

UFO

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There's more out there'

Terrestrials meet to talk about extra-terrestrials

By JAMES MCGINNIS
STAFF WRITER

UFO reports continue. The Mutual UFO network claims 120 sightings in 12 months over Bucks.

There were no tinfoil hats or little green men, but close to 700 human beings filled the auditorium of Bucks County Community College on Saturday to talk about a rash of UFO sightings over this area.

Many described themselves as "curious" or "enthusiastic skeptics," while others said they purely wanted to be entertained.

"We came here mostly for the people watching. But there's no one kooky here," said Michael Skane, who drove in from Delaware County. "The people here are just blue-collar people."

See UFO, Page A2

The Mutual UFO Network's Bucks County Conference followed a "flap" of sightings in this area. State MUFON Director John Ventre said there were now close to 120 incidents in 12 months over Bucks.

One of the new incidents first disclosed Saturday was reportedly filed by a local police officer who asked not to be identified. His report described a craft "shaped like a comma but turned sideways" and floating over I-95 near the Newtown Bypass.

It's almost certain that reports like these will keep coming.

As he looked out over the community college Saturday, Rich Ansbro of Middletown said he was finally able to speak openly about his own close encounter.

Ansbro claimed to have seen a "massive" UFO flying over Sea Isle City, N.J., five years ago.

"I'm not a crazy person. I wasn't drinking and this thing

— if you said it was two or three football fields in size, that wouldn't be enough to describe it," he said. "I can't believe I didn't pick up the phone and call someone. I just never did."

"I have always believed there's more out there," Ansbro continued. "There has to be. How ignorant would we be to think that we're all alone with this little blue planet in this enormous universe."

Walter Bain of Bristol Township said he's always had "a curious mind when it comes to UFOs. I believe there's something to it — something we're not being told," he said. But he was disappointed by the conference.

"I thought they would have more evidence here today," he said. "I am hearing a lot of the same things that I've read online and in the newspapers."

Michael Cherkowsky of Middletown echoed those sentiments. "I don't necessarily believe all the reports," he said. "You need to have that burden of proof. There is a lot of air traffic over Levittown."

Among the evidence presented Saturday, lab reports showed chemicals gleaned from the leaves of a tree in Levittown. The leaves came from a tree that was reportedly "sprinkled" by a UFO.

Ventre called it "one of the best cases we have for trace evidence." But he also had a hard time answering questions about it.

A man in the audience questioned the report, noting that one the chemical elements listed was one not actually on the

periodic table of elements. "I wasn't familiar with any element on the table of elements with the symbol OK," the man said.

Ventre responded that MUFON were "not scientists. We don't know what that means. All we know is that magnesium and boron spiked (on the spectrometer)."

The conference last five hours but the open microphone question-and-answer portion was cancelled after one of the lectures by Temple professor David Jacobs ran late.

Jacobs, who teaches a UFO course at Temple University, presented illustrations of alien experiments — some of them sexual — conducted on human beings.

Jacobs expressed confidence that aliens were visiting earth, describing the speed of light and the vast distances between the stars as "fake arguments."

Even President Barack Obama made it into the discussion as William Birnes, host of the History Channel show UFO Hunters, suggested that the Democrat would be more liberal in releasing previously classified documents.

"Now that President Obama has taken office we may actually see disclosure of some of these UFOs by default," Birnes said.

James McGinnis can be reached at 215-949-3248 or jmcginnis@phillyburbs.com

YOUR CLIPPINGS of newspaper items are very welcome. We apologise here for being generally unable to acknowledge these items as the pressure of work on our tiny staff and on our postage resources is too great. However, please do not be deterred by this seeming lack of courtesy. We really do appreciate anything you care to send.

Forget Roswell, UFOs to invade Bucks County

By **Brian Callaway**
Of The Morning Call

The truth might be right here instead of out there.

An attention-grabbing surge in the number of unidentified flying objects reported in this region helped spur a record 312 such sightings in Pennsylvania last year.

Because of that, hundreds of alien-enthusiasts will gather this weekend in Bucks County — the apparent epicenter of all that astral activity — to discuss otherworldly abductions, human-alien hybrids and other hard-to-fathom phenomena.

John Ventre, director of the Pennsylvania Mutual UFO Network and an organizer of Saturday's conference, said the skepticism that once confronted such stories seems to be receding, particularly in this region.

"It's like they're a lot more open in the Philly area to these UFO stories ... because there are so many witnesses and so many people."

Ventre's group keeps a database of UFO sightings, including detailed accounts of possible alien vehicles hovering over some of the Lehigh Valley area's most well-known landmarks.

For instance, someone claims to have been distracted from watching "Jeopardy" Nov. 19 by a slow-moving aircraft with three white lights on its front flying past the PPL building in downtown Allentown.

The witness posted a photo of the purported UFO and wrote it was moving too slowly to have been a plane and too silently to have been a helicopter.

Bucks County, meanwhile, has outpaced every

other part of the state with 71 UFO sightings in 2008 — only moderately shy of the 97 sightings reported across the entire state the year before.

Witnesses reported seeing UFOs over some of Bucks' most well-known attractions, including Sesame Place and the Oxford Valley Mall.

Amateur alien hunters aren't the only ones seizing on the reports. Local and national media also have taken note, including the Discovery Channel, which aired a special on the local UFO sightings last year.

Just saying you've seen a flying saucer isn't enough for Ventre's network to take you seriously.

The Pennsylvania chapter includes 21 "investigators," who question witnesses and seek out explanations for each sighting.

Generally, he said, about 80 percent of all reports can be debunked.

With the Bucks County cases, though, he said investigators could only discount about 20 percent of the reports — they concluded about 10 percent were hoaxes, and 10 percent were found to be man-made satellites or have other plausible explanations. As of now, he said, they have no other earthly explanation for the other sightings.

Some people in the area think the mysterious happenings are related to the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, just over the Bucks County line in Montgomery County. Ventre said his group tried contacting base officials to see whether they knew anything about the UFO reports but got no response.

A Willow Grove spokeswoman was unavailable for comment Tuesday.

David Jacobs, a history professor at Temple University in Philadelphia, has been researching reports of extraterrestrial life since the 1970s and will speak at Saturday's conference, which will be held from noon to 5 p.m. at Bucks County Community College in Newtown Township.

Most people are more willing to consider the possibility of alien life than they were a few decades ago, Jacobs said, with a couple of major exceptions: the academic and scientific communities.

"They are more resistant to it," he said. "There is ... active hostility toward the subject."

He attributes much of that resistance to the outlandish nature of some alien stories. "Wild conspiracy theories have been sort of a barrier about the phenomenon," he said.

Jacobs' research focuses on alien abduction stories. He said he's looked at more than 1,000 reported cases, including some people who've undergone hypnosis to detail their stories.

Based on that research, Jacobs said, he doesn't think people should blindly dismiss the possibility of extraterrestrial happenings.

"I go where the evidence leads me," he said. "The evidence seems to suggest that this is a phenomenon that is real, that is happening to people."

Ventre said it's not something people should fear.

