

## **The Australian Bigfoot, the Yowie.**

By Gary Opit

When Europeans began exploring the world, they found similar animals everywhere they voyaged. Most spectacular were the animals known as mammals, warm-blooded, hair-covered, that fed their young on milk; lions, tigers, leopards, pumas, jaguars, hyenas, bears, racoons, pandas, mongoose, civets, ferrets, elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, tapirs, giraffe, antelope, deer, buffalo, bison, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, camels, squirrels, porcupines, beavers, monkeys and the great apes of Africa and Asia. If any of these animals were no longer living in some places, they found their preserved fossil skeletons in the soil, in rock and in caves. Everywhere except on the island continent of Australia. None of these animals had ever lived on the land down-under in the southern hemisphere. All the Australian mammals were completely different. Christians theorised that perhaps God had created the Australian animals first and had then gone on to create the animals that Europeans, Asians, Africans and Americans were so familiar with.

The Australian natural environment is unlike that found anywhere else on the planet. Almost everything in it is unique to the island continent. It lies by itself, far from the other continents and separates the South Pacific Ocean on its east coast from the Indian Ocean on its west coast. The great Southern Ocean flows along its south coast separating it from Antarctica at the South Pole. The Timor Sea separates it from the islands of Indonesia to the north and South-east Asia. The world's largest tropical island of New Guinea, to the north-east, has always been a part of the Australian landmass, though it has been separated from it since the sea levels rose after the melting of the ice caps of the Ice Age. Tasmania, to the south-east was also separated at the same time.

It was eventually discovered that the Australian plants and animals were most closely related to those of South America. There were no armadillos, sloths or giant and smaller tree-living anteaters, that are unique to South America, though there were those strange mammals that give birth to tiny young and keep them in a pouch, the opossums, known as marsupials. In Australia British settlers found giant opossums as tall as a person that bounced around on their hindlegs, the kangaroos. Tail-less opossums that looked like small bears, koalas and wombats. There are many species of herbivorous opossums including some that can glide for a hundred yards (metres) through the air. Sharp-nosed, opossums that dig holes in the ground for worms, known as bandicoots. Blind opossums that look exactly like a mole and lives beneath the sandy desert soils. Striped fluffy-tailed opossums that feed only on termites and known as numbats. Carnivorous opossums that looked like dogs with stripes, thylacines, better known as Tasmanian tigers, also black devils and spotted quolls.

It was finally discovered that the Australian pouched marsupials were all related to a pygmy opossum that lives in southern Chile in the same type of Antarctic Beech forest that grows on the highest mountains in south-eastern Australia and New Guinea. It is now known from the study of geology and the fossil record that Antarctic beech trees once existed as a vast forest covering the ancient southern super continent of Gondwana and now exists isolated on some of the southern remnants of the super continent in Chile, New Zealand, Australia and New Guinea.

Even more ancient than the marsupials are the egg-laying furred mammals, the monotremes, duck-billed platypus and echidna. Descendants of the mammal-like reptiles that dominated the planet for 70 million years before the rise of the dinosaurs, they survive only down-under and hunt their invertebrate prey by detecting the electrical currents within the tiny muscles of insects and worms using electro-receptors in their unique beaks.

The platypus swam in the rivers and streams around the feet of the dinosaurs for 60 million years. Sixty-five million year after the dinosaurs succumbed to the rigors of life the platypus swim around the feet of Australians. One population moved permanently back onto the land and now spend their lives digging into the hard soil to extract the wood-eating termites and another species in New Guinea feeds on worms in rainforest soils. The beak no longer flatted but tube-like, the body covered in spines and the egg carried in a pouch of the echidna or spiny anteater.

The modern continents, subcontinents and islands of Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Antarctica, South America, India, Madagascar and Africa were once all joined together to form a single continent at the South Pole. A massive asteroid impact 250 million years ago shattered Gondwana and broke it up to form the modern continents and islands of the Southern Hemisphere. Many are still slowly drifting north, from the force of the impact, still propagating as flows of white-hot liquid rock travelling beneath the planet's rocky surface. Africa hit Europe forming the Alps pushed upwards by the collision. India hit Eurasia forming the Himalayas also pushed upwards by the collision. Many closely related plant and animal species still exist on these landmasses, separated from one another as Gondwana broke apart.

The Australian continental tectonic plate is travelling north at two and a half inches (6.5 cm) a year, floating on the flow of white-hot magma 100km beneath the ground surface. It is heading towards South-east Asia and because there has never been a land bridge, there are no Asian animals native to Australia, no monkeys, apes, squirrels, deer, dogs or cats. The dingo is believed to have been introduced to Australia only about 4000 years ago by Asian fisherman. Aboriginal cooking fireplaces have recently been discovered on the south coast of Victoria and dated around 130,000 years old and Aboriginal genetics show that no other people reached Australia until British settlers arrived at what is now Sydney in 1788. The British introduced domestic horses, donkeys, cattle, camels, sheep, goats, pigs, dogs, cats, rabbits and foxes. These now live amongst the native animals.

The 55 different kinds of kangaroos and wallabies range from the rabbit-sized Long-nosed Potoroo to the Red and the Great Grey Kangaroo. Male kangaroos can measure up to 2.4 m in length and stand as tall as a person. They have developed the most efficient means of terrestrial locomotion in that their bipedal hopping, the ability to leap fences, or bounding at great speed, expends less energy than four-legged running or galloping. Each time they hit the ground they receive the energy for the next jump and so travel with little exertion. Each time a kangaroo leaps it automatically drags air into their lungs and each time they hit the ground the air is forced out, so they use little energy while they are moving. Thus, they are tireless travellers.

Australia is home to some of the world's largest birds, the flightless emu lives in open country and the horned cassowary, with its dagger-like raptor feet, search the rainforest floor for fallen fruit. The world's largest songbirds are two species of shimmering silver-tailed lyrebirds, reputed to have the most powerful, beautiful voice of any species. Australia also has some of the largest reptiles, the giant saltwater crocodile regularly eats people, along with horses, cattle, pigs and even sharks at sea. Giant lizards that can reach a length of 7 feet (2 metres), big pythons and many dangerous snakes are major predators of the Australian bush. The fossil record shows that up until the most recent Ice Age Australia was a land of giant marsupials, birds and reptiles.

