn't believe what they had seen. They quickly drove off onto Route 62. Linda yelled for Roger to hurry. The couples then saw the creature on a hill by a large billboard as they went around a curve. It spread its wings and went straight up into the air.

They were all terrified and kept yelling for the driver to go faster. The Mothman began gliding back and forth over the back end of their car. "We didn't know what it was. I don't think we've ever been so scared" said Linda.

As they went along a straight stretch of road, they were going over 100 miles per hour but the creature was still able to follow them. They saw it in the back window and saw the shadow go across the car as it flew, they couldn't get away from it. They could also hear the wings hitting the top of the car as they drove. It's even said to have left scratch marks on Roger's '57 Chevy.

"It squeaked like a big mouse" said Mary Mallette. They were only able to get away from the Mothman when they reached the edge of Point Pleasant. The creature disappeared, veering off into a field, as they went into town.

The couples continued going into town. They stopped at the local *Dairyland* as they tried to figure out what to do next. Linda suggested they go to the police but Steve and Roger thought they'd just laugh at them and wanted to go back to make sure the thing was still there first. The group ended up being too afraid to do that, so they turned around.

As they were turning around, they saw [a large dead dog](#) laying along the road which was gone when they went by again later. According to the couples, the winged creature jumped out as they passed where the



## Couples See Man-Sized Bird...Creature...Something

*Point Pleasant Register*

Point Pleasant, WV

Wednesday, November 16, 1966

*"It was a bird... or something. It definitely wasn't a flying saucer."*

Two Point Pleasant couples said today they encountered a [man-sized, bird-like creature](#) in the TNT area about midnight last night.

Sheriff's deputies and City Police went to the scene about 2 o'clock this morning but were unable to spot anything.

But the two young men telling their story this morning were dead serious, and asserted they hadn't been drinking.

Steve Mallette of 3305 Jackson Avenue and Roger Scarberry of 809 30th Street described the thing as being about six or seven feet tall, having a wing span of 10 feet and red eyes about two inches in diameter and six inches apart.

*"It was like a man with wings."* Mallette said. *"It wasn't like anything you'd see on TV or in a monster movie..."*

The men and their wives were in Scarberry's car between 11:30 p.m. and midnight when they spotted the creature near the old power plant adjacent to the old National Guard Armory buildings.

The creature was seen standing on three occasions and was described as being extremely fast (*"it flew about 100 miles an hour"*) in flight but was a clumsy (sic) runner.

Deputy Millard Halstead said he had seen dust in the vicinity of a coal field. But *"it could have been"* caused by the bird, he said.

*"I'm a hard guy to scare"* Scarberry said, *"but last night I was for getting out of there."*

They did just that but the *"thing"* followed them. They said it was hovering the car, apparently gliding, until they reached the National Guard Armory on Route 62.

*"We went downtown, turned around, and went back and there it was again,"* Mallette said. *"It seemed to be waiting on us."* He said the light-grey-like creature then scurried through a field. It also had flown across the top of the car.

*"It apparently is afraid of light,"* Mallette reasoned, *"and maybe it thought it was scaring us off."*

The young men said they saw the creature's eyes, which glowed red, only when their lights shined on it. And it seemed to want to get away from the lights.

They said it looked like a *"man with wings"* but that the head was *"not an outstanding characteristic."*

Both were slightly pale and tired from lack of sleep during the night following their harrowing experience.

They speculated that the thing was living in the vacant power plant, possibly in one of the huge boilers. *"There are pigeons in all the other buildings,"* Mallette said, *"but not in that one."*

*"If I had seen it while by myself I wouldn't have said anything."* Scarberry commented, *"but there were four of us who saw it."*

They said it didn't resemble a bat in any way, but *"maybe what you would visualize as an angel."*

The last time they saw it was at the gate of the C. C. Lewis farm on Route 62.

They heard a sound like wings flapping and they said the bird rose straight up, like a helicopter.

*"This doesn't have an explanation to it,"* Mallette said. *"It was an animal but nothing like I've seen before."*

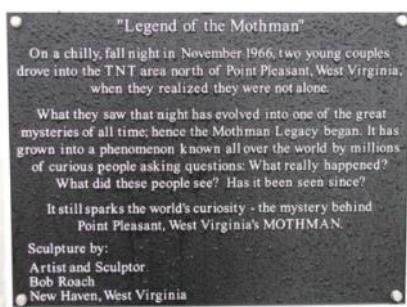
Are they going back to look for the creature?

*"Yes,"* Mallette said, *"this afternoon and again tonight."*

*"Today,"* Scarberry said, *"but tonight, I don't know."*

From <https://web.archive.org/web/2007101230219/http://www.westva.net/mothman/1966-11-16.htm>

dead dog was, went over the top of the car, and went through the field on the other side.



"Legend of the Mothman" Written of statue  
They drove back into town and parked at [Tiny's Diner](#) and decided to contact the police. The teens told their story to Deputy Millard Halstead. They told police that they saw a large winged creature whose eyes "glowed red" when the car headlights picked it up. They described it as a "flying man with ten foot wings" following their car.

Halstead didn't believe them at first but knew that weren't troublemakers and saw that they were genuinely terrified, so he actually went out to investigate their story. The couples drove back out to the TNT area with the deputy. Millard shined a spot light around the area including the tree lines.

Deputy Halstead is said to have heard strange static disturbances coming from his radio that he couldn't explain but he found no clear sign of the creature itself. The witnesses were sitting in their car and said that they saw shadows circling nearby and a cloud of dust kick up from an adjacent coal yard. The Mallettes were too scared to go back to their homes, they stayed at the Scarberry's trailer, turned all the lights on and stayed awake all night from fear.

The following day, Sheriff George Johnson held a press conference to discuss the sightings, the local press began printing the story and named the creature "Mothman" based on the comic book character, Batman, who had just gotten a television series at the time. Steve Mallette told the local newspaper "We understand people are laughing at us. But we wouldn't make up all this to make us look like fools".



That same day the couples went back to [The TNT Area](#) during daylight and found odd looking tracks resembling "Two horseshoes put together" but smooth. Steve saw something fly up inside a boiler when a door was kicked open. No one stayed around long enough to see what it was.

After this original sighting, more and more people began reporting seeing similar things such as [Marcella Bennett's sighting](#) which happened a day later. Hundreds of cars full of eager people swarmed out to the TNT area at night in hopes of seeing the Mothman. A shadow was cast of the valley of Point Pleasant and thus began the legacy of West Virginia's Mothman.

### Knowledge Overtime:

The story was immediately picked up by the [newspapers](#) and spread quickly, large crowds had already [gathered in The TNT Area](#) by the next night. Within the week, the papers had already named the creature and were picking up on similar sightings as well as speculating different explanations for what was going on. The media storm continued [throughout 1966 and 1967](#). The story was printed locally, nationally and internationally. It went over the Associated Press wire and was even featured in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* newspaper which went out to the American troops in Vietnam.

In 1970, author [John Keel](#) released a book called *Strange Creatures From Time And Space* which contained a chapter about Mothman and included this sighting. Then in 1975, he released his book [The Mothman Prophecies](#).

The story has since been detailed in several books, articles, newsprint, TV shows and documentaries. Information can be found at [The Mothman Museum](#) and a retelling of this story was even immortalized on [Bob Roach's Mothman Statue](#) in Point Pleasant.

- 1966 [Local News print from November 16th 1966: "Couples See Man-Sized Bird...Creature...Something"](#)
- 1966 [Local News print from November 17th 1966: "Four Pt. Pleasant Car Occupants See 'Bird-Like Creature'"](#)
- 1966 [Local News print from November 18th 1966: "Monster No Joke For Those Who Saw It"](#)
- 1966 [The Original Mothman Police Reports](#)
- 1970 *Strange Creatures From Time And Space* by [John Keel](#) (Chapter 18)
- 1975 [The Mothman Prophecies by John Keel](#) (Chapter 6)
- 2002 [Mothman: The Facts Behind The Legend](#) by [Jeff Wamsley](#) and Donnie Sergent Jr.
- 2002 [Mothman And Other Curious Encounters](#) by [Loren Coleman](#) (Chapter 3)
- 2002 [Search For The Mothman](#) Documentary
- 2003 The Inscription on [Bob Roach's Mothman Statue](#)
- 2005 [The Mothman Museum](#) Is Opened
- 2005 [Mothman...Behind The Red Eyes](#) by [Jeff Wamsley](#)
- 2010 [MonsterQuest's Mothman Episode on TV](#)
- 2011 [Eyes of The Mothman](#) Documentary
- 2012 Monsters of West Virginia by [Rosemary Ellen Guiley](#) (Chapter 3)

- 2013 The Tale of The Mason County Mothman by [George Dudding](#)
- 2017 The [Mothman of Point Pleasant](#) Documentary

## The Scarberry and Mallettes

Linda Scarberry, born Linda McDaniel, (June 10th 1947 - March 6th 2011) was the child of Park and [Mabel McDaniel](#). She was 19 years old during the initial Mothman sighting on November 15th 1966. She was married to Roger Scarberry who was 18 at the time. They were friends with Steve and Mary Mallette. The teens attended Point Pleasant High School.

