

Midwestern Strange: Hunting Monsters, Martians, and the Weird in Flyover Country

B. J. Hollars

University of Nebraska Press (Sep 1, 2019)

Softcover \$19.95 (224pp)

978-1-4962-1560-4

From Bigfoot to Area 51 to the Jersey Devil, the United States boasts plenty of legendary unsolved mysteries, and the Midwest has had its share of odd occurrences. B. J. Hollars takes a look at a few of these in the entertaining and informative travelogue *Midwestern Strange*.

Over the course of a year, Hollars traveled to nine spots around the Midwest known for their unusual happenings. He met with witnesses—or, in a few cases, their descendants—and looked at how the towns celebrate their notoriety. He also tells the stories behind each of the nine places and discusses some of the possible explanations for what people saw.

Consider the case of the “Beast of Bray Road” in southeast Wisconsin, with multiple sightings through the years of a wolf-like creature that can stand on two legs and has a humanoid form. Hollars interviews a journalist who wrote about the beast decades ago, an elderly man whose father sketched it after a sighting, and others who offer a range of theories, including werewolf, a subspecies of wolf that adapted to be bipedal—and something else entirely.

Other case studies include: a stone full of runes buried in Minnesota, maybe left by Vikings or maybe a total fake; aliens in a flying craft who offered a human the gift of pancakes, which he ate; and the monstrous “hodag,” a demonic creature that a Wisconsin town still celebrates with an annual festival. Each of Hollars’s conversations is interesting, and most look for realistic answers to fantastical claims. The locations themselves are worth reading about, as is the way that minor notoriety becomes a source of local pride.

More about presenting tales than about providing answers, *Midwestern Strange* is an entertaining trip through local mysteries with a focus on those who experienced them.

JEFF FLEISCHER (September / October 2019)

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