

A MonsterQuest Look at “Bigfoot”

Written by Administrator

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Bigfoot sightings have been reported throughout the United States but Washington State seems to be the epicenter of the Bigfoot universe with over 800 reported sightings. Bigfoot has commonly been described as a creature that is a cross between a human and an ape that is up to ten feet tall, broad shouldered, hairy and walks upright. In the episode entitled “Bigfoot”, the MonsterQuest team looks at some old evidence of Bigfoot and sends two expeditions into remote Washington areas in search of the creature.

The History

The Bigfoot name comes from a now famous incident that occurred near Bluff Creek in California. In 1958, construction worker Jerry Crew found giant footprints from an unknown creature. Plaster casts of the footprints showed them to be 17 ½ inches long. As the story got media attention, the creature that left the impressions behind was referred to as Bigfoot.

The Bigfoot story died down until the 20 October, 1967 when the controversial Patterson film was shot. Roger Patterson had gone to Bluff Creek to do a documentary on recent Bigfoot prints found in the area. While out on his expedition, he shot 953 frames of 16 mm film that is now the most famous footage of Bigfoot. The film shows what appears to be a large ape like creature walking through an area of broken trees. From the moment the film was released, skeptics have claimed that the film is a fraud consisting of a man in a monkey suit walking through the area. Patterson died in 1972 still claiming that the film was legit.

Bob Gimlin had accompanied Roger Patterson on the day that the film was taken. In a 2004 interview, Gimlin claims that the film was not a fraud. He states that he could see the muscle movement on the creature and that it appeared to be very real muscle. According to Bigfoot researcher, Christopher Murphy, numerous people have studied the film and no one has been able to say definitively that it was a fraud. Cryptozoologist John Kirk states that while many men have claimed to be dressed as Bigfoot in the Patterson film, none of them have been able to offer any proof that they had anything to do with it.

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Another big piece of Bigfoot evidence came from what is referred to as the Skookum expedition. In 2000, a team of Bigfoot researchers and wildlife biologist went to the Skookum Meadows area near Mount St. Helens to try to find evidence of Bigfoot. They choose this area due to finding ape signs like the breaking off of branches. The expedition set out apples to entice the creature with nearby mud wallows (muddy areas that easily retain impressions).

They returned to find that the bait was taken with some very large impressions left behind. The impression appeared to be the lower half of the body of a creature including a partial footprint. The impression was so large that it took 200 pound of plaster to cast it. The cast of the impression seemed to show a large humanoid body with long flowing hair. One interesting thing about the impression was that the partial heel print seems to have dermal ridges. These dermal ridges are similar to fingerprints and are found in all primates.

Investigations and Results

Briggs Expedition

MonsterQuest will also follow an expedition led by Dr. Briggs Hall. Hall is a veterinarian with the State of Washington whose curiosity about Bigfoot was raised in August of 2005. While on an expedition to study wildlife near Goat Rocks, Washington, he was awoken at about 1 a.m. by what he believed to be wood knocking sounds. Being an expert on wildlife for Washington, he knew of no known animal in the area that would make those noises. Later research by Hall showed that this is typical primate behavior.

Hall plans to place numerous stealth cameras in the remote Goat Rocks area and leave the cameras running for 30 days in hopes of capturing Bigfoot on film. These stealth cameras are battery powered, motion activated and can be placed almost anywhere. Hall knows that many animals are attracted by shiny objects, so he hangs compact disks from trees near the camera traps. Hall's team also uses wind chimes and sliced onions to attract Bigfoot to the camera areas. While placing the camera traps, Halls team did find some interesting tracks. These tracks were found at 6,800 feet with no shoe impressions. While the tracks were human size at 9 inches, it was a strange area for someone to be walking barefoot.

Hall's team completely vacates the area after setting the camera traps. Thirty days later, Hall returns and gathers up the camera traps that now have over 90 images stored on them. Review of the images show only animals that are known to reside in the area.

