

Sasquatch/Bigfoot Sign

Friday, September 09, 2005 (01:32:46)

Posted by Tim.Cullen

Finding and Documenting through Casting and Photography
Richard Noll 2001

Introduction –

Many times, while traversing wilderness areas that are home to wildlife, one will come upon tracks of various animals. This can be a fascinating observation and sometimes, after finding a track, more will be found and followed. A story sometimes unfolds concerning what the animal making the tracks was doing at the time. Some travel the wilderness and see very little, if any, wildlife and finding and observing these tracks can make the experience just as rewarding as seeing the animal itself.

Casting an animal track allows it to be documented, bringing the experience to others, showing them what you saw. A photograph of a track will sometimes show it well, depending on the film, resolution, light and the soil conditions, but doesn't really give it the life you saw, even in the best of circumstances. Depending on the angle photographed, a common stone removed from the ground can be made to appear as an animal track. Photographs are good in documenting a track but should be considered only half of the process.

This paper concerns the process of documenting Sasquatch / Bigfoot tracks through casting and photography, whether they are of a foot, hand or any other part of the animal. By far, the most common track evidence would be of the foot. One can ponder just how many tracks one would leave in any given day of activity if the soil conditions were just right that every single time the foot was placed on the ground a track was left. One must also consider that a bipedal animal cannot stay upright 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year... So there should be times when other impressions in the ground are seen depicting other body parts, i.e. hands, knuckles, wrists, arms, elbows, legs, knees, heels, buttocks, genitals, thighs, backs, chests, shoulders and even the head. If soil conditions permit and the behavior of the animal allows it to traverse or interact with soil conditions conducive to leaving tracks in some manner, then we should encounter all of these as well. Since all of the above can be casted, I will change terminology here and use "impression(s)" instead of "tracks".

Finding Sasquatch / Bigfoot Impressions -

From most literature written on the subject of the Sasquatch / Bigfoot, detailing close-encounters with the animal or with track finds, a remote wilderness, solitary existence can be assumed as being normal for them. One can also assume a low numbered population density and dispersal area / rate. This, combined with weather, soil conditions and possibly behavioral tendencies in avoiding the making of tracks, one can see that finding a Sasquatch / Bigfoot track may be as rare as their population numbers.

Researchers who work on this subject, if interested in finding these rare tracks, should do so in areas that have the right type of soil conditions with the right type of weather, in the right type of habitat. For now I would only like to go on record as to saying the right type of habitat would be those of remote areas with enough ground cover to support the shelter, water and food resources required. Some pertinent points can be mentioned here concerning the right type of areas and times to look for tracks:

- All animals need water. The Patterson film site was on a small creek. Succulent type of vegetation grows nearest water sources, if this were a means for the animal to gain water intake other than drinking it directly this would be a good place to look for tracks.

- Moist ground is usually found near rivers and streams. This is where good tracking and casting conditions exist. You can also use the water from the stream or river for mixing plaster and subsequent cleanup.

- Large grain sized sand isn't very good for tracks but in the same general area smaller grained sand or even mud / silt can usually be found. This fine soil can also be found in swampy or boggy areas.

- Teeth are sometimes washed down and into the same places where heavy metals (such as gold) would be located. They are called placer deposits. These types of areas have been mapped in gold territories and can be looked up in libraries (from Skookum meeting with Dr. Grover Krantz speaking on methods of collecting evidence).

- Brush and other plants can grow close to the water's edge thereby hiding tracks in the soil under their low canopy. Evidence can thus be missed, having the area appear to be devoid of the animals' occupation.

- Streams and rivers have food source materials nearby. Invertebrates and fish are sometimes present.

- The sound of water movement not only hides animal movement sounds but your own.

- Traveling with the up flow of a river or stream usually means you would be traveling up wind and may have your scent effectively screened from any animals further up.

- Dusty climates can sometimes yield track results but the best would be right after it rains.

·Snow can show long trackways but usually leaves little in track detail.

·Forest service dirt roads usually have sides that contain water and good tracking soil. Sometimes the banks have been cut into while making the roads. These banks show a cross cut of the soil and can sometimes yield bones.