One of the oldest of weathered landscapes, it is inhabited by some of the most ancient plants and animals living alongside one of the oldest surviving human cultures, the original Australians, the Aborigines. For most of the time that the Aboriginal people lived on this continent, it contained a most remarkable megafauna. As many as 50 species of giant kangaroo hopped about the bushland, the largest being the giant short-faced kangaroo *Procoptodon goliath* that stood 3 m tall, had an almost human-like head, walked like a person instead of jumping and had a single giant toe on each foot. Largest of all the mammals were the Diprotodons, giant koala and wombat-like animals, the largest was *Diprotodon optatum*, nearly 3 m long and 2 m at the shoulder. Most remarkable was the bull-sized marsupial giant tapir-sloth (*Palorchestes azael*) with its exceptionally massive forearms equipped with razor sharp, rapier-like claws up to 12 cm long, and its bizarre head was crowned with a longish trunk. In the mountains of New Guinea lived the mountain diprotodontid marsupial gorilla-panda (*Hulitherium thomasettii*), weighing 300 kg.

The world's largest bird, a giant flightless goose, (*Genyornis newtoni*) fed on herbaceous ground plants. A giant tortoise (*Meiolania*) was equipped with cow-like horns on its head and a long tail armoured with bony spikes. The giant goanna, (*Megalania prisca*), a 600 kg monitor lizard reached a

length of 30 feet (10 metres). A huge boid (*Wanambi naracoortensis*), distantly related to the South American anaconda, slithered through the wetlands hunting prey. Marsupial carnivores included thylacines, big Tasmanian devils and the marsupial lion, (*Thylacoleo carnifex*) that possessed enormous 4 to 5 cm long cutting premolar teeth in upper and lower jaws which it used to slice its prey into bite-sized pieces. With long powerful limbs and possum-like opposable first toes on its feet, it could both run and climb.

When the British began to settle the continent, often forcing the ancient landholders off their homelands, there was sustained resistance from Aboriginal people, who were otherwise generally peaceful and helpful to the newcomers. The Aboriginal people adapted to the new forms of agriculture and the new animal species introduced from the Northern Hemisphere and worked as farm labourers and stockmen. They warned the new settlers and the prospectors, searching for gold and other mineral, to beware of a large and relatively dangerous animal that resembled a huge hairy human that was active mostly at night and which lived in small numbers scattered throughout the most impenetrable mountainous landscapes.

The Aboriginal people had their own names for this rarely encountered animal depending on their language group. The Bundjalung word in north-eastern New South Wales was *Cherra-warra* or *Jurrawarra* and was said to translate as “large hairy man” and other tribes called it *Joogabinna* (Healy & Cropper, 2006). Tribes from Nambucca and Coffs Harbour in central eastern NSW knew it as *Barga*. In the central coast of NSW, it is known as *Myngawin* and in south-eastern NSW, it is known as *Puttikan*. Tribes in central NSW called it *Nuwii* and around the Australian Capital Territory it was known as *Wawee*. Tribe in north-eastern Victoria named it *Dulugal*, also pronounced and spelt *Doolagarl*, *Toolagar* and *Gulaga* and meant ‘Big Ones.’ It was known as *Noocoonah* and *Mooluwonk* in South Australia and *Jimbra*, *Jingra*, *Tjangara* and *Marbu* by tribes in West Australia. It was known as *Pangkarlangu* by tribes in the Northern Territory. In North Queensland it was known as *Turramulli*. (Pixie Byrnes, personal communication, 2008). The Yugambeh people of south-eastern Queensland called it *Bunyun* and all Aboriginal people were also familiar with a second species that was only half as large and lived in the rainforest and was known as *Janjarri*.

*Yowie* is from the Yuwaalaraay language of NSW, means ‘dream spirit’, and is also pronounced and spelt *Yourie*, *Yowroos* and *Yahoo*. The Wothowurong Aboriginal people in the Geelong area of Victoria spoke of a mysterious water beast in local rivers and lakes that was most likely to have been a species of seal and they used the word *Bunyip* for it. This word was then used by many British settlers for any large, unknown, mysterious and frightening animal encountered in the forests.

We only know of British encounters with this animal when local newspapers published articles of the incidents and the terms Yahoo, Australian gorilla, Hairy Man, Bunyip and Yowie were most often used. There were also reports of native tigers, lions, panthers and bears. From European descriptions of these animals, they may have represented relict populations of some species of megafauna surviving in habitat too remote to be impacted by human activities. Descriptions of these animals published in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers occasionally described infants carried in a pouch which may have meant that perhaps the Marsupial Gorilla-panda (*Hulitherium thomasettii*), known only from approximately 9,000-year-old fossil bones of a single individual from a cave in the mountains of Papua New Guinea, had a much larger distribution and survived to the present era.

The Giant Short-faced Kangaroo, the Marsupial Giant Tapir- sloth, the Thylacine, the Marsupial Lion and the Giant Goanna may have also survived in small scattered numbers in the remoter areas of Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea if published encounter descriptions can be believed. Even more remarkable is the possibility that the Javan Ape-man (*Homo erectus*), well known from fossil skulls dug from the eroding banks of the Solo River in Indonesia by renown archaeologists, may have reached the Australian continent and has continued to survive amongst the ancient animals and the

ancient Aboriginal people. A recounting of these published descriptions in chronological order gives us an idea of the history of the encounters with this mystery animal in particular.

Captain Peter Cunningham, a Royal Navy surgeon, in his memoir, *Two Years in New South Wales*, published in 1827, stated that he heard strange cries echoing through the mountains, that he attributed to the *Puttikan*. The Awabakal Aboriginal people described this as a fearsome creature that resembled a tall man with a hairy body and a long mane, with skin so tough that spears would not pierce it and that it roamed by night but was afraid of fire.

Alexander Harris also recorded Aboriginal knowledge of this animal when he was exploring the forests to the north of Newcastle in New South Wales in the 1830s, when he published his memoir *An Emigrant Mechanic, Settlers and Convicts or Recollections of Sixteen years Labour in the Australian Backwoods*. They informed him of a “great tall animal like a man... much greater than the human stature, and covered in hair, and perpetually making a frightful noise as he wandered alone.”