The Scarberry and Mallettes gave [police reports](#) of their Mothman encounter in 1966 and were interviewed by the [local press](#) in the morning after their sighting. The couples later had many conversations and correspondence with New York author [John Keel](#) who took several trips to Point Pleasant WV during his investigation of the story.

The Scarberry couple said that they experienced strange occurrences and [Poltergeist activity in their homes](#) throughout 1966 and 67. Linda claimed to have seen the creature many times [including once on the roof](#). She said "It seems like it doesn't want to hurt you. It just wants to communicate with you".

On July 11th, 2001, Linda was interviewed for the book [Mothman: The Facts Behind The Legend](#) by [Jeff Wamsley](#) and Donnie Sergent Jr.

On September 12th 2001, when David Grubbs produced the documentary [Search For The Mothman](#), the crew interviewed Linda Scarberry on location at [The TNT Area](#) for ten minutes but then had to stop as Linda became too overwhelmed by fear to go any further. Her now ex-husband Roger refused to be interviewed, as did the Mallettes.

Linda Scarberry appeared on the TV show [MonsterQuest](#) on February 10th 2010. She later died at the age of 63 on March 6th 2011. The story of the Scarberry and Mallettes continues to be told and repeated in various forms of media.

From <[https://themothman.fandom.com/wiki/Scarberry\\_and\\_Mallette%27s\\_Mothman\\_Sighting](https://themothman.fandom.com/wiki/Scarberry_and_Mallette%27s_Mothman_Sighting)>

## Sandhill Crane

Saturday, March 19, 2022 10:24 PM

PRIORITY BIRD

Adults. Photo: Steve Torna/Audubon Photography Awards

# Sandhill Crane

*Antigone canadensis*



**Conservation status** Within the last few decades, Sandhill Cranes have greatly expanded their nesting range and numbers in the upper Midwest, a population that migrates southeastward toward Florida for the winter. Most populations now stable or increasing, but still vulnerable to loss of habitat. Degradation of habitat at major stopover points for migrants could have serious impact on species. Localized races in Mississippi and Cuba are endangered.

**Family** [Cranes](#)

**Habitat** Prairies, fields, marshes, tundra. Habitat varies with region, but usually nests around marshes or bogs, either in open grassland or surrounded by forest. Northernmost birds nest on marshy tundra. In migration and winter, often around open prairie, agricultural fields, river valleys.

Found in several scattered areas of North America, Sandhill Cranes reach their peak abundance at migratory stopover points on the Great Plains. The early spring gathering of Sandhills on the Platte River in Nebraska is among the greatest wildlife spectacles on the continent, with over a quarter of a million birds present at one time. Although they are currently very common, their dependence on key stopover sites makes them vulnerable to loss of habitat in the future.

### Feeding Behavior

See family introduction. Except in breeding season, forages in flocks.

### Eggs

Usually 2, sometimes 1, rarely 3. Variably pale olive to buff, marked with brown or gray. Incubation is by both sexes, 29-32 days. Female does more of incubating (typically all night, part of day). Young: Leave the nest within a day after hatching, follow parents in marsh. Both parents feed young at first, but young gradually learn to feed themselves. Age at first flight about 65-75 days. Young remain with parents for 9-10 months, accompanying them in migration.

### Young

Leave the nest within a day after hatching, follow parents in marsh. Both parents feed young at first, but young gradually learn to feed themselves. Age at first flight about 65-75 days. Young remain with parents for 9-10 months, accompanying them in migration.

### Diet

Omnivorous. Diet varies widely with location and season. Major food items include insects, roots of aquatic plants; also eat rodents, snails, frogs, lizards, snakes, nestling birds, berries, seeds. May eat large quantities of cultivated grains when available.

### Nesting

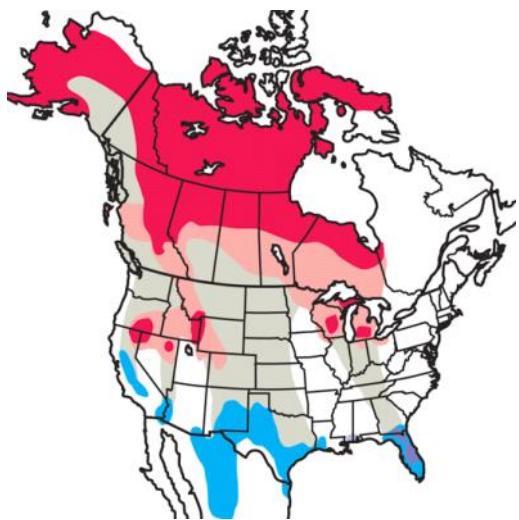
Courtship includes elaborate "dance," with birds spreading wings, leaping in air while calling. Nest site is among marsh vegetation in shallow water (sometimes up to 3' deep), sometimes on dry ground close to water. Nest (built by both sexes) is mound of plant material pulled up from around site; nest may be built up from bottom or may be floating, anchored to standing plants.

Illustration © [David Allen Sibley](#).

### Migration

Sandhill Cranes nesting in north migrate long distances (some cross the Bering Straits every spring and fall, en route to and from nesting grounds in Siberia). Those from the southern part of the main breeding range, in the northern and western parts of the Lower 48 states, migrate shorter distances; in recent years they have shown a trend toward migrating later in fall and earlier in spring, and some are now overwintering farther north than in the past. Populations nesting in Mississippi, Florida, and Cuba do not migrate.





- All Seasons - Common
- All Seasons - Uncommon
- Breeding - Common
- Breeding - Uncommon
- Winter - Common
- Winter - Uncommon
- Migration - Common
- Migration - Uncommon

From <<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/sandhill-crane>>

# Is the Mothman of West Virginia an Owl?

*More than 50 years after the first sighting, the best explanation for the infamous cryptid might be a nocturnal bird of prey. Audubon investigates.*

[By Asher Elbein](#)

October 26, 2018

## Birds in This Story

### [Barn Owl](#)

Latin: *Tyto alba*  
screams #1



### [Barred Owl](#)

Latin: *Strix varia*  
classic hoots #1



On November 15, 1966, a pair of young couples took an evening drive down a lonely road on the outskirts of Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Their route took them through overgrown bunkers of the "TNT Area," the remnants of a WW2 munitions plant. There the headlights glanced off something in the dark: a six-foot-tall, man-shaped thing. Shining red eyes stared back at them from a body without an obvious head or neck. Spooked, the couples sped away, only to see the thing following them on silent, unmoving wings.

The encounter in Point Pleasant was the first sighting of what local news dubbed "the Mothman," one of America's most enduring cryptids. Throughout the following year the town was rocked with a welter of sightings—some honest, some the product of likely hoaxes. Even after the local frenzy subsided, [Mothman proved popular with the UFO and cryptozoology set](#), and the mainstream with [the 2002 film The Mothman Prophecies](#). Its partisans maintain that it is an [alien](#), a [prophet of doom](#), or an extra-dimensional spirit monster heralding the Age of Aquarius.

Yet according to Joe Nickell, an author and investigator with the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, the original Mothman likely owes its existence to a more mundane—though no less interesting—culprit: an owl. How a nocturnal bird became an extra-dimensional entity reveals a little bit about human nature and lot about a bird that seems custom-made to give humans the chills.

Nickell grew interested in the Mothman case after looking into the similar Flatwoods Monster, a hissing 1952 apparition that terrified a family with its staring eyes and outstretched claws. Nickell identified the fiend as a Barn Owl, and suspected that the Mothman might be as well. "I think to do this, you have to take people at their word," he says. "You take people's description—allowing for some error—and match it to a real animal in the real world."

