



Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend

By Joshua Blu Buhs

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Last August, two men in rural Georgia announced that they had killed Bigfoot. The claim drew instant, feverish attention, leading to more than 1,000 news stories worldwide—despite the fact that nearly everyone *knew* it was a hoax. Though Bigfoot may not exist, there's no denying Bigfoot mania.

With *Bigfoot*, Joshua Blu Buhs traces the wild and woolly story of America's favorite homegrown monster. He begins with nineteenth-century accounts of wildmen roaming the forests of America, treks to the Himalayas to reckon with the Abominable Snowman, then takes us to northern California in 1958, when reports of a hairy hominid loping through remote woodlands marked Bigfoot's emergence as a modern marvel. Buhs delves deeply into the trove of lore and misinformation that has sprung up around Bigfoot in the ensuing half century. We meet charlatans, pseudo-scientists, and dedicated hunters of the beast—and with Buhs as our guide, the focus is always less on evaluating their claims than on understanding why Bigfoot has inspired all this drama and devotion in the first place. What does our fascination with this monster say about our modern relationship to wilderness, individuality, class, consumerism, and the media?

Writing with a scientist's skepticism but an enthusiast's deep engagement, Buhs invests the story of Bigfoot with the detail and power of a novel, offering the definitive take on this elusive beast.

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Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend By Joshua Blu Buhs Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1671985 in Books
- Published on: 2010-09-01
- Released on: 2009-05-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .70" w x 6.00" l, .90 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 296 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This sprightly, if sometimes overblown, study finds the elusive hairy wildman of the Pacific Northwest lurking everywhere. Independent scholar Buhs (*The Fire Ant Wars*) skeptically but affectionately surveys the evidentiary traces of bigfoot and his yeti and Sasquatch kin in sightings, tracks, sideshow exhibits and film, but his focus is on the megapod as cultural signifier. To the white working-class men who are his biggest fans, Buhs contends, bigfoot is an icon of untamed masculinity, a populist rebel against scientific elites, the last champion of authentic reality against a plastic, image-driven, effeminate consumer society. (Ironically, Buhs notes, bigfoot's career as advertising mascot and tabloid teaser also makes him a touchstone of consumerism.) Buhs's rote application of race-class-gender theory—By imagining themselves into the body of Sasquatch, white working-class men could imagine themselves as black, as women, could come in contact with... repressed and forbidden desires—yields more academic cant than insight; his oft-invoked white proles feel almost as legendary and stereotyped as the creature itself. Buhs is at his amused best when following the exploits of bigfoot's human handlers—the colorful band of true believers, hoaxers and pseudo-documentarists who constructed this greatest of all shaggy-hominid stories. 35 b&w photos. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [The New Yorker](#)

In 1832, the British Resident in the court of Nepal reported that the natives had spotted a “furred, upright, tailless demon.” In 1989, a Canadian woman and her grandson thought they saw a Sasquatch and joked that they should offer him a beer. Buhs traces the journey between these perceptions of elusive wild men and discovers a story of twentieth-century shifts in American culture and class. Bigfoot was both a product of the postwar ascendance of mass culture and a reaction to it, capturing the imagination of those who longed to “touch the really real behind the false front of consumer goods and scientific arrogance.” The book is most interesting when revisiting men’s adventure magazines and rural “four-waller” movies. It is silliest when asserting that “by imagining themselves into the body of Sasquatch, white working-class men could imagine themselves as black, as women, could come in contact with their own souls.” Copyright ©2008 [Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker](#)

Review

“The mistaken assumption of past Bigfoot investigation is that the phenomenon is best understood from the perspective of natural history. Joshua Blu Buhs has written an original and engaging book that tells us the meaning of the hairy beast that won’t go away yet we cannot seem to find. *Bigfoot* is the definitive history of the legend’s social and cultural context, and it offers an explanation for the phenomenon that will be pondered and discussed for years to come.”

(David Daegling, author of *Bigfoot Exposed*)

“While Bigfoot researchers have grown weary of skeptical treatments of the topic, Joshua Buhs’s examination of the Sasquatch is refreshingly crisp and insightful, as opposed to demeaningly debunking. His grasp of the popular cultural significance of Bigfoot is outstanding and his overview of the legacy of these creatures is topnotch. Highly recommended.”

(Loren Coleman, author of *The Field Guide to Bigfoot and Other Mystery Primates*)

"Buhs is at his amused best when following the exploits of Bigfoot's human handlers—the colorful band of true believers, hoaxers and pseudo-documentarists who constructed this greatest of all shaggy-hominid stories."

(*Publishers Weekly*)

"Thoroughly discredited hoaxes regarding seeing or shooting an actual Bigfoot notwithstanding, media interest in whether giant wild humanoids exist is readily re-ignitable. In 1962, Robert Hatfield struck the match when a 'half-man, half-beast monster' chased him into a cabin but ran off before Hatfield trained a gun on it. Good for Hatfield, maybe, since the gun wasn't loaded, but fortuitous, anyway, for keeping the Bigfoot legend going, since once again there was no physical evidence of the fabled creature. Buhs undertakes the telling of 'how the modern myth of Bigfoot emerged' and uses the terms *Bigfoot*, *Yeti*, *Abominable Snowman*, and *Sasquatch* more or less interchangeably throughout, since all refer to not-quite-human creatures living in the wild that are preternaturally elusive. Proceeding era by era and place by place, Buhs evaluates the stories of encounters with the giant creatures, deconstructs hoaxes, and evaluates genuine studies in service of tracking down the truth. His conclusions seem well-founded but are highly unlikely to end debate."

(*Booklist*)

"The value of Buhs's book is in its synthesizing of the many historical Bigfoot/Sasquatch stories into one readable narrative, and its summing-up of the state of Bigfoot research and belief today."

(H.J. Kirchoff *Globe and Mail*)

"Adroitly researched and well-documented. . . . Much more focused and thorough than G. Reece's *Weird Science and Bizarre Beliefs* and a very suitable cultural history complement to the anthropological focus of C. Daegling's *Bigfoot Exposed*. Highly recommended."--*Choice*

(*Choice*)

"The stories are invariably interesting, sometimes strange, often humorous and always entertaining. It's a good read, particularly if you've ever camped in a wilderness and wondered what lurks in the darkness just beyond the dying campfire light."

(Paul Fattig *Mail Tribune*)

"[*Bigfoot*] is an oversized footprint of Americana, and a fun read. Bigfoot may not be stomping through the American wilderness, but his legend still lives in the forests of our imagination."

(Jason Weeks *Sacramento Book Review*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paula Mendoza:

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