

telln' ya, it would make your hair stand up."

After a few moments, the creature ran off toward the large swamp behind the field. Bowers hustled back to his car, glancing over his shoulder to make sure he was alone. A few nights later, he told Salisbury Police Chief Jody Heath, a family friend, what he had seen and asked if he could shoot the beast if it attacked him. Heath, biting his lip, promised to find out. "He sounded like everybody else," Bowers said. "I don't think he really believed me." Bowers tried the game warden next. "He just laughed at me. He said 'There's no such thing.' I said 'Nuts.' He said, 'It was probably a bear or moose.' I said, 'Look, I can tell the difference between a bear and I can tell the difference between a moose. This was neither.' He didn't believe me. He got mad and hung up."

Bowers has shot four bears in his lifetime, so he knows what they look like. As for moose, has anyone ever seen one standing on its hind legs and walk like a man? "If a man can't tell the difference between a moose and a thing like that," Bowers said, "he hadn't ought to be hunting whatsoever, in my book. He hadn't ought to be in the woods hunting if he can't tell the difference." Hundreds of people have reported seeing half-human creatures like Bigfoot, usually in the vast forests of the Pacific Northwest and Asia, but nobody has ever caught or photographed one clearly. Bowers figures creatures like the one he saw live and die in swamp caves, where no man can find them. They probably come out in the morning to look for apples, corn or whatever it is they eat. "I think there's more people that see these that are not saying anything 'cause they don't want to be laughed at," he said.

One of these days, he may use his camera and stake out the area using apples for bait. A clear photo of the animal or its tracks might convince the skeptics. Until then he figures people can have a good laugh at his expense. "Go ahead," he said, shaking his head, "but it's not gonna change a thing, 'cause I still see what I see."

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