

# Is sasquatch in Alaska?

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It's called Bigfoot, Sasquatch, Yeti, and the Abominable Snowman, and Michael Polesnek has tracked what is believed to be this link from ape to man from Florida to Washington—and now Alaska.

Polesnek arrived in Anchorage recently to begin preliminary scouting work for a possible American Yeti Expedition in the nation's northernmost state.

Early reports of Yeti sightings years ago were thought by many to be mere ravings of persons with vivid imaginations or primitive superstitions. But in recent years, scientists worldwide have given the stamp of credibility to the elusive creature's existence.

Polesnek currently is vice president of the American Anthropological Research Foundation of Miami, Fla., the non-profit scientific organization that is managing American Yeti Expedition grants and funding this year. Last year, the National Wildlife Federation fulfilled that role for the expedition and its 10 scientists who have scoured

mountains and interviewed hundreds of persons who have claimed to have seen the creature.

The expedition this year centered near Mount St. Helens, Wash., said Polesnek, and Alaska may be the natural outgrowth of that search.

The Yeti, he said, has been sighted in the Yukon Territory and British Columbia, and the far north may be the likely location for the creature's last stand in the face of increased encroachment by man.

The Yeti expedition in Washington earlier this year, he said, brought scientists closer than ever before to finding Bigfoot.

"We found hair samples and footprints, but lost him when the hunting season opened in Washington," said Polesnek, who surmised Bigfoot disappeared because of the frightening thunder of guns.

Based on record sightings, scientists estimate Bigfoot, full grown, ranges in height from seven to nine feet, weighs more than 400 pounds, and is fully covered with hair. Hair samples found in Washington, said Polesnek, were analyzed and found to be "close to human but not human" by biologist Mary Joe Florey of the Oregon Regional Primate Center. Neither were the hair samples those of a known primate species, he said.

While in Alaska for up to six months, Polesnek said, he will search libraries and other information centers to determine the locations most suitable as Yeti habitat and will interview woodsmen, hunters, Natives and others who may have seen a creature that fits the Yeti's description.

"This is a scientific study—we're very level-headed and don't make fun of anyone who thinks he's seen it," said Polesnek.

The American Yeti Expedition or other scientifically-organized searches for the man-ape are looking north to Alaska for the first time, said Polesnek.

"Anyone who thinks he's seen the Yeti can write to me at 1600 E. 41st Ct. in Anchorage," he said, adding he hopes his mailbox is swamped with such reports.

"When you get involved with this, it becomes an obsession," he said. And although scientists are near sure the creature exists, their goal is to capture one, take blood and urine samples, conduct other tests and release the creature.

"He's been sighted hundreds of times, and if he's here on earth you're going to find him," said Polesnek.

(Courtesy of Anchorage Daily News)

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