Bigfoot

organization of Bigfoot researchers based in Parker,

They are convinced that there are bigfoot creatures living in Colorado and they wanted to show me how they search for the elusive creatures.

I haven't been tent camping in 45 years. I'm hoping to make it through the weekend without the need for Flight For Life. Any bigfoot that we might encounter will be an added

Bigfoot researchers carry numerous items when looking for a bigfoot. Field equipment can vary from low-tech to hightech, each having a specific purpose to expose the creature.

One of Myers' tools is a simple two-foot-long hardwood "knocker." This is used to smack against a tree. I ask Myers, what does knocking on a tree accomplish?

"Because sometimes they knock back," he says.

One of the items in Lombardo's arsenal is a long-playing digital audio recorder.

He sets the recorder up on the edge of our campsite overnight and will listen to the recording later to see if it picks up any unusual sounds while we are sleeping.

Other devices include redlensed flashlights, electromagnetic field meters and savory smelling food to cook, such as bacon, which might attract the creature.

But the most versatile instrument in a Bigfoot researcher's bag of tricks is personal observations of sasquatch activity.

As we head out for a hike, Lombardo explains what we will be looking for: oddly broken branches, wood stacked in intelligent patterns, unidentifiable scat droppings, fur and of course, big footprints.

At one point we come upon a large tree which has four 12-foot-long broken branches stacked against it, almost teepee fashioned.

Lombardo suggests that there is no natural way for those four branches to have arranged themselves in this fashion.

He goes on to explain that in areas of alleged bigfoot activity, one will find oddly stacked wood, tree trunks twisted and then snapped off, and bent sap-

I ask him why a bigfoot would do this.

"We don't know why they do it," he said.

He shows me a sapling, bent down in a curve, frozen in that position, with various larger pieces of wood covering the end of the sapling where it touched the ground.

"There's no way that the end of that sapling could have ended up under that wood," Lombardo says.

While not coming right out and suggesting that these random placements of dried branches are the work of a bigfoot, Lombardo indicates that similar activity has been seen near claimed sasquatch sight-

After two hours in the woods, we head back to our



LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF BIGFOOT

Tony Lombardo inspects a broken tree for signs of any hair tuffs which may have pulled off from a large animal. Hair samples are then analyzed. Unidentifiable samples could belong to a bigfoot. (Photo by Walter L. Newton/The Flume)

campsite to cook supper and wait for nightfall. After dark, bigfoot research takes on a whole new dimension.

Once supper is over, Myers stands facing the dark woods, looking for "eye shine." He explains that some bigfoots' eyes glow in the dark.

Myers suggests that the glow is not a reflection on the eyes from ambient light sources, but possibly a bioluminescence process that creates the shine from inside the their

Lombardo shows me an EMF meter. He says that some bigfoots give off electromagnetic fields and the meter is used to give an advance warning of a nearby bigfoot.

We spent about three hours after dark looking for eye shine, listening for strange noises and talking about big-

After we doused the fire, Lombardo handed out small walkie-talkies that we can take into our tents to communicate with one another and give a warning if we hear anything during the night.

About 2 a.m., the silence is suddenly shattered by loud moans and the sound of ground cover being trampled on.

It is me, bolting out of my tent, dancing around in my T-shirt and underwear, barefooted, trying to work off a leg

"Go back to sleep guys, it's just me," I say.

That morning we break camp and head to the historic Bailey County Store and Bigfoot Outpost with bigfoot talk dominating the conversation.

Lombardo felt that that the location they picked was not isolated enough. During our search in the woods, we saw evidence of other humans and a bow hunter even stopped by our camp.

"I guess it was naive to think that any location within sight of a main road is desolate enough to remain anonymous for the weekend," Lombardo said. "This was not the least successful expedition I have been on, but a lesson learned just the same."

This does not discourage Myers and Lombardo. They have every intention of searching again and again until they find the elusive creature.

Sasquatch culture

Myers owns the Bailey Country Store, which has become Colorado's central for all things sasquatch.

In the store there is a room called the Bigfoot Outpost where you can purchase books, field guides, maps and other bigfoot-related items.

Myers is always ready to give people information about bigfoots and to outfit believers and those stuck by curiosity with gear and supplies for a night out in the woods.

Myers and Lombardo believe that bigfoots exist, as do hundreds of other amateur enthusiasts and some professional researchers.

There are skeptics who feel that the whole bigfoot phenomena is no more than pseudoscience, a mixture of myths, frauds and misidentifications.

In an article published July 2 in the peer-reviewed, Proceedings of the Royal Society, scientists Bryan C. Sykes, Rhettman A. Mullis, Christophe Hagenmuller, Terry W. Melton and Michel Sartori studied 30 hair samples attributed to a bigfoot.

The genetic RNA sequencing of extracted DNA found that 28 of the samples could be attributed to known mammals. The other two samples were closely related to Ursus Maritimus, a Paleolithic polar bear.

Sharon Hill, P.G., EDM, is a geologist with a specialty in science and society and public outreach for science. She is an advocate for evidence-focused skepticism and critical thinking when dealing with the paranormal, alternative medicine claims, pseudoscience and

In an email to The Flume she points out that after 50 vears of bigfoot research, the evidence has not gotten any

"To be objective (you don't need to be 'scientific') and get the best answer, you have to ask the right question," Hill said. "What is out there in the woods that people encounter and call bigfoot?"

Even among groups of Bigfoot believers there are competing theories. This has resulted in one group dismissing another's theories out of hand.

In an article that Hill wrote for the Skeptical Inquirer website in 2002 she said, "The important criterion, however,

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is not the quantity of the evidence, but the quality of it."

Myers and Lombardo are sincere in their beliefs, but so are Hill and other scientists. She would like to find bigfoots too. But each side is approaching it from a different direction. Hill would like to see them work together, using critical skills and scientific methods.

In a November 2013 article

that Hill wrote for the Skeptical Inquirer, Hill presents her take on the issue.

"Amateurs can use a sound scientific process but that means they must give up the hooting and howling, the wood knocking, the blobsquatches and the scare-yourself-silly camp outs that make zero progress toward the answer to the question."