The idea that Mothman was some sort of bird [had been floated during the initial flurry of sightings](#), Nickell says. A group of firemen who went out to the forest to investigate reported seeing a large unidentified bird, and a local man shot a large Snowy Owl, which he maintained had been the source of the trouble. (This was a more likely identification than that of contemporary ornithologist Dr. Robert L. Smith, who [blithely dismissed Mothman as a Sandhill Crane](#), ignoring the fact that the species isn't native to West Virginia and the creature reportedly had no neck.)

Barn Owls seemed likely to Nickell in part because they are already considered eerie. According to Ryan Barbour, a researcher with the Barn Owl Project, they famously like to roost in old and abandoned buildings, they have an [unsettlingly odd appearance](#), and their vocal repertoire is heavy on hisses and clicks. In South Texas and Mexico, where part of Barbour's family is from, Barn Owls are *lechuza*, shape-shifting witches that foretell foul fortune. "Some of those who've declined our invitation to come out and do fieldwork with us are actually bird biologists," Barbour says. "They say that owls, especially Barn Owls, freak them out."

**There were other reasons to think an owl of some sort was the culprit.**

"When it comes to haunted houses and ghosts, I've always assumed that's Barn Owls," says ornithologist Rob Bierregaard, who spent 10 years studying Barred Owls in Charlotte, North Carolina. "They make really bizarre noises, and they like buildings that look haunted."

There were other reasons to think an owl of some sort was the culprit, Nickels says. The Mothman's shape as originally reported is very owl-like, with a head and body that blended together. Yet as Nickell investigated, he became less convinced that a Barn Owl was the answer. Linda Scarberry, one of the women in the original car, had reported seeing huge, glinting red eyes in the car headlights, a description backed up by following sightings. That sounded like the product of eyeshine, a feature found in nocturnal animals like dogs, cats, alligators, and, yes, owls. But there was a problem, Nickell says: Barn Owls have a relatively weak eyeshine, likely too weak to account for the haunting red eyes attributed to Mothman.

Luckily, there was another candidate available: the Barred Owl, a large species with a rounded head, deep black eyes, and a [loud, deep hoot that echoes through the dark](#). They prefer hollows in old trees and open forests, and are common throughout the southeast. Officials in the former "TNT area"—now the McClintic Wildlife Management Area—confirmed to Nickels that [a healthy population of Barred Owls live on the refuge](#). Most importantly, Barred Owls have a dramatic crimson eyeshine due to the amount of blood vessels around the eye.

To Nickells, the bird sounded like a match for the Mothman. "We know that Barred Owls exist," he says. "We know they were in the McClintock WMA. We know that they have crimson eyeshine and otherwise fit the description, big-winged and so forth, with silent flight. The assumptions you'd make for the other hypothesis is that there are extraterrestrials, that they're able to come to the planet Earth, and that they have creatures that look for all the world like a Barred Owl."



Mothman sculpture in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Photo: Franck Fotos/Alamy

But how do you go from a 17- to 20-inch owl to a six-foot eldritch horror? In a 2010 episode of the television show *MonsterQuest*, Nickells drove volunteers down a dark road lined with plywood Mothmen, complete with bike reflectors for eyes. None were able to correctly guess the size of the cutouts. "It's very hard to judge the size of something seen at night at an unknown distance, and if you misjudge how far away it is, you misjudge its height by the same proportion," Nickells says. Frightened people also tend to fixate on the object of their fear, causing it to loom larger in their memory. Taken together, it's easy to see how an unexpected encounter with a Barred Owl could be a memorable—and potentially terrifying—experience.

A certain amount of natural exaggeration and outright revision also seems to have followed the original spate of Mothman encounters. Paranormal writers played up the otherworldly aspects of the sightings, reinterpreting and reshaping the legend to suit their needs. Current artistic interpretations of Mothman often cast it as demonic or, more understandably, insect-like. A statue of Mothman now stands in Point Pleasant, with large, clawed arms, bulging eyes, and horns. "There's a process of legend-making," Nickell says. "It's interpreted and reinterpreted and eventually they take it to new heights. But you look at the figure in Point Pleasant, and to me it's a far cry from what Linda Scarberry saw."

If anything, Mothman is a testament to the way that a fleeting glimpse of a common bird can expand into something nearly unrecognizable, given the right circumstances. Owls seem particularly prone to this sort of metamorphosis, Nickells says. He's worked on several such cases, including the Flatwoods monster, the [Kelly Kentucky Goblins](#), and numerous ghost stories. "They've almost certainly been responsible for monster sightings, maybe more than any one creature," Nickell says. "Because of their size, and their shining eyes, and their nocturnal habits and noiseless flight, they're really noted for fooling people."

Look at an owl, in other words, and you aren't just looking at a nocturnal bird of prey: You can be looking at an apparition, a creature from folklore, or even a shape-shifting witch. All it takes is a fleeting glimpse, a rush of adrenaline, a flash of reflective eyes. Because owls exist, some of our favorite supernatural horrors exist, too—every forest with its own Mothman, dozing in trees during the day, hunting mice and voles at night.

From <<https://www.audubon.org/news/is-mothman-west-virginia-owl>>

# THE CORNSTALK CURSE

## IS THIS WEST VIRGINIA MYSTERY LINKED TO THE "MOTHMAN" AND OTHER STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN THE REGION?

Almost two centuries before the shadow of the Mothman reared its head in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, the land around the Ohio River ran red with blood. As the inhabitants of the American colonies began to push their way to the west, and later fought for their independence from Britain, they entered into deadly combat with the Native American inhabitants of the land. Perhaps their greatest foe in these early Indian wars was Chief Cornstalk, who later became a friend to the Americans. But treachery, deception and murder would bring an end to the chief's life and a curse that he placed on Point Pleasant would linger for 200 years, bringing tragedy, death and disaster....

There is no denying that the southeastern corner of Ohio, and the surrounding area of West Virginia, is considered by many to be one of the most haunted areas of the country. West Virginia has long been thought of as one of the strangest parts of the country in regards to ghosts, legends and strange happenings. This part of the country, which was originally a part of Virginia, was regarded by the Native Americans as a "haunted" spot, plagued with ghost lights, phantoms and strange creatures. The town of Parkersburg, just north on the river from Point Pleasant, has more than its share of ghosts and nearby is Athens County, Ohio, home to the most haunted city in the entire state.

But how did this region gain such a reputation? Why are many people not surprised to find stories of the Mothman, phantom inhabitants and mysterious creatures roaming this part of the country? There have been a number of theories to explain the large number of haunted happenings here, including that this area may be some sort of "window" between dimensions. This would, according to the theories, allow paranormal phenomenon to come and go and vanish at will, just as the Mothman did after 13 months of appearing around Point Pleasant.

Those researchers with a historical bent have offered their own solutions though. They have traced the supernatural roots of the region back to a bloody event from the days of the American Revolution.. and a great curse.

As the American frontiersmen began to move west in the 1770's, seven nations of Indians (the Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandot, Mingo, Miami, Ottawa and Illinois) formed a powerful confederacy to keep the white men from infringing on their territory. The Shawnee were the most powerful of the tribes and were led by a feared and respected chieftain called "Keigh-tugh-gua", which translates to mean "Cornstalk". In 1774, when the white settlers were moving down into the Kanawha and Ohio River valleys, the Indian Confederacy prepared to protect their lands by any means necessary. The nations began to mass in a rough line across the point from the Ohio River to the Kanawha River, numbering about 1200 warriors. They began to make preparations to attack the white settlers near an area called Point Pleasant on the Virginia side of the Ohio River. As word reached the colonial military leaders of the impending attack, troops were sent in and faced off against the Indians. While the numbers of fighters were fairly even on both sides, the Native Americans were no match for the muskets of the white soldiers. The battle ended with about 140 colonials killed and more than twice that number of Indians. The tribes retreated westward into the wilds of what is now Ohio and in order to keep them from returning, a fort was constructed at the junction of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers.

