

just as a presence in Nazi Germany but in the character structure of much of Western society (Reich, 1946).

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Hunt for the Skinwalker—Science Confronts the Unexplained at a Remote Ranch in Utah by Colm A. Kelleher and George Knapp. New York: Paraview Pocket Books, 2005. 304 pp. \$14.00 (paper). ISBN 13: 978-1-4165-1521-1.

From Heber, Utah, nestled among high mountain peaks just minutes away from the 2002 Olympic facilities, you travel southeast on US Highway 40, seventy miles up over near 8000 feet Daniels Summit and then begin a slow descent past Strawberry and Starvation reservoirs into the Uintah (pronounced "you-in-ta") Basin of northeast Utah. The first community at the bottom of the hill is Duchesne (pronounced "du-shane" by locals). The Uintah Range is to the north running east/west nearly to the Utah-Colorado border. There are 65 peaks over 10,000 feet in the Uintah range, of which 22 are over 12,000 feet and 8 are over 13,000. This is a major source of water to the region (from snowmelt). Numerous streams come out of the Uintahs and eventually all drain into the Green River coming out of Wyoming and into the Colorado River. The topography of the basin is generally tertiary Uintah pink sandstone that creates several scenic ridges and bluffs throughout the region, one of which is a prominent feature on the ranch property (Chronic, 1990). There is abundant local agriculture in the area, fed by a complex network of canals. In the midst of this is the "Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation". From Duchesne, US Highway 40 travels a generally northeast route to Vernal. The book gives the location of the "Skinwalker ranch" halfway between Roosevelt and Vernal. This is the pastoral setting of the Skinwalker book.

It is somewhat of a misstatement to call the ranch remote, unless 130 miles from a significant urban area is remote to you. The population of Roosevelt and Vernal may well take offense at being called remote. There are 40,000 plus people in the Uintah Basin, the majority of whom live along the several rivers and US Highway 40. Indeed, one of the best restaurants in the region is not more than 10–15 minutes from what we deduced is the location of the ranch.

The book recounts a series of strange encounters on this 480 acre ranch (less than one square mile). These range from skinwalkers; shapeshifters; UFOs; missing, dead, and/or mutilated livestock; invisible entities evidently apparent to

cattle; lights and orbs of various colors in the air; tunnels to another dimension with beasties and UFOs coming in and out; other various and unexplained vandalism; and other miscellaneous strange events.

The literary style of the writing is at times a bit more akin to a tabloid than a series of scientific investigations. The back cover contains such phrases as "huge otherworldly creatures", "flying orbs of light with dazzling maneuverability and lethal consequences", "life on the ranch ... under siege by an unknown enemy", "conclusions utterly hair-raising". In the body of the book, similar sensationalistic verbiage is at times noted. In the chapter on "Monsters", such language as "some sort of shape shifter, a phantom that may always remain beyond human comprehension", "nameless dread", "pervasive, bone chilling fear", "gripped by uncontrollable fear" is found. The descriptions of the Gorman family (not their real name) and their reactions use similar language that seems inconsistent with their actions. They were the owners and/or occupants of the property in the period when these events were experienced and studied.

The book does not stick to the phenomena observed at the ranch. It jumps to some other locations that have had UFO and other strange events, such as Brazil, New Mexico, and several others in a chapter titled "Other Hot Spots". Sasquatch is mentioned several times, but no descriptions that compare favorably to bona fide Sasquatch sightings are mentioned, nor is the excellent analysis of Sasquatch data by Dr. Jeffrey Meldrum at the Kalispel meeting of the Society in 2003.

Another journey into a distracting area is an erroneous attempt to relate the skinwalker and its reported bad odor to Esau in the Old Testament. The book says that Esau was covered with animal hair and emitted a strong offensive odor. Esau was not covered with animal hair, he was born hairy and may have had a genetic hypertrichosis (Moses, c. 1550 BPE). There is only one reference to odor and it is that Isaac said his smell was of the field. Flavius Josephus (94 AD) in his history doesn't even mention it. It also does not say Jacob was covered with animal hair, only his arm was covered to fool his father.

