

# North America's Sasquatch Is Not *Gigantopithecus blacki*

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## Abstract

This paper challenges and invalidates the hypothesis that *Gigantopithecus blacki* (*G. blacki*) is, became, or somehow resulted in North America's extant bipedal primate known as sasquatch, or bigfoot. The reconstructed model of *G. blacki* by Dr. Russell J. Ciochon and Bill Munns is examined in depth, revealing numerous discrepancies related to why it does not represent the original *G. blacki* or today's sasquatch. The lack of *G. blacki* fossils in North America constitutes further proof that this ancient Asian ape did not exist on this continent and therefore cannot be linked to today's living sasquatch. Further discussed is a hypothetical statement by Dr. Jeffery Meldrum which attempts to show how *G. blacki* might have become bipedal.

## Introduction

Sasquatch (or bigfoot) refers to an as yet unclassified species of large, hairy, bipedal extant primate living and reproducing in North America. And while there are claimed sightings of unidentified bipedal beings on other continents known as the almas, yeti, yeren and orang pendek, these are likely different from documented sightings of sasquatch in North America (List of Cryptids Wikipedia undated, Meldrum 2006, Bayanov 2012).

In the past, several doctors of anthropology advanced the hypothesis that the North American sasquatch was indeed the prehistoric giant ape *G. blacki* (Meldrum 2006, Krantz 1985, Bourne 1975). Many sasquatch enthusiasts and cryptozoologists (desiring an explanation for a sasquatch) accepted this suggestion as true. Unfortunately, many still accept that *G. blacki* somehow explains the presence of today's sasquatch.

Additional motivation for this belief may have stemmed in part from the *G. blacki* reconstruction by paleoanthro-sculptor Bill Munns, based on how he and paleoanthropologist Dr. Russell J. Ciochon thought *G. blacki* might have appeared. It is understandable when viewing this reconstruction that one might conclude that *G. blacki* must be the explanation for sasquatch. However, there is no evidence of any kind that *G. blacki* possessed an adducted hallux or was bipedal, two morphological characteristics possessed by sasquatches. No foot bones of *G. blacki* have ever been found by which their locomotor adaptation could be determined. This paper addresses the *G. blacki* proposition using a current application of evidentiary science and logic.



Bill Munns & *G. blacki* model

## Discussion/Analysis

A review of the *G. blacki* hypothesis reveals serious flaws and demands that we look further than this ancient ape for an explanation of sasquatch. For example, there are serious obstacles to accepting the hypothetical reconstruction as being a factual representation of the real *G. blacki*, much less accepting *G. blacki* as the explanation for the present-day sasquatch. The completed model was a collaboration between Dr. Russell Ciochon and Mr. Bill Munns. It was based on their best calculations of size, shape, and height.

Even if the reconstructed model had been an exact representation of *G. blacki* in every dimension, it would still not explain the presence of sasquatch. Neither the appearance of the model nor the ancient existence of *G. blacki* can be scientifically or geographically linked to sasquatch in North America. Yet with comments at the time from some academic scientists that reflected a focus limited to an ape-like creature (Krantz & Meldrum), accepting that *G. blacki* might explain the presence of sasquatches was to some extent understandable. In an effort to bring clarity to this issue, we will examine why this claim lacks validity. In so doing, we will examine the science of *G. blacki*, and the methodology used in making the model.

Initially, one must understand that the ancient *G. blacki* species has been classified by science as a giant ape. Its name is derived from the latin *giganto* (big) and *pithecus* (ape). As such, it was anticipated to have been a quadruped with an abducted or divergent hallux. Thus, it was placed among the Asian apes, a descendant along with the orangutan of the earlier ape ancestor *Sivapithecus* which is best known from an 8 million-year old skull discovered in Pakistan. Until a complete post-cranial skeleton of a *G. blacki* is discovered, or at least its foot bones, the assigned name *Gigantopithecus blacki* will remain. The drawing of *G. blacki* from the journal Scientific American in January 1970 is likely closer to the actual appearance of this giant ape than any other representation. One can clearly see that this is not what eyewitnesses of sasquatches are reporting.



