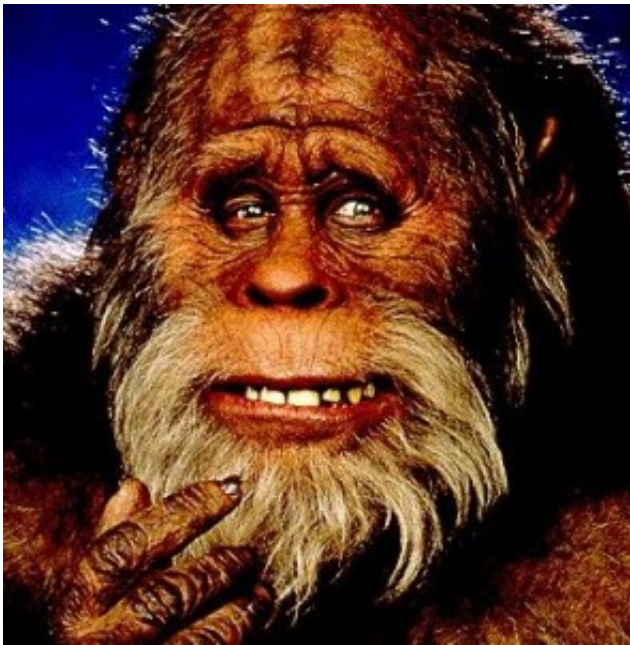


Bigfoot genome sequenced? There are skeptics

February 19 2013, by Marcia Malory



Credit: 'Harry and the Hendersons' movie

(Phys.org)—A team of researchers led by Melba Ketchum of DNA Diagnostics in Nacogdoches, New Mexico, claims to have succeeded in sequencing the genome of Bigfoot (Sasquatch). The team published their findings in *DeNovo*, a journal that Ketchum purchased and renamed because mainstream scientific journals would not accept the study. Scientists have been understandably skeptical.

According to critics, a major problem with the research is that it

bypassed the normal peer review process. Ketchum claims that established journals wouldn't publish "Novel North American Hominins, Next Generation Sequencing of Three Whole Genomes and Associated Studies" because it is controversial and because the members of her research team are not associated with large universities. Historically, such arguments have been made by those who blame the mainstream scientific community's lack of acceptance on conspiracy, rather than on bad science. Ketchum goes so far as to compare her own experience with that of Galileo.

The science in the paper itself is shaky. People across North America provided researchers, mostly forensic experts, with 111 "Bigfoot [DNA samples](#)" consisting of hair, fur, flesh and blood.

The team sequenced 20 whole mitochondrial genomes, 10 partial mitochondrial genomes, and 3 whole nuclear genomes. In their paper, they conclude that Sasquatch is a hybrid, created by [interbreeding](#) between female Homo sapiens and males of an unidentified hominin species, neither Neanderthal nor Denisovan.

Although the isolated mitochondrial DNA did come from humans, these were mostly from Europe or the Middle East. Only a few were Native American. To explain this discrepancy, the team speculated that during the last ice age, some humans walked over the ice through Greenland, despite the fact that there is no evidence that this ever happened. A much more likely explanation is the samples were contaminated.

Electron micrographs of nuclear samples do show an intermingling of patches of double and single-stranded DNA, a sign that some contaminant has mixed with modern human DNA. The researchers could have isolated the non-human DNA and attempted to match it with that of another species. However, they do not report doing that.

Ketchum claims that her team did not submit the genetic sequences to GenBank, the open access genetic database, because GenBank only accept sequences from officially recognized species. GenBank has no such restriction, according to Leonid Kruglyak, a geneticist at Princeton University.

Nevertheless, the team has created a new species name for Sasquatch, *Homo sapiens cognatus*, which they are attempting to register with ZooBank, and Ketchum is already fighting to protect Bigfoot's human and constitutional rights.

More information: www.denovojournal.com/

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