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BRIEF REPORT

The Urban Relict Hominoid: An Analysis of Incursions into Populated Areas

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ABSTRACT

Urban incursions by large, undescribed hominoids have been mentioned in historical literature but rarely examined through a consistent analytical framework. This study reviews 5,834 reports drawn from three public databases and the author's research records to identify observations of putative relict hominoids entering populated areas by ≥0.40 km. Forty-two reports met the geographic criterion, and twenty-five (59.5%) met the study's credibility threshold for inclusion. These incursions occurred in areas with a mean population density of 2,118 people/km^2, exceeding the U.S. city average of 1,600 people/km^2. Mean incursion depth was 2.83 km, with a maximum of 12.55 km. Seasonal and temporal patterns differed from the John Green and desert-environment datasets, with winter and nighttime incursions predominating. Morphological descriptions also showed an overrepresentation of lightly built individuals. Comparisons with known primates and large mammals suggest several nonexclusive explanations for these reports, including food acquisition, dispersal, exploratory behavior, and responses to anthropogenic landscape change. Because the dataset is based mostly on archival witness reports rather than independently verified biological records, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Even so, the patterning observed here suggests that urban incursions, while uncommon, are behaviorally structured events that merit further comparative and field-based investigation.

KEYWORDS

Relict hominoids, urban ecology, cognitive ecology, nocturnal behavior, dispersal.

INTRODUCTION

Reports of relict hominoids entering or approaching populated areas appear in both historical and contemporary accounts, yet systematic evaluation of such events remains limited. Most reports originate in forested or rural settings, but a smaller subset describes movement well inside the urban/undeveloped interface. Examining the ecological and behavioral context of these incidents may clarify the extent to which such reports reflect adaptability, risk-sensitive movement, and interactions with human-dominated landscapes.

Large mammals such as bears, cougars, coyotes, macaques, baboons, and vervets regularly exploit urban environments under specific ecological conditions. Across these taxa, urban use is often associated with behavioral flexibility, shifts toward nocturnality, and selective use of corridors

that reduce exposure while preserving access to anthropogenic resources (Bateman & Fleming, 2012; Fehlmann et al., 2017; Gaynor et al., 2018). Similar ecological principles may help contextualize reports of relict hominoids in populated areas.

Urban incursions by wildlife are commonly linked to energetic stress, dispersal, exploratory behavior, or access to predictable anthropogenic foods. Primates in particular show context-dependent adjustments in ranging, activity timing, and risk assessment when moving through human-modified landscapes, including crop-raiding and movement beyond protected-area boundaries (Naughton-Treves et al., 1998; Priston & Underdown, 2009). These responses often rely on spatial memory, flexible decision-making, and the capacity to integrate recurring features of human activity into movement patterns.

This study evaluates reports of putative relict hominoids entering populated areas by ≥0.40 km, examines their spatial and temporal patterning, and interprets those patterns within established literature on wildlife urban ecology, primate behavior, and cognitive ecology. By comparing the reported patterns with those documented in known large mammals and great apes, the analysis asks whether urban incursions are more consistent with incidental proximity, environmental displacement, or patterned, risk-sensitive movement.

Recent work in animal cognition emphasizes that urban environments function not only as ecological spaces but also as cognitive landscapes that animals must interpret and negotiate (Sol et al., 2020). Large-brained species often persist in such settings through behavioral flexibility, a central idea in the Cognitive Buffer Hypothesis, which proposes that enhanced cognitive capacity can improve performance under novel or fluctuating conditions (Overington et al., 2011). Urban exploiters, including corvids, macaques, coyotes, and raccoons, frequently rely on problem solving, inhibitory control, and spatial memory when navigating anthropogenic risks and opportunities. In this study, that literature serves as a comparative framework rather than as direct evidence of cognition in an undescribed taxon.

Definition of Relict Hominoids

Anthropologist D. Jeffrey Meldrum defined the term relict hominoid within a biological and paleoanthropological context as "surviving representatives of ancient hominin or hominoid lineages that have persisted into modern times" (Meldrum, 2012). Meldrum's usage highlights bipedalism, hominoid ancestry, and the possibility that small, low-density populations of archaic primates may remain extant but unclassified because of their elusiveness and the challenges of documenting rare, wide-ranging species.

In this study, the term relict hominoid is used in this biological sense: a hypothesized, extant, non-*Homo sapiens* bipedal primate representing a surviving lineage of ancient hominoids or hominins, inferred from observational, morphological, and behavioral evidence.

