



# Pangea Institute

## Lakeland Swamp Ape Sighting Report

June 2005

With the completion of the forensic rendering by artist Matt Ellis (see illustration on the right), in consultation with our eyewitness Jennifer Ward, Pangea Institute's formal investigation of the Lakeland, Florida Swamp Ape incident of 2004 has come to an end.

"Unfortunately, hurricane Francis and Jeanne destroyed the physical evidence we might have otherwise recovered. But we do have the photographs Jennifer took of the creature's footprints immediately after she encountered the animal," says Pangea Institute cryptozoologist Scott Marlowe. "Jennifer's story did provide some good leads and generated subsequent sighting reports that we were able to use to develop some workable theories to account for the animal's existence and biological habitat."

Gary White, a reporter with the Lakeland Ledger did two fine newspaper articles on Jennifer Ward's sighting of the elusive creature. But, Ms. Ward's encounter made headlines around the world when the wire services picked up Linda Florea's Orlando Sentinel stories. All the newspaper attention spawned four radio interviews, a mention on Countdown with Keith Olbermann on CNBC, and a television expose on the Tampa area Warner Brothers affiliate station WB38.

According to Marlowe, "Jennifer's experience captured the imagination of the public because of her keen observation skills, sincerity and candor." Thanks largely to Pangea's careful handling of the typical frenzy that sightings of unusual animals frequently touch off, Ward's anecdotal account stands as one of the most



credible events of this kind of the last decade.

Ms. Ward's sighting also came at an opportune time in terms of other evidence that supports the existence of the creature she encountered.

Recent fossil discoveries by the paleontologists at the Florida Museum of Natural History in the

Midwestern United States appear to support the view that primates evolved in North America somewhat simultaneously with those in Africa and Asia. "Paleontologists at the Museum have found a rock in which animal remains are embedded," says Marlowe. "These fossils appear to be those of an early, and previously unknown, primate. Physical Anthropologists and Zoologists have long suspected that primate species developed on all the temperate continents independent of one another. This fossil find may provide the first hard evidence that this was, in fact, the case."

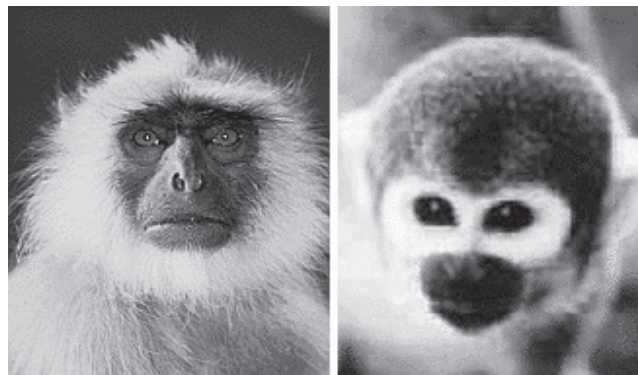
There are some puzzling physical distinctions, and some behavioral differences, between Old World monkeys and New World monkeys that the independent evolution of primate species would explain. Although primates native to the Americas would have developed somewhat different qualities from those that evolved in Africa and Asia due to unique environmental factors in each location, the overall pattern of evolution would have likely followed analogous paths.

Evolution states that sophisticated species arise from more primitive forms. "Primitive" in this sense means that the original animal is not as highly adapted as a later incarnation of an animal to effectively survive in its native habitat. In the case of primates, prosimian (lemur-like) animals eventually branched into monkeys and apes — among other species - where the monkeys and apes were better suited to survival in their particular environments. This is what happened on the other continents where primates are known -- with the only exception to this rule being the island of Madagascar. There, the lack of effective predators and stable habitat allowed lemur species to remain relatively unchanged over time.

Marlowe states that "many physical traits are normally retained from one species to the newly evolved species because they are inherited from the animal's ancestors — such as facial

features, appendage particulars, tails, hair and so forth. Sometimes these features disappear or change over time if the environmental conditions favor the loss or alteration of the trait. But, key recognizable characteristics always remain."

One of the most compelling pieces of information that Jennifer reported is that the description of the primate she encountered included details of its face. Her account follows known primate differences that the average layperson is not likely to distinguish. For example, Jennifer says that the animal didn't have a conspicuous snout or nose. "This platerinian trait is universal with New World monkeys, but the characteristic isn't true of Old World monkeys," says Marlowe.



Old World Monkeys, like the langur on the right above, have an obvious, protruding proboscis where New World Monkeys, like the squirrel monkey on the left, don't. Thus the face of a New World Monkey appears more flattened than an African or Asian monkey would. "This characteristic fits Jennifer's description and the observations made by other credible eyewitnesses to the Swamp Ape that have come forward since Jennifer's sighting report," states Marlowe.