While Hollywood blockbusters have played up the face-sucking, acid-spewing, cavity-probing possibilities of alien life, Ventre said extraterrestrials are probably just curious about life on Earth.

"If they were hostile, like 'Independence Day,' they could have taken us at any time," Ventre said. "If they are extraterrestrial, they're just here to observe us, because we're pretty interesting to watch."

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IF YOU GO

■ **What:** Pennsylvania Mutual UFO Network's UFO Conference

■ **When:** Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday

■ **Where:** Bucks County Community College, 275 Swamp Road, Newtown Township

■ **The cost:** Admission is \$15

■ **What to expect:** Eyewitness testimony from local people who think they've seen UFOs, as well as discussions of alien abductions, hybrids and the 2008 Pennsylvania "UFO Wave," a spike in the number of UFO sightings in the state

Mufon conference focuses on Bucks UFO sightings

By Megan Doherty

Editor

Have UFOs (unidentified flying objects) from outer space visited Earth, specifically Bucks County? Join the debate at Saturday's Mufon (The Mutual UFO Network) Pennsylvania East Coast Conference at Bucks County Community College.

The Mutual UFO Network's state chapter is holding the conference to bring together believers and skeptics looking to learn more. Speakers will include Mufon members, a Temple University professor, witnesses of UFOs and Bill Birnes of the History Channel's "UFO Hunters."

With several UFO sightings in Bucks County this summer, there will be much to discuss.

"Right now, I have nine open cases from last month," said Bob Gardner of Mufon.

Gardner has been a Mufon field investigator since March 2008. He was recently named state section director by Mufon; he now covers cases in Bucks, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Chester and Delaware counties.

With fellow field investigator Elise Simon, Gardner looked into the many UFO sightings in Bucks that began in early July 2008.

"We don't know what the big draw with Bucks County was," said Gardner.

Mufon's reported UFO sightings were dramatically higher in the entire five-county region. Gardner said there were nine cases in 2007 and 142 in 2008.

Mufon's mission statement is to further "the study of UFOs for the benefit of humanity."

While Gardner knows many are skeptical of UFOs, he urges others to keep an open mind.

"[You've] got to be open-minded to things," he said.

He said he believes that we are not alone in the universe, but still remains somewhat skeptical when approaching a UFO investigation.

"A lot of people might say I'm 'out there,' but I'm not saying everything is a UFO," he said.

As a field investigator, Gardner responds to reports made on Mufon.com. He contacts witnesses and gathers information such as the size of the object and its shape. Did it glow or blink? Did the object affect radios or electronics? These questions and more are used to determine a case resolution.

Gardner also checks satellite-tracking Web sites to see what man-made objects may be traveling through the skies. He recalled one instance when a Bucks man reported a possible UFO moving slowly across the sky. After observing the object and checking Web sites, Gardner determined that it was the International Space Station.

Gardner closes cases when he classifies the sighting. It could be unknown, a natural phenomenon, an identified flying object (like the space station), a hoax or have insufficient data.

Regarding the recent waving of sightings in Bucks, Gardner estimated that 20 to 25 percent of the cases were labeled as unknown, while the rest were a mix of either hoaxes or insufficient data.

He cited the media's attention to UFOs as a factor, making people more likely to report UFO sightings or talk about UFOs.

"UFO awareness is at an all-time high right now," said Gardner.

On Nov. 28, 2008, Gardner and Simon appeared on the Discovery Channel's show "UFOs Over Earth."

"We were featured in Bucks County," he said. "Ten minutes after it aired, we had another report."

Most of the Bucks County sightings were of a boomerang- or triangle-shaped object with white lights and one red light. Some were of cone- or cylinder-shaped objects.

The sightings echo Gardner's first encounter with a UFO. It happened in

Bensalem at Street and Knights roads in January of 1989.

"We saw it following us along Knights Road," said Gardner, who was in the car with his ex-wife. "It was a cylinder-shaped black object."

The object hovered and then flew away.

Gardner thinks the Mufon conference will open the minds of others. Both he and

Continued next page →

Albany Democrat-Herald
Albany, OR 1-30-09

Website gives likely explanation for sky circle

2165 Test flight tracked
as far south
as mid-valley

BY STEVE LATHROP
ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

The jet trail that left an unusual circular pattern in the mid-valley sky Thursday prompted several theories from readers, ranging from Soviet aircraft to the wicked witch of the east.

Although no official explanation has been presented, one plausible answer has come forward that may explain the mystery before it becomes a full-blown X-File.

A reader suggests the contrail is actually from newly manufactured commercial air-



The jet trails as seen from Albany.

liners being tested by Boeing.
He directed the Democrat-Herald to a

website that tracks flight patterns originating in Washington state.

FlightAware.com shows the meandering path of a flight from Boeing Field in Seattle that apparently came as far south as the mid-valley Thursday and then returned. The site says the plane departed at 11:40 a.m. and landed at 2:59 p.m. The loop-the-loop contrail was photographed over Albany around 2:30.

The Democrat-Herald was unable to reach Boeing officials Friday afternoon to confirm what the website showed.

At its southern tip over the mid-valley, the flight path shown on the site appears to circle in just the shape the contrails were seen.

To see the flight path of the Boeing aircraft, visit
<http://flightaware.com/live/flight/BOE504/history/20090129/1940Z/KBFI/KBFI>.

BCCC probes close encounters of the Bucks kind

PA's Mutual UFO

Network holds meeting regarding local sightings.

By Laura Irwin
Special to the Pilot

Have you seen a ball of light, pulsing star-shaped object or silvery disc speeding across Bucks County skies? You are not alone.

After a two-year spike in alleged UFO activity over Bucks, more than 400 residents from the tri-state area beamed into Pennsylvania's Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) State Conference at Bucks County Community College on Jan. 24.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The organization, according to their Web site, scientifically investigates UFO sightings for the benefit of humanity. They affirmed that Pennsylvania holds the highest number of reported UFO sightings in the country.

But UFO Magazine editor and host of the History Channel's "UFO Hunters," Bill Birnes, says UFO sightings are a global phenomenon and the increase in reported sightings may have less to do with a spike in activity, and more to do with sky-watchers trusting media accounts.

"The media used to say, 'If it bleeds, it leads.' But after [news outlets] began covering UFO sightings it's, 'If it hovers, we cover.'"

During the summer of 2008, local news covered a spike in UFO activity, specifically around the Oxford Valley Mall in Fairless Hills. John Ventre, Pennsylvania state director for MUFON, said 77 of 138 UFO sightings over that summer were from the Philadelphia and Bucks County area.

And MUFON's numbers continue to grow.

The number of reported sightings more than tripled from 2007, when 97 sightings were reported. There were 312 sightings in 2008.

These extra sightings also mean MUFON's membership numbers continue to grow, as new believers emerge.

When one thinks about UFO's, some might picture little, green men in a giant spaceship. Dr. David Jacobs has spent his "entire adult life, give or take two years" unraveling the mystery that is alien abductions.

In a rousing presentation, the guest speaker and Temple University professor dissected the anatomy of an alien abduction.