Taxonomic Clarification

The term hominoid is used in its formal biological sense to refer to all members of the superfamily *Hominoidea*, which includes the lesser apes (family *Hylobatidae*) and the great apes and humans (family *Hominidae*). Within *Hominidae*, the subfamily Homininae comprises gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, and humans. The tribe Hominini includes the genera *Homo* and *Pan*, while the subtribe Hominina refers specifically to humans and our extinct close relatives.

The term hominid, historically used to refer exclusively to humans and their fossil ancestors, is now taxonomically broader and encompasses all great apes and humans. By contrast, hominin refers specifically to humans and all species more closely related to humans than to chimpanzees. The phrase relict hominoid, as used in this paper, therefore denotes a hypothesized extant member of *Hominoidea* potentially within or adjacent to the hominin lineage that persists as a surviving representative of an ancient hominoid or hominin clade.

QUALITY CONTROL AND METHODS

Data Source Descriptions

Archival reports spanning multiple decades were evaluated, with historical volume fluctuating over time and reaching a peak during the 2006–2015 decade (Figure A1). A total of 5,834 reports of relict hominoid observations were reviewed from three public databases (BFRO, ORBF, and BFTimes) and the author's personal research archive (Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization, n.d.; Oregon Bigfoot, n.d.; Perez, 2022). These materials comprise witness-submitted, investigator-reviewed, editorially curated, or author-collected accounts. For the purposes of this study, they were treated as archival witness reports rather than as independently verified biological occurrences. The author conducted an initial screening for location specificity and duplication across sources, followed by a second screening for the urban-incursion threshold. Reports that

remained were then subjected to a third-pass credibility assessment before inclusion in the final dataset.

Reports were screened for duplication, geographic specificity, temporal detail, observer credibility, and descriptive clarity. Only reports containing sufficient information to estimate location, approximate distance from the urban/undeveloped interface, and basic morphological or behavioral descriptors were retained for further evaluation. Spatial and temporal patterns were then compared with the author's desert relict hominoid dataset (Champagne, 2018) and researcher John Green's archival dataset.

John W. Green's (1927-2016) database of relict hominoid reports remains an important archival resource. Green, an early researcher and author, maintained a spreadsheet database of collected reports, and although the original file is not currently available, derivative versions remain accessible online. The Green archive contains 4,068 sighting reports from 1800-2000. John Green's original Sasquatch database was formerly available through sasquatchdatabase.com; a searchable derivative version is currently available through *John Green and More* at https://sasquatch.mkrejci.com/ (Krejci, n.d.).

The largest source reviewed was the North American geographic database maintained by the Bigfoot Field Researchers' Organization (BFRO), which contained 5,572 reports spanning approximately 1904-2024. The database is organized geographically by state or province and then by county or borough. The BFRO classifies reports as Class A (clear sightings with comparatively high confidence), Class B (plausible but less certain observations), and Class C (secondhand or otherwise low-confidence reports).

A second online U.S. database, Oregonbigfoot.com (ORBF), was also reviewed for qualifying reports. This resource contains approximately 1,465 reports, similarly organized by state and county, and covers a roughly comparable historical period. Two additional observations were included from other sources: one collected by the author (Ref. #US41) and one collected by researcher Daniel Perez (BFTimes; Ref. #US8).

Inclusion Distance Threshold

A minimum distance of 0.40 km inside the urban/undeveloped interface was required for a report to be classified as an urban incursion. This threshold was intended to exclude incidental edge use and is broadly consistent with wildlife-ecology studies showing that edge effects often extend approximately 200-500 m into adjacent habitat (Villaseñor et al., 2014). Movements within that zone can reflect transitional or boundary-skimming behavior rather than interior habitat use. Studies of large mammals, including black bears, coyotes, and primates, suggest that movements beyond 200-300 m are more often associated with foraging, dispersal, or exploratory behavior than with accidental proximity (Beckmann & Berger, 2003; Lowry et al., 2013; Riley et al., 2003; Sha & Hanya, 2013). The 0.40 km threshold is therefore used here as a conservative screening criterion, not as a definitive ecological boundary.

Credibility Assessment

A credibility assessment was used because the study concerns rare, contested, and observationally difficult events. In this context, a structured screening process helps distinguish reports that contain enough descriptive and contextual detail for comparative analysis from those that do not. The scoring system does not verify species identity or establish biological proof; rather, it provides a transparent method for ranking report quality on the basis of investigator review, observer qualifications, descriptive specificity, and the presence of corroborating information.

The main strength of this approach is procedural consistency: all candidate reports were evaluated using the same stated criteria, reducing ad hoc inclusion decisions and making the screening process easier to scrutinize. At the same time, the method has important limitations. Any credibility score applied to witness reports retains a degree of subjectivity, and stronger documentation may reflect reporting circumstances rather than underlying event quality. The procedure may therefore exclude genuine but poorly documented incidents while retaining detailed reports that are nevertheless mistaken. Reporting bias, uneven investigator involvement, and variable record quality across source databases further limit inference. Accordingly, the scoring system should be understood as a tool for comparative dataset construction, not as independent validation of the underlying phenomenon.