For those of you living in States or Provinces who have saltwater shorelines, information can be gathered from the local government concerning the types and locations of low tide shellfish. This could be a great food source for the Sasquatch and when the tide comes back in, all evidence is obliterated. In Washington there are 92 public sites listed where geoduck, mussels and clams can be found during low tide. This is just in the Puget Sound region and most of Puget Sound's tidelands are privately or native owned, so there are many more areas than this. The Washington coastline has shellfish as well. Long stretches of beach lines with readily available food sources would be an ideal place to try and encounter a Sasquatch at night. This is where I would place remote web cams in number. In BC & Alaska, Grizzly do the same... they turn out in great numbers, forgoing their solitary demeanor for low tide events as well as when the salmon start running up the riverheads.

Other sign can include browsing vegetation (nettles, ferns and berries), unusual and offensive smell and broken tree top damage. The treetops could be from the animal trying to get within reach insects such as tent caterpillars.

Reasons for searching near rivers and streams and establishing study areas:

1. All animals need water. The Patterson film site was on a small creek. Succulent type of vegetation grows nearest water sources, if this is a means for the animal to gain water intake other than drinking it directly.
2. Moist ground is usually found near rivers and streams. This is where good tracking and casting conditions exist. You can also use the water from the stream or river for mixing plaster and subsequent cleanup.
3. Teeth are sometimes washed down and into the same places where heavy metals (such as gold) would be located. They are called placer deposits. These types of areas have been mapped in gold territories and can be looked up in libraries (from Skookum meeting with Dr. Grover Krantz speaking on methods of collecting evidence).
4. Brush and other plants can grow close to the water's edge thereby hiding tracks in the soil under their low canopy. Evidence can thus be missed have the area appear to be devoid of the animals occupation.
5. Streams and rivers have food source materials nearby. Invertebrates and fish are sometimes present.
6. The sound of water movement not only hides animal movement sounds but your own.
7. Traveling with the up flow of a river or stream usually means you would be traveling up wind and may have your scent effectively screened from any animals further up.

Establishing one or two study sites, containing a river or stream would allow you to map it effectively, noting good tracking soil conditions for periodic return visits. Foraging sign can be looked for and noted on return visits. The lay of the land can be thoroughly understood.

One visit to a site doesn't mean anything... animals move in and out of areas constantly. You don't want your return visits to be predictable. Animals have the ability to produce mental maps that put us humans to shame. If they see you coming every weekend, that's when they will avoid the area.

Trying to take on too big an area for study is as bad as gambling with your life savings in a casino. It may be fun, but chances are you will loose in the end.

Optimum study site conditions:

1. Historical events (not necessarily recent).
2. Water source present.
3. Close proximity to controlled area excluding human activity (watersheds).
4. New intrusion into habitat zone (recent or current logging, housing and road development).
5. Food source availability understood and seasonal occurrence identified (flora and fauna).
6. Shelter availability (large trees, heavy brush, caves, large boulders, etc).
7. Study area size limited to what can be covered thoroughly in two days by one person.

Quote:

Primate Tracking – Observation Notes
Owen Caddy

14 Feb 2001

1. WEAR green/earth toned clothing – Great apes have a much better ability than humans to pick out patterns/colors that do NOT belong in their habitat.
2. Do NOT wear shiny metal objects, or equipment – such as watches, pins – they catch the light. Stow them in a pack – or paint or tape them a darker color.
3. Do NOT use scented deodorants or after-shaves. Primate olfactory ability is vastly more acute than humans. Move silently – apes have unbelievable hearing.
4. ALWAYS observe from submissive postures and body languages. Include squatting, sitting, kneeling, laying down.
5. AVOID aggressive postures and body languages. These include standing, pointing with arms or hands, waving arms, walking towards, running any direction.
6. AVOID direct eye contact. This gesture makes ALL primates (including people) very uncomfortable. Great apes see direct eye contact as a challenge, and will usually flee immediately. Even if you cannot see their eyes, avoid looking. Merely glance toward movement or a sound. To a great ape you appear to be staring at him, as the ape would be looking at you if the situation were reversed.
7. ALWAYS observe indirectly, tilt your head down slightly, in a submissive, none threatening pose, and watch with eyes askance. Great apes observed will be less likely to flee.
8. When OBSERVING a great ape, keeping some vegetation between you and the animal. Cover provides a great deal of psychological comfort for the ape.
9. If you OBSERVE a great ape, and it is aware of you and is looking at you. NEVER LOOK at the animal through binoculars. Binoculars appear as very large eyes that cause an unhabituated ape to flee.
10. If you believe a GREAT APE IS NEAR you, but cannot see it, be assured that the animal can see you and is aware of your location. Your best bet is make an observation is to become as non-threatening as possible in posture and behavior.
11. It is extremely DIFFICULT to approach a non-feeding great ape without it becoming aware of you first. You are always better off anticipating the animal's movement by keeping still and silent, and waiting for the animal to come within your visual range.
12. It is basically IMPOSSIBLE to track and overtake a fleeing great ape. Chimpanzee and gorilla can flee eight to ten times faster than any person through heavy vegetation.
13. FOOD IS KEY to tracking primates – know where, what and when they will eat and anticipate them.