As time passed, the Shawnee leader, Cornstalk, made peace with the white men. He would carry word to his new friends in 1777 when the British began coaxing the Indians into attacking the rebellious colonies. Soon, the tribes again began massing along the Ohio River, intent on attacking the fort. Cornstalk and Red Hawk, a Delaware chief, had no taste for war with the Americans and they went to the fort on November 7 to try and negotiate a peace before fighting began. Cornstalk told Captain Arbuckle, who commanded the garrison, that he was opposed to war with the colonists but that only he and his tribe were holding back from joining on the side of the British. He was afraid that he would be forced to go along by the rest of the Confederacy.

When he admitted to Arbuckle that he would allow his men to fight if the other tribes did, Cornstalk, Red Hawk and another Indian were taken as hostages. The Americans believed that they could use him to keep the other tribes from attacking. They forced the Native Americans into a standoff for none of them wanted to risk the life of their leader. Cornstalk's name not only stuck fear into hearts of the white settlers up and down the frontier, but it also garnered respect from the other Indian tribes. He was gifted with great oratory skills, fighting ability and military genius. In fact, it was said that when his fighting tactics were adopted by the Americans, they were able to defeat the British in a number of battles where they had been both outnumbered and outgunned.

Although taken as hostage, Cornstalk and the other Indians were treated well and were given comfortable quarters, leading many to wonder if the chief's hostage status may have been voluntary in the beginning. Cornstalk even assisted his

**Cornstalk** (born circa 1720? - died November 10, 1777) was a [Shawnee](#) leader in the [Ohio Country](#) in the 1760s and 1770s. His name in the [Shawnee language](#) was Hokoleskwa. Little is known about his early life. He may have been born in the [Province of Pennsylvania](#). In 1763, he reportedly led a raid against British-American colonists in [Pontiac's War](#). He first appears in historical documents in 1764, when he was one of the hostages surrendered to the British as part of the peace negotiations ending Pontiac's War. When the British-American colonies began expanding into the Ohio Country, Cornstalk played a major part in defense of the Shawnee homeland. He was the primary Shawnee war chief in [Lord Dunmore's War](#) (1774), leading Shawnees and other Native warriors against colonists in the [Battle of Point Pleasant](#). After suffering defeat in that battle, he became an advocate for Shawnee neutrality in the American Revolutionary War, which began in 1775. Many Shawnees fought against the Americans, hoping to regain lost lands, but Cornstalk was among those who feared that fighting the Americans would prove disastrous for the Shawnees.

In 1777, Cornstalk made a diplomatic visit to [Fort Randolph](#) in Virginia (now West Virginia), hoping to learn American intentions. He and three others were imprisoned by the fort's commander. When an American militiaman was killed by Natives in the fort's vicinity, angry soldiers executed Cornstalk and the other prisoners. His murder enraged Shawnees and deprived them of an important voice of moderation.

From <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornstalk>>

Cornstalk	
	
Detail of Cornstalk as illustrated in John Frost's <i>Pictorial History of Indians</i> (1873)	
Died	November 10, 1777 <a href="#">Fort Randolph</a> , Virginia (now West Virginia)
Cause of death	Murdered while imprisoned
Burial place	<a href="#">Point Pleasant, West Virginia</a>
Nationality	<a href="#">Shawnee</a>
Other names	Hokoleskwa, Colesquo, Keightughqua
Known for	<a href="#">Shawnee</a> war leader
Relatives	<a href="#">Nonhelema</a> (sister)

From <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornstalk>>

captors in plotting maps of the Ohio River Valley during his imprisonment. On November 9, Cornstalk's son, Ellinipisco, came to the fort to see his father and he was also detained.

The following day, gunfire was heard from outside the walls of the fort, coming from the direction of the Kanawha River. When men went out to investigate, they discovered that two soldiers who had left the stockade to hunt deer had been ambushed by Indians. One of them had escaped but the other man had been killed.

When his bloody corpse was returned to the fort, the soldiers in the garrison were enraged. Acting against orders, they broke into the quarters were Cornstalk and the other Indians were being held. Even though the men had nothing to do with the crime, they decided to execute the prisoners as revenge. As the soldiers burst through the doorway, Cornstalk rose to meet them. It was said that he stood facing the soldiers with such bravery that they paused momentarily in their attack. It wasn't enough though and the soldiers opened fire with their muskets. Red Hawk tried to escape up through the chimney but was pulled back down and slaughtered. Ellinipisco was shot where he had been sitting on a stool and the other unknown Indian was strangled to death. As for Cornstalk, he was shot eight times before he fell to the floor.

And as he lay their dying in the smoke-filled room, he was said to have pronounced his now legendary curse. The stories say that he looked upon his assassins and spoke to them: "I was the border man's friend. Many times I have saved him and his people from harm. I never warred with you, but only to protect our wigwams and lands. I refused to join your paleface enemies with the red coats. I came to the fort as your friend and you murdered me. You have murdered by my side, my young son.... For this, may the curse of the Great Spirit rest upon this land. May it be blighted by nature. May it even be blighted in its hopes. May the strength of its peoples be paralyzed by the stain of our blood."

He spoke these words, so says the legend, and then he died. The bodies of the other Indians were then taken and dumped into the Kanawha River but Cornstalk's corpse was buried near the fort on Point Pleasant, overlooking the junction of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. Here he remained in many years, but he would not rest in peace.

In 1794, the town of Point Pleasant was established near the site of the old fort. For many years after, the Indian's grave lay undisturbed but in 1840 his bones were removed to the grounds of the Mason County Court House where, in 1899, a monument was erected in Cornstalk's memory. In the late 1950's, a new court house was built in Point Pleasant and the chief's remains (which now consisted of three teeth and about 15 pieces of bone) were placed in an aluminum box and reinterred in a corner of the town's Tu-Endie-Wei Park, next to the grave of a Virginia frontiersman that Cornstalk once fought and later befriended. A twelve foot monument was then erected in his honor.

And this is not the only monument dedicated to the period in Point Pleasant. Another stands 86-feet tall and was dedicated in August 1909, one month behind schedule. Originally, the dedication ceremony had been set for July 22 but on the night before the event, the clear overhead sky erupted with lightning and struck the upper part of a crane that was supposed to put the monument into place. The machine was badly damaged and it took nearly a month to repair it. The monument was finally dedicated and stood for years, until July 4, 1921. On that day, another bolt of lightning struck the monument, damaging the capstone and some granite blocks. They were replaced and the monument still stands today. But what is this bedeviled obelisk that seems to attract inexplicable lightning on otherwise clear evenings? It is a monument to the men who died in the 1774 Battle of Point Pleasant, when Cornstalk and his allies were defeated.

Could the freak lightning strikes have been acts of vengeance tied to Cornstalk's fabled curse? Many believed so and for years, residents of the triangular area made up of western West Virginia, southwest Pennsylvania and southeastern Ohio spoke of strange happenings, river tragedies and fires as part of the curse. Of course, many laughed and said that the curse was nothing more than overactive imaginations, ignoring the death toll and eerie coincidences that seemed to plague the region for 200 years after the death of Chief Cornstalk.

Many tragedies and disasters were blamed on the curse:

1907: The worst coal mine disaster in American history took place in Monongah, West Virginia on December 6, when 310 miners were killed.

1944: In June of this year, 150 people were killed when a tornado ripped through the tri-state triangular area.



The Silver Bridge, which collapsed in 1967.

1967: The devastating Silver Bridge disaster (detailed in our section about the [Mothman](#)) sent 46 people hurtling to their death in the Ohio River on December 15. Many have also connected this tragedy to the eerie sightings of the Mothman, strange lights in the sky and odd paranormal happenings.

1968: A Piedmont Airlines plane crashed in August near the Kanawha Airport, killing 35 people on board.  
1970: On November 14, a Southern Airways DC-10 crashed into a mountain near Huntington, West Virginia, killing 75 people on board.  
1976: In March of that year, the town of Point Pleasant was rocked in the middle of the night by an explosion at the Mason County Jail. Housed in the jail was a woman named Harriet Sisk, who had been arrested for the murder of her infant daughter. On March 2, her husband came to the jail with a suitcase full of explosives to kill himself and his wife and to destroy the building. Both of the Sisk's were killed, along with three law enforcement officers.

1978: In January, a freight train derailed at Point Pleasant and dumped thousands of gallons of toxic chemicals. The chemicals contaminated the town's water supply and the wells had to be abandoned.