Each report was evaluated using a structured credibility scoring system (maximum score: 11 points). Points were assigned based on:

- qualified investigator review
- observer qualifications
- descriptive detail
- observer credibility
- presence of multiple witnesses
- observation duration ≥60 seconds
- observation made within 200 m
- physical evidence (i.e., impressions, vegetation disturbances- 2 pts.)

- photographic, video, or audio documentation
- associated biogenic structures (i.e. nests, bedding areas, tracks, feeding/foraging[2] traces)

A minimum score of 5 points was required for inclusion. This threshold was selected to balance rigor with retention of analyzable cases and to exclude reports lacking sufficient descriptive support for spatial and behavioral comparison. It should be interpreted as a practical screening cutoff within this study design rather than as a standalone demonstration of statistical significance (See Figure 1).

Geospatial Analysis

Distances from the urban/undeveloped interface were estimated using GIS tools and checked against satellite imagery. When precise coordinates were unavailable, conservative estimates were derived from described landmarks, road intersections, or other identifiable geographic features. Population-density values were obtained from U.S. Census Bureau sources and municipal demographic records.

Temporal and Seasonal Classification

Seasonal categories followed standard climatological divisions. Time-of-day bins were based on common wildlife-activity windows.

Morphological Classification

Morphological descriptions were grouped into three body-build classes: massive, medium, and light.

Final Dataset

Of the 5,834 reports reviewed, 42 met the geographic criterion, and 25 met the credibility threshold. All subsequent analyses are based on those 25 reports.

Population Density

The included incursions occurred in areas with a mean population density of 2,118 people/km^2, higher than the reported U.S. city average of 1,600 people/km^2. This pattern indicates that the selected cases were not limited to low-density peri-urban settings (Figure 2).

Depth of Incursion

Incursion depth ranged from 0.40 to 12.55 km, with a mean of 2.83 km (Figure 3).

Seasonal Distribution

Winter accounted for the largest share of incursions (36%), followed by autumn (27%), summer (23%), and spring (14%) (Figure 4). In addition to the seasonal

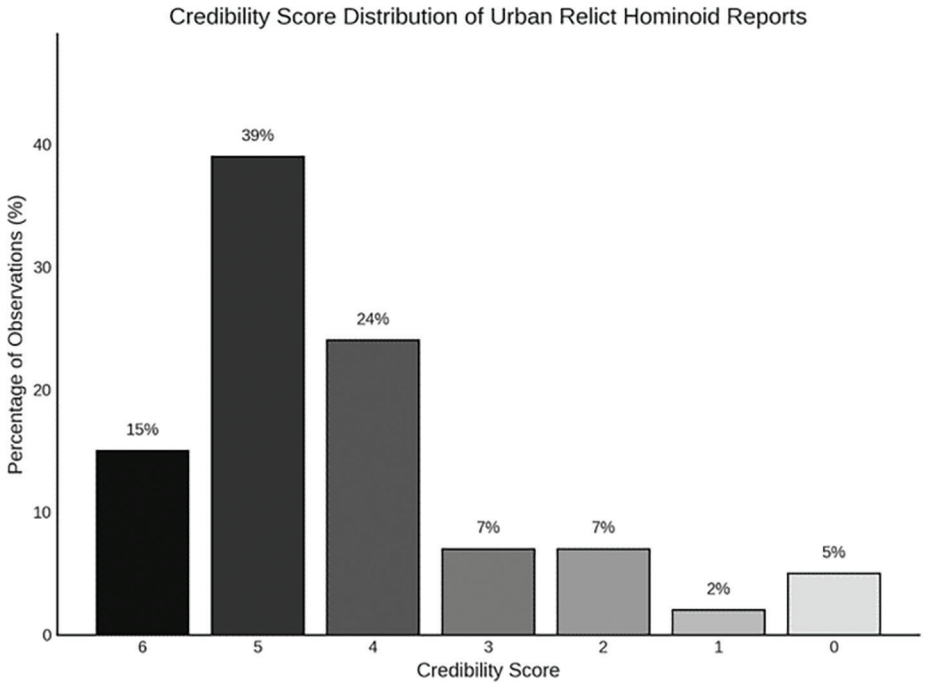

Figure 1. Credibility score distribution. Percentage of reports assigned a credibility score (0–6), with score 5 representing the modal category.

