

# Is it “Red-Listed?” Protecting the Elusive Sasquatch in B.C.

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During recent discussions about wildlife warning signs with senior traffic safety engineers of U.S. state departments of transportation, I was asked by Mississippi’s State Traffic Engineer, if our ministry had a “sasquatch” warning sign.

I was caught flat-footed. Although our ministry has the most comprehensive inventory of species-specific wildlife warning signs of any transportation agency in the world, I wasn’t certain it didn’t have a sasquatch warning sign.

As a follow-up, I did some searching and discovered a sasquatch warning sign was installed somewhere near Kelowna. When I showed Engineer in Training Jennifer Hardy, who is with HQ’s Traffic, Electrical, Highway Safety, and Geometric Standards Section, a picture of the sign, she told me it wasn’t a ministry sign. The silhouette wasn’t hairy enough to accurately depict a real sasquatch.

Unfortunately, as far as sasquatches were concerned, my knowledge about the creatures was limited to what I had learned from Kokanee Beer commercials.

As the ministry’s wildlife expert, I figured I’d better get up to speed on the subject fast. I Googled “sasquatches” and found the 2010 Olympics have “Quatchi”, a sasquatch, as one of its mascots. According to the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, “The sasquatch is a popular figure in local native legends of the Pacific West Coast. The sasquatch reminds us of the mystery and wonder that exist in the natural world, igniting our imagination about the possibility of undiscovered creatures in the great Canadian wilderness.”

If it came to the issue of being “undiscovered,” then sasquatches have certainly been seen enough times. Eyewitnesses are remarkably consistent in their description of the

sasquatches encountered or observed. They report a large, upright, human-like animal standing or walking on its hind legs. Like a human, the shoulders are prominent, but the neck is short and thick. The animal is typically covered with coarse dark hair and its arms are longer than those of a human. Apparently sasquatches have such a strong stench, similar to rotten eggs or rotten meat, that it makes one gag or want to vomit.

According to registered professional biologist Dr. John A. Bindernagel, the world’s most prominent sasquatch authority, the animals have been reported to have been seen more than 3,000 times across North America, and more than 100 sets of footprints have been cast and archived. In British Columbia, sasquatch sightings have been reported near Harrison Lake and Bradley Lagoon in the South Coast Region, near Cranbrook and Fruitvale in the Southern Interior Region, and near Houston and Moricetown in the Northern Region. Dr. Bindernagel told me sasquatch sightings have been reported more than 150 times on Vancouver Island alone. It appears sasquatches have been seen more often in the province than the elusive Pacific Water Shrew, a federally red-listed species the ministry is working hard to protect in the Lower Mainland.

According to sasquatch literature, a number of the animals have been involved in motor vehicle accidents, but to date no carcasses have been recovered. Over the last 30 years, the ministry’s Wildlife Accident Reporting System has never had a single sasquatch reported. However, there had been a number of “unknown” species discovered by the ministry’s Maintenance Contractors in locations coinciding closely with reported sasquatch sightings.



Olympic mascot Quatchi can be easily sighted in B.C. retail outlets.

Since sasquatches are suspected to grow upwards of 2.5 metres in height and weigh between 250 and 400 kilograms, I felt they could represent a significant hazard to the motoring public. I also figured if someone had already taken steps to install a non-conforming sasquatch warning sign on

a ministry right-of-way, the ministry needed to have a conforming sign in its inventory, in the event one was required for ministry purposes.

When I asked Chief Engineer Dirk Nyland at HQ, about the implications of having a warning sign for a mythological animal, Dirk remarked “It’s not mythological, if you can’t prove it never existed.” Faced with this profound convincing logic, I decided to have a prototype sasquatch warning sign designed.

The task fell into the capable hands of Graphics Production Technician Kathy Macovichuk at HQ. Over the course of a lunch hour, Kathy was able to produce a stunning sasquatch silhouette that readily met with Jennifer Hardy’s approval.

While the sasquatch warning sign is not yet part of the ministry’s official wildlife warning sign inventory, you can rest assured that should sasquatches start crossing provincial highways with more regularity, the ministry is ready to protect them. In the meantime, if you happen to take a really good sasquatch photo, please send it to me. I have a T-shirt with an incredible sasquatch warning sign design on it for the best photo I receive. ♦



Graphics Production Technician Kathy Macovichuk displays the sasquatch crossing T-shirt, which will be awarded to the employee who submits the best sasquatch photo.



An official ministry sasquatch crossing sign has been designed and is ready for manufacturing and posting when needed.