Owen told me something interesting during this trip... Paper or White and Sulfur butterflies are attracted to urine (urethra salts). We might all want to watch out for these evidence indicators and take soil samples when encountering them. I told him that I had found, during my cedar salvage days, that some cedar logs smelled real bad and some didn't... maybe there is a reason for that. It is more believable to use urine instead of footprints to mark a territory or send a message.

To add to Owen's comment about observations on other insects attracted to urine. I have observed Blues, Coppers, Hairstreaks, Skippers, (all butterflies) and ants also attracted to urine and other possible mineral microhabitat niches. Swallowtail, Painted Lady, Tortoiseshell, Morning Cloak, California Sister, Orange Tip are often congregated around seeps that indicates minerals being leached from surrounding substrates. Seeps associated with dark sand are notably good places to check for congregated insects and probable mammal tracks. Ungulates (deer et al) have been observed eating the soil in these kinds of areas.

Study Areas -

When going on a Sasquatch / Bigfoot investigation, whether it is a follow-up on a report or just looking into an area thought to be the proper habitat, research with maps is mandatory. The lay of the land and types of soil conditions can be seen from the overhead perspective and plans made on places to search for tracks. These areas can be marked on a paper map or entered into a GPS unit for waypoints to achieve while in the field.

Establishing one or two study sites, containing a river or stream would allow you to map it effectively, noting good tracking soil conditions for periodic return visits. Foraging sign can be looked for and noted on return visits. Seasons can be observed and the behavior of local wildlife can be understood.

These study sites should be convenient for your resource means, i.e. local, you have the physical abilities to traverse them, proper clothing, transportation, access rights, etc. A test can be made in various spots of the study area to see how long tracks will remain visible. This can become a schedule for your visits.

One visit to a site doesn't mean anything... animals move in and out of areas constantly. You don't want your return visits to be predictable. Animals have the ability to produce mental maps that put humans to shame. If they see you coming

every weekend, that's when they will avoid the area. Trying to take on too big an area for study is as bad as gambling with your life savings in a casino. It may be fun, but chances are you will lose in the end. Optimum study site conditions should include:

- Historical events (not necessarily recent).
- Water source.
- Close proximity to controlled area excluding human activity (watersheds).
- New intrusions into habitat zone (recent or current logging, housing and road development).
- Food source availability understood and seasonal occurrence identified (flora and fauna).
- Shelter availability (large trees, heavy brush, caves, large boulders, etc).
- Study area size limited to what can be covered thoroughly in two days by one person.
- Maps available.
- Area conducive to compass or GPS usage.
- Road network present.

Physical Description of Sasquatch / Bigfoot tracks -

Footprint tracks of Sasquatch / Bigfoot sometimes are found in conjunction with an actual sighting of the animal, but for the most part they are found separate from them. The tracks are found with identifying features indicating that they should be considered as coming from a Sasquatch / Bigfoot, which include:

- Bipedal (left and right, symmetrically shaped tracks),
- Unshod (no artificial covering),
- Stride, step and straddle indicating great height,
- Very flat footed (no arch),
- Toes with no claws (nails maybe visible),
- Toes at the forepart of the foot (not on the side of the foot or in back),
- Usually five digits visible (but soil conditions or other factors not understood can show less and maybe more),
- Toes are in a line, not an arc,
- Dermal ridge patterns maybe evident,
- The presence of a double ball,
- A Midtarsal break, producing only partial tracks sometimes,
- Indicative weight,
- Large width and length.

How do you know if an impression should be cast?

