



SEEKING OUT THE SKINWALKER PART 2

[BY APRIL SLAUGHTER]

**CAN
SCIENCE
UNRAVEL
THE
MYSTERY?**

In my never-ending search for explanations behind paranormal events and phenomena, I am continually reminded that nothing is ever that easily explained. A subject of my fascination over the past several years has been a 480-acre piece of privately owned property located in Northeastern Utah. Nicknamed the Skinwalker Ranch, this land has reportedly been host to nearly every type of unexplained phenomena thought to exist. From UFOs to Bigfoot, poltergeists to cattle mutilations, this is no ordinary ranch, with no ordinary history. The Uintah Basin has long been an area rife with reports of the unexplained, stretching back decades and affecting a majority of the residents. Many of my childhood summers were spent in the basin with my extended family, and it wasn't until I was an adult that tales of odd experiences really began to catch my attention. After attending a Salt Lake City MUFON meeting in 2006 where the ranch was discussed, I went out in search of answers for myself. What I was about to learn produced an insatiable curiosity that led me down a path of discovery I could have never expected.

This story began when the Gorman family arrived at the ranch in 1994 with high hopes of successfully raising their cattle and living a life they hoped would be peaceful. It turned out to be anything but. Over the next couple of years this family would experience things usually only imagined in one's nightmares. They endured what most would deem unfathomable, and it was not until a man by the name of Robert Bigelow entered the picture that the Gormans could begin to decipher what might actually be happening around them. Bigelow, a successful Las Vegas businessman, created the National Institute of Discovery Sciences (NIDS) and acquired the property in 1996 to research. While NIDS now owned the ranch, Tom Gorman returned to his former home each day to manage the property and cattle under their employ. The scientists working for NIDS were sent to the ranch and began an extensive investigation into what was behind the events reported by the Gormans. The area was closed off and blanketed with surveillance equipment to capture anything anomalous that NIDS could study and try to explain. According to a series of articles Emmy award-winning journalist George Knapp wrote, "the effort constitutes the most intense and thorough surveillance of a UFO hotspot ever undertaken."

Other researchers and investigators were upset that the ranch would not be available to them to study, however Bigelow and NIDS felt it best to control the environment as outside interference was not conducive to collecting reliable data. Some speculated that the arrival of the NIDS

team would cause the odd activity at the ranch to cease but surprisingly it continued, though never in a repeatable pattern. Whatever was happening on the property seemed to be selective in regards to who witnessed the phenomena and in what form. Despite the efforts of the NIDS scientists to document activity, whatever was in control always seemed to be one step ahead of them, suggesting a pre-cognitive intelligence.

In one particular pasture, NIDS had set up a series of telephone poles with high tech monitoring cameras and equipment. At exactly 8:30 p.m. on the evening of July 19, 1998 the equipment atop one of these poles was completely destroyed. Wiring had been torn out of the three cameras, duct tape had meticulously been unwound and went missing altogether, and brackets had been shattered. Knowing that other cameras were in position to view this particular pole, NIDS reviewed the recordings and could not find an explanation as to what was responsible for the damage. Such was the case in every effort the team made to visibly document occurrences on the property, which had become their greatest source of frustration.

The harder the scientists with NIDS worked to record evidence on the ranch, the more the activity would evolve and elude them. Something invisible seemed to effortlessly move through the animals, and temporarily displace large amounts of water without explanation. Strangely perfect concentric ice circles would appear in ponds, and holes were found missing mass amounts of soil all throughout the property. On March 12, 1997 Tom Gorman and two NIDS researchers were alerted by the barking of dogs that something was nearby in the trees. They jumped in their vehicles and headed for the tree line, only to see what they described as a huge set of 'reptilian eyes' looking out at them from within the tree branches. They estimated the head of this creature must have been at least three feet wide. Another massive dog-like animal was also spotted on the ground beneath the tree. Tom, hunting rifle in hand, shot at both of the animals only to watch the one on the ground disappear before his eyes. The reptilian animal apparently fell out of the tree once

shot, making a loud thud but leaving no evidence behind save for an oddly shaped claw print in the snow. The closest print it could be compared to was that of the long-extinct velociraptor.

