

Fig. XV: The Braxton County visitor, as the 1952 witnesses described it. House-style plate.

CRYPTID № 15

THE FLATWOODS MONSTER

The night something came down over Braxton County, West Virginia, in 1952. A ten-foot figure with a glowing face and no legs, the first great landing-and-encounter case of the flying-saucer age. The real account, a full 5E stat block built around its unearthly glide, and a system-neutral card.

> *"It did not hunt or hate. It simply arrived, and looked at them with a light instead of a face."*

THE LEGEND

On the evening of September 12, 1952, something came down over Flatwoods, West Virginia. Three boys were playing when a bright object crossed the sky. It arced over the hills and seemed to land on a nearby farm. They ran to get Kathleen May, a local mother. She came back with them, along with a teenager named Gene Lemon and more boys. A dog ran ahead up the dark hill. Then it came bolting back, terrified. The group kept climbing toward whatever had fallen.

At the top they walked into a thick, sickening mist. Two small lights glowed in a nearby tree. Lemon raised his flashlight, and the hillside lit up. Something towered over them, maybe ten feet tall. It had a round red face

inside a tall pointed hood. Below that was a dark, pleated, metallic body, and no clear legs. It hissed, and it glided toward them. They ran. For days afterward some of them were sick, with burning throats and nausea.

The story did not stay in Flatwoods. A newspaper artist drew the thing from the witnesses' own descriptions, and the sketch ran across the state within days. Kathleen May and Gene Lemon told it on national television a week later. It was 1952, the first great summer of flying saucers, and the whole country was watching the sky. The Braxton County Monster became one of the most vivid landing-and-encounter cases of the entire era. People had reported lights before. These witnesses said the lights had come down, and that something had stepped out.

There is a tidy explanation, and it is worth knowing. Skeptics point to a meteor that crossed the sky that night, and to a startled barn owl in a tree, whose heart-shaped face and shining eyes can look like a hooded figure with a glowing stare. Add fog, and fear, and the dark, and you have your monster. It is a good explanation. It is simply not the one the witnesses believed. They were certain that something had landed, and that it was not from here.

So the Flatwoods Monster is the fear of the thing that comes down. Not a beast out of the woods, but a visitor from somewhere colder and farther away. It does not hunt, and it does not hate. It arrives, vast and wrong and unreadable, and it regards you with a light where a face should be. Run it as the night the sky came down. The horror is not that it attacks. The horror is that it is real, it is here, and it owes you no explanation at all.

For D&D 5E — STAT BLOCK

For Every Other Game — CREATURE CARD

The Flatwoods Monster

Large aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)
Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Perception +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands no known language; communicates only in a rising hiss

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **PB** +3

Unearthly Glide. The visitor hovers and never touches the ground. It ignores difficult terrain, cannot be knocked prone, grappled, or restrained, and makes no sound as it moves except a low continuous hiss. It does not so much walk toward a target as arrive at it.

Noxious Mist. A pungent, sickening haze pours off the visitor. At the start of each of its turns, every creature within 15 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of that creature's next turn. A creature poisoned this way cannot take reactions, its eyes and throat burning.

The Flatwoods Monster

No stat lines. Just the night the sky came down on a West Virginia hilltop, and the thing the witnesses swore had stepped out of it. Where the Wendigo cannot be fed and the Dwayyo cannot be confirmed, the Flatwoods Monster cannot be understood: it arrives, it regards you, and it leaves, and nothing it does makes sense in human terms.

HOW IT BEHAVES AT THE TABLE

- **It is a visitor, not a predator.** It has no apparent interest in eating, killing, or even communicating. It arrives, it looms, it regards the party with its light, and the not-knowing-why is the whole dread.
- **It cannot be fought the usual way.** It hovers, cannot be pinned, and ordinary weapons slide off. Let the party feel how little purchase they have, and how wrong that is.
- **The sky is part of it.** The light that crosses the heavens, the thing that comes down, the way it rises back into the dark. Frame the encounter vertically, from above.

WAYS TO USE IT

- **The night something landed.** A light falls beyond the ridge. The livestock will not settle. Someone has to go up the hill and see what came down.

Otherworldly Frame. The visitor has no clear anatomy and does not bleed, and nothing about it reads as alive. Magic cannot reliably determine whether it is a creature, a construct, or something else, and effects that target only one of those categories simply fail against it.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The visitor makes two attacks: one with its Reaching Claw and one use of Searing Regard (if available), or two with its Reaching Claw.

Reaching Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

Searing Regard (Recharge 5–6). The round face flares, and a cone of red light spills out in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success. A creature that fails is also blinded until the end of its next turn.

Rise (Recharge 6). The visitor glides straight up to 40 feet and a shimmering light climbs the sky above it. Until the start of its next turn, attack rolls against it have disadvantage. It may use this to break off an encounter entirely, ascending into the dark the way it came.

Running it. The Flatwoods Monster is an ENCOUNTER, not a brawl, and

- **The sickness with no source.** People near a certain hollow fall ill, with burning eyes and nausea, days after a light was seen in the sky. The party traces it to the landing site.
- **First contact gone sideways.** It may be trying to make contact, or surveying, or simply passing through. Nothing it does is legible as friendly or hostile, which is more frightening than either.
- **Cut it loose from 1952.** Any 'something came down' works: a falling star in a fantasy sky, a thing in the crater, a visitor at the edge of a spelljamming lane. Keep the glide, the glow, the mist, and the unreadability.

THE HONEST FOOTNOTE (FOR THE GM)

- There is a thorough mundane explanation, and a good table can use it. Skeptics credit a meteor that night plus a startled barn owl (its heart-shaped face and shining eyes reading as a hooded figure with a glowing stare), with fog and fear doing the rest.
- Run it either way, or both: play the visitor straight, then let a skeptic in the party build the owl case, and never fully settle it. (Note for accuracy: despite the legend, Project Blue Book never actually investigated Flatwoods.)

the block is built to feel that way. It glides, glows, hisses, and sickens; it cannot be pinned, it shrugs off ordinary weapons, and magic cannot even confirm what it is. A party used to killing monsters will find there is almost nothing here to grab, trip, or reliably hurt, and that wrongness is the point. Lead with the landing and the dread: the light in the sky, the dog that runs back, the mist on the hilltop, the ten-foot shape that regards them with a light instead of a face. It may never land a killing blow and still be the scariest thing the party meets all campaign, because it is not playing the monster game at all. Deliberately CR 7, but scale by DISTANCE: at low levels it is a sighting, a landing site, a sickness with no cause, no combat at all; at high levels it is a full close encounter with the Searing Regard in play. Commit to the visitor at the table, and keep the owl in your back pocket (see the card) for the morning after, when the party is no longer sure what they saw.

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