1978: In April of that same year, the town of St. Mary's (north of Point Pleasant) was struck with tragedy when 51 men who were working on the Willow Island power plant were killed when their construction scaffolding collapsed.

And there have been many other strange occurrences, fires and floods. Most would say however that floods are a natural part of living on the river, although Point Pleasant was almost obliterated in 1913 and 1937. It might be hard to tie such natural occurrences into a curse, but what about the barge explosion that killed six men from town just before Christmas 1953? Or the fire that destroyed an entire downtown city block in the late 1880's? Some have even gone as far as to blame the curse for the death of Point Pleasant's local economy, an event linked to the passing of river travel and commerce.

So how real is the "curse"? Is it simply a string of bloody and tragic coincidences, culled from two centuries of sadness in the region? Can it be used to explain why the area seems to attract strange happenings and eerie tales? Or is the area somehow "blighted", separate from any curse, and attractive to the strangeness that seems to lurk in the shadowy corners of America?

The reader is asked to judge the validity of such curses for himself. For the most part, the deaths and tragedies seem to have waned over the years, perhaps dying out at the bicentennial of Chief Cornstalk's death. Largely, the curse has been forgotten over time and today, Point Pleasant is better known for its connection to otherworldly visitors like Mothman than for Indian curses and bloody frontier battles.

Fact or coincidence? Who can say... but I know that I hope, for the sake of the people of the Ohio River valley, that Chief Cornstalk will finally rest in peace!

From <<https://www.americanhauntingsink.com/cornstalk>>

## Mass Psychogenic Illness

Monday, September 20, 2021 8:45 PM

Mass psychogenic illness involves the spread of illness symptoms through a population where there is no infectious agent responsible for contagion.<sup>14</sup> MPI is distinct from other types of collective [delusions](#) by involving physical symptoms.<sup>15</sup> According to Balaratnasingam and Janca, "Mass hysteria is to date a poorly understood condition. Little certainty exists regarding its etiology."<sup>16</sup> Qualities of MPI outbreaks often include:<sup>17</sup>

- symptoms that have no plausible organic basis;
- symptoms that are transient and benign;
- symptoms with rapid onset and recovery;
- occurrence in a segregated group;
- the presence of extraordinary anxiety;
- symptoms that are spread via sight, sound or oral communication;
- a spread that moves down the age scale, beginning with older or higher-status people;
- a preponderance of female participants.

British psychiatrist Simon Wessely distinguishes between two forms of MPI:<sup>18</sup>

- *Mass anxiety hysteria* "consists of episodes of acute anxiety, occurring mainly in schoolchildren. Prior tension is absent and the rapid spread is by visual contact."<sup>19</sup>
- *Mass motor hysteria* "consists of abnormalities in motor behaviour. It occurs in any age group and prior tension is present. Initial cases can be identified and the spread is gradual. ... [T]he outbreak may be prolonged."<sup>20</sup> While his definition is sometimes adhered to,<sup>21</sup> others such as Ali-Gombe et al. of the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria contest Wessely's definition and describe outbreaks with qualities of both mass motor hysteria and mass anxiety hysteria.<sup>22</sup> The [DSM-IV-TR](#) does not have specific diagnosis for this condition but the text describing [conversion disorder](#) states that "In 'epidemic hysteria', shared symptoms develop in a circumscribed group of people following 'exposure' to a common precipitant."

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass\\_psychogenic\\_illness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_psychogenic_illness)>

Mass psychogenic illness	
<b>Other names</b>	Mass hysteria, epidemic hysteria, mass sociogenic illness, mass psychogenic disorder
	
<a href="#">Dancing plagues</a> of the <a href="#">Middle Ages</a> are thought to have been caused by mass hysteria	
<b>Specialty</b>	<a href="#">Psychiatry</a> , <a href="#">Clinical Psychology</a>
<b>Symptoms</b>	Headache, dizziness, nausea, abdominal pain, cough, fatigue, sore throat
<b>Risk factors</b>	Childhood or adolescence, intense media coverage.
<b>Differential diagnosis</b>	Actual diseases, mass delusions, <a href="#">somatic symptom disorder</a>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass\\_psychogenic\\_illness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_psychogenic_illness)>

## Contagious' stress

Robert W Baloh, a Professor of Neurology at UCLA, has long studied unexplained health symptoms. When he saw the Havana syndrome reports, he concluded they were a mass psychogenic condition. He compares this to the way people feel sick when they are told they have eaten tainted food even if there was nothing wrong with it - the reverse of the placebo effect. "When you see mass psychogenic illness, there's usually some stressful underlying situation," he says. "In the case of Cuba and the mass of the embassy employees - particularly the CIA agents who first were affected - they certainly were in a stressful situation." In his view, every-day symptoms like brain fog and dizziness are reframed - by sufferers, media and health professionals - as the syndrome. "The symptoms are as real as any other symptoms," he says, arguing that individuals became hyper-aware and fearful as reports spread, especially within a closed community. This, he believes, then became contagious among other US officials serving abroad.

From <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58396698>>

# Point Pleasant

Saturday, March 19, 2022 10:21 PM

## Stories Begin Here.

Located on the confluence of the scenic Ohio and Kanawha rivers, Point Pleasant is a city in Mason County with a population of approximately 4,350. Point Pleasant not only provides a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere, but also offers a unique combination of history and mystery-focused activities.



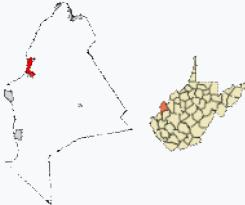
## Stay & Eat

Point Pleasant offers a variety of dining options to suit any palate. After a day of exploring, enjoy a stay at the historic Lowe Hotel.



## See & Do

Experience the culture of Point Pleasant by enjoying all of the attractions and activities the city has to offer.

Point Pleasant, West Virginia	
<a href="#">City</a>	
	
Point Pleasant (foreground) at the confluence of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. <a href="#">Gallipolis, Ohio</a> is in the background right.	
	
Location of Point Pleasant in Mason County, West Virginia.	
Coordinates:	
<a href="#">38°51'27"N 82°7'43"W</a>	<a href="#">Coordinates:</a>
<a href="#">38°51'27"N 82°7'43"W</a>	
<a href="#">Country</a>	United States
<a href="#">State</a>	<a href="#">West Virginia</a>
<a href="#">County</a>	<a href="#">Mason</a>
<a href="#">Government</a>	
• <a href="#">Mayor</a>	<a href="#">Brian Billings</a>
<a href="#">Area</a>	
• <a href="#">Total</a>	3.09 sq mi (8.02 km <sup>2</sup> )
• <a href="#">Land</a>	2.42 sq mi (6.26 km <sup>2</sup> )
• <a href="#">Water</a>	0.68 sq mi (1.76 km <sup>2</sup> )
<a href="#">Elevation</a>	568 ft (173 m)
<a href="#">Population</a>	
( <a href="#">2010</a> )	
• <a href="#">Total</a>	4,350
• <a href="#">Estimate</a> ( <a href="#">2019</a> )	4,062
• <a href="#">Density</a>	1,681.29/sq mi (649.10/km <sup>2</sup> )
<a href="#">Time zone</a>	<a href="#">UTC-5 (Eastern (EST))</a>
• <a href="#">Summer (DST)</a>	<a href="#">UTC-4 (EDT)</a>
<a href="#">ZIP code</a>	25550
<a href="#">Area code(s)</a>	<a href="#">304</a>
<a href="#">FIPS code</a>	54-64708
<a href="#">GNIS feature ID</a>	1555381
<a href="#">Website</a>	<a href="http://www.ptpleasantwv.org">www.ptpleasantwv.org</a>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point\\_Pleasant,\\_West\\_Virginia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point_Pleasant,_West_Virginia)>



## Events

Point Pleasant hosts several events throughout the year to bring the community and visitors together for celebration, history and fun.

## Contact Us

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From <<https://visitpointpleasantwv.com/about/>>

## TNT Area

Saturday, March 19, 2022 10:49 PM

### Welcome To The 'TNT Area,' Home Of The Mothman

January 23, 2012 1:49 PM ET

CLAIRE O'NEILL

In the 1960s, lore has it, a couple reported seeing a huge, winged man — the Mothman, he came to be called — just north of Point Pleasant, W.Va. The area where he was spotted became known as the "TNT area," and it still exists today.



