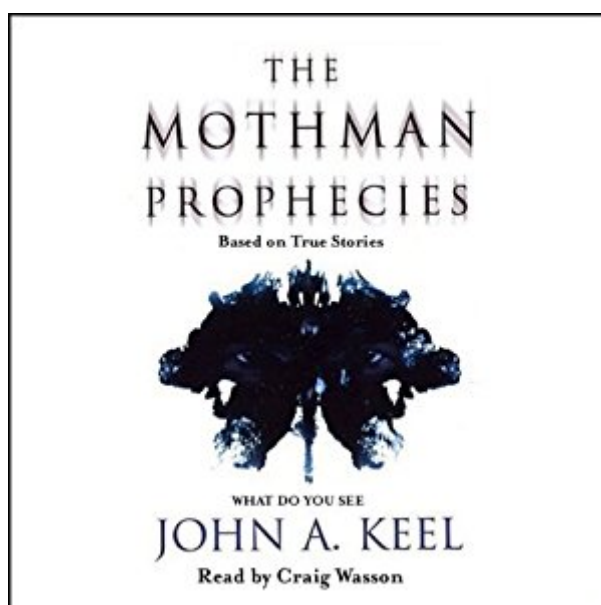


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The Mothman Prophecies



Synopsis

West Virginia, 1966. For thirteen months the town of Point Pleasant is gripped by a real-life nightmare that culminates in a strategy that makes headlines around the world. Strange occurrences and sightings, including a bizarre winged apparition that becomes known as the Mothman, trouble this ordinary American community. Mysterious lights are seen moving across the sky. Domestic animals are found slaughtered and mutilated. And journalist John Keel, arriving to investigate the freakish events, soon finds himself an integral part of an eerie and unfathomable mystery... --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John A. Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies*, as a book, is just as intriguing and mysterious as the topics he is writing about. In a nutshell, the book reads as if Keel kept a loose-leaf journal about paranormal events, both reported to and experienced by him, over the course of many years, then decided to throw all of the individual pages in the air, let them land as they might, stuck a couple hundred of them in a notebook and sent them off to his publisher. There is no novel-like narrative in *The Mothman Prophecies*, and it's not in chronological order-instead it choppily bounces back and forth and for its entire length. The funny thing is that it works for the most part. I'm hesitant to say that the atemporally schizophrenic nature of the journal entries was an intentional, clever move on Keel's part, but it just may have been. The net effect is to mirror the inexplicability, seeming pointlessness, and skewered nature of the phenomena that Keel is talking about, but unfortunately, sometimes the

attention-deficit-disorder-ladenness of the book is just aggravating. The primary thing to remember, if the book sounds interesting enough to you to tackle it (not that it's longer than your average pulp novel), is not to expect anything like a normal plot. There's an endless parade of names and events, many of which are only mentioned in one section, and it takes awhile to stop thinking that you're going to have to remember them to understand the story later. There really is no story. But once you stop waiting for a story to begin, *The Mothman Prophecies* should be more enjoyable to you. There are plenty of reasons you might be interested in this book. Of course, there's the surface topic—a series of paranormal events ranging from UFO's to flying "birdmen" (the Mothman) to misbehaving telephones. If you're at all a student of the paranormal, you'll want to read this. Or, you probably already have. For me, I was initially intrigued by the film and the claim that it was based on true events (although publisher Tor calls it fiction on the copyright/catalog data page). But once I started reading, I quickly forgot about the film and instead was fascinated with the realization that *The Mothman Prophecies* must have been one of Chris Carter's primary sources for various plots of *The X-Files*. If you're an *X-Files* fan, *The Mothman Prophecies* will tie the show together for you in an unprecedented way. After you read this book, the "mytharc" shows (all the alien conspiracy stuff) will no longer seem disconnected from the monster shows. And you'll frequently find yourself reminded of specific episodes correlated to specific journal entries in the book. Undoubtedly, you'll find yourself wondering at some point how much of *The Mothman Prophecies* is fact and how much is fiction. Tor calling the book "fiction" doesn't help towards taking it too seriously, and neither does Keel's frequent references to UFO-monger Gray Barker, who was exposed as making up at least some of the things he wrote about—see, for instance, John C. Sherwood's May/June 1998 article in *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine. Joe Nickell has also prepared a "debunking" of the Mothman for *Skeptical Inquirer's* March/April 2002 issue. I'm nothing if not a skeptic, but Nickell doesn't actually debunk much. He suggests that Mothman sightings were actually sightings of owls, and that's about all there is to his article. Keel's book, and the film that prompted Nickell's article, is about much more than can be explained by sighting an owl and mistaking it for something else. From my standpoint as a philosopher, there's something even more interesting about Keel's book. It's a wonderful example of instrumentalism. Instrumentalism, briefly, is the idea that theories about phenomena, insofar as they depart from simply recounting the phenomena in a dry manner, are interchangeable. That is, there are a multitude of possible theories for the metaphysics "behind" any observed event, and even allowing Occam's Razor (which is just a convention, not a fact, so we need not allow it—it could be misleading), any of them that accounts for the observed event is just as good as any other. Of course Keel sometimes leads us on by simple juxtaposition of easily explainable events—even going

