

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES STRIKE BACK!

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We read daily of dwindling numbers of California condors, bald eagles, manatees, even the Furbish lousewort. Remember the Snail Darter, the little fish that blocked the construction of a dam? All are endangered species. There is now growing but ominous evidence that some species are aggressively fighting back.

The first sign of this activity was discovered on Labor Day 1981 on Red Creek, Mississippi. An unusual cache was discovered near the habitat of the extremely rare Great Hairy Frog. The cache consisted of a copy of "Soldier of Fortune" magazine, several disguise kits, and directions for assembling the Israeli-made Uzi commando submachine gun. Nearby were the tracks and spoor of many different animals and birds. Only a fool would fail to note the obvious: some birds and animals were roaming the woods armed to the teeth – or bill.

Gordon Patton, a Red Creek regular, co-discoverer of the Great Hairy Frog, and a man as curious as a young cat, decided to investigate. He first located the animal linguist, Lord Greystoke, now living in the Edgar Rice Burroughs Memorial Trailer Park in St. Bernard Parish. Lord Greystoke, who now goes by the *nom de guerre* of P. J. "Bubba" Robichaux (having retired from his African enterprises many years ago to become a parimutuel operator), was able to teach Gordon how to talk to the animals. Prior to his journey into the Red Creek wilderness, Gordon practiced his new linguistic skill; he went on down to the Audubon Zoo. His first startling revelation is that the animals' true intentions when "they all axed fo' you" cannot be printed in a family-friendly newspaper.

But these and other discoveries will soon be published in the Florida Parishes Journal of Phrenology and Cuisinart Maintenance. Disguising himself as the rare blue-gummed albino armadillo, Gordon infiltrated the inner sanctum of the endangered species and learned that, yes,

they *are* armed, and, yes, they mean business: anyone shooting at an endangered species is liable to be answered by return fire.

Deception is also part of their scheme. Birders and wildlife management experts will tell you that there are only a few bald eagles in south Mississippi, but Gordon discovered many, many more. By wearing hairpieces, bald eagles can avoid recognition. The ivory-billed woodpecker likes to be thought of as extinct; Gordon found 73 of them occupying an old icehouse. Wearing rented tuxedos, they passed as a flock of lost penguins.

An interesting note learned from the birds is that, although they are grateful to the birders for their interest in their protection, the birders are considered mild perverts, voyeurs. As one red-wing blackbird told Gordon, “How’d some Audubon Society guy like me peering through *his* bedroom window?!!”

The Slug Darter, an extremely rare sub-species of the Snail Darter, has equipped itself with a miniature, aquatic version of the cattle prod, learning from its distant marine cousin, the electric eel. Habitats have been mined, noxious gases stand ready for release on intruders.

Gordon’s word to Sierrans is Beware! The razor-toting possum and the saber-toothed nutria are not to be taken lightly.

– Earl Higgins