This information, according to Jacobs, was retrieved during sessions of hypnosis from about 150 alien abductees. He then compiled his work into an abduction theory.

First, Jacobs says that being abducted only once is unlikely; whether fre-

quently or infrequently, an abducted human will be taken continually. He also says that abductions are "inter-generational."

"If your mother was abducted it isn't probable that you'd be abducted too," he said. "It's certain."

Jacobs said being abducted isn't about experimenting on human bodies, but rather research in an effort to breed a "hybrid" -- or half-human, half-alien.

But why would extra terrestrials travel millions of miles to do something like that?

"We don't know what the ultimate objective is," said Jacobs. But he added that the hybrids, after years of breeding, could end up looking human and assimilate into our world, using abducted humans to guide them through our culture so that they can fit in and "move into an apartment" or "get change from a cashier."

How do these UFO hunters know if someone is lying?

MUFON Field Investigator Bob Gardner looks first for collaboration. "Multiple reports from different people from different areas seeing the same occurrence is always a good start."

Not many attendees said they'd ever seen an unidentified flying object for

certain, but all had an interest in believing other life forms visit Earth.

Ray Orelman from Broomall said, "I've never seen a UFO, but I'd like to and I am a believer. How rare can it be if a couple million people talk about it? They can't all be psychotic."

When asked if speakers at the conference, who claim to have seen UFO's, are over-the-top in their claims, Orelman added, "I believe the speakers. Skeptics encourage believers to prove it-makes these guys work hard."

Some attendees just love science fiction.

"It's ignorant to say we're alone, but I need physical proof," Brian Segal of Bensalem said. "You do have to assume that an alien's level of technology is absolutely ridiculous. You don't navigate across the cosmos and then crash into a windmill."

UFO's are said to come in many shapes and sizes. But if you see one a ball of light, pulsing star-shaped craft or a silvery disc up in the sky, MUFON wants to know about it.

For more information or to report a UFO sighting, visit www.mufon.com.



Bill Birnes, publisher of UFO Magazine and host to the History Channel's weekly series UFO Hunters speaks to the crowd about Bucks County UFO activity.



This map, shown at Saturday's MUFON State Conference shows a rash of alleged UFO activity in the Delaware Valley.

From last page

John Ventre, the state director of Mufon, will speak on the summer Bucks sightings.

"We are going to have a handful of witnesses who are going to talk about the

whole wave," Gardner said.

Dr. David Jacobs, a Temple University professor, will speak on alien abduction and hybrids, or half-alien people.

The conference will be held from noon to 5 p.m. at BCCC's Newtown campus' library auditorium, 275 Swamp Road, Newtown.

"For this conference, we are expecting about 300 people," said Gardner. "A lot of people are open to it -- believing in UFOs."

For more information on the conference, visit www.pamufon.com.

"A lot of people are open to it -- believing in UFOs."

— Bob Gardner

Mufon state section director

Bristol Pilot
Bristol, PA 2-4-09

A case of UFO Ping-Pong

Joplin Globe
Joplin, MO 1-11-09

What happened in area skies on Jan. 13, 1967, remains mystery

Over a period of four days in January 1967, area residents kept gazing skyward. A few of them witnessed something, but what? Versions differed, but there was agreement on one issue — they were unidentified flying objects.

According to the front pages of area newspapers, they were truly UFOs. Six local papers gravitated to the curious stories featuring the various UFO sightings in Southwest Missouri and Southeast Kansas.

The Monett Times, The Joplin Globe, the Carthage Press, Neosho Daily News, Springfield Leader and Press and Pittsburg Headlight-Sun reported stories of eye-witnesses seeing bluish-green objects hovering overhead.

Most compelling of all, reliable witnesses were willing to speak of their encounters. Sightings and serious testimony came from civil servants such as Joplin Police Lt. Charles Hickman; Joplin dispatcher Sgt. Norman Finley; Pittsburg patrolman James Cronister; Neosho police Sgt. Ronel Brown; patrolman Mike Hafle; Parsons (Kan.) police night dispatcher Laura Miller; Parsons patrolman H.D. Caywood; and Monett officers Melvin Peck and Robert Autry.

Then, there were area citizens' statements from William Winchester and Carolyn Woods



**BRAD
BELK**
COLUMNIST

Belk

Continued from Page 1B

For those among us who are superstitious, Friday the 13th can be an ominous day. This was no different.

On Friday, Jan. 13, 1967, during the early morning hours, Sgt. Finley of the Pittsburg Police Department alerted fellow officers about an unexplained overhead object. Pittsburg police dispatcher James Cunningham notified the Joplin Police Department that an unidentified flying object had been viewed over Pittsburg. He described it as an object with bright colors of "vivid blue-green with flashing lights." Cunningham alerted the Joplin station because the object seemed to be leaving Kansas and heading for Missouri.

After receiving that call, Joplin's Lt. Hickman drove to Stone's Corner. He was the officer in charge of the midnight shift and he waited for nearly an hour before spotting an unidentified object in the sky. He stated in The Joplin Globe that he witnessed this odd occurrence for over an hour. He reported that he really "didn't expect to see anything but there it was. It was about 1,000 feet high and looked about as big as two houses. It made turns and maneuvered as if it were being controlled."

Three days later there were additional sightings, again in the early hours, this time in Northeast Oklahoma, Springfield and Newton County.

On Jan. 16 — and apparently feeling left out — The Neosho Daily News proudly proclaimed "UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) have finally reached Newton County, according to reports received today by the Neosho Daily News."

Neosho police Sgt. Brown was quoted saying, "It was blue-green with a blue tail. It was oblong and was stationary. It definitely was not moving. (Patrolman Hafle) and I watched it for 45 minutes until the sun started coming up. We saw what appeared to be a satellite passing by the object."

During this crazy "look-up-in-the-sky" week, a highly regarded scientific team came to the area to investigate and explain this rash of sightings. The group was led by professor Robert Low, the deputy director of UFO Project at the University of Colorado.

The University of Colorado became a data center for UFOs in 1966. Following a March 1966 report to the United States Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, an ad hoc committee recommended that the Air Force contract with a university to conduct a comprehensive program to investigate UFO sightings. Accompanying Professor

Low were William Powers, a consultant for the U.S. Air Force from Northwestern University, Loren Crow, and a man named Wadsworth. Their assignment was to explore the recent sightings, gather data and interview the parties who had witnessed the sightings.

Their final analysis was titled "An Abstract Titled Case 14, South-Central, Winter 1967." The report concluded: "Of the six, three were promptly identified, two as astronomical objects and one as a chemical release-rocket. The other three remain unidentified ..."

For the record, the FAA employees at the airport and officials at the air traffic control center at the United States Naval Air Base at Olathe, Kan., said they had reports of sightings, but nothing "official" was spotted on radar. One explanation was that the objects were clouds of chemicals formed from tests conducted at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida.

Dr. Ross Anderson of the physics department at Kansas State College of Pittsburg and an astronomy instructor told the Pittsburg Headlight-Sun, "Thursday was relatively warm ... it is possible refraction could have caused the lights to appear as the warm air moved up over the cold air," a situation he referred to as "looming."

