



Mothman

Mothman is one of several legendary West Virginia monsters, along with [Bat Boy](#) and the [Flatwoods Monster](#). Persistent sightings began in November 1966, and totaled 26 over a one-year span. The reports of a large, winged creature with glowing red eyes were centered in the [Point Pleasant](#) area, usually in or near a vast, abandoned munitions facility known as the TNT plant. Skeptics offered various explanations, some arguing that the creature was a stray sandhill crane.

As sightings increased, so did reports of other strange phenomena. Disruption of electronic devices such as telephones, police dispatch radios, and televisions, as well as automobiles, were rumored, and there were numerous reports of UFO appearances. New York writer John Keel, one of the paranormal investigators drawn to Point Pleasant, connected the stories of strange occurrences to the Mothman. Keel additionally included anecdotes regarding the presence of mysterious "men in black" and the tragic December 15, 1967, collapse of the [Silver Bridge](#) that spanned the Ohio River at Point Pleasant. His account, first published in 1975 as *The Mothman Prophecies*, became the basis of a 2002 feature film starring Richard Gere.

In one popular theory, the Mothman's advent and the subsequent Silver Bridge disaster were linked to a 200-year-old curse attributed to Shawnee [Chief Cornstalk](#) who led the Indians at the Battle Point of Pleasant and who later was murdered there. Sightings of the Mothman diminished after the Silver Bridge collapse.

The legend has had a literary impact. In [Pinckney Benedict's](#) novel *The Dogs of God*, the Mothman makes a brief though dramatic appearance. Chuck Kinder's 2004 memoir *The Last Mountain Dancer* also makes prominent mention of the Mothman. Young [Breece D'J Pancake](#), before he became celebrated as a short story writer, published a 1966 letter in the *Huntington Herald Dispatch* arguing that Mothman was in fact a California condor.

In September 2003, an original life-sized sculpture of the Mothman was installed in downtown Point Pleasant. The town celebrates the legendary creature during the annual Mothman Festival each September. The event draws more than 4,000 people who come to hear from Mothman experts and take part in more traditional festival activities, such as hayrides and storytelling.

Written by [Gordon Simmons](#)

Sources

1. Keel, John A. *The Mothman Prophecies*. New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975.
2. Sergeant, Donnie Jr. & Jeff Wamsley. *Mothman: The Facts Behind the Legend*. Point Pleasant: Mothman Lives Pub., 2001.
3. Willey, Gordon R. & Jeremy A Sabloff. *A History of American Archaeology*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1980.

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Read Mothman from The west Virginia Encyclopedia

Answer the following:

1. What are two other legendary West Virginia monsters?
2. Beginning in November 1966 how many sightings of Mothman where there in a one-year span?
3. How was the creature described?
4. What location did the sightings center on?
5. What other strange phenomena occurred along with the sightings?
6. What other disaster was Mothman related to?
7. One popular theory links the bridge collapse and Mothman to what historical event?
8. What was installed in downtown Point Pleasant in 2003?
9. What literary works mention Mothman?
10. What takes place each September at Point Pleasant?