

INVESTIGATION AND VIDENCE COLLECTION (Part II)

By Sandy Nelson

Can a Sasquatch enthusiast be an Investigator? Absolutely, YES! It is actually very easy...automatic, really. From the moment an observation is made, a thought crosses your mind. The thought could make perfect sense and fit into your standard paradigm. But when that observation doesn't make sense, yet you know what you know, your paradigm begins to shift, and you start asking questions. You look beyond the obvious and ponder theories. You are investigating!

As with all investigations, we try to make sense of what is seen, heard, smelled, felt, and what our intuition is telling us. We are looking for evidence to substantiate our finding(s).

Let's take an in-depth look at the process of obtaining evidence. Whether you are collecting evidence for your own personal understanding or contemplating submission to a laboratory for scientific proof, great care and ethics must be taken with the collection and care of evidence:

- ✚ In General: Collect specimens as they are found. Do not disturb elements or enhance the specimen. Always use gloves to reduce contamination and avoid transferring your DNA to the specimen.
- ✚ Physical Evidence: Identify each item, including date, time, location, who collected the evidence, and note the environment. The type of physical evidence being collected will dictate the type of container used for collection / storage. Example: hair is best collected with tweezers and placed in clean paper envelopes. Body fluids should be collected in clean glass or plastic containers with a lid and kept refrigerated. Feces can be collected in clean pill bottles with a lid or depending on the size, placed in clean zip lock baggies.
Note: Because most examinations of hair are comparative, and with possible Sasquatch hair there will not be a standard match...
“undetermined” will be the probable outcome.

✚ Prints & Teeth Marks: Casting footprints is a fairly common practice. Other casted anatomical parts such as hands, elbows, knees, buttocks, dental impressions, etc. are highly coveted because they are less common, but can be casted using the same technique. Study the anatomy of your own human footprint. Look at your walking pattern in different substrates. Did you know that a human can have what appears to be a mid-tarsal break in sand? Measure the print – be exact! An average width of a human footprint measures 40% or less of its length.

***Hydrocal** is a very good casting material. Obtain at masonry building supply companies. Use pancake batter thick consistency when mixed with water – in zip lock bags – use gloves – metal reinforcements, like chain link fence ties. Mix thoroughly – no lumps. Carefully splatter the mixture into the print to gently cover any detail. Then gently pour the rest of the mixture into the print, filling the print completely so all detail is captured.

***Snow print wax** is also available. It is a spray that is used in conjunction with dental stone. Spray the print, then cast.

***Dental stone** is recommended for teeth marks or snow prints as it increases the amount of detail, and sets within 30mins although, this material is more expensive – lb. for lb. Both are available on Amazon.

Regardless of the medium used to cast, always cover your cast to protect it, allowing air to penetrate the covering so material sets up. Exercise patience! Allow ample drying time, especially if the cast is large or thick. Never scrub the cast with a harsh brush. Details can be damaged. It is better to leave a little natural dirt as a contrast, or concentrated coffee can be brushed on to enhance an already scrubbed cast. Once satisfied with the cleaning, using a soft brush, apply a couple of coats of clear sealant over the detailed side of the cast. Leave the backside unsealed so moisture can continue to evaporate. When possible make a comparative human print of the same body part, in the same substrate, and cast that as well.

- ✚ Trace Evidence: Seemingly easy would be the collection of fingerprints. However, this is dependent on where the print was found, what it was deposited on, is the print contaminated (smudged), the amount of pressure on a given surface and how proficient the investigator is at 'lifting' the print. Latent body prints are such valuable evidence that extraordinary efforts should be made to recover them...even if for your own collection. The most common method for developing prints of finger(s) or hand or other body part on glass or plastic is by using powder and clear tape.
- ✚ Videotaping Evidence: Offers several advantages. This form of digital equipment is inexpensive, has audio, and can easily be learned / used. Images can be played back, and the motion of the video holds people's interest. Downside: neither the resolutions nor the color accuracy can compete with those in 35mm photography. Use a tripod to steady the video camera. Begin with a short narrative of the situation – location – what you are filming. Don't move too fast. Slow down the movement of the video equipment so viewers can clearly see without getting dizzy. Use the camera's capabilities for wide-area pans, close-ups, and tight shots of evidence.
- ✚ Photograph Evidence: High end digital cameras are expensive, but they offer interchangeable lenses, immediate viewing, and printing. Conventional silver-based film used in 35mm cameras are still best as they offer high resolutions, the best color range, and the most durable storage medium. Although the film has to be developed which delays review of the images. Regardless of what type of camera used, photograph the area &/or find as soon as possible. Describe each photo. Photograph from eye level to represent the normal view, and then advance closer to the find to photograph finite details. Photograph evidence straight down. Avoid angles and watch for sun shadows. Photograph the most fragile areas 1st. Include photos with a scale item or tape measurement in the photo. Example: with a footprint, measurements of length and width of widest area and width of narrowest area are necessary for future analysis. When investigating a large area, include a 360-degree view of the area. Multiple photos of the same area / location are advised for

comparison later. Especially if you think you see an individual or you have that special feeling of being watched. Comparison photos are essential.

- ✚ Personal Experiences: Document these as quickly as possible. Whether you use a journal or simply turn on a recorder, document the date, time of day, what you saw, heard, felt, smelled, etc. The smallest detail may come into play during another experience. Documents facts separate from theories.

From the moment an unusual artifact is found, and you look further, you are collecting a form of evidence. From the moment someone recounts a story of an experience they had on ANY subject or expresses a theory, they are sharing a form of evidence as there must be a basis for their theory. Ask questions and possibly you will glean insight to a similar experience you have had or one that you may have in the future. The collection of evidence does aide in understanding your observations.

Enjoy your journey along the way!