

Bolam Lake and Northumberland's Man-Beast

We're all most familiar with the Bigfoot reports emanating from the Pacific North West in the United States. We're also use to hearing hairy man-beast accounts from the Himalayas. In fact, these types of hominid encounters can be found the world over – including, believe it or not, Northumberland.

Probably the most well-known account in Northumberland comes from Bolam Lake. Bolam Lake is located around 20 miles North West of Newcastle. Situated in a country park, the lake is a destination for families, cyclists, walkers and water recreationalists looking for a day out.

Given the habitat surrounding the lake, it probably wouldn't make the list of a Top 10 places to have a Harry and the Henderson's type experience In the North East. That said, people have reported encountering something there. However, as we will see, there are indications that whatever it is that people have experienced (if we could exclude misperceptions, intentional hoaxes and the like), we may be looking at something more ethereal.

So what of the accounts? Nailing down the origins of the accounts is difficult. Reports seem to be essentially contemporary. The reports suggest a large (around 7ft tall), muscular hominid covered in dark or brown hair – essentially similar to Bigfoot accounts in the US. Is there an element of cultural expectation or suggestion here? Along with the sightings there have been reports of growls or heavy movement from the undergrowth and wooded area that surrounds the walkway circling the lake. Also put forward as suggestive evidence of the creature have been broken trees and tree limbs, allegedly cause by the creature either moving through the trees or making "Bigfoot bivouacs".

There is however, a major impediment to the suggestion of a flesh and blood creature at Bolam Lake. The habitat and ecology of the surrounds would be hard pushed to sustain a single Bigfoot type creature, let alone a minimum population. Factor into this also the number of visitors to the lake, and we would expect to see many more encounters with such a creature.

There is an account which may speak to a more otherworldly origin of the experiences. In 2003 a group that included British Crypto-zoologist Jon Downes set out to investigate the accounts at Bolam Lake. This investigation culminated in what Jon Downes described as one of the most profound experiences on any of his many investigations.

During the investigation there were reports of electrical equipment not working as it should have. There were also reports of strange behaviour from flocks of crows, and numerous noises in the undergrowth. Toward the end of the investigation however, five people witnessed a very large human shaped figure dart across their view, then dart back the other way. This figure was not described as a typical Bigfoot, but rather as a shadow-like entity.

So what can we make of these accounts? We can say with some certainty that it is highly unlikely that Northumberland, or indeed anywhere in the British Isles, has the ecology needed to sustain a population of flesh and blood Bigfoot type creature. With the encroachment of urban conurbations and day trippers into the less populous areas of the country, we would also expect many more reports of encounters with creatures of this type, should a population exist.

That really just leaves two likely candidates of causality. We could propose prosaic ones such as hoaxes, lies, misperception or wishful-thinking, or paranormal and otherworldly ones. Each one of these presents its own interesting avenue of inquiry.