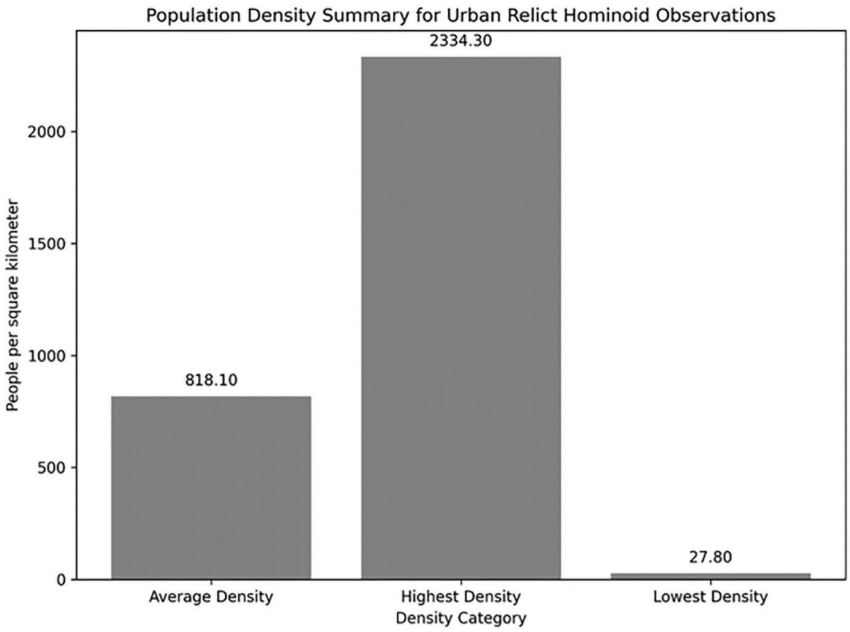

Figure 2. Population density of reporting regions (people per km^2). Minimum, maximum, and mean human population densities associated with the included observation sites are shown.

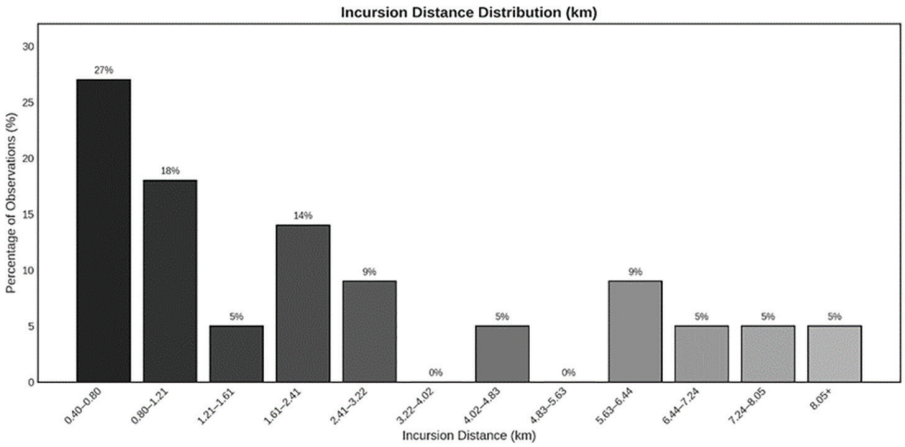

Figure 3. Incursion distance distribution (km). The figure shows the percentage of observations within each distance band inside the urban–undeveloped interface.

frequency of incursions, reported physical dimensions varied across the year, with autumn observations yielding the highest average reported height (Figure A2).

Temporal Distribution

Most incursions were reported during nighttime hours, indicating a pronounced nocturnal bias in the final dataset (Figure 5).

Morphological Descriptions

Reported body-build categories were massive (40%), medium (13%), and light (20%), with lightly built individuals appearing more frequent than expected relative to broader sighting datasets (Figure 6).

Geographic Distribution

The 25 included incursions were distributed across 14 U.S. states, with the highest concentrations in Illinois, Ohio, Utah, New Jersey, and Colorado.

Behavioral Observations

Commonly reported behaviors included rapid movement, apparent avoidance of humans, use of linear corridors, and limited vocalization.