Pond 34, Point Pleasant, West Virginia, 2011

Joshua Dudley Greer

It's called the TNT area because during World War II, [that region](#) — more than 8,000 acres — was devoted to an ammunition manufacturing facility that employed a few thousand people at its peak. For safety reasons, the explosives were stored in bunkers — or igloos — strategically scattered across the territory and disguised by a thick layer of earth.



Joshua Dudley Greer



Joshua Dudley Greer

### The TNT Area

The creature was sighted in many places across West Virginia and the surrounding states, but the largest number of sightings happened near the old West Virginia Ordnance Works, an area now known by locals as the "TNT Area."



An igloo in the TNT Area, built thick to prevent a chain-explosion from the barreled gunpowder inside. West Virginia Ordnance Works is an abandoned munitions plant to the north of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, that dates back to World War II. The facility, during its operation, manufactured ammunition and dynamite. The surrounding area is mostly forest, dotted with numerous grassy clearings and thick concrete domes, called "igloos," that were used to store barrels of gunpowder. The area is also riddled with abandoned tunnels, most of which have collapsed, been sealed off, or become flooded with water. A wildlife sanctuary, McClintic Wildlife Management, now encompasses the area.

In 1979, fishermen in the TNT area reported that chemicals had been left to seep into the ponds, causing it to be labeled an environmental disaster. By the year 1983, the TNT Area was among the country's most-polluted sites.

It was here in the TNT Area on the cold night of November 15th, 1966, three days after the first sighting took place, that two young couples would encounter this bizarre creature. Roger and Linda Scarberry were driving in Roger's black '57 Chevy Bel Air with Steve and Marry Mallette through the area around midnight when Linda noticed, unbelievably, two large, glowing red eyes in the darkness beside the old North Power Plant, and screamed. They soon learned that these eyes belonged to something that looked frankly human, about 7 feet tall with wings folded against its back. Roger stalled in the road for a minute, inspecting the strange creature. The four realized immediately that their spectacle was no ordinary bird. The true horror began, however, when the creature spread its wings and pursued them down Highway 62 to the Point Pleasant city limits at speeds exceeding 100 mph.

The four arrived in town, startled and confused, and with no sign of the mysterious bird that had chased them. Roger parked his car at the edge of town and they discussed their encounter, eventually deciding that what they saw was nothing more than an aberrant bird, and in an attempt to face their fears they again drove towards the TNT Area. It wasn't long before they saw the creature again, apparently waiting on them beside Route 62. The couples now realized that their stalker was no bird, but in the instant that the car's headlights landed on the creature it lifted vertically into the air with tremendous speed and disappeared above the tree line.

This time when they arrived into town they went to the Mason county courthouse and told their story to Sheriff George Johnson and Deputy Miller Hallsted. Two hours later, City Police began investigating the area, only to return empty-handed. The next day, a press conference was held and the local press began printing on the story, causing others to come forward with previous and future sightings. This was the major event that started it all. In the November 16th issue of the *Point Pleasant Register*, the strange encounter would be brought to the public eye with the headline "Couple Sees Man-Sized Bird...Creature...Something."

The strange encounter in the TNT Area was a harrowing experience for everyone involved, and on the morning of November 16th, 1966, Linda Scarberry was rushed to the hospital by her father after experiencing a nervous breakdown. On the phenomenon, Roger Scarberry stated, "I'm a hard guy to scare, but last night I was for getting out of there."

From <<https://cryptidz.fandom.com/wiki/Mothman>>



Joshua Dudley Greer



Joshua Dudley Greer



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Joshua Dudley Greer



Joshua Dudley Greer



Joshua Dudley Greer



Joshua Dudley Greer

The area was more or less abandoned after the war — converted, in part, to a wildlife management area, partly a landfill. Then, by no surprise, it was discovered in the '80s that the land was severely contaminated by explosives byproducts. It was then added to a federal list of hazardous waste sites eligible for cleanup.

"Today the land is primarily used as a hunting and fishing grounds," says photographer Joshua Dudley Greer, an assistant professor of photography at East Tennessee State University. [has been](#)

[photographing](#) in and around Point Pleasant for about three years. His documentation of these stark landscapes has, over time, culminated in a systematic visual study of the TNT igloos\* and the surrounding forestation.

Sponsor Message

"The iconic structure of the igloos and the eeriness with which they repeat themselves throughout the landscape was what initially interested me," he says.

To make the series, Greer lugs a cumbersome large-format camera around those 8,000 acres, which is no easy feat. "But I actually like the physical task of making these photographs," he says. "It makes me feel like I deserve the photographs a little more, knowing that I had to work hard to make them."

Without context, Greer's project seems innocuous enough. But just a few details reveal just how unsettling it really is.

"In May of 2010," Greer recalls, "one of these igloos containing 20,000 pounds of unstable materials suddenly exploded. Fortunately no one was injured, but the event seemed to spell out how deeply ironic and troubling our relationship to our own history can be."

From <<https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2012/01/23/145334460/welcome-to-the-tnt-area-home-of-the-mothman>>

## The deadliest bridge disaster in US history was caused by a tiny crack just three millimeters deep

In 1967, 64 people went into the frigid Ohio River



The twisted wreckage of the Ohio River Silver Bridge after it fell with an estimated 75 cars and trucks on it December 15, 1967. Many cars were crushed beneath this ramp when the bridge toppled. (AP)

**C**harlene Wood was driving home at 5 p.m. on December 15, 1967, when she felt Silver Bridge shake. The bridge, built in 1928, spanned the Ohio River between Ohio and West Virginia, and [served 4,000 vehicles](#) every day. On this cold Friday, a single eyebar — a 55-foot-long section of steel, two inches thick and 12 inches wide — had suddenly fractured. Then the pin holding it in place fell loose, sending the bridge's components into catastrophic failure. "It was like someone had lined up dominoes," Wood [recalled](#). "I could see car lights flashing as they were tumbling into the water. The car in front of me went in. Then there was silence."

Silver Bridge inherited its name from its metallic aluminum paint, but it was notable as well for its distinct design. The American Bridge Company, which won the bid for the project, settled on the cheaper method of using eyebars instead of cables of steel wire, the sort used in famous suspension bridges like the Brooklyn and Golden Gate.

The [eyebars](#) used were long steel plates, 2 inches thick with a 12-inch face, and ranged from 55 to 44 feet in length. The ends of the eyebars terminated in loops, allowing 11-inch pins to [join them](#) to the next eyebar section—like a bicycle chain. They also bore the hanging weight of vertical supports that held up the bridge deck below. While other successful bridges had used eyebar-chain suspension and incorporated many redundancies, at the time the nearest model to the Silver was a single (and now decommissioned) [bridge](#) in Florianopolis, Brazil. Other eyebar models, like the Three Sisters in Pittsburgh, constructed at the same time, were shorter and used as many as eight eyebars in a section. The Silver Bridge only used two.



A failed eyebar beneath the collapsed Silver Bridge.

Silver Bridge was dubbed the “Gateway to the South” upon its opening, and residents on both sides appreciated its promise of better commutes and easier traveling. But it also came to be known for its tendency to rock and shake. Salesman [Ben Cedar](#) crossed Silver Bridge around 15 minutes before it collapsed, but only reluctantly. “I was worried about that bridge every time I crossed over,” he said. “If you got stuck in the middle of that bridge, it would wave back and forth, back and forth.”

Charlene Wood was pregnant at the time she drove home from her job at a hair salon. She was moving at 15 miles per hour as she approached the bridge, which was filled with truckers, commuters, and Christmas shoppers. As she drove over it, she felt it begin to shake. Wood put her car in reverse, and was able to move back a short distance before the rocking of the bridge stalled her car. She was four feet away from the precipice when, within 60 seconds, Silver Bridge rocked and collapsed into the river.

Bill Needham was less lucky. He was driving a truck across the bridge when it collapsed and threw him into the river. He was able to escape from his partially opened window. “I didn’t know how far I had to go up,” [he recalled](#), “But I could tell the water kept getting lighter.” He used a nearby box as a flotation device and was rescued 15 minutes later. His partner, Robert Towe, didn’t make it.

Howard Boggs was a passenger in a car with his 17-month-old child and his 18-year-old wife, Marjorie, who was driving. Their car was heaved into the river by the collapsing bridge. When Howard was pulled to safety by a rescue boat, [he told](#) the crew on board, “I just hope to God Marjorie and the kid got out okay.” Their bodies were found in the car six weeks later.

