



UFORCOP CASE REVIEW

THUNDERBIRDS

October 6, 2011



SIGHTINGS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Thunderbird Definition: Thunderbird is a term used in Cryptozoology to describe large, bird-like creatures, generally identified with the Thunderbird of Native American tradition. Similar cryptids reported in the Old World are often called Rocs. Thunderbirds are regarded by a small number of researchers as having lizard features like the extinct Pterosaurs such as Pteranodon . Reports of Thunderbird sightings go back centuries, and the fossil record does show that giant birds (teratorns) with wingspans between 12 and 18 ft (3.7 and 5.5 m) were likely contemporary with early man. Today the creature is generally regarded as a myth. (Wikipedia)

This article deals with modern sightings of such a creature, reported as real, as opposed to mythological accounts, though believers in the phenomenon often use the Native American legends in attempts to support their claims.

A number of sighting reports from Pennsylvania have been studied over the last year and a half only to put researchers in a quandary as to why these reports were even published. Reports have the (large bird) as small as an Ultra Lite aircraft and as big as a B17 Flying Fortress. Wingspans of 15 feet to 45 feet are not uncommon in a sightings report. Body lengths of 5 feet to 18 feet are also not uncommon. Some witnesses say they do not roost in trees but hide in caves and atop high mountain ranges in the state. Witnesses range from young to very elderly and in groups and alone. Interesting is the fact most reports come out of Greensburg PA, and Greene and Westmoreland Counties. A few from the North such as Clinton and Tioga Counties but are scant in number. Under 5 at this writing. The birds are described as having feathers and some others described the bird as featherless with membrane type wings.

A sighting in the 1940s, was described as an enormous bird like creature with a body shaped like a naval torpedo. The creature was flying at at least 500 feet and cast a shadow the same size as a small passenger airplane. Similar sightings in Missouri prompted residents to write concerned letters to then St. Louis mayor Aloys P. Kaufmann demanding that the city do something about these reportedly huge birds. The mayor instructed an administrative assistant to set a trap to catch one of the creatures, but when blue heron tracks were discovered on an island in the Meramec River, the mystery was considered solved.

There was a spike in Thunderbird sightings in the late twentieth century. On occasion, such reports were accompanied by large footprints or other purported evidence that were attributed to known species.

The most controversial report is a July 25, 1977 account from Lawndale Illinois. A group of three boys were at play in a residential back yard. Two large birds approached, and chased the boys. Two escaped unharmed, but the third boy, a ten year old, did not. One of the birds reportedly clamped his shoulder with its claws, then lifted the boy about two feet off the ground, carrying him some distance. The boy fought against the bird, which released him. The boy had no injuries or claw marks.

Viewed as a tall tale, the descriptions given by the witnesses of these birds match that of an Andean Condor: a large black bird, with a white ringed neck and a wingspan up to 10 feet. However, an Andean condor's talons are not strong enough to lift heavy objects. This holds true in all large species of birds. Their talons are made for ripping and tearing of flesh for example a rabbit or fish. They are not designed for lifting heavy loads. They are also for the most part gliders. It takes all the strenght they have to move the wingspan they carry to get into the air. They glide in the air currents as they launch from high perches such as a cliff or mountain top to hunt prey.



It should be noted that not one single report has ever come from any one of the over 200,000 plus Onithologist's (Bird watchers) in the United States. A call to the Audubon Society was met with “**your looking for reports of what?**” followed by laughter. Guess that answered my question. With a group this large scanning the skies with high powered binoculars, scopes and cameras at hand a bird this size would not escape detection very long.

Another fact is that the majority of reports are second, third and sometimes fourth hand to investigators. No legitament photos or video have ever been scientifically supported. No police reports or mass sightings.

Another interesting fact is that all reports we've looked at have one redeeming quality. Every person or persons making the report wants to remain anonymous. One would think somebody would want the credit for reporting a huge bird the size of a plane.

No nests, no eggs, no roadkills or large strange feathers have ever been reported. The only sound reported is a loud swoosh as the bird passes overhead. No recording of that either. No carcasses and no human or animal injuries reported.

As in all legends proof is fleeting. This legend goes back hundreds of years when ancient Indian lore brought forth this creature to whom a great deal of honor was bestowed in both ceremonial functions and daily lives. Photo's showing a large bird tacked to a barn in Tombstone AZ and a photo of a group of US Calvary soldiers standing around the carcass of a large bird they allegedly shot out of the sky have all the markings of the most famous photographer of our time.....Photoshop!

Some cryptozoologists have theorized the ancient Thunderbird myth to be based on sightings of a real animal with a mistaken assessment of its apparent size. Some skeptics have claimed such a large bird could never have flown, but several flying creatures with huge wingspans are indeed known. The prehistoric vulture-like [Argentavis magnificens](#) had a wingspan of around 7 m (23 ft) and was capable of flight. The massive Cretaceous-era [pterosaur Quetzalcoatlus northropi](#) (or perhaps [Hatzegopteryx thambema](#)) was the largest known flying creature in history, with a wingspan of around 12 m (40 ft). However, the Thunderbird's identity as a pterosaur is unlikely because the Thunderbird is invariably shown having feathers. A pterosaur's wings were made of a membrane of skin stretched over a bony finger, similar to a bat's wings.

Totem poles are monumental sculptures carved from large trees, mostly Western Red Cedar, by cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest of North America. The word *totem* is derived from the Ojibwe word *odoodem*, "his kinship group". (Wikipedia) Most all Totem Poles depict a large bird with outstretched wings. What is curious is that the carved Thunderbirds have a larger wingspan in tribes of the Northwest and West and smaller wingspans in the British Columbia and more Northern tribe locations. Condors are common in areas of the West and Northwest. They are not common in British Columbia and farther North. Eagles are

more likely to be seen by the Northern tribes hence carving of smaller wings.

Some reports could be the California Condor brought east by upper high winds or a Turkey Vulture or an Eagle. Blue Herons are seen in Pennsylvania as a common sighting according to Onithologist's, but until some proof of any kind is presented this case of Thunderbirds in Pennsylvania will be closed as **misidentification of a known species** or **hoax reports**.



California Condor



Great Blue Heron



Eagle



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