The *Melbourne Punch*, 4 May 1841 edition on page 4, declared under the title of ‘An Australian Gorilla’ that “an animal has been seen in Queensland answering to the following description: — Height about five feet, slender proportions, arms long, legs like human being, only the feet about eighteen inches long, and shaped like an iguana, with long toes, the muscles of the arms and chest being well developed, the back of the head straight with the neck and body, but the front of the face projected forward, with monkey features.”

An 1842 edition of the *Australian and New Zealand Monthly Magazine* stated that the natives of Australia believed in a hideous monster, of an unearthly character and ape-like appearance. “On the other hand a contested point has long existed among Australian naturalists whether or not such an animal as the Yahoo existed, one party contending that it does, and that from its scarceness, shyness and solitary habits, man has not succeeded in obtaining a specimen, and that it is most likely one of the monkey tribe.”

Captain William Collin in his autobiography *Life and Adventures (of an Essexman)* described an event that occurred at Port Hacking NSW in 1856 as follows. “One afternoon Gogerly sent down two of his boys in an old log canoe, to tell us that their father had seen a Yahoo, or wild man of the woods; it was about 12 feet high, they said, carrying a staff 20 feet long. He warned us that we were not safe from the creature, as it was seen close to our tents. On hearing a noise, he used his spyglass and scanned the shore, til his eyes rested on the monster, which he declared was looking at my mate and myself, as we gathered shells on the beach. We loaded our guns and took them to find the Yahoo. We certainly did find some remarkable tracks, which had not been made by a human being.”

The Nelson Examiner and the New Zealand Chronicle of 17 January 1867 published an article entitled ‘Strange Animal – The Murrumbidgee correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, relates the following’: - “For two years past a strange animal has occasionally been seen near the Murilla Mountain, and various have been the descriptions given of the creature, so that we have been doubtful of the reports, and fancied the animal was nothing more or less than an old ‘wallaroo,’ (hill kangaroo) as the Murilla is very wild and rocky, and the wallaroo is found in such places; but within the last few days two persons have seen the creature that has caused much alarm to a whole camp of stonebreakers and roadmakers, sixteen or seventeen in number. It is described as being three feet six inches high, standing on its hind legs, the forelegs or arms could about touch the ground. It was covered in shaggy black hair all over. It made a most horrible yelling when the parties rode in the direction of the rock it stood upon, showing a very fine set of teeth. It made a spring at its disturbers, who put spurs to their horses and fled. The blacks in this district are aware of the existence of these animals, and state that there were a great number of them some time ago. The place where this creature was seen is one of the wildest places that could be found on the northern line of the road, at the back of the Murilla Mountain, or, as it is generally called, the ‘Murlow.’ This creature evidently belongs to the ape type. Has one of these creatures ever made its escape from confinement, or are there any such creatures in

the country? If so, it is strange they have not been spoken of before this. The utmost reliance may be placed upon the statement here put forward.”

The Sydney newspaper *The Empire*, 17 April 1871 published the following article.

“The following particulars have been supplied to us by Mr. George Osborne, of Illawarra Hotel, Dapto, concerning a strange looking animal, which he saw last Monday, and which he believes was a gorilla. It is to be hoped successful means may be adopted to capture the animal (alive if possible), as it is quite evident it is one of the greatest natural curiosities yet found in the colony. Together with the interest attached to the peculiarity of this strange “monster in human form”, there is something very remarkable and suggestive in the fact, that he should have presented himself to Mr. Osborne, while that gentleman was going his rounds, collecting the census. The following are Mr. Osborne’s remarks concerning the animal:

“On my way from Mr. Mathew Reen’s, coming down a range about half a mile behind Mr. John Graham’s residence, at Avondale, after sunset, my horse was startled at seeing an animal coming down a tree ... and when it got to within about 8 feet (2.4 m) of the ground it lost its grip and fell.

My feelings at the moment were anything but happy, but although my horse was restless, I endeavored to get a good glimpse of the animal by following it as it retreated until it disappeared into a gully. It somewhat resembled the shape of a man, according to the following description:

Height, about 5 feet (1.5 m), slender proportioned, arms long, legs like a human being, only the feet being about 18 inches (46 cm) long, and shaped like an iguana, with long toes, the muscles of the arms and chest being well developed, the back of the head straight, with the neck and body, but the front or face projected forward, with monkey features, every particle of the body except the feet and face was covered with black hair, with a tan-coloured streak from the neck to the abdomen. While looking at me its eyes and mouth were in motion, after the fashion of a monkey. It walked quadruped fashion, but at every few paces it would turn around and look at me following it, supporting the body with the two legs and one arm, while the other was placed across the hip. I also noticed that it had no tail.

It appears that two children named Summers saw the same animal or one similar in the same locality about two years ago, but they say it was then only the size of a boy about thirteen or fourteen years of age. Perhaps this is the same animal that Mr. B. Rixon saw at the Cordeaux River about five or six years ago. The query is, ‘where did it come from?’”

The *Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser* in 1876 published another encounter with the mysterious animal as did the *Herald* on Saturday 20 January 1877 entitled; *Discovery of a live Yahoo!*

“The Milburn Creek correspondent, of the Sydney Evening News under date November 11, writes as follows: —

Who has not heard, from the earliest settlement of the colony, the blacks speaking of some unearthly animal or inhuman creature that inhabited some part of the wildest, inaccessible, rugged, and sequestered haunts of rocky mountains and gorges in the colony, namely—the Yahoo-Devil Devil, or the Hairy Man of the Wood—which to this day they stand in fearful awe and terror of? I, for one sympathise with the superstitious, or aboriginal sayings, of those wild and unsophisticated denizens of the Australian bush—that their aboriginal tradition of such unearthly mongrels or monsters have and do now exist—though so rare and not as yet often seen or believed in by white men.

Fourteen days ago, and not more than ten miles from here, towards the head of the Lachlan River, on Coolamba station (Hammond's) in one of the most secluded and melancholy-

looking spots imaginable, imperceptibly a terror of awe creeps over every one that has to pass through this far and wide-known gorge or death chasm of the river. While a lad of the name of Porter (a son of Porter a farmer on the Lachlan), was shepherding a flock of his father's sheep, near the dismal rocky bridge or gorge, as so called, an inhuman, unearthly-looking being was seen by the lad coming direct towards him from the high, rugged, and precipitous rocks. The dogs on observing such an unknown monster would not attack, became timid, and crouched around the lad's legs, who became horror-struck with fear; he left the sheep to their fate, and ran, together with his collies, for home. On relating the inhuman sight he had seen, which was not credited by the father and others at home, they however, at last, mustered courage, and went to the exact place described, but could not find or see anything of the hairy man.