I have seen many casts purported to be from Sasquatch / Bigfoot. Most are just clumps of hardened plaster, showing nothing but pine and fir needles and a basic outline of a possible humanoid type of foot. These kinds of impressions could be from almost anything. Of course sometimes there is an actual sighting to go along with it. I use the following criteria in determining when and if a cast is warranted:

1. Only after documenting thoroughly with measurements, photography, sketches and corroborating eyewitness observations should you start to think about or begin the casting process. The impression is a female 1st generation mold of the object placed there. It is more important and significant than any cast you could possibly pull out of it. Once you make the cast, the impression is destroyed.
2. Only when enough detail is evident and identifiable should a cast be made from an impression. Forest litter in an impression can be somewhat removed from it but if this was the material that was between the object and the ground then it will detract from the casting process and results. There should be enough detail in the impression as to be able to tell that a known animal didn't make it or from the removal of an inanimate object, i.e. a rock, etc.

3. The size and shape of the impression conforms to what is believed to be of Sasquatch / Bigfoot origin.

4. If you have prepared the impression for casting, have all the materials available and know the process. You have but only one chance to make a cast from the impression. You have removed debris, growing grass and weeds. The impression is dammed up.

When you shouldn't cast and impression -

Impressions have been found in down logs, as if they were used to walk along, with the log being rotten. They have also been found in places unlikely that a creature such as a Sasquatch / Bigfoot could have made them and not have disturbed the area more, i.e. such as under low hanging tree branches, etc. Not all giant human looking foot impressions are what they first appear to be.

If I find a definite, animal-made, impression that resembles the dimensions and shape of Sasquatch / Bigfoot, and I have the means available to cast it I will. But on the other hand, I can't tell you how many casts I have made and later determined that it was man-made or mistaken identity. These I have just thrown in the garbage can.

I have found that sometimes I cannot make out what the impression is until after I have casted it. So my general rule of thumb is to study it, photograph it, think about it, cast it, study the cast, photograph the cast, and determine if it should be kept.

If I have to clean the impression up to make out what it is then I would not cast it. I don't mean burning out grass or removing fallen twigs and pinecones. I am talking about making the toes show better, the heel a little more defined, that kind of stuff.

Document the Sasquatch / Bigfoot Tracks before Casting -

My best advice right now is to use your head and do it right the first time by going as slow as is needed. This is not a race.

When finding a track, always check and make sure you have found all of the tracks present. A tracking stick can be used for this. Once all the tracks have been found, identify the "signature" print. This would be the one print that has the most information (i.e. best toe impressions, depth, ball print edge, skin folds, dermal ridges, nails, heel, etc.) This is one that you definitely want to cast. Next locate two more prints to cast, for example one from the same side as the signature print and one from the other side. If you had to make a choice of tracks to cast, and only had enough material for two casts, then they should be of the same foot, not a left and right. This helps show foot movement between tracks.

Document the area with the following pictures and or sketches:

1. Over all general terrain.
2. In line with print trail, mark prints with sticks in ground with flags or use brightly colored ground marking spray paint so as to easily be seen in the photographs. Lay tracking stick on ground in line as well (it would be good if this stick had 1' marks that were visible in photographs).
3. Close-ups of signature print with scale.
4. Close-up of toes with scale.
5. Close-up of heel with scale.
6. Repeat documenting as in 3., 4. and 5. for the other two or more prints. It is imperative though that at least the prints being cast get documented in this manner.
7. Map the prints. Show direction of travel, stride length, step length, straddle width, and other details if available.
8. Place location of find on area maps or mark as GPS waypoint to get coordinates.
9. Cast in ground.
10. Cast being removed. Make sure to include the person's face that cast it.
11. Surface of cast with debris.
12. Surface of cast cleaned.
13. Photograph the finished cast, including details.

Preparing the Track for Casting -

Casting the track should start by the removal of all extraneous material, not related. If a pinecone is in the print, remove

it very carefully, unless it was squashed by being stepped on. I once found a print that had a squashed mouse in it! It was an obvious fake so Peter Byrne plucked it out of the print (North Bend). If a dirt clod is in the print and it seems to have been caused by the ball of the foot pushing off, I would leave it in, but I have seen others try and remove it with obvious detrimental results.

Dam up at least 1" surrounding the print. I use the aluminum "U"s for this but a soil dam can be used as well. It should be at least ½" above the surface because that is how thick the cast should be at it's minimum. This original cast is being dammed up because it is important to show the intersection of the foot with the surface. If you don't dam it up and just pour into the print, the size of the cast may not be the size of the print and the thick plaster will mash very fine details.