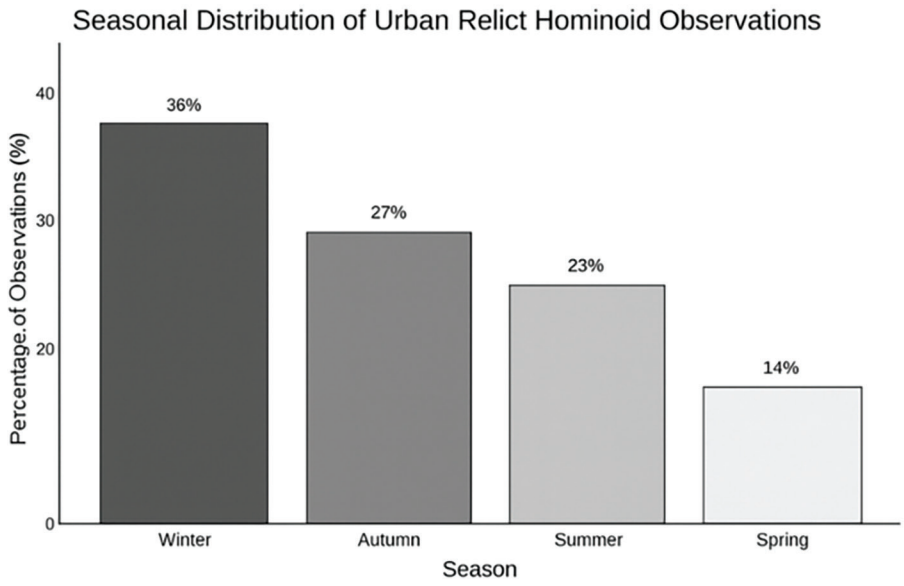

Figure 4. Seasonal distribution of incursions. Winter comprised the largest proportion of reports in the final dataset.

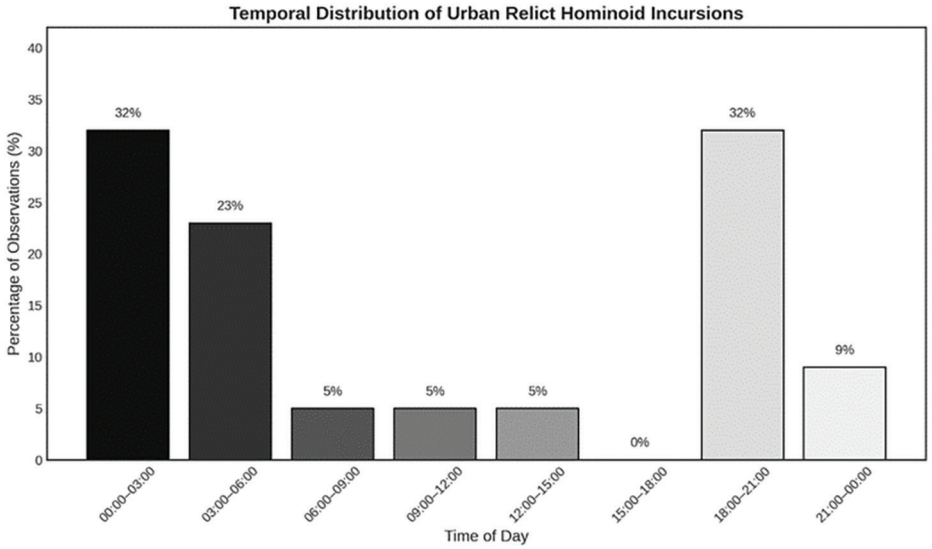

Figure 5. Temporal distribution of incursions. Observations are grouped into eight 3-hour intervals, with peaks at 00:00–03:00 and 18:00–21:00.

DISCUSSION

Intelligence and Behavioral Flexibility

The behavioral patterns documented in this dataset are consistent with a degree of behavioral flexibility comparable to that seen in other large-brained mammals, particularly great apes and adaptable carnivores. The strong nocturnal bias, apparent use of urban corridors, and repeated movement into populated areas suggest patterned risk-sensitive behavior rather than uniformly random movement. Comparable temporal adjustments and route selection have been documented in urban macaques, baboons, leopards, and coyotes, all of which modify activity in response to human disturbance gradients. In the present study, those comparisons are interpretive rather than taxonomic: they help frame the observed patterning but do not establish equivalence in cognition or confirm species identity.

These behavioral signatures are broadly compatible with the Cognitive Buffer Hypothesis, which links larger brains and behavioral flexibility to improved performance in novel or human-modified environments (Sol et al., 2005). Species that persist in urban settings often do so by shifting

