

About the Tales:

From Bill Russo, the author of *The Creature From the Bridgewater Triangle*, comes new tales from the 200 square mile area that is sometimes called 'America's Bermuda Triangle'. This time the stories are fiction - and yet these yarns come from a place where 'real' and 'unreal' collide and exist in an uneasy truce in the same space.

Four young friends gather at a summer camp near the eerie Hockomock Swamp. They spin a few campfire yarns. The oldest of the group tells a story that could be called *The Cold, Clammy Touch of Death*.

His narrative is derided by his companions so he offers them a far darker scenario when he relates the bizarre life of Jimmy Catfish of the devilish body of disparate waters called Codfresh Lake.

As the last hushed words of the story fade away, more firewood is piled on the campfire and an unforeseen event ratchets the mood of the friends from jocular to tense as they contemplate a new horror - a reanimated warrior from a hundred years ago who wears a string of scalps around his neck and head - some of which are fresh with blood from the newly dead.

Swamp Tales

Horrors from the Hockomock Swamp
and the Cape Cod Marshes

by **Bill Russo**

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Also by Bill Russo

The Ghosts of Cape Cod

In paperback, E-book And as an audiobook narrated by NPR's Scott R. Pollak

The Creature From the Bridgewater Triangle

Available in both
Paperback and e-book formats.

It's a book of New England stories, including the account of the author's encounter with a Puckwudgie, as featured on national television and in the award winning documentary, "The Bridgewater Triangle".

Jimmy Catfish – the Beginning and the End

The prequel and backstory to a story first told
In chapter three of this book.

Crossing the Musical Color Line

Stories of singers and players that the Bill Russo knew or interviewed; some famous, some only known as 'musician's musicians – but all iconic and influential.

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Forward:

The greatest boxing match ever, was not contested in a slick Las Vegas fight room with glitzy ringsiders paying \$2500 a seat; but in a back alley, most likely in a rust belt city, by two unknown combatants - probably with no onlookers.

The most skilled baseball player? He was surely a farm boy in Texas who never traveled more than a hundred miles from his home, but could 'chunk' a fist sized rock 61 feet through the air and knock a fly off a frog's tongue.

So too with stories of the paranormal - Ghost stories, Vampire Tales, and Werewolf Wanderings. The best of these don't come from Hollywood or from television.

The grimmest of yarns come from close to the ground. From trailside cooking fires and bunkroll musings; the scariest narratives are born.

Are they real? Right up front I will tell you they are not! They are merely campfire tales. Keep telling yourself that as you read the yarns from a place where reality, imagination, and the impossible exist at one time in the same place.

I will only repeat again, that the truest yarns are the ones that emanate from the source. When the tales being told, are being iterated in one of the most haunted places in the world, the stories get even icier.

Such is the case with the offerings in this short book. It takes place mostly in the area of the Hockomock Swamp, which is a spooky place that lies within the even scarier, Bridgewater Triangle.

The Bridgewater Triangle is a focus point of some 200 square

miles in Southeastern Massachusetts about half way between Boston and Providence, where thousands of unexplained happenings have mystified residents and researchers for hundreds of years.

The areas of strange activity are centered around the towns of Raynham and Bridgewater, but many weird tales also come from the whole area, stretching down even to the island/peninsula of Cape Cod.

In one of the most credible UFO sightings ever, two respected TV journalists reported seeing a large spacecraft over the Raynham Dog Track.

Bigfoot, Middlefoot and even Littlefoot sightings are as common as Little League baseball fields, in the towns of The Bridgewater Triangle.

Cannibalistic monster dogs with glowing red eyes and sharp, long fangs have been spotted dining on local farmers' stock. A 40 ton rock, unearthed at low tide in a salty river turned out to be the prehistoric equivalent of a graffiti wall. Thousands of ancient scrawlings on it, of undetermined meanings have boggled the brains of men and women of science for over a hundred years.

One man was walking his dog on a midnight trek when he met a squat, hairy swamp creature (probably a Puckwudgie) who spoke to him; begging him to 'come here'. The gentleman refused the chance of chatting with the pleading bushy being, and in so doing, most likely saved his life - according to those who claim to know the power of such demons.

Ancient extinct dinosaurs with the ability of flight; (pterodactyls) reportedly still fly in the spirited air of the vast, uncharted Hockomock Swamp. The most reputable witness to such a featherless flyer, was a Norton, Massachusetts Police Sergeant, who besieged with so many questions, eventually declined any further comment on the matter.

