

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | THE CREATURES OF HOCKOMOCK SWAMP
S1E4 TRANSCRIPT

FANNY MANZELLA: So, I left the house to just go for a jog like any other time I would go for a jog. I had my, you know, headphones on. And it's when I was on my way back home that I saw this. It was facing me, facing the road. I could see its face, but I couldn't make its features out. It was so big. It was, like, taller than the ceilings in your typical home. And it was broad, like, not skinny and tall, like, broad and tall. I was worried that it either saw me, or was going to see me in any moment, and I did not want to be there any longer.

NARRATION:

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE. STONEHENGE. EASTER ISLAND. THESE ARE STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS PLACES THAT DEFY OUR TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY. AND NOW WE ADD TO THAT LIST, A REGION IN NEW ENGLAND KNOWN AS THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE. IT'S WHERE A CREEPY SWAMP CALLED HOCKOMOCK IS HOME TO SIGHTINGS OF UFOS, PARANORMAL ACTIVITY, AND BIZARRE HUMAN-LIKE CREATURES.

I'M YOUR HOST, STEVE FRENCH. THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "THE CREATURES OF HOCKOMOCK SWAMP."

ABOUT 30 MILES SOUTH OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS IS A 200-SQUARE-MILE STRIP OF LAND CALLED THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE. IT'S A RURAL AREA DOTTED WITH SMALL TOWNS, CEMETERIES, AND DARK AND FORBIDDING FORESTS. THIS IS WHERE A VIOLENT AND BLOODY WAR WAS ONCE FOUGHT BETWEEN INDIGENOUS TRIBES AND NEW ENGLAND COLONISTS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. TODAY, IT'S GROUND ZERO FOR COUNTLESS UNEXPLAINED PARANORMAL ENCOUNTERS.

CHRIS PITTMAN: Many people have reported seeing UFOs, both during the day and at night. Some of them have seen structured craft, others just see lights in the sky. People have reported seeing all kinds of monsters, short dwarf-like creatures, Bigfoot, huge snakes, winged humanoid creatures.

NARRATION:

CHRIS PITTMAN IS A LOCAL PARANORMAL EXPERT, HISTORIAN, AND AMATEUR ARCHAEOLOGIST. HE WAS RAISED IN THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE AREA AND HAS SPENT HIS LIFE RESEARCHING THE STRANGE REPORTS OF PARANORMAL ACTIVITY IN THIS UNIQUE REGION.

CHRIS PITTMAN: All of my life, I was really, really interested in the paranormal, and particularly in UFOs. Absolutely enthralled by these stories of people being confronted with these mysterious aerial objects that they couldn't explain. And I started to investigate UFO sightings locally as I came to know more about this stuff. I would actually go out to places where people had seen UFOs. I would meet with the witnesses, and I would try to explain what it was that

they had seen. It was possible for me relatively easily to figure out, this was a misidentification of an aircraft, or this was a misidentification of planet Venus, or something like that. There were also many other times that what the witnesses were reporting to me was totally baffling and absolutely impossible for me to explain, really interesting stuff.

CHRIS PITTMAN (cont'd): And I was looking at it from the perspective of a scientist. I was trying to be totally objective about it and look at each case and determine, you know, is this real? Create a hypothesis. Is this connected to other cases? And then try to prove or disprove that by collecting more information. And then I started to have really weird things that started to happen in my own life. I would have files pertaining to UFO sightings that would disappear from my home and then be replaced later with photocopies. I had unmarked black helicopters hovering over my house for such a long time that it made the front page of the local newspaper. I started to get really weird phone calls, emails. I would start to see weird lights in the night and other people around me started to see weird things, too. Eventually, after several years, kind of all came to a head and I took a big step back from UFO research because it just became too frightening and I felt like it was becoming too dangerous.