If the print is in a mud puddle or it is a print that has collected water you can dig a small trench outside of the print to drain off the water. Use a thin bladed knife to breach the print and drain the water into the trench. You can try to add plaster powder to the water in the print first before casting, but do not try to soak up with a cloth or blow high-pressure air into it. With the B-11 material I use, a mud puddle presents little problem in that I will just pour lightly into the track area from the side of it. This material will setup even under this type of condition. The water in the puddle will just be raised out of the track since it is lighter.

Placing a cardboard box over a track can protect it from the elements as well as from misplaced feet until ready to cast. The sun can start drying out a track quickly and this drying out, given the type of soil, can cause the soil to crumble in on itself or crack apart through expansion.

Sometimes tracks have vegetation growing in them; either they are old or the vegetation was springy and bounced back after having been stepped on. If there is grass and weeds growing in the track, they should not be pulled out. Use a small (\$15) blowtorch to burn the debris out of the track. Sears and Radio Shack both have them and they are quite small. Just don't cause a forest fire and if you are on some ones property... ask first before burning and have water at the ready. I have burned out a print before casting and still obtained dermal ridge details, this with a month old track.

Casting Sasquatch / Bigfoot Tracks -

The cast will be made in two parts... the Face Coat and the Backup. This first part is for making original casts in wet fine sand, silt, dirt, mud and clay. Follow these directions and you will always get the best cast possible.

I have been using B-11 Hydrocal. (Another type of Hydrocal is Hydrocal White. Some people use this since it is lightweight after casting. I use it at work since you can carve and scrape it quite easily. I do not recommend it for casting tracks though; it breaks and crumbles too easily). It costs between \$12 and \$25 for a 100-lb. bag. It takes about 10 to 18 lb. of plaster to make one proper cast of a Sasquatch footprint. I also use Aluminum wire ties for strength (these are sold in a 50 bundle and used for chain link fences). They will not rust and are easy to carry.

I have three (3) watertight 2.5 gal buckets with lids and handles, filled with Hydrocal, a smaller mixing bucket with handle, mixing stick, plastic gloves, Aluminum wire ties and a soft bristled brush. Just one of these kits is more than enough to cast a print of 18".

I carry three (3) of these kits because I would want to try to cast two (2) prints that are of the same side and then one (1) print of the opposite. It doesn't much matter which side has the two (2) prints, but I would look for the ones that have movement in the toes (It is almost impossible to see dermal ridges in a track). The "signature" print can be from either side. I also carry two- (2) 18"x10" Aluminum "U" shaped straps for the dam. They fit into one another to make a nice deep cast edge. They easily fit in a backpack. Rolled metal siding can also be used for the dam.

A level "L", just a piece of plywood cut into the shape of a "L" with two (2) vial levels attached, can be used to press into the surrounding dirt of a print. It is aligned with True North and will later allow the cast to be leveled as it was in the field. This is important in that if the print displays unusual depths in parts of it, they may be explained by how the surface was oriented.

This kit costs no more than \$10 to build and about \$1.00 to refill. Do not use Plaster of Paris or FIX-ALL. Both of these products are similar to Hydrocal White but are very sensitive to moisture after they have cured.

If I were hiking... the 2.5 gal bucket would be replaced with a large zip-lock baggie. Just pour in about a coke can full of water and knead it in the bag. Of course you would need several of these bags to make a proper Sasquatch track cast.

This is good for soil tracks. If I were to cast in snow I would also be packing Snowprint - Wax (\$16.95, Evidence Collection & Protection 1-800-953-3274). It is red in color and will highlight the print before casting for photography. I would also use a 5% Potassium sulfate solution to mix the plaster with. This prevents the water in the plaster from freezing. I would also consider using either Tool Stone, Castone or Dental Stone since they do not exotherm as much as Hydrocal when setting but are much more expensive. Instead of the Snowprint-wax spray you could use a gray primer fill spray as well.

I carry a tape measure and compass separate from this kit, for obvious reasons.

If I find prints, or are shown prints, I will use a tracking stick as well. You have to have at least two prints for this though. A tracking stick is just a straight stick with two rubber bands. Laying the stick on the ground, in line with the prints, the first rubber band is placed at the heel of the first print; the second rubber band is placed at the same spot of the second print. To find the next print, arc or move the stick, placing the first rubber band at the same spot on the second print and arc the stick a little. Not all strides will be equal so there may be a tolerance band noted.