*G. blacki*, American Journal, 1970

We must understand that the *G. blacki* reconstruction was a creative artistic interpretation made to produce a visual image of the way *G. blacki* might have appeared. It was derived from comparisons with great apes. Dr. Ciochon explained it thusly:

To gain a more complete image of what the giant ape looked like, we sought the help of Bill Munns, who creates highly realistic, life-size models of existing endangered primates...for zoos and educational institutions. Based on the jaws and teeth, and using the proportions of the skulls of existing great apes, we estimated that the average male *Gigantopithecus* had a skull that measured 18"

from the bottom to the highest point of the sagittal crest (a male gorilla by comparison has a skull ten inches high). The next step was to **project a hypothetical skeleton from the hypothetical skull**. (bold by author)

Dr. Ciochon further explained:

For this purpose Munns used as references two of the largest terrestrial primates known to man, one modern being the gorilla; and one from the fossil record, the extinct giant baboon *Theropithecus oswaldi*. In determining the size of the *Gigantopithecus*, we felt it necessary **to scale the body back a bit, so as not to be influenced too much by giant ape's extraordinarily deep and thickened mandible**. Nevertheless, given that the average male silverback gorilla is about six feet tall and weighs about 400 pounds, Munns calculated that the average *Gigantopithecus* male was more than ten feet tall and weighed as much as 1,200 pounds comparable to a large male polar bear. (bold by author)

The phrases "...project a hypothetical skeleton from the hypothetical skull ", "...scale the body back a bit...", and "...not to be influenced too much by...", are significant clues which tell us the model is not an exact likeness of a real *G. blacki*, but truly is an artistic work based on an imagined amalgam of an extinct ape, a modern day gorilla, and the fossilized teeth and mandible fragments from several *G. blacki*.

In a separate article, both Ciochon and Munns further acknowledged that the 1 to 6.5 head to body ratio used for the model may have been conservative. Thus, the reconstruction could have perhaps been made even larger than it is. Based on Dr. Ciochon's own words, we need to understand that the accuracy of the reconstruction as a true likeness of the giant ape *G. blacki* is inexact. It is unquestionably an impressive looking model, but it would be incorrect to accept it as an exact likeness of the real *G. blacki*.

Found only in Asia, the few fossil remains of *G. blacki* are three jaw bones and about a thousand recovered teeth. The skull of *G. blacki* and the full reconstruction by Munns stems from only these few fossilized pieces and estimated calculations made by Munns and Ciochon. No other remains of a *G. blacki* skeleton have ever been found. There are no arm bones, no leg bones, no foot bones, just no other bones. Thus, the true appearance and size of the ape remains unknown. This is also why the reconstruction had to be based on hypothetical dimensions and calculations.

Based on today's scientific classification of *G. blacki* as an ape, there is no scientific evidence that *G. blacki* ever possessed bipedal locomotion. Because we know that sasquatches are primarily bipedal with an adducted or non-opposing big toe, it would take a giant leap of scientific manipulation to conclude that *G. blacki* is today's sasquatch. It is important that we understand that Dr. Ciochon never claimed that *G. blacki* is today's sasquatch. He is on record as stating that he does not believe sasquatch exist, and he does not link the *G. blacki* reconstruction to any claim regarding sasquatch .

Related to the subject of bipedality in *G. blacki*, Dr. Jeffery Meldrum (Idaho State University) proposed the below hypothetical statement. A hypothesis, written as a hypothetical statement, is a suggestion searching for an evidentiary foundation. Its purpose here was to suggest a possible way that *G. blacki* could have potentially become bipedal..

But if the foraging strategies that convergently shaped the jaws and teeth of *Gigantopithecus* and early hominids produced bipedalism in the one lineage, the possibility of the convergent evolution of bipedalism in *Gigantopithecus* under similar environmental conditions should at least be entertained.

The above hypothetical lacks any evidentiary foundation. To his credit, Dr. Meldrum further wrote:

With the fossil remains of *Gigantopithecus* restricted to jaws and teeth, there can only be speculation about the locomotion adaptations of this giant ape.

Thus, his hypothetical statement was simply a suggestion in need of evidentiary proof.