NARRATION:

WHILE INVESTIGATING UFOS, CHRIS PITTMAN GATHERED HUNDREDS OF ACCOUNTS OF PARANORMAL ACTIVITIES FROM THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE AREA. AT FIRST GLANCE, THEY SEEMED OUTLANDISH. AND YET, THE PEOPLE REPORTING THEM WERE CREDIBLE, AND VERY CERTAIN OF WHAT THEY'D SEEN.

CHRIS PITTMAN: After a few years, I had amassed a bunch of them, and I came to the conclusion that it was nonsense for me to continue to just disregard this body of evidence I was collecting.

NARRATION:

AMONG THE WITNESSES TO THIS AREA'S ODD ACTIVITY IS THE MANZELLA FAMILY. PETER AND TRACY MANZELLA HAVE LIVED IN THIS PART OF NEW ENGLAND FOR OVER 30 YEARS AND RAISED THREE DAUGHTERS HERE. THEIR OLDEST IS NAMED FANNY, WHO IS NOW 38 YEARS OLD.

FANNY MANZELLA: We pretty much live in a forested thicket. It's swampy. It's, like, almost impenetrable, twisted thickets of forest. We spent a lot of time playing around in the woods in general, behind the house I grew up in, in the fields next door, in the forest behind the house, and in the forest in front of the house. We happen to live about 100 yards from a historic cemetery, and the people buried there are, for the most part, descendants of the people who built the home that I grew up in. I always had a sense that there was something unusual about the area that we live. I used to feel a lot of strange vibes, I guess, outdoors as a kid, even from a very young age.

FANNY MANZELLA (cont'd): There were strange feelings. Like, I would see, sometimes, shadows out of the corner of my eyes. I always had a really strong sensation and I still do, to

this day, that there's something watching you from the woods, which is unsettling. I can deal with it during the day. At night, I don't love it. I don't feel that way inside the house. It's really only outdoors.

NARRATION:

IT ISN'T UNTIL SHE'S AN ADULT THAT FANNY HAS A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH A STRANGE CREATURE LURKING IN THIS OMINOUS SWAMP LAND. LATE ONE AFTERNOON, FANNY IS HOME WITH HER PARENTS WHEN SHE DECIDES TO GO OUT FOR A JOG ON HER USUAL RUNNING PATH THAT TAKES HER THROUGH DENSE WOODS, AND PAST THE NEARBY CEMETERY.

FANNY MANZELLA: It was last spring. The day was misty, I mean, not misty, like I couldn't see through it. But it was odd and eerie. It was a damp, overcast, chilly afternoon and just the whole energy of the woods and everything around me just felt frightening and unsettling. I went for a run, probably for about an hour. And, it's when I was on my way back home that I saw this. The house I grew up in, and the cemetery where I saw this, and where all this happened, happens to be at the bottom of, like, a fairly steep hill. So, I was coming down the street, you know, and it's, like, a wooded street. There's some houses up the street from where we live. But in the area where I saw this, it happens to be densely wooded. There aren't any developments or homes nearby.

FANNY MANZELLA (cont'd): There's a cemetery set back in the woods. The tombstones are still fully visible from the street. It's maybe 15 yards or so, up a little wooded path, the cemetery, and I always just unconsciously look at the cemetery every time I pass it. Whether I'm driving past it, walking past it, running past it, whatever, I'm just always looking. So, on my way back from this run heading down the hill, I glanced over and looked up the path. And I saw what I saw, which was incredibly alarming and very frightening. I described it as like an ogre. I would say it was at least, like, 15 feet tall, so nowhere near the size or structure of a human being. And this creature was 100%, at the entry of this gated cemetery, obscuring the view into the cemetery. Like, I really couldn't even see any of the tombstones because it was right there blocking the entry of the cemetery. Incredibly huge, covered in hair, kind of reddish, or, like, warm toned, like orangish, reddish fur. The face, I can tell you, was not hairy. It was the only part of the creature that wasn't covered in hair, as far as I could see. The rest of the animal was hairy, but like stringy, like, wiry hair, not like a luxuriant animal coat.