State trooper Rudy Odell, 31, may have been the first officer to respond to the disaster. Before the bridge collapsed, it shook violently, turning the deck over and sending dozens of cars and their passengers into the water.

“I could hear them hollering for help. I didn’t know how many there were at that time,” [Odell recalled](#). “There was absolutely nothing I could do. It was a long way out into the water.” Another rescuer, Bill McCormick, [observed](#) “people hanging on to flotsam from the tractor-trailers that had been on the bridge.”

In all, 31 vehicles went into the Ohio River that day, sending 64 people into its 44-degree waters. Those like Howard Boggs defied the odds: Of the 64 who went in, 46 died. The collapse remains the deadliest bridge disaster in United States history.

President Lyndon Johnson released a statement [saying](#) all Americans were “shocked by the cruel tragedy and loss of life,” and assembled the Task Force on Bridge Safety to mount an investigation. Forensic analysis was able to trace the problem to a small stress crack, around three millimeters deep, inside the bearing loop of eyebar 330. The crack had grown around an impurity in the steel, and had been aggravated by the elements and the natural movements of the eyebar along the pin over the 39 years of the bridge’s use.

The most alarming part of the [conclusion](#) was that there was no way for engineers or maintenance crews to have found the ruinous defect, save by taking apart the entire joint, which—since it was integral to the bridge’s structural integrity—would have been merely restating the problem. “If ever a design was to blame for a failure,” writes engineering historian Henry Petroski, “this was it.”

Silver Bridge’s legacy is especially pronounced in being the impetus for National Bridge Inspection Standards. These guidelines, still in use today, require all public bridges containing a 20-foot-plus span to be examined every two years. If they are determined a higher-risk bridge, they must continue to be examined more frequently, as often as monthly or more, until they can be repaired. Other bridges, in the wake of the collapse, were examined and retrofitted with better parts, and Silver Bridge’s sister bridge in nearby St. Mary, West Virginia, was decommissioned shortly after, in 1971.

Yet for all the heavy documentation, one colorful theory suggests as the cause of the bridge collapse a bit of West Virginia folklore. In 1970, the author John Keel popularized the legend that the Mothman, sightings of whom began in 1966, was seen on the bridge near the time of accident, though whether as a warning or the cause is uncertain. Indeed today, in the town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, where Silver Bridge was anchored, there is an annual, tongue-in-cheek Mothman festival, and even a [large statue](#) of the monster.

## Mothman Prophecies

Saturday, March 19, 2022 10:23 PM

### The Enduring Legacy of The Mothman Prophecies

As The Mothman Prophecies turns 20, we look back at the legends that inspired the movie and explore its everlasting creepiness.



This feature contains spoilers for **THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES**

Twenty years ago, on Jan 25, 2002, **The Mothman Prophecies** opened in movie theaters. Starring [Richard Gere](#) and Laura Linney and directed by Mark Pellington, the movie was a critical and commercial nonstarter, but in recent years it has developed a cult following as a truly creepy psychological horror flick.

Adapted from the book by John A. Keel, the film follows Gere's reporter character John Klein, whose wife witnesses a flying moth-like creature with red eyes shortly before dying of a brain tumor. Two years later, he finds himself lost in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, where strange sightings of a similar figure are on the rise. As he becomes a part of this mystery he's likewise grappling with his lingering grief, and his sanity begins to unravel. Atmospheric and unsettling, the movie also features one of the weirdest product placements in cinema when a demon-alien voice on the phone tells Gere's character that it knows he's holding Chapstick lip balm. (Just say "Chaaaaapstick" to a fan of this movie and watch the response.)

Now, two decades later, Mothman — a mysterious [cryptid](#)/alien/ultraterrestrial — is having a moment. **The Mothman Prophecies** created a slow burn movement that launched Mothman into "It Monster" status, and it's certainly become a darling to Etsy designers who seem to love making Mothy merch.

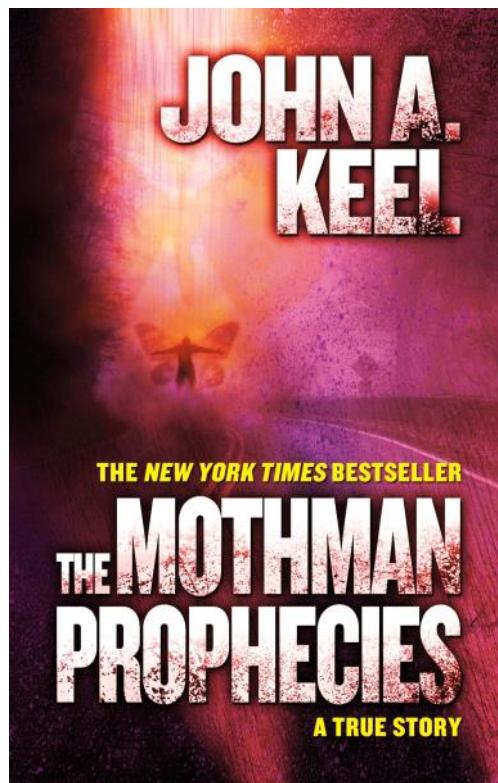
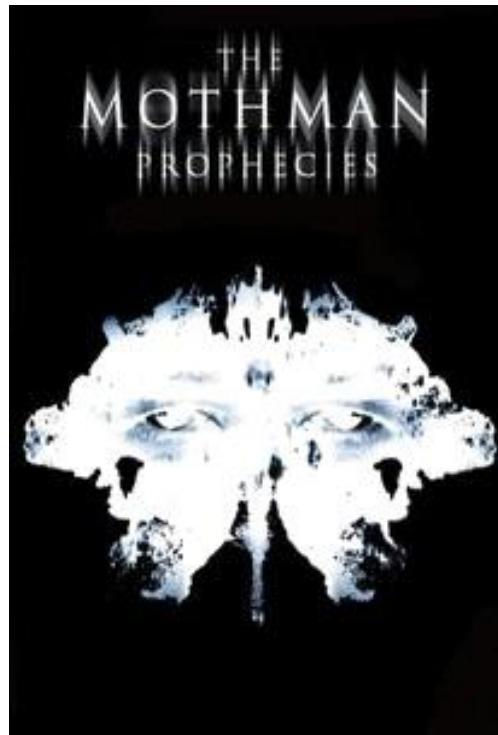
To honor the anniversary of this weird movie — which Keel said "managed to squeeze the basic truths" of the real story into it — let's explore some original Mothman lore.

#### The Mothman

On Nov. 15, 1966, in the small town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, two married couples fled a World War II munitions dump site — dubbed the "TNT area" — claiming they'd seen a terrifying creature. *The Point Pleasant Register* ran a headline the next day: "Couples See Man-Sized Bird ... Creature ... Something!"

Steve Mallette and Roger Scarberry reported seeing a "man with wings" "about six or seven feet tall, having a wingspan of 10 feet and red eyes about two inches in diameter and six inches apart." Moreover, the thing was said to be a clumsy runner but extremely fast, traveling up to 100 mph once it took flight.

By Nov. 18, more sightings had emerged that took place before the couples' report. A community gravedigger named Kenneth Duncan, and other men, were digging his brother-in-law's grave about 500 miles away when they saw "something that looked like a brown human being" flying. Newell Partridge, who lived about 100 miles outside of Point Pleasant, said he saw the thing about 90 minutes before the married couples. He believed it was linked to the



disappearance of his dog who spotted red eyes in a field, chased after them, and never returned.

As around 100 other accounts mounted, wildlife biologist Dr. Robert L. Smith postulated the creature was a sandhill crane. Mason County Sheriff George Johnson said he thought it was a “freak shitepoke” heron.

On November 17, 1966, the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch* published the headline, “Bird, Plane Or Batman? Mason Countians Hunt ‘Moth Man.’” This adds credence to the theory Mothman got its name because the Adam West *Batman* series was quite popular during the time of the sightings. Though the comic book villain Killer Moth did not appear in the series, he was in an eight-minute unaired “pilot” for Season Three in 1967, which debuted Yvonne Craig as *Batgirl*.

