

BACKYARD BIGFOOT

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The True Story of Stick Signs,
UFOs, & the Sasquatch



LISA A. SHIEL
with a foreword by Nick Redfern



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BACKYARD BIGFOOT
BY LISA A. SHIEL

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To *“the foot”*

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Foreword

by Nick Redfern

Countless words have been written on that most mysterious of all man-beasts, Bigfoot, and doubtless countless more will continue to be written until the ever-vexing question of what the beast is (or indeed is not!) is finally resolved to the satisfaction of the collective cryptozoological and scientific research communities.

Until that day arrives, we are largely reliant upon the work of investigators that dedicate their lives to studying and chronicling the facts surrounding all things large, lumbering and hairy. In addition, securing the testimony of firsthand witnesses to Bigfoot and its handiwork is overwhelmingly crucial when it comes to keeping in touch with the latest developments, sightings, encounters, and activities of the monsters that lurk deep within the shadowy woods and the darkest corners of North America.

Seldom, however, is the researcher, the writer and the witness the same person. And seldom is that same person able to put their thoughts, experiences, discoveries and conclusions into book format in an insightful, thought-provoking and always-entertaining manner. But such is the nature of Lisa Shiel and her new book, *Backyard Bigfoot: The True Story Of Stick Signs, UFOs, And The Sasquatch*.

Perhaps best known up until now for her entertaining novels *The Hunt for Bigfoot* and *Lord of the Dead*, Lisa now turns her hand to nonfiction—and not before time: anyone wanting a unique, and intensely personal perspective on the Bigfoot controversy will not be disappointed by *Backyard*

Bigfoot. And Lisa is to be applauded for addressing highly controversial issues that many within cryptozoology are steadfastly determined to shy away from when it comes to Bigfoot—particularly the controversies surrounding UFOs and Bigfoot, and the personal interaction between their species and ours.

Lisa's book begins with a superb roundup of reports of hairy man-beasts dating back thousands of years and across numerous continents, a plethora of cultures, and amid a range of ancient legends, tales, and assorted folklore. And after reading this opening salvo of data, it becomes abundantly clear that Bigfoot-style entities are not just with us today, but have been for perhaps as long as we ourselves have existed.

But it is in Chapter Two that the adventure and the intrigue really begins, when Lisa introduces us to her personal research into a seldom-discussed aspect of the Bigfoot puzzle: stick-signs. Many skeptics—and indeed researchers—bemoan the lack of hard evidence indicating a Bigfoot presence among us. But if you know where to look, you can find it. For example, in mid-2005, myself and well-known Texas monster hunter Ken Gerhard and his wife, Lori, uncovered a classic teepee-style creation while roaming the woods of the Lone Star State's Lake Worth, in search of the infamous Goat Man. Teepees constructed out of branches, as many students of Bigfoot will be aware, are found with regular frequency in areas of man-beast activity. But they are not the only things found, as Lisa reveals.

At a personal level on this aspect of the Bigfoot mystery, things really kicked off for Lisa in November 2003 while she was living in the woodlands of North Texas. She was already aware of what appeared to be unusual presences in the vicinity of her home during the dead of night—presences that would spook both her pet animals and Lisa, too. But it was when *something* began to leave carefully placed sticks on the ground of her remote property in clearly delineated patterns that things moved up a gear. I will not relate the full story of what happened, as Lisa expertly does so herself. But I will say this: if you want to learn more about the way in which this mysterious creature (whatever its point of origin) interacts with the human species, then Lisa's revelations and intriguing experiences are essential reading.

Indeed, as Lisa shows, what we appear to have among us is not some form of unintelligent ape; but rather a creature or entity that we have vastly underestimated and that possesses skills and powers far beyond our own and that displays curiosity, playfulness, and, perhaps, even humor.

Controversies such as the conventional picture of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, the rise of ancient civilizations, and Earth's recent and ancient history are discussed, dissected and shown to be highly problematic—as is

the theory subscribed to by a number of researchers that Bigfoot is nothing more than the last remnants of that most massive of all apes—*Gigantopithecus*. Some Bigfoot scholars will not agree with Lisa's conclusions on this latter issue. So be it. But no one can say that Lisa does not firmly stand behind her assertions—and for that alone she deserves our admiration and support.

Chapter Five, *Orbs in the Night*, will doubtless stir up those that adhere to the idea that Bigfoot is purely a zoological problem, primarily because it addresses the various reports and data that suggests some form of link between Bigfoot and the equally controversial UFO puzzle. But anyone and everyone that claims to be open-minded on the Bigfoot topic should read this data very carefully. Something very strange is indeed afoot.

Synchronicities and weird coincidences also play a role in this story when the critters that Lisa is seeking out in Texas, resurface when she moves to Michigan to live. Again, I will let you, the reader, savor the delights of this aspect of the story, but, once more, it is a fascinating addition to the world of Bigfoot.

Backyard Bigfoot is manifestly different to so many other titles on the bookshelves, and I am mightily relieved and pleased that it is. Reference-style books are fine; but if you are determined to go to the next level of your understanding and appreciation of the creature that is Bigfoot, listen to the witnesses. But when the author and the witness are one and the same, you are in for a real treat.