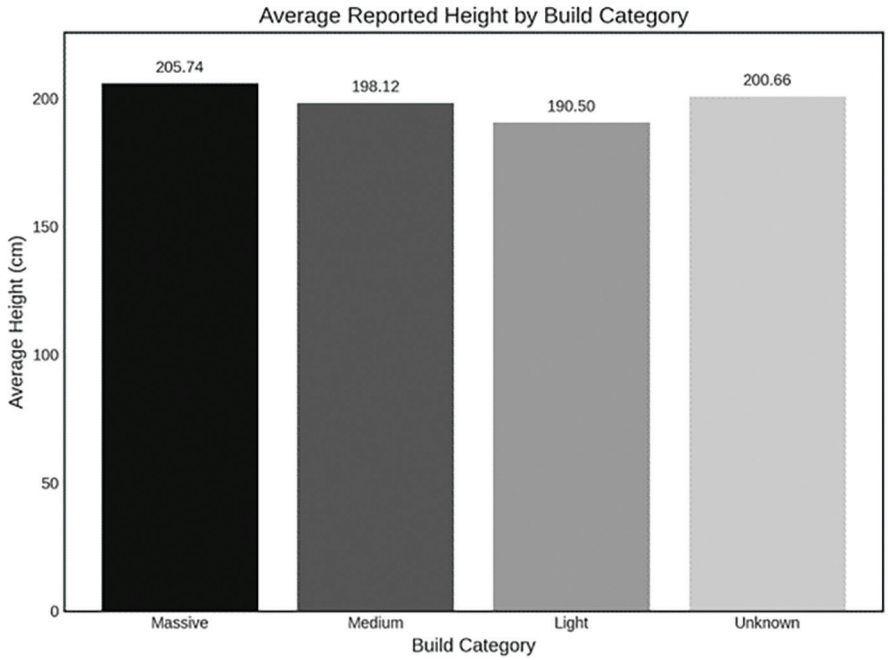

Figure 6. Average reported height by body-build category (cm), based on observer-reported body-build descriptions.

activity timing, modifying foraging strategies, and using spatial memory to reduce exposure to risk. The nocturnal, corridor-based movements documented here fit that general ecological pattern. However, because the present dataset is based on witness reports, any inference about cognition must remain provisional and should be treated as a hypothesis generated by the patterning in the reports rather than as a demonstrated property of a verified species.

Movement through complex urban environments, often at night, across multiple kilometers, and with limited reported detection, may be consistent with the use of spatial memory, route familiarity, and sensitivity to human presence. These possibilities align with cognitive domains documented in primates, including mental mapping, flexible foraging, context-dependent risk assessment, and dispersal-related movement costs (Isbell & Van Vuren, 1996). The apparent overrepresentation of lightly built individuals may also be compatible with dispersal-age exploration. However, because these inferences are drawn from witness narratives, they should be treated as provisional interpretations rather than demonstrations of species-level cognition.

Cognitive Ecology Implications

The ecological and behavioral signatures described here may have implications for how such reports are interpreted within cognitive ecology. First, the reported patterns suggest possible sensitivity to human activity cycles, seasonal resource conditions, and landscape structure. If those patterns reflect actual behavior, they would be consistent with dynamic risk assessment similar to that reported in great apes navigating fragmented or human-modified habitats (McLennan & Hill, 2010; Meijaard et al., 2010).

Urban-cognition research distinguishes between species for which cities function as cognitively demanding problem spaces and those for which urban environments operate as comparatively accessible niches exploitable through preexisting adaptations (Griffin et al., 2017). Within that framework, the reported incursions may be interpreted not as evidence of novel cognitive evolution, but as the possible redeployment of ancestral capacities such as spatial memory, exploratory behavior, and context-sensitive risk assessment in anthropogenic settings.

Second, the reported use of linear landscape features such as riparian zones, greenbelts, rail lines, and drainage systems may indicate sensitivity to predictable structural elements within human-modified environments. Comparable corridor-based movement has been documented in bears, wolves, coyotes, bobcats, and some primates and is commonly associated with spatial familiarity and risk reduction (Beckmann & Berger, 2003; Riley et al., 2003; Sha & Hanya, 2013).

Third, the predominance of apparently solitary incursions may suggest that some events depend more on

individual experience than on overt group coordination. This pattern is broadly comparable to taxa that show high individual variation in ranging strategies and reliance on personal landscape knowledge (Chow et al., 2021).

Finally, the combination of nocturnality, deeper incursions, and apparent avoidance of high-traffic periods is consistent with risk-sensitive adjustment to human presence and broader patterns of behavioral adjustment in urban environments (Gaynor et al., 2018; Sol et al., 2020). In this study, that pattern is best treated as a comparative ecological signal rather than as direct evidence of advanced cognition.

Comparison to Great Ape Models

Orangutans (Pongo Spp.)

Orangutans exhibit solitary ranging, extensive reliance on spatial memory, and the capacity to move through fragmented landscapes. Those traits provide a useful comparative model for interpreting the deep, apparently solitary incursions in this dataset, particularly because orangutan conservation studies emphasize the need to interpret great-ape persistence within complex human-modified landscapes (Meijaard et al., 2010). The comparison is heuristic rather than taxonomic.

Gorillas (Gorilla Spp.)