Face Coat -

The Face Coat picks up the most surface detail. It is a very light coating of plaster, weighing very little so as not to destroy fine detail or run out of a track on a slope, such as upright layers of dirt between the toes or dermal ridges. To cover a track with the face coat you should fill a mixing bowl a little less than 1/3 water. Add plaster until it has the consistency of a watery pancake batter. Mixing the Face Coat should be done with the hands and fingers so wear gloves because some plaster has lye in it and dissolves organic tissue over time, especially on abrasions and cuts. The Face Coat is mixed with fingers because absolutely all lumps must be removed... this cannot be done with a stick; they must be felt for and smashed completely. Occasionally you should beat the mixture; with an open submerged hand, gently raise and lower it, forcing the top and bottom layers to mix (water is lighter than the mixed plaster and will remain on top).

The Face Coat is applied by flinging or dribbling it off the fingertips and into the print on the very delicate detailed areas. Some places you may have to use your fingers as a brush to get the plaster where it is needed such as backdrafted sides. Just be careful not to put a finger into the print surface. This Face Coat will not be thick, probably no more than 1/8" to 1/4". This will harden or dry out more quickly the thinner it is. If the track is on a slope, this flinging of the plaster off the fingers will need to be done several times before a thicker than normal backup coat is applied. Stop applying, while trying to cast on a slope, if the material starts to run, until it sets or hardens up a little. You can have limited success mixing a little fresh water to the same mix for more layers on these slope conditions.

The Face Coat is ready for the Backup plaster when you can touch it and leave hardly a trace. It should not be like Jell-O. Don't press too hard on it or you may make an impression you will have to always explain when showing it. The face underneath can even crack, leaving a weak area only later to have break. You can also slide your finger on the Face Coat surface and if it leaves just a fraction of an inch deep mark it is ready. Waiting too long may make the Backup plaster and Aluminum wires not adhere properly, but not usually.

Backup Coat -

The Backup plaster is mixed thicker, with a stirring stick and of course there is a lot more of it (probably three to six times the amount used for the face). Place two (2) aluminum wires lengthwise in the print on the Face Coat before pouring. Pour the plaster until the print depression is filled and then place two (2) more wires across the print width-wise. Fill the remainder of the dammed area with the plaster and smooth the top surface with the mixing stick. If you have some hemp type rope, small sections can be cut from it, unwound and mixed with the remainder of the Backup coat. This will really make the cast strong.

Allow the print to fully cure. Plaster, when curing or hardening gives off heat and steam or water vapor. This is called exotherming. When the cast starts to cool it will be safe to remove it from the ground. The time it takes for the cast to fully cure is dependent on the humidity and temperature of the surrounding air. For the finest detail, wait until the cast is the same temperature as the surrounding air.

Dig under the print if possible, about 2" to 3" all the way around. Gently twist the cast from side to side and from back to front from under it so as to break any soil suction. This twisting of the cast will tell you if it is ready to be lifted for it will seem free of the ground. Do not leave the cast in the ground for more than 6 hours or you run the risk of the face coat leaching into the ground and destroying any fine detail that may have been present.

Wait until the cast is very cold before using running water or a soft brush to remove the debris clinging to it. Do not clean down to the actual plaster surface. This will damage fine detail and will not look natural. When fully cured a light coating of thinned sanding sealer or lacquer should be applied to the surface. This can be done away from the field with spray or brush. Do not let too much sealer just set on the surface or it will pool and fill in small details.

Large Scene Casting -

There is a limit as to what size of an area can be casted in the field. It is determined by how much plaster you have, the support structure used internally and the means by which it is removed from the ground and transported out of the field. The purpose of large scene casting is for the context of the various impressions found at a site.

The main task is to determine what is relevant at the scene and make a border big and deep enough to surround and support it. One person can handle a 2' x 2' casting area in the field pretty easily. I would use this to determine how many people you need to help cast a given scene. It would also be great if another person were mixing the plaster.

Depth of the cast should be determined by the overall dimensions of the cast. For every 2' x 2' area allow 1/2" for cast thickness. Support should be internal metal (preferably aluminum) and does not have to be totally embedded.

The scene should be squared up as much as possible with the bordering material.

Determining if a Track is real or not -

There are three concerns in discussing the determination if an impression is real or not:

1. Inanimate object-made impression - these include seepage holes, removed rocks and logs, falling tree limbs and such that leave an impression in the ground that looks as if made by an animal. The best indicator as to this being the case for any particular impression found is it being singular in nature, i.e. not of a trackway.

