

The *Gigantopithecus blacki* Hypothesis

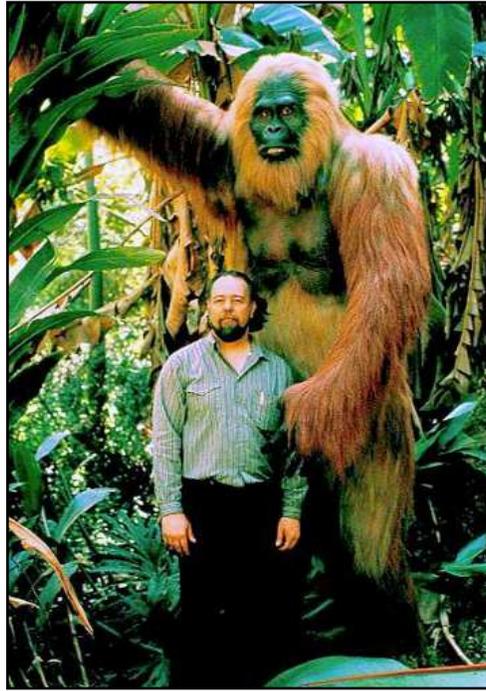
by John Morley, Biologist

Many cryptozoologists and other Sasquatch enthusiasts still accept the hypothesis that *Gigantopithecus blacki* (*G. blacki*) somehow explains the presence of today's sasquatch. This proposition in the past became a strong contender in the effort to understand the true nature of sasquatches. Unfortunately it is still accepted today by many laymen. 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 paleo-anthropologist Dr. Russell J. Ciochon thought *G. blacki* might have looked. It is understandable when viewing the reconstruction that one might conclude that *G. blacki* must somehow explain 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. While a bipedal *G. blacki* may have been a convenient way of trying to explain the sasquatch phenomenon, it seems that the foot issue remained a serious question even for some academic researchers. Today the *G. blacki* proposition needs re-addressing using a current application of science and logic.

A review of the *G. blacki* hypothesis reveals serious flaws. It demands that we look further than this ancient ape for the 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. It's important for the reader to understand that the reconstruction by Bill Munns is an impressive appearing model. This writing is not a negative commentary on his work. The reconstruction was a collaboration between Dr. Ciochon and Mr. Munns. It was based on their best calculations of size, shape, and height.

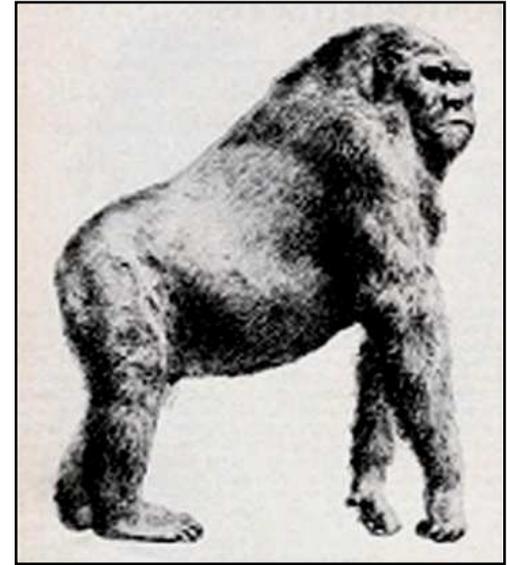
As is explained herein, even if the reconstructed model had been an exact representation of *G. blacki* in every dimension, it would still not explain the presence of sasquatch. Neither the appearance of the model nor the ancient existence of *G. blacki* can be scientifically linked to sasquatch. It is unfortunate that



Bill Munns and his *Gigantopithecus blacki* model.

many have accepted this proposition as true, since it is quite lacking, scientifically speaking. Yet with comments at the time from some in academia that reflected a focus limited to an ape-like creature, accepting that *G. blacki* might explain the presence of sasquatches was understandable.

In an effort to bring clarity to this issue, we will examine why this claim lacks validity. In doing so, we will examine the science of *G. blacki* and the methodology used in making the model. First, 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 would have been quadrupedal with an abducted or divergent hallux. *G. blacki* was placed among the Asian apes, a descendant along with the orangutan of the earlier ape ancestor *Sivapithecus*, which is "best know" 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* is likely to remain. The drawing of *G. blacki* from the journal *Scientific American*, January 1970 (seen above), is likely closer to the actual appearance of this giant ape than any



Gigantopithecus blacki, from the *American Journal*, 1970.

other representation. One can clearly see that this is not what eye witnesses of sasquatches are reporting.

We must remember that the *G. blacki* reconstruction was a creative interpretation made to produce a visual image of the way *G. blacki* might have appeared. It was made at the request of Dr. Ciochon and 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, for comparison, has a skull ten inches high). The next step was to project a hypothetical skeleton from the hypothetical skull. (Underlining 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 the giant ape's extraordinarily deep and thickened mandible. Nevertheless, given that the average male silverback gorilla is about six feet tall (standing erect) 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. (underlining 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 in Asia, the only 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 feet 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.

A further examination by Dr. Ciochon of the *G. blacki* diet stemming from evidence found on its teeth provided

even more evidence which supports its classification as a quadrupedal ape. Ciochon found opal phytoliths bonded to the molar teeth. These phytoliths permitted the identification of the actual plant remains eaten by these nonhuman animals 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.

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, modern 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, I am not aware of any reports of vegetative consumption on the scale that would be required to feed a live *G. blacki*.

We must also remember that 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 teeth of *G. blacki* showed no indication that they consumed raw meat.

It is important that we further understand that a living sasquatch has specific anatomical features, which cannot be scientifically linked to *G. blacki* or its hypothetical reconstruction due to a lack of *G. blacki* post cranial skeletal remains. Neither have fossil bones of *G. blacki* been found in North America. 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, this is also lacking in any evidentiary foundation. Under-

standing that creative license was necessary in order to achieve the reconstructed model, we can see that it is both reasonable and logical to conclude that it is impossible for the appearance of *G. blacki* (model or real) and the appearance of sasquatch to be identical.

As noted, and based on today's scientific classification of *G. blacki* as an ape, there is no scientific evidence that *G. blacki* ever possessed bipedal locomotion. As an ape, it would have been expected to be a quadruped. 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's important that we understand that Dr. Ciochon never claimed that *G. blacki* is today's sasquatch. In fact, 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.

G. blacki is still studied today. The most recent is a study conducted by scientists from the University of Copenhagen, and published in *Nature* on 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. In short, living orangutans are the nearest relative of *G. blacki*. Each is a quadruped, and both are apes. To date no evidence has been developed supporting that a bipedal sasquatch with an adducted hallux is in any manner related to the giant ape *G. blacki*.

The *G. blacki* proposition is replete with discrepancies, leaving us with more issues of accuracy and validity than solutions supported by logic and scientific evidence. Based on what we know of this extinct giant ape and the hypothetical creativity used to achieve the reconstruction, accepting it as being representative or identical to a sasquatch is without evidentiary foundation.