



Book Review

Meet the Sasquatch. By Christopher L. Murphy, in association with John Green and Thomas Steenburg. Blaine, WA: Hancock House Publishers, 2004. 239 pp. ISBN-0-88839-574-4. \$75.00 (hardcover).

Meet the Sasquatch is an encyclopedia of information about a creature known as Sasquatch, or Bigfoot. The book is a beautifully illustrated and clearly written account of references to sasquatch beginning in ancient times through 2004. The book was prepared in conjunction with a sasquatch exhibit (provided by the authors) held at the Vancouver Museum, British Columbia, Canada, in 2004.

There have been thousands of sasquatch sightings, as well as hundreds of casts made of their footprints, through the years in North America. A map (p. 171) displays these reports throughout North America for approximately one hundred years and numbers them at 2,557. Sightings have been reported in nearly every state in the United States, and in most provinces in Canada. Most scientific institutions and scientists remain unconvinced of the existence of this creature, or at least "would like to see some hard evidence." Perhaps much of the evidence is already out there since, as the authors' say in their introduction, "One thing is certain -- the mystery is far beyond the possibility of a "hoaxing." Mainly, there are just too many credible sightings, over too vast an area, over too many years, to even consider this possibility." (p. 9).

There are eleven chapters, an excellent bibliography, an index, and over 720 photographs, many in color, many published for the first time. Indeed, the book is worth getting for the history revealed by the

photographs alone.

Chapter 1 deals with reported early contact between the First Nations and "creatures of the forest," as seen in stone carvings (one dated to 1500 B.C.), pictographs, totems, costumes, and native mythology. For example, the Kwakiutl *D'sonoqua* mask (the whistling cannibal woman) is believed to represent the sasquatch.

A short Chapter 2 discusses early explorers and travelers in North America and their writings and reports about contacts with sasquatch creatures that go back about 200 years.

Chapter 3 is entitled, The Sasquatch "Classics," and includes the reports of six individuals who have claimed to have had various types of contact with sasquatch, beginning with Fred Beck (1) and four friends all attacked by multiple ape-like creatures while prospecting for gold in the Mt. St. Helens and Lewis River region of southern Washington State in 1924. Incidentally, the area is now known as Ape Canyon. Albert Ostman (2) said he was captured in 1924, in British Columbia, by a family of sasquatch and claims to have lived with them for six days before escaping. John Green and I interviewed Ostman shortly before he died and we were impressed with his memory for the details regarding his capture and subsequent escape and his accurate descriptions of ape-like creatures at a time when such details of great ape anatomy and behavior were certainly not common

knowledge. John W. Burns (3), who lived with the Chehalis Indians for years, first coined the name sasquatch (wildman of the woods) to describe the beings the Indians said lived in the forests, although, he never saw a sasquatch himself. Jeannie Chapman (4) and William Roe (5) reported seeing giant upright man-apes in British Columbia in 1941 and 1955 respectively. Jerry Crew (6) first made a plaster cast of a giant footprint he discovered near Bluff Creek, California, in 1958, spawning the appellation "Bigfoot" to describe the footprints. That term is usually used in the United States for the creature while sasquatch is the designation used in Canada, although both terms are interchangeable.

Chapter 4 considers the most visible expeditions that had been organized through 2004 to find sasquatch. There have been, actually, only two, both organized by the late Tom Slick, a Texas oil millionaire with a strong passion for finding sasquatch and yeti. The undertakings were known as the Pacific Northwest Expedition and the British Columbia Expedition. Unfortunately, after Slick's untimely death in a plane accident in 1962 funding stopped.

Chapter 5 discusses in great detail the famous Patterson-Gimlin film, made on October 20, 1967 along Bluff Creek, California, that alleges to portray a female Bigfoot walking on a sandbar retreating from the witnesses. The film has been examined through the years by scientists and nonscientists and several of their reports are reviewed in this chapter, including seven of the more significant claims that the film was a hoax. It is the opinion of the authors however, that the film "cannot be proven to be a fabrication" and that "findings indicate that the creature filmed was a natural creature." (p. 50).

Chapter 6, Bigfoot Goes Digital, is an absorbing discussion of how high tech equipment and computers have made it possible to create a digital Bigfoot that

accurately walks across the screen so scientific experts can analyze the biomechanics of its movement. As documentary producer Doug Hajicek states, "Technology will never replace field studies but it does greatly enhance such studies." (p. 93).