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While no human being was ever physically accosted, animals on the property were not as fortunate. It seemed that whatever was in control of the activity liked to target them, especially the cattle. On one particular Sunday morning, Tom and his wife were tagging the ears of newborn calves out in the pasture. After tagging one particular calf, the Gormans walked about 200 yards out into the pasture away from the animal and returned 45 minutes later to find it dead and stripped of flesh. Nearly 60 pounds had been inexplicably removed from the animal and not a single drop of blood was on or near the calf. A veterinarian was called to the scene and surmised that two extremely sharp instru-

ments had been used to mutilate the animal; by whom and how was never discovered. NIDS researchers were diligent in their efforts to secure any scientific documentation to explain all of the odd events on the ranch. However, they could never provide a solid piece of evidence for scientists and researchers to study in hopes of explaining the phenomena. A lot of time and money was put into this project only to end up with more questions than answers. The Gorman family eventually decided it was best to end their lives anew elsewhere and moved out of state. My intrigue with this 'cursed' land sparked a curiosity in me that I felt a great need to satisfy. The Uintah Basin had been my playground for so many years, and I began to wonder if experiences I had as a child were more memory than they were dreams, which I had always believed they were. One particular recollection stands out in my mind as something that may have been the beginning of my arduous journey into the realm of the skinwalker phenomena. As a child I often spent my summers with my aunt, uncle, and cousins at their home in Roosevelt, Utah. One afternoon, when I was about ten years old, I went for a walk in the pasture area located directly behind the house and extending up into the hills. With me came my uncle's German Shorthair Pointer. After about an hour of walking around, I began to head back toward the house when I noticed the dog was not with me. I turned as I approached the property gate to call for him when I saw him running toward me from the hills at an accelerated speed, as if he were trying to escape from something. Just as he reached me, he froze and fell over onto his side, eyes wide and panting. As I stared at him in confusion, I heard a voice say something to the effect of, "He's not hurt. Not here to hurt." I was startled as I looked

around, thinking someone had to have been within feet of me to hear them speak so clearly. No one was near me. However, about 100 or so yards away up on the hill I spotted a figure. I can only describe it as being the outline of a very tall human being, but dark and shadowed with no definitive detail. I too was frozen where I stood, seemingly unable to move or look away from this figure. The only memory I have following this event is finding myself on the living room couch a couple of hours later, exhausted. I went to check on the dog, and found him cowering in his pen as if he were genuinely frightened by something. Until I began to learn about the mysterious events in the basin, I thought my experience was nothing more than a naptime nightmare. Now I am not so sure. Following my attendance of a MUFON meeting in 2006 highlighting the ranch, I was eager to revisit the basin along with a small group of individuals to once again experience the high strangeness of the area for myself. Dave Rosenfeld, director of the Utah UFO Hunters (UUFOH) coordinated an expedition out to the property surrounding the ranch and off we went, hoping to experience or discover something profound. I did not expect what would befall our small group, huddled out in the dark the night we camped, nor would I have been able to guess that the memory of that night would slowly unfurl itself over a lengthy period of time afterward.

I was only partially aware of my surroundings that evening. What I know for certain is that I could see the command post NIDS had established near the homestead, the ominous ridge looming behind it, and a sky full of stars without a cloud to be seen. Something blacked out a patch of sky above us, as we listened to what can only be described as a soft 'whirring' sound. While recording equipment was in use, nothing was captured and we were not surprised. Strange flashes of light were witnessed by us all in one of the pastures, and I caught a glimpse of a figure moving behind one of our vehicles. Strange shifts in emotion flowed effortlessly over us all, along with an unsettling sense of being watched. Paranoia? Perhaps. None of really believed much of anything paranormal was happening at the time. We were hoping one of the myriads of strange cryptids would pay us a visit, or that a UFO would come plainly into our sight. I wouldn't have thought much of what I remembered before retiring to the tent to sleep in the middle of the night; that is, of course, until I went missing for an hour and a half...

PLEASE NOTE: *The ranch is privately owned property, and there is zero tolerance for illegally gaining entry to the ranch. You will be prosecuted.*

Resources:

Hunt for the Skinwalker by Colm A. Kelleher, Ph.D. & George Knapp

Path of the Skinwalker by George Knapp (3 part series of articles published in the Las Vegas Mercury)

<http://www.aliendave.com/>

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