Bigfoot

He is known as Bigfoot. For years his very name has struck terror into the hearts of people on the Pacific Coast of North America. Hundreds claim to have seen him. Some know him by other names, such as Sasquatch, MoMo, or Skunk Ape. But all agree on what he looks like. He is reported to be between seven and nine feet tall, with large red eyes that glow in the dark. A sickening odor emanates from his hairy body. He has huge feet that make footprints measuring over 15 inches long.

Stories of Bigfoot have been around since the days of the early American Indians. Old Indian tales tell of wild men that were part animal. They were huge and hairy, with glowing eyes. According to the legends, they not only killed and ate cattle, but they also ate human beings.

There have been equally gruesome stories of Bigfoot in more recent times. One such story involves four gold miners. They built a cabin in a canyon near the volcano Mount St. Helens in Washington State. In 1924, they moved into the cabin and lived there peacefully until someone—

Roger Patterson claimed to have taken this picture of Bigfoot, or Sasquatch, in 1967 using 16mm movie film.
or something—began to rob their camp. When the miners looked for signs of the intruder, they discovered huge footprints in the dirt. Worried, the men began carrying guns.

4 One day soon after, the miners spied two apelike animals at the edge of a nearby cliff. Quickly the men raised their rifles and began shooting at the beasts. The bullets appeared to wound one animal, but it ran away. The second animal seemed to have been killed. All four men saw it plunge over the precipice. When they went to look for the body, however, they found nothing.

5 That night the men were awakened by a heavy pounding on the cabin roof and walls. Someone was throwing rocks at their cabin! The miners didn’t dare go outside. They just stuck their rifles through cracks in the cabin walls and began firing. It was too dark to aim, but the men felt that they had to do something to protect themselves. When dawn arrived, the bombardment of rocks stopped. The miners stepped out and looked around. They saw rocks, blood, and enormous footprints all around the cabin.

6 It didn’t take long for the miners’ story to spread. As more and more people heard of the “apes” that had attacked the four men, the canyon became known as Ape Valley. It is still known by that name.

7 The four gold miners were not the only ones to run into Bigfoot in 1924. A prospector working near Vancouver, British Columbia, also claimed to see the creature that season. In fact, he claimed that he had been kidnapped by a Bigfoot. The man said that he had been asleep in his sleeping bag when a Bigfoot appeared. The creature scooped up the sleeping bag, with the man in it, and slung it over his shoulder. For the next week, the prospector was held captive by a Bigfoot family. In addition to the one that captured him, he said, there were two other Bigfoot creatures. The three behaved as father, mother, and child.

8 During that week, the Bigfoot creatures seemed to be observing the man. He studied them, too. He concluded that they were not apes, but primitive human beings. They even talked to each other in a simple language.

9 The prospector finally managed to escape and find his way back to civilization. For a long time, he didn’t tell anyone about his experience. Later, when asked why he remained silent, he claimed that he was afraid people would laugh at him. Supposedly, the man kept his secret for 33 years. As more and more Bigfoot
sightings were reported, he decided to come forward with his story.

New Bigfoot sightings are still reported from time to time. No one knows exactly what a Bigfoot is or where it comes from. But several theories have been proposed. The most popular one is that Bigfoot is a primitive creature, half human and half ape. People who embrace this theory think that millions of years ago there were many such creatures. They believe that a few of their descendants are still around. At first it may seem that such creatures could not possibly have stayed so well hidden in today’s crowded world. But there are still some great, dense forests in North America.

Another explanation is offered for Bigfoot’s ability to avoid people. Some folks think that Bigfoot is a visitor from outer space. In this age of space adventure movies, it is not hard to imagine Bigfoot coming to Earth from another planet. In fact, whenever there is a Bigfoot sighting, there also seems to be an increase in the number of UFO sightings in the area.

Despite the many theories (some pretty farfetched), stories, and sightings of Bigfoot, we still have no proof that any such creature exists. Nobody has ever captured one. No Bigfoot bodies have ever been found. What we do have are many photographs of a beast that fits the descriptions, and many plaster casts of huge footprints. We also have a few feet of movie film showing a large hairy creature walking through the woods. The film was made by two men in a forest in northern California in 1967. One of the men had been a Bigfoot fan for years. He wanted to capture the creature on film. The men claim that they did find a Bigfoot. (At least they have some film of a hairy, upright creature.) In the film, the Bigfoot looks very much like a man walking around in a monster suit. Film experts and scientists who saw the movie couldn’t tell whether this Bigfoot was real or a fake.

Is there a Bigfoot or isn’t there? No one is sure. The photographs and plaster casts could be fakes. Or could they be real? Well, certainly the people in Skamania, Washington, seem convinced. There have been so many Bigfoot sightings around Skamania that the town has passed a Bigfoot law. In Skamania, it is illegal to kill a Bigfoot. Punishment for the crime is a fine of $10,000 and five years in jail. As yet, no one has been caught breaking that law.