

THE WEEPING SQUONK

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

In the natural history of America and in its folklore, there are animals recorded in the stories that are fearsome critters,---like the Cactus Cat, (the Cactifelinous Inebrious) or the splinter cat, (the Felynx Arbordiffisus) or the Billdad, whose latin name escapes me for the moment. It is a Paul Bunyan type natural history as recorded some years ago by B. A. Bodkin. The foreward was written by Carl Sandburg who in his day had seen 'em all. And one of them, indigeneous to Pennsylvania, is the Squonk, or by its scientific name, the (Lacrimacorporus Dissolvens), which translated means the dissolving tear. And the only place it has ever been actually seen is around the Mount Alto and the Caledonia State Forest area, but believe me it has been seen---Carl Sandburg saw one once while it was in the process of dissolving. The range of the squonk is very limited--that's why it never got out of the habitat of the Caledonia woods. Few people outside the region of south central Pennsylvania have ever heard of the quaint beast, which is said to be fairly common in the hemlock forests of the Commonwealth, although a squonk has never been seen in the northern tier counties--snipe yes, but not squonk. The squonk is of a very retiring disposition, generally travelling about at twilight and dusk. Because of its misfitting skin, which is covered with warts and moles, it is always unhappy. Hunters who are good at tracking are able to follow the squonk by its tear-stained trail, for the animal weeps constantly. When

cornered, mind you, and when escape seems impossible or when surprised and frightened, it may even dissolve itself in tears; like a diamond back salamander or a chameleon changing colors. Squonk hunters are more successful on frosty moonlight nights, when tears are shed slowly and the squonk dislikes moving about--nights like tonight's would be good for squonk hunting. On these nights you can come upon them by the sound of weeping under hemlock trees. Last person I knew who nearly got one was a certain J. P. Wentling of Mount Alto, who when last heard was living in Minnesota looking for Billdads. He made a clever capture of the Pennsylvania Squonk by mimicking the animal and inducing it to hop into a sack. While carrying it home, his burden became lighter and lighter and the weeping inside the burlap ceased. Wentling unslung his squonk sack and looked in. There was nothing there but tears and bubbles. Which might give one food for thought. If you could get the Lacrimacorpus Dissolvens into a sack on a freezing night--below zero like up in Kane or Phillipsburg, you might be able to run home fast enough to get the squonk into your freezer. I'm sure the William Penn Museum in Harrisburg would be interested in having one. It's something to do on a cold night in Pennsylvania, and remember who told you.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.