Nick Redfern is the author of *Three Men Seeking Monsters: Six Weeks In Pursuit Of Werewolves, Lake Monsters, Giant Cats, Ghostly Devil Dogs, And Ape-Men* (Simon & Schuster, 2004); and *On The Trail Of The Saucer Spies* (Anomalist Books, 2006).

1

Ancient Evidence

We humans have long struggled to understand our world. From natural processes like earthquakes to the staggering array of living things that surrounds us, we seek to document all that we experience. The earliest humans, who lacked the technology to sequence DNA or examine tissue samples under a microscope, sought to document and understand their world through the arts. Cave paintings, rock art, sculpture, myths—these served as the tools for ancient archaeologists.

No modern human can claim to have deciphered all the riddles inherent in ancient artwork and myths. So archaeologists have devised an unwritten rule concerning ancient cultures: if you can't explain the symbolism, call it a religious icon. If we remove the lens through which archaeologists and anthropologists have forced us to view the ancient world, we can study the evidence without distortion and gain a sharper understanding of what our ancestors saw. If we treat the ancients as intelligent people rather than superstitious dolts, if we take what they depicted as literally as possible, we may see things we're not supposed to see.

We might see hairy hominids.

Into the Ice Age

The earliest artwork dates to a period called the Paleolithic—literally, “old stone”—which we refer to as the Stone Age. Historians divide the

Paleolithic into three segments labeled Lower, Middle, and Upper; the Lower Paleolithic is the oldest portion. The Paleolithic began about 4.0 million years ago and ended at different times in each region of the world. In fact, some cultures technically live in the Paleolithic today, as they continue to use stone tools similar to those in use thousands of years ago. In most areas, such as Europe and the Mediterranean rim, the stone age concluded around 10,000 years ago.

Science tells us the only “humans” alive during the Lower Paleolithic, 4.0 million years ago, were apelike hominids such as *Australopithecus*, *Homo erectus*, or the Neanderthals. Science also tells us modern humans emerged in Africa around 200,000 years ago, at the start of the Middle Paleolithic. By the time the ice sheets had begun to retreat, modern humans had found a toehold in Europe and Asia and the earliest Australians had braved the ocean to reach their new homeland. In the Upper Paleolithic, we discover the first traces of culture in the form of rock art, engraved bones, and figurines.

In the Upper Paleolithic, which began 30,000-40,000 years ago, ice sheets swathed much of the planet. Parts of the world that have since turned to desert, such as Egypt, existed as savannahs and lush grasslands. The climate was changing, however, and by the end of the ice age—as the glaciers melted at breakneck speed—the sea level would rise 400 feet.³⁴ Some researchers believe the rise happened suddenly in a global deluge that inspired the flood myths abundant in cultures around the world. Severe, inexplicable swings in climate triggered animal extinctions during the same period.³⁴ Humans alive at the time struggled to keep up with the shifting landscape. Species once hunted for food, like the mammoth, died out. Humans had to adapt. Is it coincidence the Paleolithic terminated at the peak of the glacial retreat?

Yet, amid the chaos, humans found time to express themselves in art. From cave paintings to petroglyphs to portable objects, artwork from the Upper Paleolithic astounds us with its sophistication. The artists depicted animals familiar to them, including bison and horses, as well as bizarre beings and abstract symbols whose meaning remains unclear. In these earliest artworks, we can also find images of hairy, bipedal creatures.

The Dolní Head

A site called Dolní Vestonice, in the Czech Republic, stands as one of the most important sites for Paleolithic archaeology. Huts and burials



The ivory head found in the 19th Century (Dolní Vestonice, Czech Republic)—24,000 BC.

uncovered at the site date back to about 28,000 years ago. One hut even contained an oven which the inhabitants had used to fire clay figurines. Archaeologists have found numerous works of art at the site. But one sculpture, offered to the British Museum in the 1940s, affords the most startling glimpse into ice-age life.

The mammoth-ivory sculpture, a head broken off a larger and now lost figure, measures three inches tall. The head depicts a male with a heavy brow ridge, deep-set eyes, wide mouth and nose, stocky neck, and long hair. The hair, which seems to drape around his neck, appears plastered to his skin.

Did the Paleolithic artist attempt to mimic the appearance of a hairy hominid? The creatures are often described as having

longer hair on their heads and shoulders. The protruding brow hardly resembles Paleolithic people, for the humans of the ice age looked just like modern people.

One sect of archaeologists dismisses the sculpture as a forgery, for three main reasons:

1. No archaeologist took part in its discovery. A Czech family gave the sculpture to archaeologist Alexander Marshak, who wrote an article about the piece for *National Geographic* in 1988. The family said the piece had been discovered in the 1800s. According to the archaeological elite, the object therefore has no “provenance”—no proven origin—and no context from which to derive a date.
2. The style is too sophisticated and realistic, making the piece unique—a dirty word in archaeology. Paleolithic people either lacked the expertise to carve realistic figures or they preferred stylized forms.
3. The head doesn’t look like a modern human. Instead, the male face resembles a stereotypical “caveman”—a Neanderthal or other pre-human hominid.²

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