"Jennifer observed that the animal walked on two legs and the tracks left by the creature that she photographed shows five parallel toes," Marlowe explains. "The Lakeland footprints match a plaster cast of a known

Swamp Ape track made in the Ocala National Forest in 1983 that the FMNH gave us to study. This trait alone suggests that the animal Jennifer saw is a hominin ape of some kind." All known apes, other than humans, have an opposable big toe, like the thumb on a human hand, and all apes except humans are habitual knuckle-walkers that are not consistently

bipedal as was the creature Jennifer encountered.



*Russell McCarty of the Florida Museum of Natural History presents Pangea's Scott Marlowe with the original track casting of a Florida Swamp Ape made in the Ocala National Forest after a sighting in 1983*

The Ward track also matches footprints of other Gulf State bipedal primate tracks that Marlowe received from the American Primate Conservation Alliance made in the Texas and Louisiana swamps for additional comparison. The track also has some similarities to the footprint of the Yowie; a Swamp Ape cousin native to "Down Under," that Marlowe obtained from an APCA member in Australia. "Jennifer's photograph clearly shows a clear heel impact with the animal pushing off on its toes as it walked - just like humans do," says Marlowe. "I doubt that there are dozens of podiatrists running around the southeastern swamps, let alone world-wide, deliberately planting anatomically correct, bogus 17-inch footprints

just to get a few yucks," says Marlowe.

Matt Ellis' rendering of the Lakeland Ape shows that the creature's cranium resembles that of a relict hominin species known as *Homo habilis* -- a presumably extinct early human first found in Africa by the famed Louis Leakey and his team in 1960.

"The recent reassessment of an unknown primate encountered by Dr. Francois de Loys in 1917 (shown below) suggests that the two 'monkeys' he and his petroleum expedition encountered in Venezuela were actually some sort of New World Ape. This raises the specter that there are indeed as yet undiscovered higher primate species that evolved here in the Americas," says Marlowe. The famed photograph of the animal killed by de Loys group shows one of the two 5-foot tall creatures encountered by his expedition. "This ape may have been a New World counterpart to the African chimpanzee," adds Marlowe, "suggesting that there may well be an American gorilla, orangutan or even a hominin-like equivalent."



There may be congruence indicated in the recently “dis-covered” Bongo or Bili Ape of the Congo - a suspected new species of gorilla known for about 100 years that inhabits the forests of the region - but only recently recognized by the scientific mainstream. So, the Florida Swamp Ape and its colloquial relatives could actually represent a highly evolved North American primate species that has somehow gone relatively undetected. In spite of a shrinking habitat, the animal only remains unconfirmed by modern science because of the creature’s renowned bashfulness -- a behavioral trait it seems to share with the Bili Ape.

The apparent absence of a lithic technology on the part of the Swamp Ape may also point to an evolutionary path independent of Old World primates. New World monkeys are considered to be less intelligent than their Old World counterparts -- although tool use has been observed in at least one South American monkey species. Tool use is far more common in African and Asian evolved primate species and tool making from stone is common in human species.

Credible sightings of the Swamp Ape have never included descriptions of any sort of weapon or tool -- unlike the European and Asian versions of similar hairy biped creatures. Indeed, even where there have been reports of Bigfoot or the Swamp Ape stalking or hunting, the reliable accounts have related that the creatures used their bare hands to kill their prey.

“Tool use and manufacture is a learned behavior,” observes Marlowe. “So if the inspiration for the development of a tool didn’t materialize, or the innovation wasn’t passed on for some reason, then tool-related behaviors would not have developed here either. It is also plausible that the tool material favored by these primates is not stone and thus not immediately evident or preserved as are the stone artifacts

associated with early hominins. It has puzzled scientists for decades that Homo ergaster, a later human species, apparently didn’t have the more advanced lithic technology possessed by its African predecessor.”

Homo ergaster appears to have evolved in Asia, but didn’t demonstrate the fine stone tool making abilities of the African originated Homo erectus. “It’s presumed that this was because H. ergaster made his tools out of bamboo and that wooden artifacts didn’t survive the ages to give testimony to advanced tool use by these humans.”

Indeed, this theory may be corroborated by the fact that Asians today use bamboo and wicker for everything from building material and furniture to eating utensils.

Another piece of the puzzle fell into place with the recent genetic study into the “Mexican Wolf-Boy” phenomena called hypertrichosis. “The Swamp Ape, Bigfoot and his cousins are extremely hairy. Many people balk at the idea that the animal could be an ape-man or even a man-ape because of this trait,” says Marlowe. “However, recent genetic research is causing physical anthropologists to re-examine our popular reconstructions of hominin species which artist’s have habitually rendered with features that mirror ourselves laid over a archaic skeletal frame. The research supports that a covering of body and facial hair was normal for these early hominids -- in fact, it’s a dominant genetic trait, and that the ‘naked ape’ condition is actually unique to our own specific species.”

In other words, our genetic ancestors weren’t clean-shaven as they are often drawn.

Marlowe will be spending part of the summer season on expeditions to locate and document the Florida Swamp Ape and Texas Bigfoot.