so far as implying that there could have been something paranormal about the missing minutes on the Watergate tapes-and he could be making up a sizable percentage of the anecdotes to entertain us, but that's ultimately why you should read this book anyway-for entertainment. It's also, even if fiction, a fascinating psychological artifact, and even as fiction with plenty of structural quirks, an entertaining read.

I just had to clarify the fact that the movie is "based" on the events that are recorded in Keel's book. The book is by far and away better than the movie. First off the book takes place in 1967/68 not the present. Besides giving you a look into all the paranormal phenomenon floating around Point Pleasant at the time it also gives you a look into the attitude and fear the people of the small town were feeling at the time. There are stories of aliens, strange lights, men in black, mysterious phone calls and of course the mothman. The name is misleading as he does not resemble a moth at all (in fact the name came from a reporter making a reference to a Batman villain). But to anyone interested in cryptozoology he is a beast that is worth looking into. True the book is a little egotistical as John Keel makes himself out to be a superhero at times but I genuinely enjoy his take on the situations. His writing style is a little choppy and sometimes jumps into other accounts of unexplained events but it is easy to get through. As this is really the only book that centers on the Mothman and the events in Point Pleasant it is definitely recommended reading for paranormal fans. There is even a section on Indrid Cold (another being worth looking into for the interesting and sometimes ridiculous story). Just please don't slight this chilling tale because of the terrible movie apparently made from the book's cliff notes.

There are studied subjects and phenomenon out there that defy scientific explanation. Just because one cannot put a particular phenomenon under the rigours of scientific examination, doesn't mean such phenomenon is merely the product of a deranged mind. The reason the protectors of divine rationality are reluctant to examine the paranormal is it seems to contradict known physical laws. It doesn't follow the rules. However, if you have actually had the fortune or misfortune to experience such phenomenon i.e., spirits, UFO's, demonic creatures or source less cries of anguish in the night, ~The Mothman Prophecies~ can seem almost plausible. The book is certainly entertaining and, surprisingly, at times quite frightening. The book essentially focuses on a series of unexplained events that manifested in and around the little West Virginia town of Point Pleasant. Numerous reports of Unidentified Flying Objects and strange lights in the southern skies motivated John Keel to investigate what all the fuss was about, and if there was any truth to the reports. His

investigations led him down a peculiar path of events and personal experiences that finally pushed him to develop a theory, albeit an extraordinary one. What is the 'Mothman'? A journalist coined the term from the popular Batman series, because the actual creature, taken from eyewitness accounts, resembles the legendary comic hero. The amount of actual sightings is nothing less than incredible, which leads one to suspect the beast's reality. The book only touches on the Mothman and relates a scattered assortment of weird events and unusual sightings from the 'Men in Black' to 'abductions' and the cries of infants in the night. Throughout the book, Keel attempts to connect the dots, so to speak, inferring that all the varied phenomenon could well come from a single source. This is a big reach, but so is the book as a whole. Keel proposes that these manifestations, UFO's, MIB, winged-beasts et al, possibly originate from an alternate reality - another dimension if you will. These other dimensional being(s) guide and play with the human race and have been for a very long time. Throughout history these beings have manifested in many guises and forms, according to a specific historical/social context, depending on civilizations particular belief system at the time. For example, in the middle ages, this other dimensional phenomenon showed in the form of witches, warlocks, fairies and elves. For the American Indian, the phenomenon appeared as nature spirits; and in ancient times, they manifested as winged-lions, centaurs and Olympic gods. Because of our technological advancements and predilection to anything 'scientific', they now show as flying saucers, aliens and FBI agents. In other words, Keel suggests that their form shows in the way we 'interpret' these sightings - screened through our socially conditioned minds. Generally these amazing stories are told in a matter of fact tone, a journalistic style, setting the reader up from the start to lend credence to the entire book. This is clever and it works. But one gets the impression that Keel is absolutely serious about his subject matter - and to this day is trying to get to the bottom of it. This is what makes the book intriguing and worth the time.

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