

# Our Own Monster

by:

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The Ozark Howler is a cryptical, mysterious creature wrapped in folklore and dipped in legend. It is a local legend that crosses modern state lines, and spans generations. I'll try to describe its appearance as best I can after reading 50 eyewitness accounts. It resembles a large grizzly or oversized black panther with horns and glowing eyes. Some reported glowing red eyes; while others declared glowing yellow eyes. Some report it to be more dog-like. All accounts agree that is terrifying!

The Howler's hallmark, as you might expect, is its howl which every witness swears is unlike anything heard in the wild. It is often described as an "unearthly scream" accompanied by a high-pitched howl. The accounts of hunters most fascinated me, because they know the calls of creatures commonly heard in the depths of the Ozark forests. I find it difficult to picture these avid outdoorsmen being scared out of their wits from a fox call, the bugle of a Bull Elk, or the scream of a Fisher Cat.

Something in the area has spawned tales of fear and forboding since pre-columbian times. The First Nation Uta'mqt and Osage had ancestral tales of Dogmen, oral traditions that were later recorded. How accurately preserved the tales were cannot be known. The French, Spanish, Scottish, Irish, Welsh and English settlers subsequently brought their mythologies with them to the Ozarks in the 1800s. Witness accounts and sightings continue into present day in Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Sightings in Springfield (2009) were dubbed the Nixa Hellhound.

Is the Ozark Howler merely the perfect storm of a misidentified creature, basic human fear, and ancestral folklore? The only assurance we have is that the lore surrounding the creature has sparked books, poems, podcasts, blogs, and even a song or two. It's a legend intertwined with the Ozarks - lesser known than Bigfoot - but one all our own.