

Creatures of the Night

By Scott M. Anna

Ever wonder while sitting in the serenity of your porch, on a star studded night in the North Georgia Mountains, what the sounds are that you hear? Whether they be off in a distance, or seem to be right at your porch steps, you know that these sounds are not human-related.

One morning about 5:00, I was awakened by the sound of what sounded like "Leo" the MGM Lion. After rushing to my bedroom window, wanting to see what the roar was all about that frightened me and my dog Gollum, I saw the slithering figure of what I now know as a Puma "Mountain Lion." Finding it's way to the North Georgia Mountains through the Appalachian Trail, it found its way to my cabin, where numerous woodland creatures have been seen throughout this past year.

I had asked a neighbor if she had known of any Puma's being sighted in this area. She told me that indeed they had. Not too long before my encounter, she told me that she had seen one running across the ridge above her house. Being that Puma's are nocturnal, most people don't get the privilege of seeing one, much less hearing the roar of one as I did. This was the only encounter with the Puma that I was able to have, so back to the other creatures.

Sitting on my porch I have been startled by many sounds, such as the howl of a coyote, when the moon is full, screeching hoots from Screech Owls, loud cackles from something I still have no idea what from, along with a gobble or two from Wild Turkeys.

Back in the months of August and September, I had the



Painting by Scott M. Anna

honor of living along a Black Bear trail, where numerous sightings occurred, (stories of these encounters are on my website: www.cabinercrittersart.com). The majority of the sightings of the Black Bears were during broad daylight, but there were a few times when either the sound of them walking through the woods, or a huff from a mama bear warning her cubs that there were humans nearby were heard.

Many of the "Creatures of the Night" don't make a sound, but the shine of a flashlight can make them easier to see. The glow of an opossum's eyes are often seen, along with other tree creatures such as owls. Deer are plenty in this area, and are often visiting day and night. In the Autumn, the cicadas fill the night air with their annoying, sometimes deafening chirps. Thank the Man above He didn't make these creatures year-long visitors!

And yes, I must not forget the birth of the little nocturnal

creatures in my dryer vent. Flying squirrels, which make an interesting night out on the porch by viewing the white streak as they fly by, were born in my dryer vent, which I have since closed up.

So take this challenge, if you are blessed with living in the woods as I am, and sit out on your porch in the late evening, listen to the sounds of the woods. Write the sounds down that you can and can't recognize, talk with your neighbors, see if they can fill in the blanks of the "can't identify" list, or visit wildlife sites on the internet that have .wav files that play the sounds of these various woodland creatures. Also, make sure you have a bright flashlight to search around in the brush, and tree limbs for bright reflective eyes. Being a Wildlife Artist and Photographer, I have been living my lifelong dream among the numerous creatures I am able to paint and photograph, and envision the creatures I am unable to see.

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