FANNY MANZELLA (cont'd): It clearly had arms, legs. It was on two feet like a person would be, clearly not a person. Broad chested, broad shouldered. It was definitely close enough that I could 100% say it wasn't a stump, or a bear, or a tree. It couldn't have been a moose or, anything like, you know, not that moose even live here, but it couldn't have been anything like that. And there was no mistaking what it was that I was seeing. I mean, it was clearly some sort of monster of some sort. I had an immediate response to it. I was immediately terrified, filled with dread, and it was facing me, facing the road. I could see its face, but I couldn't make its features out, but I felt that it had seen me, and I did not want to be there any longer. It was a scary, bad feeling. And I felt like that's part of what makes it what it was. I felt like I was at threat of being attacked or chased. I could see its face and I saw it either saw me or was going

to see me in any moment, which is why I bolted. I ran as fast as I possibly could. I mean, this was after, probably, I'd already run five or six miles, so I was fairly tired, but I had an extreme boost of energy at that moment. I did look over my shoulder to make sure that it wasn't following me.

TRACY MANZELLA: So, when Fanny came home, she came in like she was caught on fire. She was out of breath. She was panting. She was obviously panicked. She was clearly terrified.

NARRATION:

TRACY MANZELLA, FANNY'S MOTHER, HAS LIVED IN REHOBOTH SINCE 1990.

TRACY MANZELLA: One of the things that she clearly insisted to me, because when I think of Bigfoot, I think of sort of a tall, mangy, hairy creature that is fairly benign. I don't think of it as a malignant force. But from her experiential description, what seemed to strike her more than anything else was the evil, and she used that word, and menacing nature of this creature that she saw.

FANNY MANZELLA: It was an ominous sensation. Like, I can't say, like, it wasn't like, "Oh, I saw this creature and it was, you know, interesting, or maybe it was friendly." I was filled with terror, and I'm not someone that scares super easily at all.

TRACY MANZELLA: She insisted that it was evil, and had fangs, and had a menacing face. And I said "Fangs? 'Cause I never think of a Bigfoot with fangs." I asked her to draw it for me and I think what she drew was sort of a demonic looking, devil-like facial features. I was not at all skeptical about the experience that she had, because having lived here for nearly 30 years or more, I've heard a lot. I would say that, having raised my kids here, all of them were uneasy about the woods. I used to describe the place as being like a Bermuda Triangle to friends and family about experiences and happenings and what it's actually sort of like living in this swampy terrain.

NARRATION:

FANNY HAS SHARED HER EXPERIENCE WITH VERY FEW PEOPLE.

FANNY MANZELLA: I didn't really want to talk about it because I felt like it made me sound a little crazy, honestly. Of all the legends in the Bridgewater Triangle, I feel like the Bigfoot one, to me, seems like the most preposterous. I just feel like a Bigfoot sighting, even in my own mind, sounds so, like, insane and bizarre and, like, outlandish that describing it even to people that know the Bridgewater Triangle, like my own parents, like I felt I had to say, "I'm not crazy. I really saw this."

NARRATION:

FOR PARANORMAL INVESTIGATOR CHRIS PITTMAN, AN ENCOUNTER LIKE FANNY'S IS NOT AT ALL SURPRISING. BIGFOOT-TYPE CREATURES ARE ONE OF THE MOST COMMON SIGHTINGS IN THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE.

CHRIS PITTMAN: I collect Bigfoot sightings. I collect reports from people who say that they saw something that's like a Bigfoot. But these reports, they vary a tremendous amount. They're not all the same. One person might tell me that they saw an eight-foot-tall creature that was covered with long red hair, and then another person saw a six-foot creature that was covered with short white hair, and then a third person might have seen a 12-foot-tall creature that had no hair on its face. I've never had a case where somebody said that they saw a creature and then someone else said that they saw a creature two hours later, a few miles away, and it was identical. All the cases are isolated. All of the cases are different. But to me, that's compelling in a way because it's clear to me that these people aren't just hearing a story and then imagining something that's the same, or fabricating something maliciously that's the same as something that they've already heard. They're all different.