Gorillas show sophisticated risk assessment in human-modified landscapes, and dispersal-driven exploration by subadult males offers a useful analog for the apparent overrepresentation of lightly built individuals in this dataset. At the same time, gorillas are generally less solitary and less nocturnal than the pattern described here, making the comparison useful but limited within broader primate social-system theory (van Schaik & van Hooff, 1983).

Chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes)

Chimpanzees are often cited for their high degree of behavioral flexibility, including flexible movement, foraging adjustment, and sensitivity to changing social and environmental conditions. Studies of chimpanzees in disturbed forest–farm mosaics show that great apes may alter responses to humans and researchers in human-modified landscapes (McLennan & Hill, 2010). Although the present dataset provides no direct evidence of tool use or social coordination, the reported alignment of movement with human rhythms is broadly comparable to forms of environmental responsiveness documented in chimpanzees and other cognitively flexible mammals.

Synthesis

Taken as analogical models, orangutans, gorillas, and chimpanzees provide useful comparative frameworks for interpreting reported navigation, dispersal-like movement, and behavioral flexibility in the present dataset. These analogies help situate the observed patterning within primate behavioral ecology, including broader theories about the ecological and social drivers of primate social systems (van Schaik & van Hooff, 1983), but they do not justify direct claims of equivalence in intelligence or taxonomic affinity.

Individual-Level Cognitive Variation

A growing body of research suggests that urban exploitation is often driven by individual-level behavioral variation, with only a subset of animals regularly entering human-dominated areas (Chow et al., 2021). This framework is relevant to the apparent overrepresentation of lightly built, possibly dispersal-age individuals in the present dataset. If that pattern is reliable, it may indicate that urban entry reflects not only species-level flexibility but also within-population differences in exploratory behavior and risk tolerance.

Behavioral-Cognition Model for Urban Incursions

Perception and Environmental Assessment

- Detection of anthropogenic cues (light, noise, scents, etc.)
- Assessment of human activity levels
- Recognition of safe vs. high-risk zones

Spatial Memory and Route Planning

- Long-term memory of landscape features
- Identification of low-exposure corridors
- Multi-kilometer nocturnal navigation
- Avoidance of bottlenecks and high-traffic areas

Risk-Sensitive Temporal Adjustment

- Nocturnal movement to reduce detection
- Seasonal timing aligned with energetic stress
- Avoidance of daylight and peak human activity

Motivational Drivers

- Energetic stress (winter scarcity)
- Dispersal-related exploration
- Curiosity and environmental sampling
- Resource assessment

Behavioral Flexibility and Decision-Making

- Context-dependent movement
- Individual variation
- Solitary decision-making
- Adaptive responses to human presence

Outcome: a pattern of rare, apparently intentional, largely solitary, nocturnal, corridor-based incursions that may be consistent with flexible decision-making under human disturbance.

Taken together, these perspectives place the reported incursions within a broader framework that integrates urban ecology, cognitive ecology, and individual behavioral variation (Griffin et al., 2017; Lowry et al., 2013; Overington et al., 2011). The recurring pattern of solitary nocturnal movement, selective corridor use, deep entry into populated areas, and possible overrepresentation of dispersal-age individuals is consistent with flexible, context-dependent responses to human-modified landscapes. At the same time, the evidentiary base remains indirect. The most defensible conclusion is therefore not that the reports prove a particular taxon or level of cognition, but that the dataset contains nonrandom ecological structure warranting further comparative analysis and more direct field-based methods.

CONCLUSION

This study identified a small subset of archival reports describing putative relict hominoid movement well inside populated areas. Within that subset, the mean incursion depth of 2.83 km and the maximum of 12.55 km extend beyond what would typically be considered incidental edge use. The reports also show a strong nocturnal bias, a winter peak, and frequent association with linear landscape features, patterns that resemble risk-sensitive movement strategies documented in other large mammals living near people.

The apparent overrepresentation of lightly built individuals may be compatible with dispersal-age exploration patterns seen in primates and carnivores, and the timing of many reports may indicate avoidance of daylight and periods of higher human activity. Even so, these interpretations remain inferential because they are derived from witness narratives rather than direct biological observation. The study therefore supports a more limited conclusion: if the included reports are treated as analyzable behavioral records, they display recurring ecological structure rather than a random collection of anecdotal events.