Walls Expedition

MonsterQuest will field a Bigfoot expedition that is to be led by botanist Kristine Walls to the Skookum Meadows area. Walls' interest in Bigfoot was piqued in May of 2004 while she camping in the Cascade Mountains. While sleeping in her tent, she heard something moving around and touching the top of her tent. She heard the creature leave the campsite and come back again. While she never saw what was making the sound, she entertains the possibility that it was Bigfoot.

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The Walls expedition team is made up of all females. The theory behind this is that Bigfoot may find a team of females as less threatening and more interesting. They compare this theory to the work that Jane Goodall was able to do with large apes. Joining Walls on the expedition will be Melissa Hovey, Archeologist Kathy Strain, and Monica Rawlins.

The team will employ an array of low light cameras including infrared, thermal and starlight technology in an attempt to capture Bigfoot pictures. Wood knocking and ape vocalizations will be used to try to entice a Bigfoot to investigate. Areas near the camera traps will be baited with apples.

After several days of wood knocking and vocalization, the team collects the camera traps and views the images. The camera captured images of several forms of known local wildlife but no signs of Bigfoot. The team did however make two interesting findings. They found what appeared to be a bedding area with broken branches and what appeared to be purposely moved branches. They also found some old tracks near the campsite. The plaster casts of these tracks showed them to be around 15 inches long.

Skookum Cast Analysis

Dr. Daris Swindler, a primatologist from the University of Washington, will examine the body cast that was obtained by the Skookum expedition. Skeptics of the cast believe that it may have been caused by an elk that got into the mud wallow. Elk are known to exhibit this behavior to escape the heat and insects.

Swindler compares the lower leg of an elk to what is believed to be the lower leg of the Skookum cast. His analysis looks at the general shape and muscle formations. At the end of his analysis, he determines that the impression in the cast does not match elk, human or known primate.

Motion Analysis of Patterson Film

Dr. Jurgen Konczak of the University of Minnesota will also be analyzing the Patterson film. Konczak is an expert in the science of human motion and he is hoping to determine if the strange wobbly gait that the creature in the film displays is compatible with the motion range of a human. To complete this analysis, Konczak will use a system which involves attaching numerous lights to a human subject. A specialized camera is used to pick up the lights and a computer to reconstruct the light points in order to make a comparison with the Patterson film. A male athlete with excellent range and muscle control is chosen to attempt the simulation of the creature in the Patterson film. Frame by frame, Konczak will attempt to match the motion of the athlete to the creature. Konczak will be joined by Esteban Sarmiento, who is an expert in large wild apes with the American Museum of Science. Sarmiento will compare the motions of the film with known ape motions.

After numerous attempts to duplicate the motions that were made by the creature on the Patterson film, Konczak determines that the motions could not have been made by a human. Since an athletic man, who is being directed and posed, could not replicate the gait in a

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controlled environment, it would be impossible to do in the cluttered outdoor setting. Sarmiento’s analysis of the creature’s gait was that it did not match the walk of a human or an ape.

Digital Analysis of Patterson Film

MonsterQuest contacted digital photography expert Owen Caddy to conduct an analysis of the Patterson film. Caddy has been able to acquire the original 16 mm film and he will be using new technology to study the film. Caddy will utilize a high resolution digital microscope to make a digital picture of each frame. He will then be able to use these digital picture to bring out more detail then was previously available.

Once the digital enhancements of the film was completed, Caddy was joined by Dr. Swindler in analyzing the enhanced footage. The enhanced pictures showed no signs of seams or zippers from a costume. Computer analysis was able to show movements of both the eyelids and mouth of the creature. Mouth placement was consistent with that of a primate and not a human. Caddy and Swindler believe that any costume shown in the film would have had to have been extremely well done with face articulation. Caddy found it unlikely that anyone filming a fraud in 1967 would have planned on making a film that would withstand the scrutiny of the undiscovered digital technology of forty years in the future.

Conclusion

While unable to find any good new evidence of the existence of Bigfoot. MonsterQuest did add new credibility to two previously known pieces of evidence. The analysis of the Skookum cast was interesting but the findings on the Patterson film was the really big shocker. The Patterson film remains the best evidence of Bigfoot after more than 40 years.