2. Animal-made impression – there are only a few animals that can leave impressions that could be mistaken as to that of belonging to Sasquatch / Bigfoot. The foremost of these would be that of bear. A bear has a footprint that if double impacted with both the front and rear pads could extend to a length believed equal to most of the smaller tracks found.

3. Man-made impression –

A) Hoaxes –

B) Human –

1. Tracks cast in sand. Easiest thing to do is fake a track in sand, wet sand, for dry shows hardly anything. This is why sand is used to form metal. Even early man used sand molds to form copper axe heads. Sand will not show dermal ridges, the sand grain is too large (greater than 1mm). Sand is easy to remove manufacturing marks.

2. Multiple tracks, same foot side, same details, and different dimensions. This indicates that one cast may have been used to make the other. Unless a tooling method is used in duplication, the duplicate cast will always be bigger. Without tooling experience, detail is lost in a duplicate cast, since the finer scrapes, holes, twigs, rocks and things create what is known as back draft. It is interference, a lock, holding the two together. When they break apart the track loses the pattern detail. Using a pliable (like rubber) membrane to cast with eliminates this problem, but creates others such as the natural looking cast surface coating.

3. Background of person making cast or finding the track(s). If the person has been doing some questionable things or has faked something else, nothing is preventing them from doing it again.

4. Lack of details surrounding the track (i.e. exact location, photos of print, date, time, etc.). Misleading or incorrect information is even worse. All casts of tracks should be accompanied with photographs.

5. Apparent age of footprint. If the track looks real fresh, then why isn't the researcher still out there? The thing should still be near.

6. Depth. A gauge should be provided as to what kind of weight could leave what kind of depression in the same medium. A photograph showing your own foot next to the track, with weight on it, then the depression left by your foot, would tell a lot. Take off your shoe to do this.

7. Toe angle. Angled too much and they could be human (within a size limit, some basket ball players have size 24 shoes). Arced too much and they could be bear. No angle, no arc... they could be fake.

8. Length of step and stride. Big footprints close together don't usually add up. A step is the distance from one print to another print of the opposite side, from a common point on the track, such as the heel or toe. A stride is the distance from one track to another track of the same side, from a common point on the track.

9. Lack of surface detail on cast. I feel that if something is walking barefoot out in the woods, that there at least has to be some surface marks.

10. Number of toes. I usually dismiss anything that does not have five (5) toes. I have listened to a great deal of experts on this topic and feel that four (4) or three (3) toes may be possible. I have only seen four (4) toes once and it appeared to be a fake. There is always some investigation but for the most part I have always found evidence that they were hoaxed. Of course I have not investigated ALL three and four toed track finds.

11. Other evidence nearby the tracks. Dug up trees have been found, as if who ever found the tracks would not know that a shovel was used.

12. Toe lines intersect with Sasquatch ankle position, not human ankle position. I am unsure of this but that is how it is looking right now.

13. Lone track. I have never seen another animal leave a lone track so why should a Sasquatch. Learn to track a bit; you don't have to be an expert at it to find other sign.

14. Toes perpendicular to length of foot. There is usually a slight angle to the toes; they are usually in a pretty straight line too. This angle to the toes is about 15 degrees. It is not an exact angle but... just think about it... having toes splayed out like the fingers on a hand make them look more like they are walking on their toes.

15. Tracks in line with toes pointing outward or inward of line of travel. Sasquatch trails usually have the toes inline with the route of travel. One set was found in Marietta that had every other right foot turned out at an angle. This is probably due to looking in that direction, turning the foot for more support while doing so.

16. Tracks going uphill or downhill at angle to hill. Bears usually go straight up and down a hill. Most sightings having a Sasquatch traversing a hill, mention that they went straight up or down as well. There is nothing wrong with finding tracks not going straight up or down a hill, it is just that I have looked at all the reported sightings that seem reliable and the ones that have a creature going up or down a hill state just that, they did not observe it cutting a zig zag up or down. Bears do this as well. Maybe it has to do with the distribution of the body weight... Is it a more stable body position to just go straight up or down?

17. In multiple track find, no toe movement.

18. Manufactured marks. On casts, plaster splash on the outside of the cast has been included in the overall size of a duplicate track. Tracks with removed material instead of compressed. Unusual scrape marks and very small sticks that were not broken in the track or on the cast. Just check out this one and tell me what you think www.angelfire.com/oh/ohiosasquatch/frn.html... it is down the page linked to the word "track".

