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# Ethological Coherence and the Putative Relict Homo Species



**Daniel H. Kegley**
**holstonia-investigations.org**
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**Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Jeff Meldrum and Dr. Jane Goodall**

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**Abstract**

Ethology provides a powerful scientific approach for investigating rare, cryptic, or elusive species. In cases where physical specimens are absent or incomplete, behavioral patterning has historically served as a primary line of evidence for identifying distinct taxa (Goodall, 1986; Harrison, 2010). In the case of Bigfoot, behavioral evidence derived from long-term field observations, eyewitness reports, acoustic analyses, and environmental patterning suggests a coherent profile consistent with archaic hominin behavior. This paper synthesizes reported locomotor, communicative, foraging, social, and ecological indicators into an integrated ethological framework. Comparative analysis indicates that the behavioral repertoire attributed to Bigfoot exceeds that of non-human apes and aligns more closely with patterns inferred for Neanderthals, *Homo erectus*, and small-band hunter-gatherer populations (Foley & Gamble, 2009; Will et al., 2016). By examining environmental interaction, avoidance intelligence, movement ecology, and niche construction, this paper argues that ethology offers a viable framework for

evaluating Bigfoot as a putative relict *Homo* species and outlines non-invasive methodologies appropriate for future investigation.

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**1. Introduction**

Ethology—the scientific study of behavior—has long served as a cornerstone of primate research, particularly where skeletal or genetic evidence is limited. Behavioral evidence has been central to the recognition of tool use in chimpanzees, vocal differentiation in gibbons, and ecological divergence among closely related primate populations (Carpenter, 1964; Arcadi, 1996; McGrew, 2010). When behavior is repeated across contexts and regions, it may indicate the presence of a stable evolutionary lineage rather than isolated anomalies (Harrison, 2010).

Research into Bigfoot has traditionally been framed as deficient due to the absence of confirmed physical specimens. However, the behavioral data themselves are more structured and internally consistent than is commonly acknowledged. Reports spanning decades and broad geographic ranges describe recurring locomotor patterns, communication modes, environmental interactions, and avoidance behaviors. Such consistency is difficult to reconcile with hoaxing or misidentification alone and instead suggests an underlying behavioral repertoire characteristic of a biological organism (Lurz & Rushton, 2008).



The purpose of this paper is to examine these reported behaviors through an ethological and comparative primatological framework. Behavioral data are treated here as *reported phenomena* and evaluated for internal consistency, cross-context repetition, and comparative plausibility rather than as direct proof of taxonomic identity. By comparing reported behaviors with those of non-human apes, archaic hominins, and small-band hunter-gatherer populations, this paper explores whether the evidence is more parsimoniously explained under a relict *Homo* hypothesis than under non-hominin alternatives.

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**2. Foundations of Primate Ethology**

Primate ethology evaluates behavior across domains including locomotion, communication, foraging strategy, social organization, cognition, and environmental interaction (Goodall, 1986; Dunbar, 2009). These domains vary systematically across primate taxa and are shaped by ecological pressures, anatomy, and cognitive capacity.

Non-human apes exhibit complex social and technological behaviors but remain constrained by anatomical and ecological limits. Chimpanzees demonstrate tool use and social intelligence yet lack efficient obligate bipedalism or sustained long-range acoustic signaling (Boesch & Boesch, 1984; Arcadi, 1996). Gorillas construct temporary nests but do not engage in persistent landscape modification (Tutin & Fernandez, 1993). Orangutans display advanced problem-solving abilities but maintain largely solitary social structures (MacKinnon, 1974).

By contrast, archaic members of the genus *Homo* are characterized by ecological flexibility, habitual bipedalism, complex communication systems, coordinated foraging, and intentional environmental modification (Foley & Gamble, 2009; Harrison, 2010). Many behaviors attributed to Bigfoot align more closely with this hominin behavioral spectrum than with that of extant non-human apes.

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### 3. Behavioral Evidence Attributed to a Relict *Homo*

#### 3.1 Locomotion and Gait

Bigfoot is consistently described as an efficient, upright biped capable of sustained travel across uneven terrain. Such locomotion exceeds the documented bipedal capabilities of non-human apes and more closely resembles hominin gait mechanics (Thorpe et al., 2007; Almécija et al., 2015). Reported trackways describe compliant foot motion, even cadence, and terrain-responsive foot placement comparable to early hominin footprints (Bennett et al., 2009).

