

THE ELUSIVE REALITY

Colin Bord

A review of *Bigfoot* by John Napier

FOR all those seriously interested in the reports of the bizarre, the book *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality*, by John Napier published by Jonathan Cape, 1972, is of great value not the least being that it can be read on two levels. Written by an established scientist, it is ostensibly a cool, factual examination of the sighting reports and photographs of the figure, and tracks left by the enigmatic creatures known as the yeti or abominable snowman in the Himalayas, and the Bigfoot or Sasquatch in North-West America. Dr. John Napier is an anatomist and anthropologist, he is expert, sceptical and honest, and is able to clear away much of the fog that inevitably collects around such reported phenomena. It is also a report of the impossible, and readers familiar with the works of John Keel and F.W. Holiday will find here unintentional substantiation for the ideas promulgated by those writers.

After a general discussion of "Man and his Monsters" as mythology and history, the author then investigates "Bigfoot in Asia," giving a chronological survey of yeti reports from the Himalayas, and some fascinating and unexplained footprint photographs. When he comes to the American sightings there is an interesting and detailed analysis of the 16 mm film shot by Roger Patterson, and, as an appendix, an analysis of the film by a specialist in human gait, but the results of the analyses of both scientists are inconclusive.

There is detailed discussion on how footprints are formed by men and beasts and this is related to the evidence provided by photographs and plaster casts. The general conclusion in this section is that some tracks can be shown to have been made by known animals, but others cannot, and what produced them remains a mystery. The last two chapters

consider the evidence against the possible fauna to be found in the regions concerned, and the possibilities of a living fossil, a living relic from the past.

In conclusion the author decides that there is something that leaves manlike footprints and for which there is as yet no adequate explanation. He observes, "...for all the hundreds of sightings of the creature itself and the tens of thousands of footprints that have been seen no Sasquatch has ever been captured." And, "...never a live creature, a dead body, a skeleton or even a single bone has come to official notice." The question of food poses problems. What does a creature of large dimensions eat above the snowline at 15,000 ft. in the Himalayas or in the sunless, low-vegetation areas of the coniferous forests in North-West America? How could it survive?

When all the evidence has been sifted through, and much of it discarded, there is left an inexplicable residue which points in a direction that is becoming increasingly familiar to readers of *Flying Saucer Review* who have read the reports of Surrey pumas and aquatic monsters in Scottish and Irish lakes. Although John Napier admits that he is an unwilling traveller in what he terms the "Goblin Universe" of the parapsychical, the honesty of his investigation leads him inevitably to the same questions as are posed by John Keel and F.W. Holiday in their books, though as a scientist he cannot afford to search for the answers in the directions they have taken.

As well as the appendix on the film analysis mentioned above, there are four tables, giving sightings on both continents, comparative foot dimensions and a list of mammals found in the Himalayas. There are also 18 photographs as well as notes on sources and a good index. A useful and stimulating book for students of monster lore.

MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

On belts for tightening and other matters

Dear Sir,—Let me begin to express my best wishes for 1974, wishes which both of our countries will sorely need! With this difference that your plight is much more severe than ours, due to internal matters with you, while with us it is external, namely the oil-blackmail. Both of us will have to tighten our belts. However the saying

here is that one can't buy belts any more, for they are all exported to England. And another saying over here is: "Speaking is silver, but silence is oil!"

May I make some remarks on the paper by Dr. B.E. Finch, on page 20 of *FSR* 19/4. In the first place radiation pressure is a very tiny force, only effective on a very thinned out gas, like that in the tail of a comet. In that situation radiation-pressure

predominates over gravity-attraction, which you can see very nicely on the tail of now visible comet Kohoutek, which points from the sun, and not to it. In the Crookes radiometer the rotation is not due to radiation pressure at all, for then the small gadget would be in balance and stop rotation as soon as two successive vanes arrive at a symmetrical position to the direction of the radiation source. So, you will see that all vanes have a shiny and a