

Mothman folklore stirs up frantic propaganda

By Aaron Sakulich



It's been my contention all along that while UFOs are extremely interesting and make great fairy tales, stories about them can't be taken at face value. Naturally, Hollywood had to prove me wrong by taking one of the creepiest stories in American Folklore, the story of Mothman, and turn it into a terrible movie, *The Mothman Prophecies*. If you've seen that film, forget it: Here's the real, well, as real as a story about flying space people can be, story.

The date: November 12, 1966. The place: rural West Virginia. Five men in a graveyard, preparing a grave to receive a new inhabitant. That's creepy enough as it is, but wait, there's more. They stood, amazed, as something that looked like a "brown human being" took off from some nearby trees, flying straight up like a helicopter, and then flew over their heads. It didn't look much like a bird, but rather more like a human being with big wings. As with all UFO-related things, there's plenty of people that claim Mothman was first sighted earlier or later than this incident, but it's generally assumed, at least, that this sighting is towards the beginning of the story.

The sightings began to come hard and fast. As more reports came it, it

became apparent that the Mothman was about the size of a human being (by some reports, much taller) with large wings that could fold up on its back like a bat, and huge (or regular) eyes that glowed (or not, sometimes) red (or green, etc.) As a writer, I hate myself for the sentence I just wrote, but I'm trying to make a point: Descriptions of Mothman, as with all UFO-related things, vary wildly. What can be agreed upon is that the Mothman can fly: He's been described as taking off straight into the air like a helicopter without using his wings, following cars for many miles, so on and so forth. Also, apparently, it has no problem walking, and may or may not eat dogs. Hey, give me a break. I'm just reporting the data I've got in front of me.

The Mothman's home is assumed to be the so-called TNT area near the town of Point Pleasant. The TNT area consists of huge concrete silos that were used for storing high explosives during the second World War. They're connected by miles of underground tunnels in which "Mothman could easily hide unseen for months!" They've sat largely abandoned for decades, the forested area being used mainly by teenagers looking for isolated spots to drink themselves silly or get some discreet loving'. There's also a wildlife preserve nearby that houses some pretty rough terrain, very little of which has been travelled by the likes of man (steep hills, ponds, dense forest, that sort of business.)

Usually, an encounter with Mothman goes more or less according to this plot: A group of people is (for whatever reason) fooling around out in the woods. There's not a lot of houses out there, so they're almost always just passing through. Then, they see what they think to be a large person, until the glowing red eyes and huge bat wings give away that it's no man, it's a Mothman! The Mothman then flies around, scares them shitless, and disappears into

the night.

So it's a clear cut monster story, right? Ha! You wish! Houses around the Mothman-plagued areas began reporting poltergeist activities, doors opening and closing, stuff flying across the room, the whole nine yards. It got so bad, apparently, that some families decided to move to better, less ghost-infested homes.

The Mothman story ends more abruptly than any other story I've ever come across, and with a significant amount more blood. In the weeks before December 15, 1967 strange lights plagued the skies above the Ohio-West Virginia border. Mothman sightings increased. On that fateful night, the Silver Bridge, linking Point Pleasant and Ohio, collapsed during rush hour. 46 people died in the icy water; the 44 bodies that were recovered were all buried together in the town cemetery. After that, Mothman almost totally disappeared.

In his place, however, weird stuff began springing up left and right. Local reporters that had been covering the Mothman story began receiving visits from the infamous Men In Black, who were interested only in finding out what the reporters knew about UFO reports at the time of the bridge collapse. Reporter Mary Hyre was visited one night by a short, dark-skinned man who "looked vaguely oriental" (sic) and acted oddly. That same night a man matching that same description visited numerous other witnesses and pumped them for information. He acted oddly at each meeting and something about him made those he visited uncomfortable. Though he claimed to be from Ohio, he accidentally mentioned that he didn't know where Columbus was, he talked funny, so on and so forth. Veteran UFO investigator John Keel believed he had been visited by a Man In Black, a suspicion that was only strengthened when an odd

looking man walked past him on the street, whipped around, took a photograph of him, and then ran off.