On Saturday, last however, a fishing party, of young men and young women went to the Rocky Bridge waterholes for a night's sport. These waterholes are famed far and near for quality and quantity of fish. It is customary for those bent for good sport to remain for the night, and, as a matter of course, a large fire is made. On the evening of this memorable day, two hours before sun-down, the young men and some of the women went to set their lines, leaving one of their young friends to boil the billy and prepare supper.

While engaged, the young woman was suddenly startled by observing a man, who, as she naturally imagined at first sight, was one of their party coming towards the fire, but on walking closer, discovered the appearance to be unsightly and inhuman, bearing in every way the shape of a man with a big red face, hands and legs covered with long shaggy hair. From fright she became almost spell-bound, screamed and screeched—but unable to run. The men, on hearing such unearthly cries, left their fishing lines and ran towards their comrade. On reaching the fire, the monster, the cause of the alarm was only distant some fifty yards. On their appearing it stood, for a minute or two, and turned away and made for the rocks.

Two of the men armed themselves with a tomahawk and cudgel and followed this extraordinary phenomenon of nature for a short distance up the rocky and rugged mountain; when suddenly it turned around and stood viewing the men as they were approaching. They also halted being then about sixty yards from the object of terror, commanding a full view of his whole shape and make, which resembled that of a big, slovenly man. The head was covered with dark grizzly hair, the face with shaggy, darkish hair, the back and belly and down the legs covered with hair of a lighter colour. This devil-devil—or whatever it may be called—doubled round, and hurriedly made back towards the women and fire again.

On seeing him coming, a fearful commotion amongst the females, and a kind of supernatural terror amongst the men, took place. In the meantime, before reaching the camp, it sided away towards the inaccessible rocky mount. The names of the two men who witnessed and took part in the scene are Porter and Dunn, well-known settlers on the Abercrombie and Lachlan Rivers. Mr. Lannes, another settler of the Lachlan has informed me, the other day that the neighbours all round organized a party to go in search of the human monster, and hunt him down, dead or alive.

It is not many weeks ago that I recorded the remains of a similar animal or creature being found in the Walla Walla scrub. It is well known to the old settlers for the last thirty odd years that the blacks will never camp within a mile of this death-like chasm of the Lachlan, though they come long distances every year to fish in the adjoining water-holes, but leave before sundown to camp miles away. Whether this be the black man's veritable Yahoo—devil-devil—or the white man's hairy man of the wood; time, it is hoped, will now shortly tell."

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 October 1877 published the following article.

"An Extraordinary Animal, - Mr. Prosser, manager at Messrs. Amos and Co.'s sawmill at Amos's Siding, near Sutton Forest, has just informed us (Scrutineer) that a most peculiar animal has been seen by two men, Patrick Jones and Patrick Doyle, residents of Sutton Forest, in the bush between Cable's

Siding and Jordan's Crossing. Mr. Prosser himself has seen the footprints; they are 3 feet apart, and the impression made by the feet is similar to that of an elephant. The animal is described as being 7 feet high, with a face like a man, and long shaggy hair, and makes a tremendous noise. Fourteen of the men from the mill, fully armed, intend starting on Saturday next to endeavor to capture this "wild man of the woods". Mr. Prosser assures us there is no exaggeration about this affair, and everyone at the mill believes in the existence of this strange creature."

In the *Australian Town and Country Journal* of 9 th December 1882, amateur naturalist Henry James McCooey wrote of his encounter with a strange creature in bushland between Batemans Bay and Ulladulla on the New South Wales south coast.

"A few days ago, I saw one of these strange animals in an unfrequented locality on the coast between Bateman's Bay and Ulladulla. My attention was attracted to it by the cries of a number of small birds which were pursuing and darting at it. When I first beheld the animal, it was standing on its hind legs, partly upright, looking up at the birds above it in the bushes, blinking its eyes and distorting its visage and making a low chattering kind of noise. Being above the animal on a slight elevation and distant from it less than a chain, I had ample opportunity of noting its size and general appearance.

I should think that if it were standing perfectly upright it would be nearly 5ft high. It was tailless and covered with very long black hair, which was of a dirty red or snuff-colour about the throat and breast. Its eyes, which were small and restless, were partly hidden by matted hair that covered its head. The length of the fore legs or arms seemed to be strikingly out of proportion with the rest of its body, but in all other respects its build seemed to be fairly proportional. It would probably weigh about 8 stone.

On the whole it was a most uncouth and repulsive looking creature, evidently possessed of prodigious strength, and one which I should not care to come to close quarters with. Having sufficiently satisfied my curiosity, I threw a stone at the animal, whereupon it immediately rushed off, followed by the birds, and disappeared in a ravine which was close at hand."

Edward Pierson Ramsay, Curator of the Australian Museum in Sydney, questioned the existence of such a creature. Henry James McCooey responded to the criticism of his report and a subsequent edition of *The Australian Town and Country Journal*, writes:

"The mere fact of no apes [are] found in the Sydney Museum does not justify us in rushing to the conclusion that there are none in the colony, for it is extremely improbable that any ape will be foolhardy enough to present itself at the museum to undergo the somewhat delicate operation of stuffing; and beyond the fact that there are, none to be found in the Sydney Museum there is not one scintilla of evidence to prove that they are not to be found in the colony, while there is abundance of evidence to show that they are.

I do not claim to be the first who has seen this animal, for I can put my finger on half a dozen men at Bateman's Bay who have seen the same, or at any rate an animal of a similar description; but I think I am the first to come forward in the columns of a newspaper and give publicity to the fact of having seen it. I may mention that a search party was organised at Bateman's Bay some months ago to surround the locality [and] the supposed ape... and shoot or capture it, but the idea was abandoned in consequence of the likelihood of gun accidents; and I may further state that the skeleton of an ape, 4ft in length, may be seen at any time in a cave 14 miles from Bateman's Bay, in the direction of Ulladulla."