I would seriously recommend reading Tom Brown Jr.'s book "The Science and Art of Tracking". There is lot of good information in this. His earlier book "Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking" is good as well. I carry both into the field with me when I can.

I usually look at a track first with the question "How would I make something like this in material nearby?" and will actually try to do so. I spend a lot of my own time and money on trips looking for the Sasquatch and I want to make as sure as possible that I am not being taken in on someone's joke. They may think it is funny but I don't! Then there are those who make their own because they can't find any real ones or don't get into the woods a lot. To those people I would like to say... get out of the study please. You are not helping anyone... including yourself.

Nothing is ever black and white but to me it looks this way. I have not done a lot of study on other human feet, but mine fit.

Making Duplicates of Casts –

Duplicates of original casts can be made using several types of liquid vulcanizing rubbers. I do not recommend using soil or sand since the very act of pressing the cast into this type of material can break it. In a pinch, add a little water and microwave heat Play-Doh, then pushing this modeling compound against the cast can be used with surprisingly good detailed results, but is a one-time only kind of mold. Of course you can do it all over again.

I use a Urethane rubber designated SB-111. This material is what is called a two-part or AB mix. Two equal parts of the material are mixed thoroughly using a double bucket method:

1. Pour into two buckets, separate but equal amounts of the liquid rubber and catalyst compounds,
2. Pour one into the other and scrape clean with flat paint type mixing stick,
3. Mix thoroughly,
4. Pour back into the other bucket and scrape clean again,
5. Mix thoroughly and use.

All the mixing equipment used are disposable items since cleanup is very hard without the proper solvents. I also use rubber gloves.

I recently made a mold of a Sasquatch / Bigfoot track and will discuss here the method used.

This particular mold took a little under 2 gallons to produce. There is about 230 cubic inches in a given gallon of liquid; the frame was 3x18x10, so this frame could hold around 600 cubic inches without the lump of plaster in the middle, clay radius or wood corners taking up space.

The corner wood pieces add two things to the mold:

1. Angular stability to the sides of the mold.
2. Reduction in the amount of rubber used to produce the mold.

It takes between 12 - 24 hours for the rubber to vulcanize fully but it sets up in about 2 hours (This depends on surface temp, relative humidity and how long the mixed solution was left in the mixing bowl before pouring). It does not exotherm too much nor gas up. Any bubbles coming to the surface after pouring is usually due to the original cast being porous and this is to be expected.

The cast must be sealed and a silicone release agent or spray wax used on all contact surfaces before pouring the mold. A small paintbrush can be used to paint the surfaces of the mold with the liquid rubber once mixed and this will eliminate about 80% of the bubbles that form during mixing or pouring. Slight tapping on the wooden form with a small hammer will knock bubbles loose from surface tension on the cast.

- Cost to make this mold: \$150
- Time to make this mold: 3 hours
- Time to make a cast from this mold: 1.5 hours
- Number of duplicate casts this mold is capable of producing: 1000

Unless experienced with mold making, I would not recommend everyone who has original casts to attempt this process since there is the experience level of using these types of materials to take into account. There are concerns of back drafting, rubber seepage, rubber mixing, cleaning, cast sealing, release and table flatness / level.

The mold in itself gives one the chance to see what the original track must have looked like to the finder and seeing them side by side, especially with surrounding context available, is quite a valuable and enlightening experience.

When making casts from the mold, a product called Stevens is used, a commercial mixture of Vaseline and Kerosene. A plaster mix is made that is somewhat watery so it will fill every little detail. It, like the cast made from the ground, should be left to cure and cool down for the best detail, and then sealed.

This particular track is very fascinating in that the mud it stepped in must have had a high clay soil content (note the drying cracks). Dermal ridge patterns, bunions and callus are all evident. The ball of the foot even mushroomed out as it stepped. The mud moved up through the toes and stayed there after the foot left the surface. None of this detail could have been captured in any other way than with a rubber mold.



The cast being prepared for rubber pouring. Support, right angles and cracks or seams are filled with modeling clay. A wood support structure is built and sealed around the cast making sure to have at least ½" on all edges when finished.



Here the finished rubber mold can be seen still inside its wooden support structure. A cast made from this mold sits in front of it.

This article reproduced with permission of the author