So there you have it. Mothman was one creepy monster that scared the pants off of rural folks during a time when lots of strange lights were being seen in the skies. After a bridge collapsed, he left the area, never to return. To be fair, there are some UFO enthusiasts that claim Mothman was but one of a race of beings from a planet in the Draco constellation and that the Mothmen visit us to this day. Others claim he was a ghost; a mutant freak; an escaped genetic experiment; a bunch of young pranksters; a being from a parallel universe; so on and so forth.

What do I think? I think that once the story of Mothman got started, every person who saw an owl or strangely shaped tree stump freaked out and reported a space monster. If you've read this column before, you know I don't put any credence in the idea that any light in the sky is a UFO, so when people claim to see a light in the sky and that it must be Mothman's glowing eyes, I have a hard time believing it.

Remember how everyone used to be obsessed with that ugly dress Jennifer Lopez wore once? And then, when something that was actually important (September 11th) came along, everyone put that shit away and started worrying about the important thing? I don't find it preposterous to think that the town whipped themselves into a frenzy over Mothman and then, when visited by a naturally occurring tragedy, put that childish stuff away to worry about actual problems. That's why Mothman disappeared after the bridge collapse, not because his work was done and he could return to the womb of the earth. As for the Men In Black: People that are interested in UFOs are pretty weird. They've got terrible social skills and look sort of funny. I know I sure fall square in the

goddamn centre of this category. Trust me, if you've ever met me, you know that there's something about me that makes our interaction uncomfortable. That doesn't make me a Man In Black; that just makes me a dweeb (albeit an awesome and/or lovable one.) There's nothing about the Mothman story that can't be explained with a little bit of logic and knowledge of human behaviour. There's no such thing as Mothman.

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Picture Credit

<http://www.monsterparade.com/gallery/one/mothman.html>

Source:



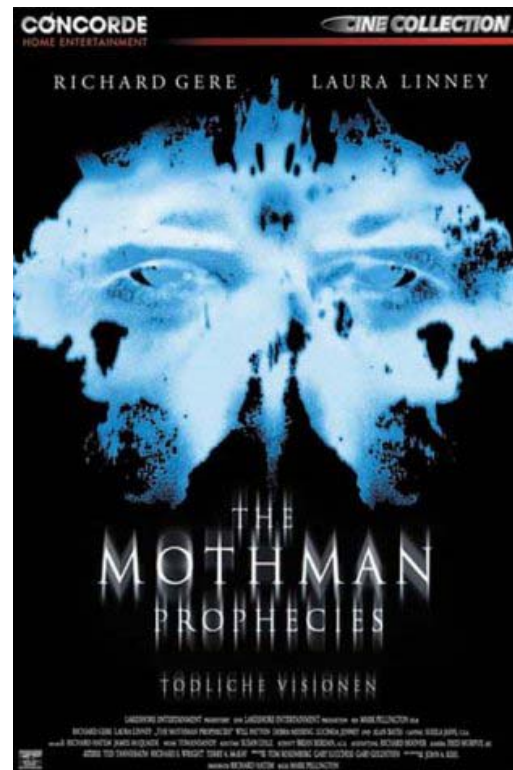
<http://www.thetriangle.org/news/2005/02/11/SciTech/Mothman.Folklore.Stirs.Up.Frantic.Propaganda-861142.shtml?page=3>

Editor:

The movie version of The Mothman Prophecies in my mind was one of the finest films of it's era.

Actors, scenes atmosphere created something the cinema audiences of the world have not enjoyed in years.

I am sure that those involved in the happenenings of the late sixties were convinced in the reality of their experiences. Surely not everyone was popping pills and wearing tie dyes with flip flops.



If you have not seen the movie or read the book, do one or the other soon.

You will; not be disappointed.