What?

So who was right? It's like a well-played Ping-Pong volley. There is the side of "ping" that swears to various logical explanations, and on the other side of the court lies "pong," representing those mice and men ready to feast on big chunks of green cheese.

Ping — Was there one substantial, tangible item left from this encounter? No.

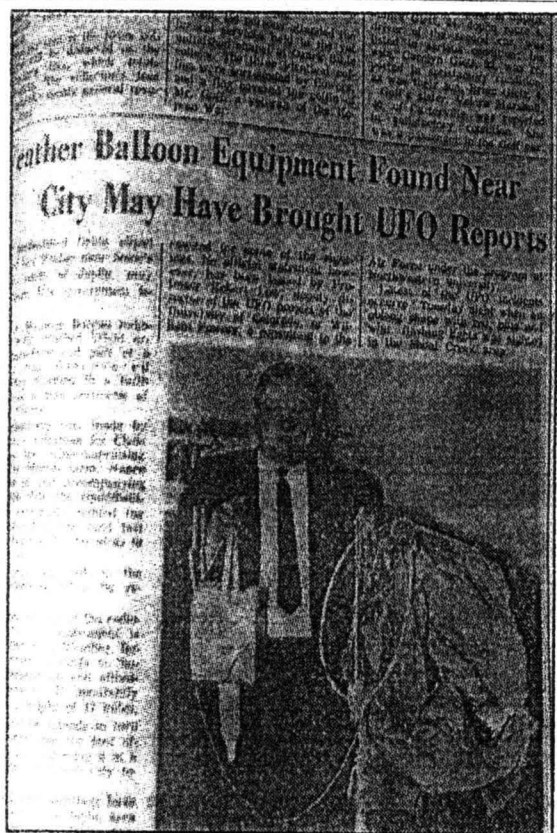
Pong — So what did these 11 area police officers and six area residents see during that five-day period?

Ping — A downed U.S. Weather Bureau radiosonde was discovered on Jan. 18 in a field about a mile northwest of Stone's Corner. The radiosonde was an instrument used to obtain readings on humidity, temperature and atmospheric pressure. The bright orange balloon that powered the weather gadget had been punctured, causing it to fall to the ground.

Pong — Recently I shared parts of this story with my fellow Noonday Rotary Club. After I concluded, a gentleman whom I have known for many years stated, in front of the entire club, that he remembered seeing something unfamiliar in the sky on that morning of Friday, Jan. 13, 1967.

Still clueless, I guess my only advice is ... don't look down, look up.

Brad Belk is the director of the Joplin Museum Complex.



Globe/Roger Nomer

In January 1967, a series of strange sightings in the night sky generated lots of news coverage. Some of those objects may have been explained by a weather balloon.

of Neosho and Edgar Lampe of Monett. Three Monett High School seniors, John Caine, Jerry Prier and Sharal Henson, told of observing "cigar-like saucers."

See Belk Page 6B

FROM THE ARCHIVES

LA GRANDE

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'Flying Discs' Reported Sighted As Bombers Cruise Over Korea

Probe Asked Of Mystery Sky Objects

By DEAN W. DITTMER

WASHINGTON (U.P.) — The Air Force disclosed Tuesday that objects resembling "flying discs" have been sighted over Korea by crew members of two U.S. bombers.

Top officials have ordered a full investigation of the reports, which came through regular military intelligence channels.

A spokesman said the objects were described by four eyewitnesses as globe-shaped, bright orange in color, and emitting an occasional flash of bluish light.

He indicated that several were sighted, but did not give the number. *What, Hoy?*

The Air Force, which has thrown cold water on hundreds of previous "flying saucer" stories, apparently was impressed by the circumstances under which the new sightings were reported by its own personnel.

Continued →

Jan. 17, 1957 ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

'High Speed' Objects Entering Our Atmosphere, Admiral Says

Former Head of Navy Guided Missiles
Says They Move as if Directed
by 'an Intelligence.'

WASHINGTON, Jan. 17 (AP) — Retired Rear Adm. Delmer S. Fahrney, once head of the Navy's guided missiles program, said yesterday reliable reports indicate that "there are objects coming into our atmosphere at very high speeds."

Fahrney told a press conference that "no agency in this country or Russia is able to duplicate at this time the speeds and accelerations which radars and observers indicate these flying objects are able to achieve."

Fahrney said he never has seen a flying saucer but has talked with scientists and engineers who reported seeing strange flying objects.

He added there are signs that "an intelligence" directs such objects "because of the way they fly."

"They are not entirely actuated by automatic equipment," he said. "The way they change position in formations and override each other would indicate that their motion is directed."

An Air Force spokesman said that service is still investigating all reports but has found absolutely no evidence that there are flying saucers. He said that most of the reports are found on checking to have some logical explanation, but that a percentage remains unexplained.

Fahrney announced a new private group, the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, was set up to tie together a number of UFO — meaning "unidentified flying objects" — clubs throughout the world. He said his committee would collect and investigate flying saucer sighting reports,

evaluate them and make public its findings.

Fahrney said retired Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer of Poolsville, Md., will serve the committee as "evaluations adviser."

Wedemeyer, World War II commander of United States forces in China, is now a vice president of Avco Manufacturing Co. before retiring in 1951, he was deputy chief of staff for plans and operations and commander of the Sixth Army.

Fahrney pioneered in the development of radio-controlled drone aircraft targets in World War II. He coined the phrase, "guided missile," to distinguish that product from the flying bombs and aerial torpedoes.

He was commander of the Navy's missile test center at Point Mugu, Calif., from June 1949 until his retirement a year later.

Fahrney has no information or preconceived ideas as to whether the unidentified flying objects are from outer space, but believes they involve "a tremendous amount of technology of which we have no knowledge," and that their development must have taken a long period of time.

Rules Out Arson.

SYRACUSE, N.Y., Jan. 17 (AP) — A fire marshal said last night he had established that plumbers were working in the basement of the First Methodist Church Tuesday when a fire started there that wrecked the church and another building. John M. Dacey said arson was ruled out as a possible cause of the blaze. He said a blowtorch might have tossed sparks that caused the fire.



FOREIGN NEWS

British News Clippings are courtesy of TIMOTHY GOOD
Spanish Translations courtesy JANE THOMAS GUMA

The Daily Mail
England, 1-9-09

Strange lights in the sky followed by an ear-splitting boom, so...

Did a UFO do this?

By David Wilkes

ONE saw orangey-yellow spheres skimming across the sky.

Another reported a 'massive ball of light' with 'tentacles going right down to the ground'.

Then witnesses told of an ear-splitting bang at 4am. Come dawn and the plot thickens.

At the nearby wind farm one of the 60ft blades from a 200ft turbine was found ripped off. Another had been left twisted and useless.

So far, so mysterious, except - of course - to the UFO experts.

For them, the strange goings on at a wind farm in Conisholme, Lincolnshire, can be explained by a flying saucer crashing into the turbine in a close encounter that could, at last, provide the evidence of other life forms they have been waiting for all their lives.