CHRIS PITTMAN (cont'd): Fanny told me that she saw this creature that she described as looking like a troll or an ogre. She said that it was massive, really frightening looking. I mean, she described it as being like a monster. The creature that Fanny told me that she saw kind of fits within the vast range of creatures that people have reported to me that they saw and they said, "I think I saw a Bigfoot." I think that she's totally credible and where she was on the road, she certainly was close enough to it to have been able to see if it was just a person standing there. So, I believe that what she's saying is true. And if it wasn't a person, what could it have been?

NARRATION:

WHEN CHRIS INTERVIEWED FANNY ABOUT HER ENCOUNTER, HE LEARNED THAT FANNY'S PARENTS HAVE HAD THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES WITH STRANGE PARANORMAL PHENOMENA. FOR PETER MANZELLA, FANNY'S FATHER, IT HAPPENED 15 YEARS AGO, WHEN HE WAS DRIVING HOME FROM WORK ON A DARK, MOONLESS NIGHT.

PETER MANZELLA: I was driving my truck back to my house, and I was fairly close, maybe a couple miles away from my house. All of a sudden, sort of right in front of my truck, these three lights appeared, which seemed to be keeping pace with my truck, which I slowed down immediately. The lights were not really like lights. They looked like holes that had been cut in some black fabric. They didn't have the usual quality of a light, like a headlight, or a flashlight, or any light that I knew of. They seemed to be, you know, like, looking through holes in a black board or something.

TRACY MANZELLA: It was very late at night. It was close to midnight, if not after. And he blew in the door and he said, "You just can't believe what I've just seen." And then he described to me that there were these lights. And one of the things about Rehoboth, there are no lights in Rehoboth. In other words, it is, there are no streetlights. It's one of the nice things about living here. When it's dark, it is dark. And when it's cloudy, it is so dark. It's like you can't even hardly see your hand in front of your face. If it's not a helicopter or an airplane, you'd be hard put to figure out where that light was coming from. And he told me that, when he got out of the car and he looked, he saw this triangular shaped vessel or craft, that was just above the tree line, just hovering at the tree line. So, it wasn't like it could be a plane, or, like, a helicopter, because

they would have been, A) the helicopter would have been noisy and B) the plane, you know, it'd be moving along. And when he got out of the car, and he pulled over and he shut his truck lights off, it just shot away. And there was absolutely no sound. There was no, you know, motor, engine or anything like that. There was no sound of any kind.

PETER MANZELLA: They vanished into a point. I thought it was odd. As a matter of fact, I drove home and I thought I would call the police to see if anybody else had seen anything odd. I don't think I called them because I thought they'd, like, ask me my name and then say, you know, some, "Oh, there's that nut job on Chestnut Street." So, I didn't. I still don't know what it's all about. I have, like, tried to think about other phenomenon that could have caused it, but I didn't get very far either with a paranormal explanation or the scientific explanation. I don't know what it all means at all.

NARRATION:

TRACY MANZELLA HAS HAD HER OWN PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE. HERS OCCURRED 12 YEARS AGO, WHEN SHE WAS DRIVING HOME WITH HER YOUNGEST DAUGHTER.

TRACY MANZELLA: We were doing our typical teenager-mother dynamic of having an argument in the car. It was a chilly night, so we had our windows rolled up. It was dark early, so it probably must have been five o'clock. And we were heading down our street, and just before we got to the driveway, and we're still on the street, we were bombarded from all sides with the brightest flashlights. Like, what you might think of those early flashes that you saw in the 20s and 30s, those, you know, that the press would carry, but as if there had been maybe 20 of them going off all at once, and from all sides. It was a incredible bombardment of lights.