Chapter 7 is a short chapter presenting several pages of artwork by various people in addition to several morphologically interesting reconstructions of the head and face of sasquatch based on the Patterson-Gimlin film.

The physical evidence for the existence of sasquatch is presented in Chapter 8 and consists mainly of plaster casts and photos of footprints. Hundreds of large human-like footprints have been discovered all over North America and many of these have been preserved as casts. A significant assemblage of these is housed in the laboratory of Dr. Jeff Meldrum at Idaho State University. Based on the study these specimens, Meldrum has inferred a model of the functional morphology of the sasquatch foot, offering a coherent hypothesis of a locomotor adaptation suited to a giant bipedal ape (p. 129).

Some of these footprint casts may have been fabricated, but it seems highly unlikely that all have, since they span several decades and thousands of miles. The question of fabrication is considered in detail here and the carved wooden feet of the late Ray Wallace are presented for comparison and the Wallace family's claims of hoaxing examined. Pictures of 17 casts are shown on pp. 105-107, with dates, locations, and who made them. Their lengths range from 13" to 18.5" and they present an interesting array of information regarding the anatomy of the plantar surface of the inferred sasquatch foot. The authors conclude, "The existence of multiple, independent examples of footprint casts -- the combination of distinctive anatomy of the foot and details of ridge texture and flow make the probability of a hoax unlikely." (p. 141).

Among the most intriguing material to

appear in years is the Skookum cast. In 2000, the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO) coordinated a group that spent some time in the Skookum Meadows east of Mt. St. Helens, in Washington State. They removed a large cast of what appears to be an impression of the buttocks, thigh, lower leg, heel, and forearm of a reclining sasquatch. The conclusion of several scientists that examined the cast, is that it *may* represent the impression of an unrecognized hominoid. However, there are alternate claims that it is an impression of a bedded elk. The remainder of the chapter discusses purported hair samples of the creature that on analysis appear to resemble human hair, with certain consistent differences; maps showing the locations and numbers of the many sightings and tracks of sasquatch in North America; ordinances that have been adopted by several counties in Washington State for the protection of sasquatch; and finally, sasquatch roots. If the creature exists, where and what are its origins? The most logical theory was proposed by John Green, and advocated the late Grover Krantz, who stated that sasquatch belongs to a species allied to *Gigantopithecus blackii*, found in China, and thought to have become extinct as recently as 200-300 ka. *Gigantopithecus* represents the largest known primate that ever existed.

Chapter 9 pays tribute to many of the individuals, past and present, who have maintained a continuing interest in the arena of sasquatch investigation. One must read this chapter to get the full impact of the strong personalities of these individuals as described by the authors. For example, there is the incomparable, late Bob Titmus, "the greatest of the 20th century "sasquatch" hunters." (p.181). John Green is the legend among us. He is a true doyen of sasquatch investigators in North America, and I might add, still active. The late Grover Krantz spent some thirty-nine years investigating the evidence for and against sasquatch, writing several books and

numerous papers on the subject. His efforts will someday be more fully appreciated. The tributes continue for Rene Dahinden, Tom Steenburg, Daniel Perez, Richard Noll, J. Robert Alley, Ray Crow, Matt Moneymaker, Bobbie Short, and Paul Smith. This list, as noted by the authors, only includes a few of the many individuals who have contributed to sasquatch research.

Chapter 10 is an interesting discussion of the many sightings and stories of unusual hominid creatures in Russia with a short mention of the famous Yeti (or Abominable Snowman) from the Himalayan Mountains. The Yeti has been known for about 100 years from sightings and footprints, but not photographs. The latest information on Yeti is from a British expedition to Bhutan in 2001. Strands of hair found were attributed to Yeti and later when analyzed at Oxford University, the DNA in them appeared not to be human or bear and could not be recognized as from an existing animal. This fact, in itself, is most intriguing.

Chapter 11, Conclusion, can be wrapped up with the following statement from the authors, "The evidence presented in this work definitely indicates that sasquatch exists. Certainly, men have been sent to the gallows on the strength of less convincing evidence." (p. 228).

The book is a milestone in sasquatch publications and should be read by enthusiasts and skeptics alike, since there is so much to be learned from this book about this mysterious creature of the forest. The authors make a compelling case that there is substance to this mystery that clearly warrants serious consideration. Ultimately they bring us to the brink of a pertinent question: Is the evidence sufficient to concede the existence of sasquatch as a wildlife form that represents North America's great ape?

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