In the *Monaro Mercury and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser* of Wednesday 18 August 1886, three additional reports of encounters with the mysterious animal was published under the heading 'The Jingera Yahoo' which stated;

"Whilst a young man named Flynn was looking after stock at the back of the Bredbo station one afternoon last week, he was surprised to observe a hairy human form, about seven feet in height, walking in the bush. The wild man walked with an unsteady, swinging, and fast step, his arms being bent forward and nearly reaching the ground, whilst the colour was described as "bay," between a red and chestnut. Flynn did not take a second look at the uncanny creature but rode as fast as he could to the homestead of Mr. Crimmings nearly two miles away, to whom he reported the strange, mysterious affair. Since then, Mr. Crimmings himself has interviewed the monster, and his account tallies exactly with that given by Mr. Flynn. But Mr. Crimmings heard the animal make a cry that sounded very like "Yahoo."

We hear that Mr. Joseph Hart, of Jingera, also saw the "Yahoo" as he was returning home one afternoon. The strange being is, no doubt, the "wild man," that has been so often talked of about Jingera for so many years past. It is the intention of Bredbo and Jingera residents to scour the bush in a strong body and capture the monster alive or dead. For this purpose, they will meet at Mr. Kelly's hotel at Little Plain on Monday next to organise their forces and obtain a supply of ammunition. Should they capture the wild man alive, it is to be hoped the men of Bredbo and Jingera feed him up and keep him till the Centennial Exhibition is open."

In the *Goulburn Evening Penny Post* of Saturday 17 September 1887 an encounter with the mysterious animal was published entitled 'Another Yahoo' and stated;

"From time to time we (Braidwood Dispatch) hear of the appearance of an extraordinary creature between a man and a beast in several parts of the bush in this district, and those who have observed these appearances being generally men of bush occupations and liable to be joked about their stories when they come into town, have not had much credence attached to their tales. Nevertheless, from the different statements made to us we are not disposed altogether to laugh at them, remembering Hamlet's wise injunction about there being "more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

About a fortnight since one John Mahony, in the employ of Mr. Thomas Lee, who has a contract for erecting a bridge at Gilbert's Creek, on the road to Cooma, and about a couple of miles out of town, was engaged cooking his and his mate's supper just after dusk, when he saw a hairy individual, 7 feet high at least, marching down without the least concern for anybody, and striding across 5 feet drains and 5 feet high fallen trees without the slightest trouble, and proceeding on his way wholly oblivious of anything around him. John Mahoney cleared without asking any further questions of the strange intruder. It was a full moonlight night, and the figure was not more than twenty yards away from him.

Numerous stories of the same kind are current of a man or animal showing himself in the bush, and we could mention names to show the credibility of our information and the possibility of there being animals in the bush even yet, with all the settlement that has taken place, of which people are wholly ignorant. The appearance is described as that of a gorilla, about 7 feet high, all hairy from head to toe, and of a light colour. Other persons have seen the creature, whatever he be, in various parts of the district, viz., at Monga, Parker's Gap, and the Sassafras, in every instance to their utter terror, most of them being carriers, who avow that they will never pass over the same part of the road again unless in company with someone else."

The *Queanbeyan Observer*, 30 November 1894 ran a report that stated:



“On the third of October last young Johnnie McWilliams was riding from his home at Snowball to the Jinden P.O., Braidwood. When about halfway the boy was startled by the extraordinary sight of a wild man or gorilla. The boy states that a wild man suddenly appeared from behind a tree, about 30 yards from the road, stood looking at him for a few seconds, and then turned and ran for the wooded hills a mile or so from the road. The animal ran for two hundred yards across open country before disappearing over a low hill, so that the boy had ample time to observe the beast. The boy states that he appeared to be over six feet in height and heavily built. He describes it “as a big man covered with long hair”. It did not run very fast and tore up the dust with its nails, and in jumping a log it struck its feet against a limb, when it bellowed like a bullock. When running it kept looking back at the boy, till it disappeared. It was three o’clock in the afternoon, and the boy described everything he saw minutely. The boy is a truthful and manly young fellow, well acquainted with all the known animals in the New South Wales bush and persists that he could not have been mistaken.

For many years there have been tales of trappers coming across enormous tracks of some unknown animal in the mountain wilds around Snowball. Of course, these tales were received with doubt, and put down as clever romancing on the part of the possum hunters, but the story of Johnnie McWilliams is believed by all who know the boy as a true tale. The proof of the existence of such an animal in New South Wales should be of some interest to the naturalist.”

In the *Brisbane Courier* on Friday 17 July 1896 on page 5 another encounter with the mysterious animal in northern New South Wales was published and stated;

“The immortal bunyip has turned up again, though, as usual, he has eluded capture. According to the “Sydney Telegraph’s” correspondent at Tenterfield, “a resident on the Clifton Road reports having been attacked by a large hairy animal, like a gorilla. An armed party went out after the animal, but failed to find the monster, and a police constable has been despatched to the scene.”

In the *Colonist* of 13 September 1900 another encounter with the unknown animal, this time in inland northern New South Wales, was published and stated;

“A Scare, - News from Mudgee (New South Wales) states that the residents of Pyramul, about 40 miles from Mudgee, have been terrorised by the appearance there of a strange animal resembling a baboon. Several reputable people aver that they have encountered the animal, and that its appearance is such as to inspire the greatest dread.”

The *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal* of 1902 published an article on Thursday 19 June 1902 entitled ‘Aboriginal Traditions, the Yahoo and Rock Dog’ by Bobdad Shuite which stated;

“Considerable interest is being taken in certain circles in Sydney in the early traditions of the Australian blacks... The aborigines are a very superstitious race, and throughout there is an air of mystery and strangeness about them. At one time I thought that there were no aborigines left in the Western district, but in this I was mistaken, for there are a few remnants of the Mulgoa and Burragorang tribes still in existence... Not long since I was down at Burragorang and there met a party of their young people... One of the older aborigines has told me... some facts concerning the “Yahoo,” I cannot call to mind the aboriginal name for this animal.

The “Yahoo,” (as we all know) is an animal said to resemble a man only that his body is covered with long hair, and his feet are turned backwards, the toes being where the heel should be. The aborigines really believe that such an animal exists, and they are all afraid of it. My informant confidently believes that one is still living. He, indeed, offered to take me to the place where I could see it for myself. He says this strange creature is to be seen at the Devil’s Hole, a point about two miles from Katoomba. He describes this particular Yahoo as being large and strong.