Despite these credibility drawbacks, the book does describe in substantial detail the scientific attempts to document the various phenomena. A few pictures would have been helpful. Particularly, pictures of the calf with the precision mutilation that occurred nearly before the Gorman family's eyes, of the several bulls all crammed tightly into an enclosure, and of the TV cameras that had been dismantled mysteriously would have been a nice addition. It is true that skeptics could claim the pictures were contrived, however they would have helped for people with inquiring minds. The book does have a respectable reference list and even an index, something not often found in this sort of a book. Part III goes into detail about possible explanations for the observed phenomena and has some critical discussion about all of the possibilities. I found this part to be more in a scientific vein, which lends credibility to the observations.

The National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS) purchased the property and financed the studies done there. The resources that were put in place were respectable. The ranch seems to still be owned by that organization and is

firmly locked up. There is a lot of information about the ranch on various web sites, and the place is called the Bigelow Ranch therein. (Robert Bigelow is the President and founder of NIDS and the staff and board are composed of well credentialed scientists, many of whom are members of the Society for Scientific Exploration.)

For privacy reasons, the book does not identify the owners who experienced the strange events for a couple of years before NIDS bought the property and instituted the more-or-less controlled investigation. Neither does the book say exactly where the ranch is. The initial inability to check on specifics tends to make one skeptical. However, with topographic maps (US Geological Survey, 1964: Ft. Duchesne, Windy Ridge, Roosevelt, and Randlett Quadrangles) and a scaled transparent 480 acre square, it was not hard to find only one spot in the whole region that had all of the topographic characteristics the book describes for the ranch. My wife's family, who lives in Duchesne, spent a Saturday searching and driving all the back roads, and they found the location. I decided not to follow up on a suggestion to contact NIDS for a visit, preferring to do my own investigation without benefit of anything except for what is in the book.

The gate at the ranch entrance is a large steel structure that is firmly closed with "No Trespassing" and "Keep Out" signs, a large chain, and four padlocks. It is in the middle of a dirt lane about a quarter mile from another road servicing other properties. There did not appear to be any other way in. With photographs from the gate and from an overlook to the south, it was easy to reconstruct the layout of the buildings. There appeared to be a black vehicle near one of the buildings (sun glittering from a window), but otherwise the area was completely deserted. There were no livestock to be seen anywhere on the property. This in itself is an anomaly, because all the surrounding properties were very busy with spring plowing and handling cattle. One interesting thing happened: As we were on our way out to the highway after being at the gate for about 15 minutes, a white SUV passed us at an excessive rate of speed from the opposite direction and disappeared down the lane to the gate. Some people handling cattle at pens a scant quarter mile from the gate seemed to pay us no attention. However, they may have alerted the person in the SUV. As we navigated a back road north of the ranch, a sheriff's patrol car parked and observed our activities. They never stopped us, only observed us. We thought it odd.

A first verification of the book's credibility was that there actually was a property and only one that met all of the descriptions in the book. This lent considerable credibility to the accounts in the book. People whom my family queried in the area all knew of the events that took place there. It is obvious that strange activities did take place in that area. However, my brother-in-law taught agriculture in a local high school and had not heard anything about large cattle losses or mutilations in the short distance from Duchesne to the ranch. Neither had a friend who has an 8000 acre cattle ranch just north of Duchesne. It seems that the ranch is now quiet and we felt no special feelings when we visited, such as those described in the book. The significant anomaly seems to be that the

phenomena were confined mostly to the small area of the ranch. In prior times the whole region had been subject to several UFO sightings. The book gave me an implication that there were no close neighbors to the ranch, however there are a dozen or more within a mile to the east, south, and west.

One more point of interest: An old Navajo acquaintance recounted that "skinwalker" is a Navajo appellation. He said that most indigenous Native American tribes had traditions of similar creatures and called them shapeshifters and that it was some sort of hypnotic phenomenon. He told me that in pre-Columbian times it was learned and practiced to improve hunting. When the "White Man" came and began to oppress them, it was done unsuccessfully to drive them out. Today, he said, the skinwalkers are considered to be pure evil and will be killed when encountered by Navajos. Another source from the Navajo culture recounted that the skinwalkers are seen occasionally and that although this source had not encountered one, he said that he knew people who had.

All in all, despite the literary deficiencies and the excursions into other areas, the book recounts some very interesting phenomena. It is apparent that attempts at scientific investigation were made and that results were a bit disappointing. The NIDS investigators may have in hand some hard evidence that is not in the book. If so, it would be interesting to see some of it.

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