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#### **John A. Keel**

Journalist and UFOlogist John A. Keel wrote *The Mothman Prophecies* in 1975. It collected his research on the Point Pleasant sightings while also connecting them to a larger pattern of phenomena such as UFOs, reports of flying men, *Men in Black* (MiBs), Native American Thunderbirds, the birdlike Garuda of Buddhist and Hindu lore, and even ghosts. Keel posited theories of “ultraterrestrials,” or beings not from outer space, but from a reality slightly out of alignment with our own, whose presence aligned with ancient folklore.

The NYC-based author, who died in 2009, was often on the ground in Point Pleasant beginning in 1966 — calling it his second home for a time — and maintained frequent contact with eyewitnesses. In *The Mothman Prophecies*, the author is adapted into Gere’s John Klein, but Keel’s UFOlogy researcher side is represented by the character Leek (Keel spelled backwards), played by Alan Bates.

It should be noted that Gray Barker published *The Silver Bridge*, a book about the Mothman, in 1970, five years prior to Keel. Barker also notably introduced the concept of MiBs to the mainstream in his 1956 book *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, though Keel is attributed as coining the term. Barker’s credibility remains dubious due to his involvement in hoaxes.

#### **Indrid Cold**

In November 1966, about 51 miles from Point Pleasant, Woodrow Derenberger was driving home one night when he saw an unusual craft land ahead of him. He described it as “an old-fashioned kerosene lamp chimney, flaring at both ends, narrowing down to a small neck and then enlarging in a great bulge in the center,” and from within a man emerged through a hatch that had “slightly elongated” eyes, with slicked back dark brown hair, and deeply tanned skin. He wore reflective blue clothing and had an expression of a wide grin.

Communicating telepathically, the figure introduced himself as Indrid Cold, and said “we mean you no harm.” Derenberger said he visited with Cold and others like him subsequent times, and learned they were from the planet Lanulos. The man even said he visited the planet.

Around the same time, the Lily family in Point Pleasant told Keel they had seen strange lights in the sky and poltergeist activity in their home. One night the daughter Linda woke to a large man looming over her with a broad smile. Cold came to be known by another moniker, The Grinning Man. Along with an October 1966 sighting in New Jersey, Keel’s Mothman investigation came to include Cold and these strange smiling visitors. Derenberger is adapted into a character played by Will Patton in *The Mothman Prophecies*, and it is Cold who is the voice of Mothy, uttering the creepy “chaaapstick” line while on the phone with Klein.

#### **Mary Hyre**

Mary Hyre was considered a star reporter at The Athens Messenger — located on the other side of the Ohio River near Point Pleasant — where she would also write a column about strange occurrences called “Where the Waters Mingle.”

Keel viewed her as a friend, and held her in high regard, writing, “If you wanted to find out anything about the area, and its people, the quickest way was to ‘ask Mary Hyre.’” Indeed, Mary joined Keel on his investigations, and she likewise experienced phenomena. She was also visited by potential MiBs that warned her not to write about sightings.

Additionally, it would seem her niece Connie Carpenter was one of Keel’s early interviewees on the case. Carpenter saw a huge, flying gray figure with

red eyes while on the way home from church. The experience left her with "eyeburn," or red, watery, swollen eyes; these are symptoms Keel associated with [UFO encounters](#).

In the film, Debra Messing plays Klein's wife, Mary, who encounters the moth creature, and later dies from a brain tumor. Laura Linney's police officer character Connie is more closely the Mary Hyre of the film as she befriends Klein and provides a voice of sanity as he unravels.

Keel dedicated ***The Mothman Prophecies*** book "To Mary Hyre, and the people of West Virginia."

## The Bridge

The Mothman sightings mounted, with upwards of 100 associated with the phenomenon. These preceded the collapse of the Silver Bridge into the Ohio River on Dec. 15, 1967 — a year and a month after the first reported sighting. The collapse during rush hour killed 46 people and was attributed to a defect in a single link of the low redundancy eyebar-chain suspension bridge.

Built in 1928, the Silver Bridge was under undue strain. By 1967, the average vehicle was more than twice as heavy as in the late 20s, and the bridge experienced frequent traffic jams. The collapse of the bridge was inevitable considering it was not designed with a radically different future in mind.

The Silver Bridge disaster was linked to Mothman sightings, with some paranormalists concluding the creature was either a harbinger of doom, a messenger who seeks to warn of disaster, or simply an observer of human events.

## The Legacy

***The Mothman Prophecies*** failed to make much of a dent in the box office, only landing in the top three on opening day. [Box Office Mojo](#) reports it made \$55 million worldwide off its \$32 million budget, and it was a dud with most critics. Still, the film has garnered a cult following in recent years as a creepy, underrated flick. And it has done wonders for Mothy!

Keel's book brought Mothman into the mainstream, and paranormal weirdos (aka fans of anomalistic phenomena) knew of the creature, but aside from being mentioned in the 1997 ***X-Files*** episode "Detour," it wasn't getting a lot of love. The film helped make Mothy a rock star over time.

In 2002, Point Pleasant organized an annual Mothman Festival, held the third weekend of each September (which will be returning in 2022 after being canceled the previous two years). And in 2003, artist Bob Roach unveiled his 12-foot-tall, polished steel Mothman statue (with red, orb-like eyes) just steps from the Mothman Museum in downtown Point Pleasant.

As for sightings, there have been numerous accounts in the years since the movie was released. Unfortunately, most — like the Freiburg Shrieker at a collapsed mine in Germany — are likely the stuff of internet legend that then influenced urban legends.

Many stories, such as the Blackbird of [Chernobyl](#), seen before the nuclear reactor disaster in 1986, were retconned to have taken place in the past, but only emerged in the early aughts. ***The Mothman Prophecies*** also references Chernobyl and claims the "moth man" moniker is translated from Ukrainian, but this is total fiction.

More recently, Chicago has laid claim to its own Mothman, beginning with standalone reports in 2011 and then additional accounts in 2017. The reports were elevated by paranormal bloggers and then picked up by news outlets, but are questionably sourced. Unfortunately, what seemed like multiple sightings may have been only a few repeated across sites. Interestingly, they coincided with both the 50th anniversary of the West Virginia sightings, and with ***The Mothman of Point Pleasant*** documentary.

From <<https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/the-mothman-prophecies-anniversary-legacy/>>

# John Keel

By [Menachem Kaiser](#)  
July 6, 2009



John Keel, the legendary ufologist and author of "The Mothman Prophecies," [died](#) Friday, at the age of seventy-nine. The news reminded me of a chance encounter I had with Keel a couple of years ago, during a visit a friend and I made to an old-age home on the Upper West Side, part of a program that sends chirpy youngsters to drop in on Jewish seniors; for someone who's desperately lonely, a ten-minute visit can makes a world of difference. On that day, there was no Mrs. Goldberg inside the room we'd been sent to. We asked the lone occupant—a Mr. John Keel—where we could find her. He told us that she had died, and invited us in. We listened as Keel told his life story, completely absorbed and incredulous (though unfailingly polite). We thought that he might be delusional, or, at least, a highly entertaining fabulist. He told us about U.F.O. sightings and his experiences with a mythical creature from West Virginia called the Mothman. He said he wrote a book about the Mothman (we figured it must have been self-published), and later negotiated to get Richard Gere to play him (i.e., John Keel, not the Mothman) in a movie. Keel then spent forty minutes describing a trip to India, where he investigated the magic of the fakirs.

I think Keel knew that we didn't really believe him, but he didn't seem to care. Everything was presented as a lesson. (I think he even called us "whippersnappers.") He lectured on the nature of belief, on the variances of truth, on the dangers of extreme skepticism, and on his aversion to love. When we finally had to leave—nearly two hours later—and were standing in the doorway, Keel called us over and said, "One day you'll know," then bid us farewell. Was he referring to his fame, which we discovered that afternoon online? (We immediately picked up "The Mothman Prophecies" both the [book](#) and [movie](#)—for peanuts on Amazon.) Or the truth of his theories? Or something else entirely?

From <<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/john-keel>>

John A. Keel	
	
<b>Born</b>	March 25, 1930 <a href="#">Hornell, New York</a>
<b>Died</b>	July 3, 2009 (aged 79) <a href="#">New York, New York, United States</a>
<b>Occupation</b>	<a href="#">journalist</a> <a href="#">parapsychologist</a> <a href="#">ufologist</a>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Keel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Keel)>