Few, if any, of the white people have seen this animal, but its voice has been heard. On one occasion a gentleman was out walking amongst the mountains and had been out on the narrow neck, in the

neighbourhood of the Devil's Hole. He was belated and the shades of evening had set in before he left the secluded spot. After he reached home, he informed his friends that the Yahoo had followed him all the way home. He had not seen it, but he could hear it quite distinctly following behind him and frequently heard the cry "Yahoo! Yahoo!" The effect of this night's experience was never forgotten by my friend, and I firmly believe that it was no fancy on his part."

In the *Delegate Argus and Border Post* of Saturday 15 August 1903 on page 5 another report of an encounter on the New South Wales south coast with the mysterious animal was published under the title of 'Eden's Gorilla'

"A great sensation was caused here last Thursday when a gentleman came into the township and stated that he was startled by seeing what he termed a gorilla between Candelo and here. He says it was fully the size of a full-grown man, with abnormally long arms and large head. It bounded right onto the cutting, gazed at him in a weird sort of way, and made a most unearthly noise; it then leaped over a fence and made for the ranges with the speed of an antelope."

The *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* in 1906 published an encounter on the New South Wales north coast with the mysterious animal by Mr. E. J. Clifford who shot at and wounded the animal. The article entitled 'The Yahoo Again' stated;

"A correspondent of the *Glen Innes Guardian* is responsible for the following yarn from The Gulf, near Emmaville, from which wild locality some ten or eleven years ago came an equally wild story about a marvellous wild animal alleged to have been seen in the scrub.

The Gulf writer says that Mr. E. J. Clifford has had this exciting experience about five miles north of the Gulf: He was crawling through dense scrub, when a wild animal rose up in front of him, and, as if frightened, paused for a moment. Clifford, who had a 32 Winchester, had his arms at the moment busy working through the bush. As speedily as possible he fired.

The animal which, he says, appeared to be 8ft high and 3ft broad, black in colour, and covered with hair of great length, gave several unearthly yells, something like a native bear (koala), and made off. Clifford fired two more shots at it as it fled over a flat. Following it for about a quarter of a mile, he saw blood and the huge footprints where the animal crossed a creek in the sand. The head of the animal seemed to be shaped like that of a dog. The animal at first stood upright like a human being and ran on two legs at a great pace. It was some forty-two yards away from Clifford when first seen. The time was about midday, and Clifford saw it clearly. A rifle party of about 30 has left the Gulf in search of the creature. Clifford is said to have shown some of the miners the blood and tracks on the sand."

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 October 1912, published an account of a sighting of the animal near Creewah, NSW, written by the noted poet and bushman Sydney Wheeler Jephcott.

"After nearly fifty years in the 'bush' with every sense alert to catch the secrets of the wilds, up until a few days ago not the faintest scintilla of firsthand evidence had reached me that any animal of importance remained unknown in our country. But about 10 days ago, when riding through the jungle which lies on the eastern slope of Bull Hill (about 12 miles south-east of Nimitybelle railway station), I noticed on a white gum trunk a series of scratches such as could be made with the point of a desert spoon. These scratches were in a series of three on one side meeting a single scratch coming from the opposite direction, being exactly such as would be made by three fingers and the thumb of a great hand with abnormally strong and large nails. Beginning at a height of about three feet six inches, the series of scratches rose to a height of about seven feet. All ... were made by a right hand, suggesting that the creature which made them shared a peculiarity of mankind.

From these indications I judged that some animal unknown to science was at large in this country but took no further action. However, on Sunday (October 12), I heard that George Summerell, a

neighbour of mine, while riding up the track, which forms a short cut from Bombala to Bemboka, had that day, about noon, when approaching a small creek about a mile below 'Packers Swamp', ridden close up to a strange animal, which, on all fours, was drinking from a creek. As it was covered in grey hair, the first thought that rose to Summerell's mind was: 'What an immense kangaroo'. But, hearing the horse's feet on the track, it rose up to its full height, of about 7 feet, and looked quietly at the horseman.

Then stooping down again, it finished its drink, and then, picking up a stick that lay by, it walked steadily away up a slope ... and disappeared among the rocks and timber 150 yards away. Summerell described the face as being like that of an ape or man, minus forehead and chin, with a great trunk all one size from shoulders to hips, and with arms that nearly reached to its ankles.

I rode up to the scene on Monday morning. On arriving about a score of footprints attested to the truth of Summerell's account, the handprints where the animal had stooped at the edge of the water being especially plain. These handprints differed from a large human hand chiefly in having the little fingers set much like the thumbs (a formation explaining the series of scratches on the white gum tree).

A striking peculiarity was revealed, however, in the footprints: these, resembling an enormously long and ugly human foot in the heel, instep, and ball, had only four toes – long (nearly 5 inches), cylindrical and showing evidence of extreme flexibility. Even in the prints which had sunk deepest into the mud there was no trace of the 'thumb' of the characteristic ape's 'foot'.

Besides, perhaps, a score of new prints, there were old ones discernible, showing that the animal had crossed the creek at least a fortnight previously. After a vexatious delay, I was able, on the Wednesday afternoon, to take three plaster of Paris casts – one of a footprint in very stiff mud, another in very wet mud, and a third of the hand with its palm superimposed on the front part of the corresponding foot. These I have now forwarded to Professor Davis, at the university, where, no doubt, they can be seen by those interested."

Surveyor Charles Harper, on hearing of the Summerell incident wrote to the *Sydney Sun*, with an account of his own sighting that was published on 10 November 1912.

"For many years past vague and mysterious rumours have been current of an Australian gorilla or 'hairyman', or some such animal, seen on and in the wild uninhabited mountains and gorges forming the Curriekilly Range ... from the head of the Clyde River extending southerly to the Victorian border, the eastern slope consists of excessively broken, lateral ridges, deep gorges, and dense jungles, extremely difficult of access for man or beast, therefore its primeval solitude is very rarely disturbed. Scientists assert that this animal, like the bunyip, is a myth, and such animals do not, and never did, exist on this continent, although the old generation of Aboriginal natives assert the contrary in both cases.