TRACY MANZELLA: And it didn't seem to come from a single source. It seemed to come... we were sort of engulfed in it. And we immediately, you know, stopped what we were arguing about, and we looked at each other. And I rolled the windows down. There was no sound. There was no helicopters. There was nothing. And it went quickly as it came. But it was just really a shock, and a surprise, and a mystery as to what had happened. And, we both looked at each other, and we're just kind of like, what the heck was that? But we kind of had lived here long enough to know things sort of happen here. It's just a part and parcel of living here.

NARRATION:

SO HOW CAN THE UNUSUAL PARANORMAL ACTIVITY AROUND HOCKOMOCK SWAMP BE EXPLAINED?

CHRIS PITTMAN: Nobody really knows what has triggered the paranormal activity in the Bridgewater Triangle. There are a lot of theories about it. Some people think that there are certain areas of the earth that have some kind of energy that allows people to get a glimpse of another dimension. There's people that think maybe it's the tremendous amount of water flowing through the Hockomock Swamp, the billions and billions of gallons of water that are there, that somehow creates an energy that some aspect of the paranormal can use to manifest itself.

TRACY MANZELLA: I think that you hear stories about people going to deserts and having paranormal experiences, and people going to mountains and have these experiences. And I think there's, like, desert energy and there's, like, mountain energy, and I think there's swamp energy. I think that that's what's going on here, is I think the Hockomock and his tributaries, which reach into where we live. We're not at Ground Zero, but we're certainly a part of that great swamp. And perhaps the traumatic history from this area, it's just sort of remained. It just seems like the energy is stuck.

CHRIS PITTMAN: Some people have made a connection between the paranormal activity in the Bridgewater Triangle area and the kind of dark aspects of local history. King Philip's War, the conquest and eventual genocide of the Native population of this area. I think there can be a tendency of people to try to look at the history of the Bridgewater Triangle area, and look at the wars and the struggles that have happened here and try to connect that to the paranormal aspect. But I would encourage people to look back further than that and think about all those centuries about which we don't know anything at all. And realize that, you know, even though this was such a long time ago, there are still vestiges and remnants of these people that we can see even today, and it's possible that some aspects of these paranormal experiences that people have might be connected to that.

TRACY MANZELLA: I find them interesting stories and I don't discredit the stories I hear because I believe them absolutely.

FANNY MANZELLA: I'm 100% a believer in the paranormal as it relates to the Bridgewater Triangle. And this experience hasn't changed that at all. I mean, it hasn't intensified it really at all. It hasn't really altered it. I feel, I guess, the same way about it as I did before I saw it. It's just, now I've seen something. I go jogging still here all the time and go on long walks by myself all the time. Like, I'm not, like, living in fear or anything. I believe that what I saw, I'll probably never see again. I hope not to.

NARRATION:

IF YOU'VE HAD A PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE IN THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE OF MASSACHUSETTS, PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR STORY AT [UNSOLVED.COM](https://unsolved.com).

NEXT ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES...

KARYN SANDLOS: When I took the phone, it was my sister and I just immediately knew something was wrong. And she said, "I'm so sorry. It's Uncle Dave." And I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "He's been murdered."

NARRATION:

Unsolved Mysteries is a production of Cosgrove Meurer Productions and Cadence 13. It is executive produced by Terry Dunn Meurer and Chris Corcoran. Produced by Lloyd Lochridge, Christine Lenig, Courtney Ennis, and Paige Hymson. The Story Producer for this episode was

Cynthia Bowles, and it was edited by Charles Olivier. From Cadence 13, editing, mixing and mastering by Chris Basil, Andy Jaskiewicz and Bill Schultz. Production support by Sean Cherry and Ian Mandt. Artwork and design is by Curt Courtenay. Publicity by Josefina Francis and Hillary Schupf. The original theme music was composed by Gary Malkin and Michael Boyd.

THANKS FOR LISTENING TO EPISODE 4 OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES.