

Bigfoot — Aula'aq (N), Arula'aq (S)

ARULA'AT TANG'RINGUTAAKAIT CUUMI. – THEY USED TO OFTEN SEE BIGFOOT BEFORE.



Photo: A bear footprint in the sand.

Stories of Bigfoot creatures—hairy, man-like beings that live in the wilderness—are common in the Kodiak Archipelago and Prince William Sound. Alutiiq people call these beings *aula'aq* or *arula'aq*, which means to run away. Some say these creatures are half human and half beast; others believe that they are small people that can turn themselves into animals. Whatever their form, southcentral Alaska's Bigfoots have extra-human powers. People who have tracked strange footprints find that the impressions simply disappear, as if the creature vanished into the air. Those who try to touch a Bigfoot reach out to find nothing. And one man who shot at a strange man with a long white beard returned later to discover a dead weasel.

Although Bigfoot-like creatures have never been photographed, clues suggest their existence. Some people have seen odd human-like tracks, others have lost food from wilderness cabins, heard strange whistling noises that made them dizzy, experienced thumping on the sides of their house at night, or been visited by peculiar people they believe to be *arula'at*. People hunting and trapping from remote cabins typically encounter these creatures. Some *arula'at* are thought to be shy, stealing from camps when their occupants are away or sleeping. Others are more aggressive, asking for food and shelter, helping themselves to cabins, and even following and attacking people. In Prince William Sound, Alutiiq people report carrying religious icons, holy water, or incense to ward off *arula'at*.

Bigfoot legends may have arisen from stories about people who committed crimes and were expelled from their villages. In classical Alutiiq society, people who lived alone in the wilderness could turn into dangerous, evil spirits who spoke through whistling. Alutiiq people are not alone in their belief in nonhuman persons. Alaska's Yup'ik and Iñupiat people speak of encounters with similar extraordinary beings, thought to travel between this world and another.