John Harrison, of nearby Saltfleetby, saw the ball of light and its 'tentacles' over the farm. 'It was an incredible sight, I have never seen anything like it before,' he said. 'I have no idea what it was.'

Lesley Whittingham tried to photograph the scene. 'It looked like a giant explosion in the air,' she said.

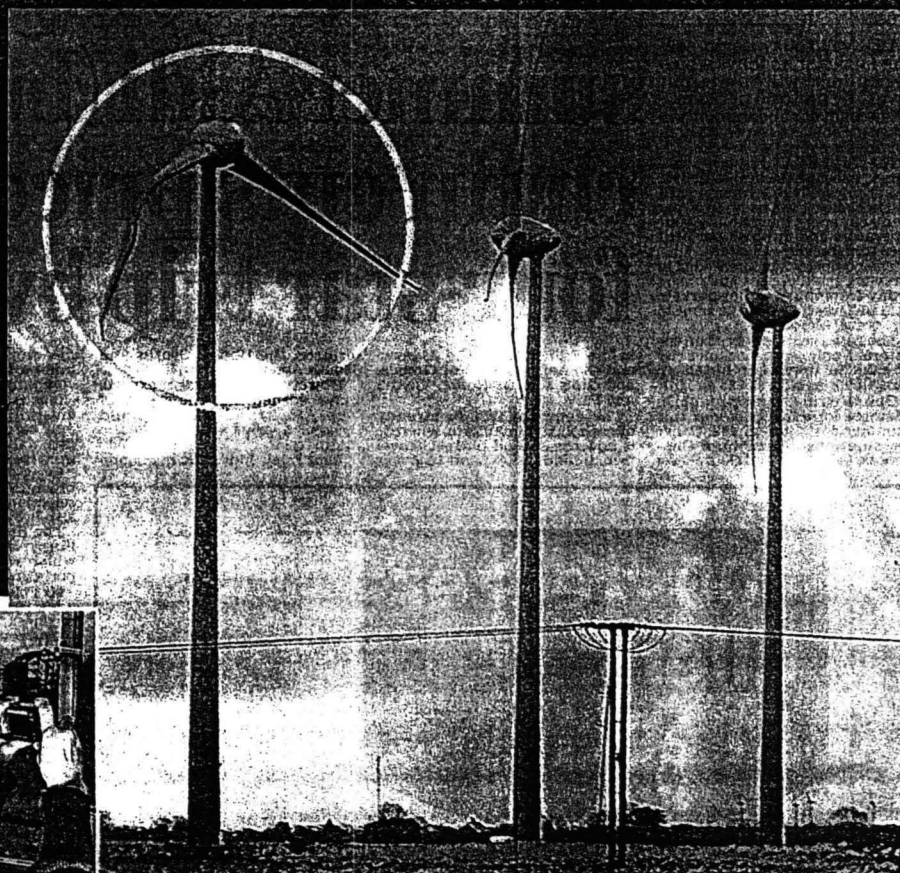
Dorothy Willows saw orangey-yellow spheres. 'I don't believe in UFOs but it was a low-flying object,' said Mrs Willows. Her husband Stephen was woken by a sudden noise hours later on Sunday morning when the damage to the turbines happened.

Could that have been the sound of a UFO hitting it?

Yesterday council chief Robert Palmer said he had seen a 'round object with a slight red trim hovering near the top of the turbines' that night too. 'When I heard what had happened I was slightly worried so I've called for a full health



Broken blade: The damaged wind turbine at the centre of the Lincolnshire UFO mystery and, inset, Lesley Whittingham with her camera



IF NOT ALIENS, THEN WHAT...

■ One theory is ice massed on the turbine blade or formed in a crack in it. Locals say it was -2c on Sunday night and estimate it may have been as low as -10c in the air around the top of the turbines. Wind farm builder Ecotricity has ruled this out.

■ Another is that lightning struck the blade which fell to the ground. Ecotricity says there is no sign of this.

■ There is no evidence of a collision - with a spaceship, with an animal or with anything else.

■ Human sabotage is also a possibility. Wind turbines provoke strong feelings.

■ Some locals think a helicopter hit the turbine.

■ Others reckon the strange lights came from fireworks at a birthday party.

and safety review,' said Mr Palmer, 66. 'If the aliens are coming, I want to be there to meet and greet them.'

Yesterday your reporter visited the scene and, while I failed to see any little green men, I did find four little men in green uniforms. But they had arrived by van, not spaceship, and worked for Ecotricity, the company that built the wind farm.

UFO expert Nick Pope, a former head of the Ministry of Defence's UFO Project, said: 'This is a really bizarre case. What's particularly exciting is that because there's

been a collision, there will be residue of the object involved.'

'Forensic science will enable this material to be recovered and analysed. This elevates this UFO case, because with most sightings all you have is eyewitness testimony or indistinct and shaky film footage taken on a mobile phone.'

Despite his confidence in obtaining hard evidence, a glance around the bleak Fenland landscape provided another mystery.

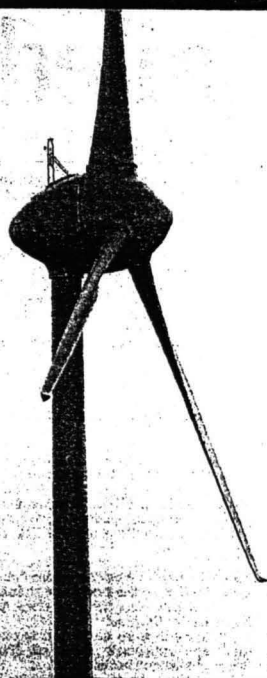
Having travelled billions of miles to visit Earth, why would our alien

friends land in the hamlet of Conisholme, where there are no shops and no pub, but oddly there is an ice cream parlour?

The thought had crossed the mind of the nearest resident to the wind farm.

The woman, who gave her name as Sheila, said she saw or heard nothing on Sunday night and added: 'I hope that one day we will see aliens, but I doubt it will happen in that field. I've lived here for 20 years and nothing interesting has ever happened here.'

YOUR CLIPPINGS of newspaper items are very welcome. We apologise here for being generally unable to acknowledge these items as the pressure of work on our tiny staff and on our postage resources is too great. However, please do not be deterred by this seeming lack of courtesy. We really do appreciate anything you care to send.



ALIEN INVASION!

Lights in the sky, inexplicable damage to a windfarm and hundreds of UFO-watchers hunting for clues... how a small, barren corner of Britain this week became ET's unlikely new home

By Simon Edge and Martin Stote

THERE were two big stories in the Lincolnshire town of Louth yesterday. One was the woman who had found a wisp of Santa's beard in her chimney when she was clearing away her Christmas decorations and is now auctioning it for charity on eBay. The other was the UFO invasion.

Last Saturday night, in the lonely fenland near the village of Coniscliffe, something happened to one of the 290ft turbines built to harness the icy wind that blows straight in across the North Sea from the Urals.

The huge, spindly blades rotating on the pylons over the endless flat fen are an eerie sight at the best of times. But yesterday the damaged pylon stood in testimony to the fact that something pretty large and very powerful had broken it like a child's toy.