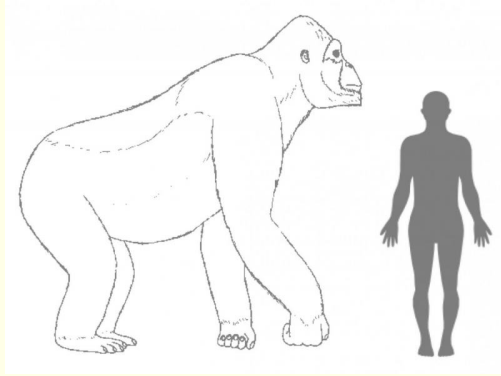
For *G. blacki* to exist today, they would need to consume large amounts of vegetation on a daily basis, even more than is consumed each day by large living apes. Such consumption would have a visible impact on vegetation within their environment. In fact, such visible signs are one-way researchers are able to know where present-day gorilla families have recently fed, and the direction in which they are moving. Yet when researchers are in known sasquatch habitat, they find no visible signs of such large-scale consumption of vegetative matter. While they have found bushes and trees from which fruits and berries have been removed, we must remember that birds and other animals also consume such fare. To date there is no evidence or reports of vegetative consumption on the scale that would be required to feed a live *G. blacki*.

Also relates to vegetative consumption, a further examination by Dr. Ciochon of the *G. blacki* diet provided even more evidence which supports its classification as a quadrupedal ape. This evidence stemmed from findings on its teeth (Ciochon et. al., Piperno, Thompson, 1990). The evidence took the form of opal phytoliths bonded to the molar teeth. These phytoliths permitted the identification of the actual plant remains eaten by these nonhuman apes prior to their death. His analysis showed a diet consisting of grasses, which may have been a mix of bamboo with other vegetation, and fruits.

Sasquatches are omnivores, consuming several kinds of meat as well as leaves, berries, and fruits. This reduces their dependency on vegetative matter and is consistent with field findings of deer and hog carcasses indicative of sasquatch feeding habits. To the contrary, the phytoliths on the teeth of *G. blacki* teeth showed no indication that they consumed raw meat.

The hypothetical that *G. blacki* somehow is sasquatch disregards the previously stated reality that there is no evidence that a *G. blacki* ever lived in North America. One study led by Dr. Herv E. Bocherens states that:

The giant form from Southeast Asia, *Gigantopithecus blacki*, ...may have survived until about 100,000 years ago.



Credit Dr. Herv E. Bocherens

The above illustration shows the relative size of *G. blacki* compared to a human. Again, this is not what eyewitnesses of sasquatch are describing.

Scientifically, there has never been an identified giant ape species in North America, past or present, regardless of its form of locomotion. Certainly, fossil bones of *G. blacki* have not been found in North America, but only in several locations in Asia. Thus, there is no evidence to indicate a linkage between *G. blacki* and sasquatch on this continent. While some have suggested that *G. blacki* could have crossed into North America on the Beringia land bridge (Krantz, Bourne) this is also lacking in any evidentiary foundation. Based on the science presented herein, it is anatomically correct and logical to conclude that the appearance of *G. blacki* (model or real) and the appearance of sasquatch are far from identical.

Remarkably, *G. blacki* is still being studied today. The most recent is a study conducted by scientists from the University of Copenhagen and published in the journal Nature November 13, 2019. Its purpose was to shed light on what is likely the present day relative of *G. blacki*. The study sought to compare "protein-based phylogenetic enamel sequences" with those from extant apes (Hominoidea). Their results revealed that *G. blacki* is a related taxon with all extant orangutans. Thus, living orangutans are the nearest relative of *G. blacki*. Each are quadrupeds, and each are apes.

## Conclusion

To date no evidence has been developed to support that a bipedal sasquatch with an adducted hallux is in any manner related to the giant ape species *G. blacki*. The *G. blacki* hypothesis is indeed replete with discrepancies, leaving us with more issues of accuracy and validity than solutions supported by actual scientific evidence. Based on what we know of this extinct giant ape, the hypothetical creativity used to achieve the reconstruction, and the lack of *G. blacki* post-cranial skeletal bones in Asia, accepting it as being identical to, evolving to, or being representative of a North American sasquatch is completely without any scientific foundation.

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