#### 3.2 Communication Systems



Reported vocalizations include howls, whoops, whistles, mimicry, and rhythmic percussive sounds. Long-range vocal signaling and structured call sequences are more consistent with hominin communicative flexibility than with ape vocal repertoires, which are generally context-specific and limited in range (Arcadi, 1996; Bermejo & Omedes, 1999).

#### 3.3 Surveillance and Avoidance Intelligence

Frequently reported behaviors include concealment, downwind positioning, and silent withdrawal. Such behaviors reflect situational awareness and predictive avoidance strategies characteristic of mobile hunter-gatherer populations operating in low-density landscapes (Foley & Gamble, 2009).

#### 3.4 Foraging and Feeding Ecology

Reported behaviors include berry collection, ungulate pursuit, fishing, scavenging, and opportunistic foraging. Broad-spectrum foraging strategies are a hallmark of archaic human populations and are associated with ecological flexibility and seasonal mobility (Fruth & Hohmann, 2002; Foley & Gamble, 2009).

#### 3.5 Social Structure Indicators

Although rarely observed in cohesive groups, reports of adult–juvenile pairs, parallel trackways, and coordinated movement suggest small-band social organization consistent with low-density hominin populations rather than solitary ape behavior (Dunbar, 2009).

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**4. Environmental Interaction and Niche Construction**

Environmental modification is among the most compelling behavioral indicators attributed to a relict *Homo* species. Investigators across North America have documented bent saplings, crossed limbs, stacked branches, and geometric arrangements appearing in recurring patterns across regions and habitats.

Intentional environmental modification distinguishes hominins from other primates and reflects cognitive planning, spatial awareness, and social signaling (McGrew, 2010; Harrison, 2010). The reported structures attributed to Bigfoot exhibit characteristics inconsistent with random natural processes, including symmetry, repeated form, and placement along ecological boundaries such as ridgelines, riparian corridors, and game trails.

The spatial clustering of these features suggests deliberate placement rather than incidental breakage. Within an ethological framework, such modifications may function as boundary markers, navigational cues, or communication devices, consistent with hominin niche construction behaviors observed archaeologically and ethnographically.



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**5. Movement Ecology and Seasonal Behavior**

**5.1 Altitudinal and Seasonal Shifts**

Reports describe seasonal transitions between higher elevations in summer and sheltered lowlands in winter. Such patterns parallel the movement strategies of large omnivores and mobile hunter-gatherer populations responding to climatic conditions and resource distribution (Lurz & Rushton, 2008).

**5.2 Resource-Driven Mobility**

Movement patterns align with seasonal resource availability, including salmon runs, mast production, berry abundance, and ungulate fawning periods. Foraging-driven mobility is a defining feature of hominin ecological strategy (Foley & Gamble, 2009).

**5.3 Landscape Use Modeling**

Field observations and encounter mapping suggest corridor-based travel along ridgelines, ecotones, and riparian systems. These pathways optimize concealment, mobility, and access to diverse resources while minimizing human encounters, consistent with movement ecology models for cryptic species (Lurz & Rushton, 2008).

### 5.4 Home Range Estimates

Based on encounter frequency, ecological modeling, and analogs from large-bodied omnivores, individual home ranges may exceed 50–200 km$^2$. Such low-density spatial distribution aligns with reported rarity and the absence of sustained human contact (Lurz & Rushton, 2008).

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## 6. Predictive Behavioral Modeling

Ethological modeling allows testable predictions regarding spatial, seasonal, and acoustic behavior.

Acoustic activity is predicted to cluster near ridgelines and ecological boundaries that facilitate long-range sound transmission and territorial signaling. Structural modifications are expected to occur along movement corridors and transitional zones. Seasonal behavior should track resource availability, with summer concentration in uplands and winter occupation of sheltered lowlands (Foley & Gamble, 2009; Lurz & Rushton, 2008).

Such predictions permit falsifiable testing through structured observation and monitoring.



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## 7. Recommendations for Scientific Investigation

Non-invasive methods provide the most ethical and scientifically appropriate approach to studying a cryptic hominin.

- **Acoustic Monitoring:** Deploy long-duration recorders near ridge systems and ecotones.
- **Structural Surveys:** Map environmental modifications using standardized typologies.
- **Behavioral Observation:** Employ ethogram-based data collection protocols.
- **Camera and Thermal Deployment:** Focus on predictable movement corridors.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Prioritize non-intrusive observation and conservation sensitivity.

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