One of its three 65ft blades vanished from the top of the mast - although it had not, as was first believed, disappeared completely. It was found in the grass, sheered from the cone that supported it. Another of the hollow fibreglass blades, which are normally slightly arched and pointed, had buckled into the shape of a boomerang.

The truly spooky dimension to all of this is the accompanying stories about strange lights in the sky and flashing orange spheres seen late on Saturday night.

Stories that have drawn dozens of UFO spotters to the area, desperate for a glimpse of "aliens".

"We don't have an explanation at the moment as to what the cause was," says Dale Vince, founder of Ecotricity, the company that operates the 20-turbine wind farm. "We have been crawling all over it, we have sent bits off for analysis and we are trying to work out what caused it. Until we have some idea,

some plausible explanation that it was not a UFO, I don't think we should rule it out. To make one of these blades fall off, or to bend it, takes a lot."

The reports of UFO sightings have been plentiful. Retired farmer John Harrison, from the nearby village of Saltfleetby, described looking out of his landing window to see a massive ball of light with tentacles going right down to the ground over the wind farm.

"It was huge," he said. "At first I thought it must have been a hole where the moon was shining through but then I saw the tentacles - it looked just like an octopus. It was an incredible sight. I have never seen anything like it before. I have no idea what it was, all I can say is what I saw."

Another resident, Dorothy Willows, said she and her husband Stephen saw a low light in the sky followed by a bright flash, travelling at a fast pace and going towards the turbines. "If you see an object flying and you don't know what it is, then I guess you call it a UFO," she said with flawless logic.

And the report of strange activity in the night sky was confirmed by no less a personage than Lincolnshire County Councillor Robert Palmer, who is also chairman of the local District Council.

Yesterday the 66-year-old Conservative politician described how he and his wife were driving towards Louth from his farm in North Somercotes when they saw something in the sky.

"I noticed a bright, round light in the direction above the turbines. It seemed to be white with a slight redness around the edge. It was well below the star level. It moved away from the wind farm and then it disappeared and we thought no more about it until we heard about the shattered turbine."

Cllr Palmer said he personally ruled out "anything in the flying saucer line" on the grounds that if the average private plane has a system to avoid crashing into such objects in the dark, beings with the technology to

'At first I thought it was the shining moon but then I saw tentacles'

travel from a distant planet probably ought to have something similar.

But at least one ufologist has no such reservations. Russ Kellett from the Flying Saucer Bureau says he has received an unusually high number of calls reporting unexplained activity in Lincolnshire.

"One person saw what they at first thought was a low-flying aircraft on the Saturday evening and another heard a loud banging in the early hours of Sunday," he says.

"This is the second highest number of reports of activity we have ever had - I have had more than 30 phone calls and e-mails."

The current flurry comes on top of 29 sightings of unidentified flying objects in Lincolnshire in the past decade, according to government figures issued 18 months ago.

The Daily Express
England, 1-9-09

Local novelist Karen Maitland says unexplained phenomena are part and parcel of the county's folklore. "There have been stories like this in the fenlands and marshlands for generations," she explains.

In her novel *Company Of Liars*, Maitland described the dancing lights on the marshes, observed for thousands of years, which are caused

by a phosphorescent gas that is only visible at night.

"The current stories are the modern version of what Lincolnshire people used to do around the fireplace, drinking poppy juice and talking about bogbarts. The frequent reports of things in the sky are also because we have so many military bases around here, with lots of night flights, and we are also on a bird migration route, particularly at this time of year."

"This is a part of the world with very little artificial light in the night sky and many of the fenland roads are built above the level of the surrounding landscape, with huge ditches on either side."

"As a result it can be incredibly disorienting driving at night. It really can feel like the land that time forgot."

Yet still the damage to the turbine remains bizarre. On that score a possible explanation is offered by Emily Bell, who was hosting an 80th birthday party for her father Peter on Saturday night.

"The party had a medium-sized fireworks display and was held in a village just a mile from the wind farm. They were mostly dropping over my parents' house but we were laughing that we could have broken the wind turbine," she says.

Last night the fallen blade, which experts said could have damaged the other blade as it fell to earth, was on its way to Germany for analysis.

Meanwhile, parallel investigations are continuing into the mystery of Father Christmas's beard.

UFO puzzle: it was the Guardian wot done it

Sun's wind turbine scoop sparked by birthday party

Fireworks explain lights but not rotor damage

Esther Addley

"It was huge," John Harrison, a farmer from Saltfleetby, said yesterday of the light display he saw in the Lincolnshire sky on Saturday night. "At first I thought it must have been a hole where the moon was shining through, but then I saw the tentacles. It looked just like an octopus."

To Dorothy Willows, watching from her home in Louth, the "strange lights" hinted at a "low flying object ... skimming across the sky towards the turbines".

Hours later, after an "almighty smash", one of the enormous wind turbines at the Ecotricity plant in Conisholme, 15 miles south of Grimsby, was found to have shattered, leaving its 130ft rotor a mangled ruin. To the Sun, which splashed the story over its front page yesterday, there was only one possible explanation: "UFO hits wind turbine."

The BBC's Today programme eagerly followed up, questioning Ecotricity's founder, Dale Vince, about what could have caused the damage. "Something about the size and weight of a cow would probably do it," he said. As for the lights, he remained mystified. "The UFO theory, funny as it may sound, is the best one that we have currently got."

The Guardian is able to reveal one possi-

ble explanation — one with uncomfortably close links to the newspaper itself. Late on Saturday night, the Guardian's director of digital content, Emily Bell, was a mere two miles from the Ecotricity plant when she witnessed an unusual light show in the night sky: the firework display she and her brother had arranged in their parents' garden to mark their father Peter's 80th birthday.

"There were several roman candles, and some of those ones which are orange and have the little blue dots when they go off," Bell said yesterday. "My brother said he got them from the local garden centre. Because it's so flat in that part of the world, you can see for miles and miles. So if you were perhaps a certain distance away and perhaps had had a drink, you might mistake them for orange balls of fire."

The next morning, they noticed the shattered turbine, visible from the bottom of her parents' garden, and joked that one of their rockets might have damaged it. "There we are in the middle of a scoop and we're beaten to it by a red-top tabloid," Bell's mother, Bridget, 74, said. Bell's husband, Ed Crooks — who happens to be the energy editor of the Financial Times — also found himself beaten to the story.

"I think the fireworks certainly might explain the lights in some instances," Vince said last night, adding that there was "absolutely no question" fireworks could have caused the "catastrophic failure" of the turbine. For that, the company is continuing to consider metal fatigue, and looking into the possibility of a cow-sized piece of ice falling from a passing plane, which might explain the absence of other debris at the site.



