

Haw River Vampires

Haw River, for those wondering, is located in North Carolina, and is one of the tributaries that feed into the Cape Fear River; it is also the site of the one of the most vicious and relentless clandestine cryptozoological eradication campaigns in American history. To give you an idea of how long the fight's taken place... it started under the aegis of the Confederate Secret Service, got transferred to the Pinkertons when that group quietly brought in the remnants of the CSS in 1871, and was only taken over by the FBI in 1938. The Feds officially closed the books on the fight in 1970, but the entire operation is still deeply classified and the documentation for it has been thoroughly and deliberately lost in the archives. Preferably until everybody involved is safely dead of old age.

Why? Well. The extermination of a sentient species, honestly: what old autopsies of Haw River Vampires still remain demonstrate that they were self-aware tool users who probably had at least a spoken language. They were also murderous, sadistic, deeply xenophobic, and intrinsically vicious blood-drinking amphibians that could squeeze through a six-inch gap and batten on whatever

was on the other side. At this point, it's unclear whether Haw River Vampires were always this awful -- legends of [mermaids](#) in the area stretch back for centuries, with all that that implies -- or whether pre-Civil War industrial waste products made them that way, but by the time that the CSS started investigating 'heinous blockade running Unionist reprisals' in 1863 the species was thoroughly at war with humanity.

How did humanity fight back? Mostly by destroying as much of the local ecology as they could. The basic principles apparently were: keep the water filthy, which seemed to keep the Haw River Vampires from breeding too quickly, then track down each clutch of eggs, wipe those out, then repeat. Endlessly: neither the CSS nor the Pinkertons had the resources to do more than keep the problem manageable. It wasn't until the 1950s that the federal government was able to systematically address the problem (as usual, using the Interstate Highway project for cover). A combination of dams and sonar tracking drove the breeding population below viability level, the project was deemed closed, and everybody went on to other, hopefully less unpleasant, duties.

And, no: nobody later bothered to tell anybody in the Environmental Protection Agency any of this. To be fair,

doing so in the immediate post-Watergate era would have maybe led to riots or worse, and in the 1980s it looked like the species was truly dead anyway, and in the 1990s the senior people involved in the original project started dying of old age. Which means, of course, that when scattered reports of disappearances and 'animal attacks' in the Cape Fear region started popping up again in 2005 there wasn't much of an immediate response. There was *something* -- North Carolina went on to have a spate of suspicious, yet oddly muted, water contamination incidents -- but the government apparently wasn't actively dealing with the problem, or possibly not even really aware of it on an institutional level.

But also in that time a certain company called Securitas Critical Infrastructure Services (an offshoot of the Pinkertons, in a deeply and convolutedly corporate way) now operates more and more in the Cape Fear area. Do they know what they're looking for? Does **anybody** really know, at this point?

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