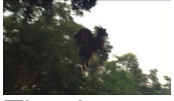


## Community Reacts to New Jersey Devil 'Sighting'

Written by KIERA LANNI | PHOTOGRAPHY/LEISURE EDITOR  
Wednesday, 28 October 2015 11:31

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The Jersey Devil might be making an appearance in time for Halloween.

Paranormal Investigator Kelly Roncace of *NJ.com* received an eye-opening email from an Egg Harbor man. According to the email he sent to

*NJ.com*

, Dave Black was driving home from his job as a security guard in Atlantic City when he had the encounter. "I was just driving past the golf course in Galloway on Route 9 and had to shake my head a few times when I thought I saw a llama," Black wrote.

He then saw the llama-like creature spread out leathery wings and fly over the golf course Black spent hours looking at the photo, trying to come up with a rational explanation. Did a goat grow wings and fly? Is it just a prank?

"A friend suggested that maybe it was an animal running and an owl grabbed it, the photo being a combination of them. That's still not my first instinct, but I don't know how to explain it otherwise," Black wrote.

Black sent the photo to Roncace, lead investigator of Jersey Unique Minds Paranormal Society, for some sort of explanation. Even Roncace could not come up with a true explanation. Even so, news sources like the *Huffington Post*, *Buzzfeed*, and Good Morning America have picked up the story. It even became a trending topic on Facebook.

Dr. Richard Veit, Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Department of History and Anthropology, finds the photo not so convincing. "I don't think it's true, but I think it's fascinating," Veit said.

Veit imagined the creature to be larger than what is in the photo. "I think it's often been portrayed as having the head of a horse, cloven hooves, and big bat-sized wings. This devil looks a little bit more modest," he said.

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"It honestly looks like it was Photoshopped in," said senior Radio and Television major Patrick Hall.

Sara Rosenfeld, a math major, feels that the creature looks magical, but she does not buy it. "I don't know, I think it's weird looking. It looks like he will eat our souls," Rosenfeld said.

Even if the photo is not undeniable, Veit pointed out that the location is significant. He said, "The original story starts off in a place called Leeds Point, so the geography is good."

The Pine Barrens have long been haunted by the so called Jersey Devil. According to the popular New Jersey folklore site, *Weird New Jersey*, legend has it that in 1735, a Quaker woman who lived in the Pine Barrens area named Mother Leeds became pregnant with her 13th child. She exclaimed, "Let this one be a devil!" out of frustration. Initially, she gave birth to a beautiful baby, but it underwent a horrific transformation. It seemed she got what she wanted because she gave birth to the horned, goat-like creature who flew away to wreak havoc and haunt to residents of the Pine Barrens.

Given the folklore surrounding the area, Veit sent out some students to the site of Mother Leeds' house a few years ago, but the students did not find any evidence to support the story of the Jersey Devil.

Veit has heard some theories about the legend of the Jersey Devil. One suggests if families or members of the community were squabbling with each other, they would say things that would be prejudicial against each other. Veit also heard one researcher argue that Mrs. Leeds might have been praying in Latin, and other people might of thought she was saying something other than she did.

Veit also said that the people of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were not as scientifically driven as we are today. He said, "People were certainly afraid of things like witchcraft during this time period, so they believed more in the presence of a spirit world than we do, and that might have inspired them."

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Being an archeologist, Veit has come across things he could not explain. “I certainly find things that I haven’t been able to explain and there are some artifacts that are intriguing that I’m not sure what they are. There are some mysteries out there.” Of course, he has never found anything related to the Jersey Devil.

Overall, Veit feels that it is exciting that the Jersey Devil has become an international celebrity over the years.

Veit said, “It’s interesting that it keeps showing up through time, but that means that people are fascinated with the supernatural and want these unusual things to be real.”

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