The wrecked wind turbine - minus one rotor - in Conisholme. Metal fatigue and ice are now the main suspects, rather than a UFO Photograph: Chris Radburn/PA

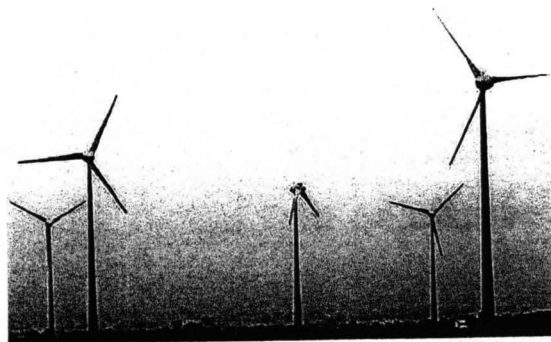
Telegraph
England, 1-15-09

Windfarm damage blamed on UFO

Damage to a wind turbine at Conisholme, in Lincolnshire, could have been caused by a UFO, according to its owners.

By Alastair Jamieson

Last Updated: 10:54AM GMT 15 Jan 2009



The turbine is one of 20 at the Conisholme site, which has been only been fully operational since April 2008. Photo: PA

A giant blade was broken off the 290ft high generator, part of a windfarm while another turbine was damaged.

UFO enthusiasts believe the incident was caused by a mystery aircraft.

Ecotricity, which owns the site, said while investigations continued they were not ruling anything out - but the extent of damage was "unique".

The turbine is one of 20 at the Conisholme site, which has been only been fully operational since April 2008. The 66ft broken blade has been recovered and is being examined.

Dale Vince, founder of Ecotricity, said the company was keeping an open mind about the incident, in the early hours of Sunday January 4.

He told BBC Radio 4: "Until a definite cause can be identified we shouldn't rule anything out. To make one of these blades fall off, or to bend it, takes a lot."

Russ Kellett, from the Flying Saucer Bureau, said more than 30 phonecalls and email has been received from witnesses in the areas reporting a low-flying object at the time of the incident.

Other experts believe the damage is more likely to have been caused by chunks of ice flying off the blades of other turbines following the failure of internal anti-icing systems.

The Ministry of Defence said it was not looking into the incident.

A spokesman said: "The MoD examines reports solely to establish whether UK airspace may have been compromised by hostile or unauthorised military activity. Unless there's evidence of a potential threat, there's no attempt to identify the nature of each sighting reported."

Ecotricity said it hoped to have the turbine back in action within a week.

Lights in the sky and a broken wind turbine: evidence of little green men?

The Daily Telegraph
England, 1-9-09

By Matthew Moore

THERE are, it has to be said, more salubrious places for aliens to crash-land than on a wind farm in the Lincolnshire Wolds.

But that is what locals fear happened when a turbine was destroyed a few hours after mysterious glowing orbs were seen in the night sky.

More mundane theories, such as a block of frozen urine dropped by a passing plane or simple mechanical failure, were mooted but none had been proven yesterday.

"It sounds unbelievable, but actually we don't have any explanation at the moment," said Dale Vince, founder of Ecotricity, which owns the wind farm at Conisholme, near Louth.

At least half a dozen residents reported seeing the orange-yellow spheres, which some witnesses claimed were trailing tentacles. Dorothy Wil- lows, who lives a mile and a half from the wind farm, said

she saw a "low-flying object skimming across the sky towards the turbines" on Sunday evening.

In the early hours of Monday, a 213ft glass fibre turbine was left crippled, with locals reporting hearing a loud bang like thunder. One of the £1 million turbine's 65ft blades was ripped off and another severely damaged.

Although no unusual debris was found at the site, rumours of a possible alien attack or collision spread quickly. RAF Scampton, the nearby base that hosts the Red Arrows, said it had no planes flying that night.

Robert Palmer, the chairman of East Lindsey district council and one of those who claimed to have seen the lights, was keeping an open mind. "I would be very interested to find out what it was. If we are being looked at by other people, by other planets, it would be interesting to find out why they have chosen this part of the country," he said.

But experts said the explanation was likely to be mechanical, not extraterrestrial.

Fraser McLachlan of GCube, which insures more than 25,000 wind turbines, said there were five or six instances a year of blades separating of their own accord.

"Water could have got into hairline cracks in the blade, weakening the structure when it turned into ice, or it's possible that the blades were just poorly attached to the hub," he said.

Prof Christopher French of Goldsmiths University in London, the editor of *The Skeptic* magazine, which investigates paranormal claims, said that the lights in the sky could have been caused by aircraft, satellite debris or a meteorite.

"Any of these explanations, plus several others, appear to me much more plausible than the idea that technologically advanced aliens have travelled light years across space but then bumped into a wind turbine," he said.

The Times
England, 1-9-09

Aliens probably not to blame for mangled turbine



Conisholme The apparently mysterious wrecking of a wind turbine in Lincolnshire was probably caused by mechanical failure induced by this week's cold snap — and not aliens, as had been suggested — said Fraser McLachlan, chief executive of GCube, which insures wind farms (Chris Smyth writes).

UFO groups said that they had been inundated with calls reporting strange lights in the sky at the time the turbine was damaged. Robert Palmer, 66, a turkey farmer who is also leader of East Lindsey District Council and a member of Lincolnshire County Council, said he saw a bright white light with an orange edge as he drove close to the turbine on Sunday morning.

Mr McLachlan said: "We see things five or six times a year that look like this. It does happen that a blade will sometimes just come off a machine."

NOTEBOOK



Emma Jacobs

Britain's Roswell

It is an uncomfortable feeling for a journalist to become the story; doubly so, if you miss the story. So, imagine how Ed Crooks, the Financial Times energy editor, felt when he read yesterday's Sun splash — "UFO hits wind turbine" — and realised that he had been at the site of Britain's very own Roswell. As The Sun reported: "Strange lights were spotted streaking towards the 290ft-tall generator on a wind farm" in Lincolnshire, leading an unidentified UFO expert to pronounce: "We are very excited."

Perhaps aliens did indeed "zoom" towards the wind farm. But there seems to be a slightly less mysterious explanation for this "giant explosion in the air". It was, in fact, a firework display at Ed's father-in-law's 80th birthday party.

Financial Times (UK and Ireland Edition)
England, 1-9-09

BY DAY A SERVING BOBBY. BY NIGHT UFO INVESTIGATOR

Cops & saucers

IN HIS day job as a detective Gary Heseltine looks after railway passengers.

But off-duty the 48-year-old looks to the stars.

For the past six years he has produced an annual report detailing UFO sightings by police officers across the country.

Gary says: "Police officers are trained to give dispassionate, detailed descriptions of things they see and are highly credible witnesses as a result."

His latest report to be published on Gary's PRUFOS (Police Reporting UFO Sightings) database this week, highlights 50 new cases involving 106 officers. That takes the total of individual sightings he has recorded to 310.

Gary's interest in UFOs started when he spotted one himself aged 15.

He says: "I was walking a girlfriend home when we saw a brilliant white object travelling across the sky. Suddenly, there were power cuts behind the flight path of the object."

"I raced home, told my parents and predicted a power cut. They didn't believe me and I rushed out into the garden just in time to see the object passing overhead."

"No sooner had it passed over the top of the house than there was a power cut."

By CAROLINE IGGULDEN

school and there were efforts made to get him to try to resign."

Since starting the database Gary, a detective constable from Wakefield, West Yorkshire, who has two grown-up children, claims to have clocked up two further UFO sightings himself.