In various parts of the southern district of this state on the coastal slopes, and at various times, extending over a long period, I have met men (and reliable men at that) who unhesitatingly assert that they had seen this hairy man-shaped animal at short distances. They were so terrified at the apparition and the hideous noise it made when it saw them that they left their work as timber-getters, and at once cleared out from the locality, leaving their tools and work behind them.

The description of this animal, seen at different times by different people in several localities, but always in the jungle, invariably coincided.

At the risk of being considered by your readers the reincarnation of Ananias or the late Thomas Pepper, I will describe this animal as once seen as briefly as possible. I had to proceed some distance into the heart of these jungles for a special purpose, accompanied by two others, and two large kangaroo dogs with a strain of the British bulldog in each.

On the night of the second day, about 9pm ... we heard a most unusual sound, similar to the beating of a badly tuned drum, accompanied by a low, rumbling growl. The dogs were supposed to be able to tackle anything. But in this case, they seemed utterly demoralized, they would not bark, but whined, and made to come into the tents.

The horrible sound gradually drew nearer, and our thoughts flew to escaped tigers ... We had no firearms, only a scrub hook and an axe ... after much coaxing I induced one of my companions who had a large bundle of leaves and dry kindling to ... place them on the smoldering camp fire ... they flickered up into a big blaze, illuminating the scrub ... when a most blood-curdling sight met our gaze.

A huge man-like animal stood erect not twenty yards (14 m) from the fire, growling, grimacing, and thumping his breast with his huge man-like paws .... The creature stood in one position for some time, sufficiently long to enable me to photograph him on my brain.

I would say its height when standing erect would be 5 feet 8 inches to 5 feet 10 inches (1.7 to 1.8 m). Its body, legs, and arms were covered with long, brownish-red hair, which shook with every quivering movement of its body. The hair on its shoulder and back parts appeared in the subdued light of the fire to be jet-black, and long; but what struck me as most extraordinary was the apparently human shape, but still so very different.

I will commence its detailed description with the feet, which only occasionally I could get a glimpse of. I saw that the metatarsal bones were very short, much shorter than in the genus *Homo*, but the phalanges were extremely long, indicating great grasping power by the feet. The fibula bone of the leg was much shorter than in man. The femur bone of the thigh was very long, out of all proportion to the rest of the leg.

The body frame was enormous, indicating immense strength and power of endurance. The arms and forepaws were extremely long and large, and very muscular, being covered with shorter hair. The head and face were very small, but very human. The eyes were large, dark and piecing, deeply set. A most horrible mouth was ornamented with two large and long canine teeth. When the jaws were closed, they protruded over the lower lip. The stomach seemed like a sack hanging halfway down the thighs, whether natural or prolepses I could not tell. All this observation occupied a few minutes while the creature stood erect, as if the firelight had paralyzed him.

After a few more growls, and thumping his breast, he made off, the first few yards erect, then at a faster gait on all fours through the low scrub. Nothing would induce my companions to continue the trip, at which I was rather pleased than otherwise, and returned as quickly as possible out of the reach of Australian gorillas, rare as they are." The Bombala Anthropoid was drawn by Will Donald from the description.

*The Sun* newspaper on 17 Nov 1912 published a very interesting article as a follow-up to the article that they had published seven days earlier entitled 'Bombala's Superman seen at other places. Hawkesbury Man's Corroboration' which stated;

"Last Sunday we published a description by Mr. Charles Harper, a Sydney surveyor, of a great hairy anthropoid which he encountered in the Currikkilly Mountains. Mr. Horace Saxon, of Sackville, Hawkesbury River, now supplies corroborative evidence.

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"Mr Harper's account of the man-ape seen by him and others in the Bombala Ranges will cause no surprise to a number of old hands, who have long kept what they have seen or heard in this matter to themselves, and so avoided much unpleasant comment and ridicule," says Mr. Saxon. "They had a lesson in that direction when they announced to a jeering world that the platypus laid eggs. Not a man of science would listen to the story. The Queensland fish that walked about on dry land

(mudskippers), and that other fish that suckles its young like a woman (dugong) were, equally scouted and their discoverers derided. If it was simply a case of an ape-like creature being seen wild in the Australian bush, doubtless the story would have gained its way into print long ago. As the Malay is supposed to have brought the dingo to our northern shores, he might equally have brought some of the apes he has more or less domesticated.

If Mr. Harper had more skill as a naturalist, or a longer time to observe the creature, he would have seen that it is neither ape, nor man, but may be best described as marsupial man. The so-called hanging stomach seen by Mr Harper was in reality the pouch in which it carries its young, like other marsupials. The black baby when he pokes his head out of the pouch is strikingly like an aboriginal child and much more human than its grown parent.

In this Hawkesbury district there are at least five persons who have seen the creature, and more than a score have heard it. As its senses of sight, hearing, and smell are probably far keener than ours, its habits nocturnal, and its nature as timid as that of the gorilla, its rare appearance is not surprising. There is no reason to suppose that there is a tribe of these creatures, or that they are gregarious. Only one mature creature has been seen at a time; but three of the five observers noted that he — for it is always a male that is seen — carried in a pouch a black baby. Now this fact of a male marsupial having a pouch, to no doubt assist the female in carrying the heavy young, is such a novelty to scientists, and was sure of such a howl of ridicule that the discoverers have wisely kept the public uninformed.

How were they to prove their truth? There is no feasible means of catching the creature; and to shoot him is to invite a trial for murder or manslaughter. So far, the creature has only been seen or heard at intervals of several years. Having been seen seems to make it for a time very cautious.

It has always been seen near the coast range of mountains, and though at points as far separated as Gippsland and North Queensland, it is quite possible that there is only one pair with their young. Probably the creature wanders up and down the coastal range, moving according to the season of the year, or as its food supply varies. No doubt in due course a skeleton or some of the bones of the marsupial man will be discovered and more light thrown on this interesting question.

While marsupials usually have abnormally developed hindquarters," adds Mr. Saxon, "In the case of marsupial man it is the arms that are abnormal in length and strength. The creature appears to be able to spring from its hands like a huge grasshopper. Two of our local observers had the forethought to take plaster casts of the creature's tracks; but have not shown them to scoffers. It is much to be desired that bushmen camping in secluded parts of the mountains take with them a flashlight photograph apparatus. Then we might hope for an authentic picture. Going from past experience, the creature will not be seen at Bombala or elsewhere for two or three years."

