

Jersey Devil

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The Jersey Devil begins with an unwanted child and a departure into the Pinelands. Its changing body and chilling cry have survived generations of retelling without one agreed description.

STATUS	Established regional folklore; origin story is legendary
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	New Jersey, USA
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Cryptids
STORY HISTORY	Longstanding New Jersey legend; eighteenth-century setting in common retellings

THE ACCOUNT

In the familiar Mother Leeds telling, a woman expecting her thirteenth child wishes the Devil would take it. The newborn changes into a grotesque creature and escapes into the dark Pinelands. Later accounts send it through wetlands and woodland with a piercing scream. Pictures disagree about the proportions, adding horns, wings, hooves or a forked tail. The New Jersey Pinelands Commission preserves the story as local folklore, including the gentler modern idea of a creature that protects its wooded home.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The commission's account is a source for the tradition, not a birth record or authenticated animal observation. The often-repeated eighteenth-century setting belongs to the legend and should not be mistaken for a verified supernatural event. Its varied drawings likewise show how people imagine the creature rather than a stable anatomy established through examination. No single illustration can stand in for every version told in the Pines.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

The departure is the part that lingers: something leaves an ordinary house and becomes too difficult to locate again. The forest does not create the family's fear; it gives that fear somewhere to continue living. The later protector version changes who should be afraid of whom.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Jersey Devil

New Jersey Pinelands Commission

<https://www.nj.gov/pinelands/infor/educational/facts/jerseydevil.shtml>

RETURN TO THE STORY

Jersey Devil

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<https://u225x.com/record/STR-CRYPT-030>