Serpents, or snakes, nearly as big around as telephone poles, are seen with some regularity. Ghostly lights sometimes illuminate whole sections of trees in the thick forests that surround tiny kettle ponds.

Spectral illuminations, on occasion, shine far above 'The High Tees' - a swath of land running from Boston to Providence, hosting the high tension wires of the Electric companies. There are those who say that this verdant strip is a superhighway for all manner of odd creatures traveling back and forth from Lizzie Borden's home in Fall River, to Boston and Providence.

The stories in this work, come from four Counselors of a Summer Camp deep inside the Hockomock where the trees and the rocks are the same as they were hundreds of years ago. On a three day training mission before the official start of the season, they were seated around a smoky fire; doing what people have done ever since fire was first captured and corralled by a group of round stones: sharing campfire tales.

(Author's Note: These tales make no claims of authenticity, though many are based on local myths and legends.)



Part of the Hockomock Swamp

In their words, here are the Tales From The Swamp:

Chapter One: The Campfire

The first narrator is a teenager named Bill Ricci.....

“The best stories are told, not on Halloween night, but during warm evenings in early July, under the stars around a smoldering camp-fire. Six months before the new century began, I was seated with three companions at just such a fire.

We had cooked and eaten our 'Campers Stew' and were hunkered down, cross legged around the coals swapping tales. The sun had set. To the West, billowy clouds were dyed a delicate crimson by the remains of the twilight. A gentle wind swirled the smoke from the cooking fire in lazy circles around us, keeping us happily free of flying pests such as mosquitoes, gnats and midges.

Mist from a tiny kettle pond, less than 30 yards distant, was transported on occasion by the breeze to caress our faces with a spritz of cool, spring fed water.

It was one week before the beginning of the 1999 season of Summer Camp. At 15, I was the youngest of the Counselors and by far the least experienced. I did have the advantage of having spent parts of the last four summers as a paying customer of Camp Wild River. This year, having been selected as a Counselor in Training; I would spend the entire season at camp and be paid for it too.

I knew the 200 acres of woodland that was home to the camp as

well as most of the Senior Counselors and I could hold my own in any sport. My Dad was short, but I had picked up some height genes from my Mom's side and was already close to six feet tall. My weight hadn't caught up to my height, being only 165; but I was wiry and fast and had won most of my matches as a member of the High School's Freshman Wrestling team.

As part of our job training, we were camping out in the open for three nights. There were three groups of four counselors each. My quartet was Delta - group four. My three mates were Bobby Butterfield, who was 18 and a senior in high school; Freddy Simpson who was a 21 year old college student; and Mr. Markens, a 28 year old history teacher.

After we finished our delicious stew, the talk turned to the spooky area that we lived in - a part of Massachusetts called 'The Bridgewater Triangle'."

The Campfire Stories

"There's no more haunted place in the United States," said Freddy. "When my Dad was a Counselor here 25 years ago, he saw the Red Eyed Dogs. Walking with two friends near the old iron works just before dawn, over by the dam, they heard an unearthly wailing. They watched four huge canines with flashing fangs attack a large stag that was crying from pain and fear. Dad said the monsters were as tall as ponies and they were ravenously eating the unfortunate stag alive. Their eyes glowed redder than the coals of a hard-wood campfire. The eerie light transformed their bloody mouths into gaping Jack-o-Lantern smiles.

So intense were the creatures, at their ravaging, that they took no notice of my Father and his friends. Dad never again saw the horrific dogs. Mainly due to the fact he and his pals decided to never again walk the swamp in the dead of night!"

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The wind picked up and pushed smoke from the smoldering fire into the eyes and up the noses of the campers. Bill Ricci coughed, wiped his eyes with a red bandana and asked the history expert a question.

"What do you think, Mr. Markens? Is the Hockomock Swamp haunted?"

He thought for a moment, lifted his glasses from his nose and slid them back to the top of his head, cleared his throat, and finally spoke.....

"Well, as a teacher and a student of this region, I can tell you that for hundreds of years, this area of Massachusetts has been the

site of thousands of reports of shaggy half-men, half-ape creatures. There have been dozens of accounts of flying birds that seem to be prehistoric pterodactyls. They are extinct flying dinosaurs. Thunder Birds have been spotted. Abnormally large Snakes have been sighted. Snakes, or serpents I should say, as big around as telephone poles! For myself, I have never seen anything in these woods that I cannot explain."