The principal limitations of the study are its reliance on human observation, uneven documentation quality, possible reporting and selection biases, and the absence of independent biological verification. Those limitations constrain the strength of any taxonomic or cognitive claims. Nevertheless, the consistency of several spatial and temporal signatures across geographically diverse cases suggests that the reports are suitable for cautious comparative analysis. Future progress will depend less on further anecdotal accumulation than on targeted field methods, standardized screening protocols, and efforts to test whether the reported patterns can be corroborated through independent environmental evidence.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research and directions should prioritize methods capable of reducing dependence on anecdotal testimony and improving reproducibility. Particularly important next steps include environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling, GIS-based corridor modeling, passive acoustic and thermal monitoring, comparative behavioral analysis, longitudinal monitoring of recurrent hotspots, integration of historical and Indigenous knowledge, machine-learning review of large report databases, and non-invasive field approaches designed to test specific behavioral predictions. Together, these approaches would help determine whether the patterns identified here can be independently replicated and biologically substantiated.

1. Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling
2. GIS-based corridor modeling
3. Passive acoustic and thermal monitoring
4. Comparative behavioral studies
5. Longitudinal monitoring of hotspots
6. Integration of historical and Indigenous knowledge
7. Machine-learning analysis of report databases
8. Non-invasive behavioral-cognition field experiments

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APPENDIX

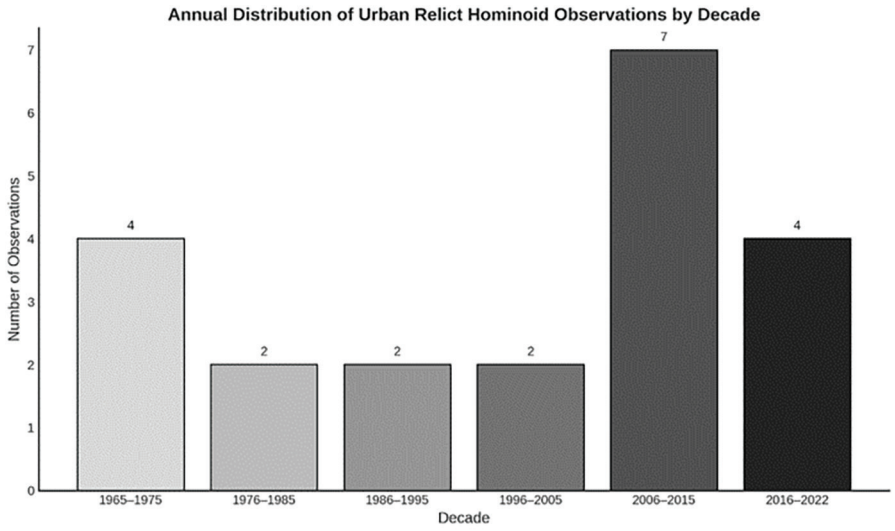

Figure A1. Annual distribution of observations by decade. Counts of reported urban relict hominoid incursions from 1965 to 2022 show the highest frequency during 2006–2015.

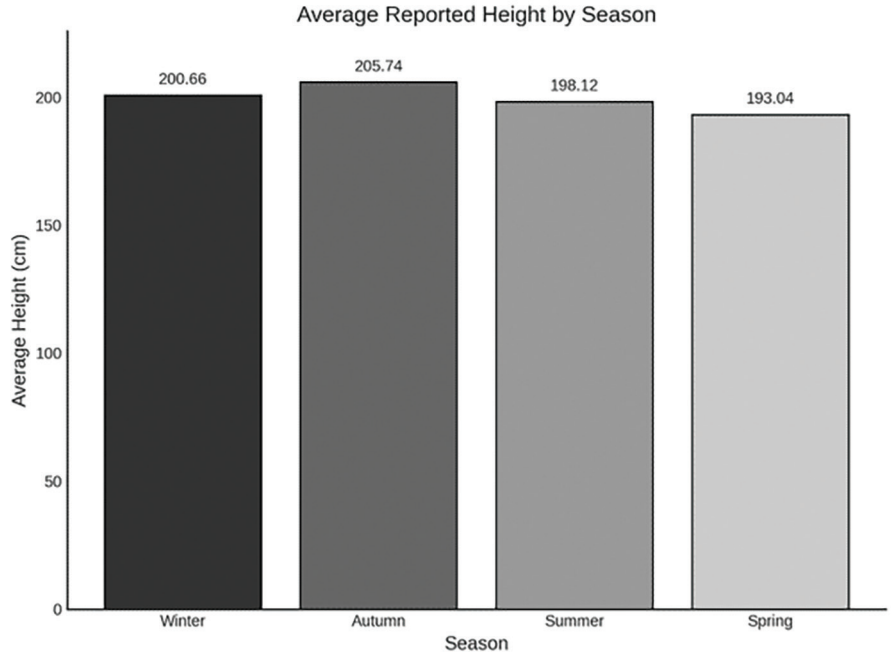

Figure A2. Average reported height by season (cm), based on converted metric averages. Autumn reports show the highest mean height.