

I don't know what it was, but I know I saw it and it was out there."

The dozens who've felt this fear know it could still be out there — the Hockomock swamp creature.

How it survives, no one is quite sure. Does it feed on deer or wayward house pets? Does it comb the marsh for tender shoots of spring grasses or munch on 10,000-egg clusters left by mating wood frogs?

No one doubts any animal could find refuge in the vast 5,200-acre swamp, which remains a remote, wild place despite the roads, trails and sizzling power lines that criss-cross the soupy forest.

Hockomock. The Indian word means "the evil spirit place" or "haunted place."

A new breed of scientists — cryptozoologists — say the swamp sits smack in the middle of the



EYE WITNESS? John Baker of West Bridgewater looks out onto the Hockomock Swamp, where he claims to have seen the man-beast in the early 1980s.

Staff photo by Laurie Swope

Bridgewater Triangle, a "window" open to the bizarre world of man-beasts, giant hounds, UFOs and unexplainable lights.

But to some veteran swamp-watchers, cryptozoology is a four-letter word.

"There are no monsters out there," insists Joseph Cardoza, 77, a member of the Easton Rod and Gun

Club and its 1984 sportsman of the year. "Where do people get these ideas? The biggest footprint I've seen out there is mine."

But even historians give the reported sightings some respect.

"Who am I to call them liars?" says Ken Moore, chairman of the Bridgewater Historical Commission. "I wouldn't go near

that place in a million years."

"They've got snakes as big as stove pipes, giant birds and Bigfoot. No, I don't go near there."

But the creature stays safe within the primeval confines of the swamp — so remote and deep in some places that chunks of ice still remain from the glaciers that carved out

the Hockomock centuries ago, or so the legend goes.

The Hockomock Bigfoot — not to be confused with the Pacific Northwest's Sasquatch — has never been photographed or trapped. But not for lack of trying.

To this day, Joseph DeAndrade gets emotional when he recalls his much-publicized sighting of the creature in 1978.

DeAndrade was exploring the Clay Banks section of the swamp when he glimpsed the creature.

"Something in my mind told me, 'Turn around and you will see,'" said DeAndrade, 43, a former security guard who now writes pamphlets about UFOs. "I saw what I will never forget for the rest of my life. It was 200 feet away and it was walking slowly, like Frankenstein, into the brush."

DeAndrade later re-

ported the incident in a local newspaper.

"I cried when I wrote that," he said the other day. "I am a very emotional person."

Swathed in camouflage, he and two friends formed the Bridgewater Triangle Expedition Team. Armed with long rifles and cameras, they never spotted Bigfoot again.

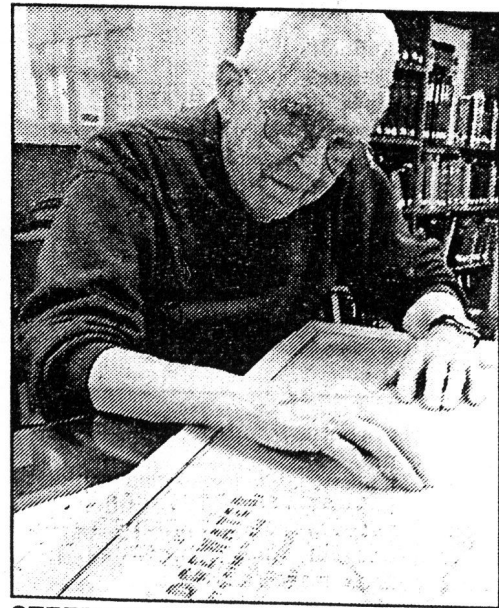
The team was later disbanded by DeAndrade.

"It's hard to find good people. If you're going to do that kind of work, you need help."

Despite the fear it inspires — its bestial size, foul odor and fearsome strut — one thing is for certain: The creature has never harmed a human.

At least none who lived to tell the tale.

"It makes me think I'm lucky to be alive," DeAndrade said. "In the Hockomock Swamp, anything is possible."



STEERING CLEAR: Ken Moore says he 'wouldn't go near' Hockomock Swamp.

Bay State's Bermuda Triangle?

BRIDGEWATER, MASS. 02324

By ED HAYWARD

The "Bermuda Triangle" may lay claim as the vortex of mystery, but Massachusetts boasts its own weird window.

Take a map and take a pen. Connect the dots between Abington, Freetown and Rehoboth. There lies the "Bridgewater Triangle."

Superimposed over much of the 5,200-acre Hockomock swamp, it is a "window" area where the paranormal and abnormal swirl.

Despite the encroachment of civilization, the swamp remains wild at its core, an able host to the primitive and puzzling.

From Bigfoot to UFOs, the triangle has hosted an equally wild assortment of "phenomenon," as cryptozoologists — students of unknown or undiscovered animals — call them.

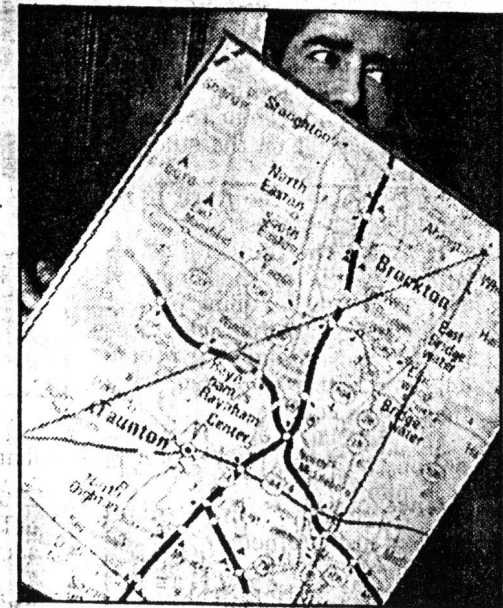
"In the Colonial times, there were things called yellow days," said Loren Coleman, a Maine writer who coined the term "Bridge-

water Triangle" in the 1970s. "The skies shone with an eerie, sulfuric, yellow light."

"Spook lights" — unexplainable, elusive balls of light — allegedly swirl near the dog track in Raynham. Then there was the giant bird spotted in 1988. And the blood-thirsty hounds spotted one year, gnawing on the throats of two ponies.

The swamp boasts an ancient burial ground — possibly 8,000 years old — and Dighton Rock, which bears antique graffiti from Colonial and modern times.

As far as Bigfoot goes, Coleman says even cryptozoologists such as himself are skeptical about many reports. But he puts credence in other sightings. "I think 80 percent of the Bigfoot reports in the Eastern U.S. are misidentifications and hoaxes," he said. "But there does seem to be something going on here. I call them 'unexplainables.' I think maybe we have some migration of these creatures."



DANGER ZONE: Joseph DeAndrade shows a map of the "Bridgewater Triangle."