Bobby Butterfield had been anxious to speak, and jumped in when Markens cleared his throat, a nervous habit the teacher had - akin to some people's frequent injection of 'you know' into almost every sentence they utter.

"I've been a camper and a counselor here for quite a few years you know. I have never seen anything like what you guys are describing, you know. But I will tell you what I did see. And mind you. I have seen it three times you know! It is just before or just after sunset. It happens near Rusty Pond, you know where they used to dump old cars and trucks, and the water has turned a reddish brown."

"Yes we all know where it is Bobby. What did you see?" asked Mr. Markens.

"Glowing trees. Entire trees lit up from the base right to the highest branch. Not lit up like by a light bulb, but lit only with a faint, cold glow. They were not even as bright as a fire fly. They looked like giant versions of those glow sticks that people carry; but not the bright ones, you know. They looked like dim glow sticks that are just short of going out. There would be as many as 40 trees, on either side of the path, shimmering in the darkness with that faint, spectral light."

"I've heard of that phenomenon," remarked the history teacher. "There can be several natural explanations for it."

"Well Mr. Markens, that doesn't make it any less scary, you know," Bobby affirmed coldly.

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It fell to Bill Ricci next, to take up the tales.

"It's my first year as a Junior Counselor but I have been a camper at Wild River for four years. Also, my parents' house is only a few miles away. Our land backs right up to the 'High Tees' - that long swath of land that has the high tension wires that run from Boston to Providence."

"Hey Bill, everybody knows about the 'High Tees'," Bobby Butterfield interjected. "It's a sixty mile green strip that is supposedly used as an expressway by ghosts and creatures that wander from Massachusetts to Rhode Island."

"You are correct Bob. I've never seen anything weird, either in the 'High Tees' or in the area around the Camp. But I know there are plenty of bizarre creatures in the swamp. My uncle and my Father have seen things, but they refuse to go into details. They will only tell me that they have seen and spoken to some people they called 'wild men'."



Entrance to the High Tees in Raynham, Mass.

"Really Bill," an excited Mr. Markens interrupted. "I've never heard this before. Please go on."

"Well, I really don't know much. They simply refuse to tell me any more than I already have told you. My Uncle, walking in the High Tees, has seen a wild man at least twice. He talked to it. The more I asked him about it the less he wanted to discuss it. Finally he said that it was just an old drunk passing through that he spoke with and he made it a closed subject. The same thing happened when I talked to my Father. Clearly, they have seen something - Something that scared them into silence."

"I know your father and his brother a little bit," said the school teacher, "and I don't think there's too much on earth that could scare either one of them. Their spirit and bravery is well known around Southeastern Massachusetts. There's another reason why they will not talk about their experience."

"What could the reason be?" Bill asked.

Mr. Markens thought for a moment, cleared his throat, and moved his glasses back down to his nose before he spoke.

"They are both conservationists. Your Dad and Uncle have been against every building project that's ever been proposed for the Wild River area. Perhaps they fear that if it were known for certain that there are half-wild men living in the swamp; it would bring unwanted publicity that could lead to the capture and destruction of the primitive creatures."

"You could be right about that," I admitted, "The both of them are always rescuing turtles or injured animals and nursing them back

to health before releasing them back into the wild. My Dad always says that the Wild River area should never be developed."

"He's right about that, of course", agreed Mr. Markens, "because the 60,000 acres of swampland around us, act as a Rhode Island-sized sponge. The swamp swabs up excess rain and moisture from storms and stores it, so that we never experience flooding or flood damage in our towns. If there's too much development, the sponge won't be big enough to stop the torrents of water during hurricanes and such. Massachusetts could literally sink into the Atlantic Ocean!"

The moon was more than half full and cast a decent amount of light on our camping spot. Mr. Markens threw some more wood on the fire while Freddy Simpson placed an old aluminum coffee pot on a patch of hot coals.

Chapter Two: The Iron Works

"If we are going to be sharing some more ghost stories, I'd like a cup of hot coffee," Freddy said after setting the pot down. "Mr. Markens, you're the history guy. How about telling us a story about this place from back in the day?"

"Well Freddy, I am pretty much of a skeptic about this area that is called 'The Bridgewater Triangle', but there is one scary story that took place not 200 yards from where we are, over a hundred years ago.

As you guys know, there was an iron works right here where we are, in Southeastern, Massachusetts. It was the one of the first in the nation. The melting furnace was first lit around 1700 and ran non-stop for over 200 years.

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