

## Tree Break / Twisted Limbs

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Tree breaks and twists have been historically associated with sasquatch activity. Several Native American tribes describe this behavior in their traditional stories. The Nelchina Plateau Tribe tells a story of a "Gilyuk," which twisted trees. As reported by Green (1981:336), the following relates the story:

### Quote:

Finally, there is a story published in Sports Afield in 1956, in which the writer, Russell Annabel, tells of an Indian being carried off, presumably for dinner, by "Gilyuk, the shaggy cannibal giant sometimes called The-Big-Man-With-The-Little-Hat." The Indians knew that Gilyuk was around because they had seen his sign, a birch sapling about four inches through that had been twisted into shreds as a man might twist a match stick. The scene is set on the Nelchina Plateau, south of Tyone Lake, sometime about the 1940s.

This is significant, as there is no reason for Native Americans to associate known ape behavior with a bigfoot, when apes were not present in North America. Krantz (1992:169) and Bindernagel (1998: 69, 73, 76, 99, 179, and 215) describe tree breaks as a known bigfoot behavior from reports from the 1960s to present.

However, there are other explanations for such breaks including natural, snow broken or bent trees. This protocol is designed to assist identification and recording of tree breaks and twisted limbs.

**Natural Snow Trees** When it snows, the ice and flakes accumulate on the branches of trees, with more on the upper branches, than the lower branches. Often the upper branches will have a snow load from the tip of the branch to the trunk. Lower branches generally only accumulate snow on the tips. Trees have a natural "resistance" to this weight, but the branches will break if the snow load exceeds their ability to hold up the weight. Most often what happens, instead of breaking the branches, the tree will start to lean in the opposite direction of the weight in an effort to compensate for the extra weight. If something is going to give, it is the branches on the top, or the tree will lean too far over and snap closer to the base, very close to ground level.

Figure 1 shows snow bent trees.



**Twisted/broken trees** Twisted trees are defined as trees (oak, pine, cedars) that are broken (snapped) off near the top and left hanging to the side. Often times, the top of the tree is slightly twisted, before it is left hanging. The most common

broken topped trees are 4-5" DBH. According to a Ph.D. silviculturalist, it is not possible for a tree to break naturally in this manner. Snow cannot twist-off the top of a tree. The tree that he examined also had few branches, making it more unlikely for snow to be the cause. Straight trunks cannot accumulate snow. Often breaks occur at very high heights. Although there may be various reasons for this, it is possible to pull small trees over, break the top, and release the tree, making it appear that the "breaker" is taller than they really are. It is also possible that the tree was broken during the winter, when snow was on the ground. Using a 4ft. or more snow drift will, of course, allow a break higher up on a tree than standing at ground level.

Figure two shows a broken tree not caused by snow. The tree is 4" DBH and is twisted and snapped.



Figure three shows another broken tree not caused by snow.



**Aging Tree Breaks and Twists** Even if the tree is broken, if it is still attached, the broken part can and likely will remain green for a great deal of time because water can still get through the system and “feed” the broken part. The key is what the break itself looks like. Is sap still oozing? Is there any sap present? Is the color of the wood at the break light or dark? Is the top and bottom of the break the same color? What part of the break is exposed to the sun and does that appear different? All of these will help you determine when the break occurred.

Figure 4 shows a tree broken and wrapped around another tree.



### **Considerations**

It is completely accurate to say that unless someone witnesses a tree being broken by a sasquatch that it is impossible to determine the exact cause of a break. However, it is not pointless to record data associated with broken/twisted trees.

First, outright dismissing activity as not being associated with sasquatch behavior is just as bad as associating all activity with sasquatch behavior. Broken/twisted trees are only being considered as possible indicators because there is historical evidence linking this behavior to them. Secondly, some natural causes for the broken trees may not be discovered until after the data is collected. For example, once the trees are plotted on map, it may be apparent that the line follows your local power company line and workers have caused the tree damage. Lastly, you can always throw the data away later if we discover broken trees are not associated with sasquatch. However, we cannot go back and recover data not recorded.

### **Recording**

1. Record the location of the tree on a USGS topographic map.
2. Mark the tree using a nail or tape to document that this tree was previously seen and recorded. This will help you determine when new broken trees appear.
3. Photograph the tree and measure the height of the break.
4. Note the DBH of the tree (what is the diameter of the tree at breast height?).
5. Note where branches are and aren't.
6. Examine the break (especially sap) for hairs. If hairs are present, collect according to protocol.
7. Record the data on a form, including date of discovery and a photograph.

Once you have recorded the data, use it for the following purposes. Do you see any patterns? Do the trees follow a course of a trail or areas where there may be conflict with humans due to recreation (ATVs, cars, etc.)? Do the trees only appear in the summer, when it has not snowed? Do the trees appear with any other evidence such as footprints, reported unknown screams, or sightings in the general area? Do the weather patterns prior to the discovery of a new tree show high winds that can be directly linked to the broken trees (this may show that broken trees are all natural).

When in doubt, record it.

### **References**

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