From these 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century newspaper reports we can see evidence that a large gorilla-like animal was well known to those people who lived and worked in forested environments. This animal was primarily nocturnal and bipedal, though its elongated forelimbs meant that it also had a quadrupedal gait when required. It could climb trees and did not congregate in numbers but appeared to forage alone. The animal was always rare, or at least rarely encountered and apparently preferred to dwell in rugged stony escarpments covered in forest, which its morphology was well suited.

Although individuals did, at times approach people, often using vocalisations, this appears to have been mostly bluff to frighten potential predators away and the individual always retreated and left the locality. Hence parties of hunters, determined to track down the beast after an encounter with members of the community, found no sign of it. If it was herbivorous it would have left evidence of its activities and the Aboriginal people and the British settlers, particularly the loggers, prospectors and general bushmen, would have observed disturbances to vegetation as it fed on native fruits or herbage and it would have been most often encountered wherever edible plants and fruit grew.

Consequently, the meagre evidence suggests that it most likely to be carnivorous, in that it is was a large and powerful animal that left no traces of its foraging. Because no individuals were captured and transported to the cities, where it could be examined and classified, it was regarded as mythical by the scientific community.

It appears that the bushmen generally regarded the mystery animal as a species of ape, perhaps a gorilla, which found no favour with the scientific community, because apes and other modern placental mammals, beyond native rodents, were absent from the continent. The research by Mr. Horace Saxon, published in *The Sun* newspaper on 17 Nov 1912, provided evidence that this was in fact a native animal, a marsupial ape. Horace Saxon must have been one of the earliest researchers on this animal because in his article he does not mention having seen one himself but had obviously questioned those eyewitnesses that had. He mentions that he had taken note of reports of these animals from the entire eastern Australian coast from Victoria to North Queensland and that all these reports came from coastal mountains. Of the five eyewitnesses that he had questioned, who had encountered the animal in the rugged sandstone escarpments of the Hawkesbury River wilderness in which he lived, three of them provided descriptions that included a somewhat kangaroo-like pouch on the abdomen, within which was observed a hairless, black-skinned infant.

Saxon writes “three of the five observers noted that he ... carried in a pouch a black baby.” These witnesses appeared to have assumed that the adult at each encounter was male, perhaps because the animal appeared to be very human-like and a female human has mammary glands or breasts, so that if these were absent then it had to be a male. However marsupial females have their mammary glands in their pouch and males and females look very similar beyond the pouch. Since marsupials give birth to tiny young that crawl from the birth canal to attach to a nipple within the pouch to suckle and grow, the female is forced to carry a pouch while the male has no need of such survival adaptations. It would be extremely unlikely that a male would develop a pouch to carry the young, since males generally need to be more robust to defend the family from predators, the foraging territory from competitors and to take more dangerous prey, all of which would have been difficult to do so while carrying an infant. It is also unlikely that only a single pair existed and migrated vast distances as an explanation for the vast geographical separation of these occasional encounter reports.

With industrialisation of the cities the rural population declined and Settled down to a more modern sedentary urban western lifestyle. The Aboriginals, the migrant Europeans, Asians and other peoples making up modern Australia, mostly ceased hunting the forest animals for sustenance and depended on horticulture, agriculture and the farming of cattle, camel, sheep, goats and pigs. All native animals and plants are now appreciated and protected, particularly in large wilderness national parks and freed from hunting pressure, populations of once extremely rare animals may be increasing in numbers. From out of these areas come increasing modern reports of encounters with unclassified large animals, the most spectacular of which is the Australian Bigfoot, generally known as the Yowie.

Cryptozoological researchers, such as the author, receive a continuous stream of encounter reports from all bushland localities and even in the outskirts of towns, describing what appear to be three different species of hominid-like animals. One species closely resembles *Homo erectus*, another species closely resembles *Homo floresiensis*, and both these species leave very human-like footprints. Both these species are only known as fossils from the islands directly north of Australia. The third species is apparently more gorilla-like and leaves footprints that do not resemble those of people, often being three-toed, perhaps these are the prints of the marsupial ape.

In the New York Times, 13 December 1996, an article entitled ‘3 Human Species Coexisted Eons Ago, New Data Suggests’ written by John Noble Wilford it states; “Scientists have found stunning new data showing that a third human species apparently coexisted on earth with two others as recently as 30,000 years ago. In research that could redraw the human family tree and is certain to be controversial, the scientists re-examined two major fossil sites along the Solo River in Java and found

that an early human relative, *Homo erectus*, appeared to have lived there until about 27,000 to 53,000 years ago.

Writing in the journal *Science*, the scientists said the new dates were "surprisingly young and, if proven correct, imply that *H. erectus* persisted much longer in Southeast Asia than elsewhere in the world." If the dates are right, as Dr. Swisher's team noted at the conclusion of its report, "the temporal and spatial overlap between *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens* in Southeast Asia is reminiscent of the overlap of Neanderthals (*H. neanderthalensis*) and anatomically modern humans in Europe."

Archaeological and fossil evidence on the eastern Indonesian island of Flores proves that 900,000 years ago *Homo erectus* crossed the Wallace, Weber and Lydekker Lines of deep marine channels that divide the south-east Asian animals from the Australian animals. Consequently, it is possible that the Yowie represents a surviving population of *Homo erectus* that reached the Australian continent and has continued to adapt to current environmental conditions and has evolved into the extremely large and powerful hominid that eyewitnesses continue to report encounters with.

The discovery of fossil skeletons of the one metre tall Hobbit (*Homo floresiensis*) in a cave in Flores, that were originally believed to be only 13,000 years old, also proved that relict hominids had entered the Australian biological region. Originally believed to have been a miniature species of *Homo erectus*, that had lived for so long in the Australian biological region that, like the pygmy *Stegadont* elephant it co-existed with, it had evolved into a tiny species. Recent research has found that it more closely resembled a miniature species of an extremely ancient hominid, *Homo habilis*. Consequently, it proves that relict hominids have long survived in the Australian biological region and it is therefore possible that the Janjarri represents a surviving population of Hobbit (*Homo floresiensis*) that reached the Australian continent and has continued to adapt to current environmental conditions and has evolved into a miniature hominid that eyewitnesses continue to report encounters with.



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