In 1999 he was in his garden and spotted three lights moving as a triangle towards his house. They kept a perfect formation before banking away.

Then, in April 2007, Gary was again in his garden when he saw a white sphere heading towards him. It passed over the roof of the house and his partner, Valerie, also saw it before it turned and flew away.

Gary, who met Valerie at a UFO conference four years ago, says: "I believe the accounts on the database can be relied upon because policemen don't put their head above the parapet lightly for fear of humiliation. I have 20 years' experience as a detective constable and I know when someone is lying to me."

Sightings reported to Gary over the past year include one from a 76-year-old retired bobby who has stayed silent about his close encounter for 35 YEARS.

Gary says: "He saw three green spheres coming towards him in the village of Crofton, West Yorks."

"They then did a right-angled turn and shot off into the distance. This man had lived with this all his life. He had never even told his wife."

Two other retired officers contacted Gary this year to tell him about an incident in 1966. They had been on patrol near Bristol Airport, which was closed at the time.

Suddenly their car engine and lights cut out and a 100ft-wide, oval-shaped object hovered 500ft above the road.

They watched it for ten seconds and then it disappeared.

Gary adds: "In the not too distant future mainstream science will discover there is life on another planet."

Until that time, though, Gary will be keeping a close watch on the skies over Yorkshire.

Creatures

Then, in the mid-Nineties, he found a UFO magazine full of highly credible accounts of sightings by military pilots backed up by radar evidence.

It encouraged Gary, a British Transport Police officer, to set up the PRUFOS database (prufospolicedatabase.co.uk) to log police sightings.

One of the most startling reports on it is that of PC Alan Godfrey. He spotted a diamond-shaped UFO levitating above a road in Todmorden, West Yorks, in 1980.

He tried to call for help on his police radio but it had stopped working. He then tried to get out of his car but was blinded by a white light.

Then he went blank.

His next conscious memory is being back in his car, further down the road, and the UFO was gone. He walked back and saw a circular dry patch in an otherwise wet road.

Under hypnosis he claimed he was taken up into the spacecraft and examined by small creatures.

Gary says: "If you asked Alan Godfrey, I am sure he would say he wished this never happened."

"He was ridiculed at work. When the story got out his kids were teased at



X FILES...
Gary Heseltine and, inset left, in uniform in 1989. Above: pictures from his UFO database

Brian snaps 'doughnut UFO'

Ring-shaped object captured on motorist's mobile phone

Louth Leader
England 1-21-09

THIS doughnut-shaped UFO was caught on camera near Conisholme Wind Farm a few weeks before the wind turbine was damaged.

Brian Lee, 55, was driving on Billings Gate Road in South Somercotes at 4.30pm on December 9 and stopped his car to take some pictures of a dramatic sunset.

It wasn't until he returned home and looked over the images on his mobile phone that he discovered the strange object in one of them.

He said: "I looked at the pictures and just saw this doughnut-shaped thing in the sky - I didn't know what to think it was."

The image, facing a south westerly direction, also shows the headlights of a car approaching. The mystery object can be seen in the sky amidst the dark clouds.

Mr Lee, from nearby Saltfleet, said: "I've sat on this photo for a while because I just didn't know what to think about it, but after seeing all your stories in the Leader about the wind farm UFOs I thought maybe I should show somebody."

By Gemma Gadd
gemma.gadd@jpress.co.uk

When asked if he believed UFOs were of alien origin, Mr Lee said he likes to keep an open mind, but added: "This isn't some sort of hoax as I really don't have any interest in the whole UFO thing. I just thought it was really strange."

Louth lady Gail Cross has also reported seeing orange lights moving in formation over Louth on Saturday January 3, the night before the wind turbine was damaged.

She told us: "There were four lights moving silently in a square shape and a fifth trailing behind like a tail."

She added: "I don't believe in aliens or things like that, but this was a strange sighting."

● The results of tests on the 65ft blade to see why it 'fell off' one of the turbines at the wind farm could take up to a month to arrive, say Ecotricity.

● Latest news updates - go to www.louthleader.co.uk



Above, Saltfleet man Brian Lee with the mobile phone used to capture the image (Photo: Ian Holmes). And, left, Mr Lee's photograph of the strange doughnut-shaped UFO.

By GUY WOODFORD
Crime Correspondent

THEY are more used to dealing with calls reporting crime and antisocial behaviour.

But Notts Police have also experienced a number of rather other-worldly enquiries from members of the public.

New figures from the force reveal a total of 21 UFO sightings in the county were recorded in 11 calls to the force control room between November 1 in 2003 and October 31 this year.

One caller reported seven sightings in Eastwood, followed by another five from two callers in Newark.

A Notts Police spokesman said: "While we would advise the public to contact the Civil Aviation Authority to report any sightings, we do receive the

YOUR VIEWS

Have you seen anything strange in the sky? Comment online at thisisnottingham.co.uk

occasional report of a UFO to the control room.

"In the event of a call, we would contact the East Midlands air traffic control to see if they are aware of anything that could be a UFO and report the sighting to them."

In May this year, police quashed extra-terrestrial speculation by saying a suspected UFO seen in Beeston was actually a force helicopter.

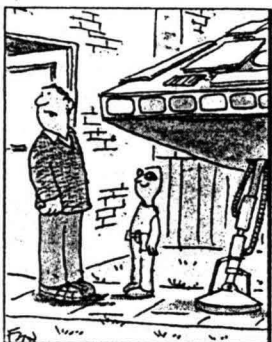
The Post reported how residents claimed to have seen a bright and stationary triangular light hovering over the town square, with a loud noise at 11.30pm on Saturday, May 10.

Further sightings were reported in Long Eaton and Ilkeston.

But a police spokesman said the helicopter had been investigating a green laser flashed at the aircraft from the ground. Officers later confiscated the laser from an unnamed youth.

More UFO sightings in police 'X-files'

Figures add to MoD list



"A figment of our imagination says his satnav's packed up and do we know the quickest way to Proxima Centauri?"

The new figures on UFO sightings follow the release in August last year of a Ministry of Defence list of UFO sightings across Britain, including ten in Notts between 1999 and 2006.

They included one sighting of two lines of lights in the sky over RAF Newton in 1987, said to look like a "flying football pitch".

The information was released after a series of requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

PC Lee Roberts, of Radford Road Police Station, the leader of the Ashfield Paranormal Investigation Unit,

said: "Our unit has been inundated with calls from places including Eastwood, South Normanton, Hucknall and Sutton-in-Ashfield.

"A lot have been reporting lights in the sky and unknown formations.

"I think people have become more aware of our work. We've had people contact us 12 years after they saw something they couldn't explain. They said they hadn't reported it because they didn't know who to go to."

guy.woodford@nottinghameveningpost.co.uk

UFO expert stunned by his own close encounter

By Gavin Roberts

A NORTH-EAST UFO expert today revealed how he experienced a close encounter of his own.

Ex-RAF man Ian Taylor was stunned to see a glowing orb in the skies above Aberdeen.

The object - red with a yellow core - was visible for several minutes, gliding slowly across the night sky before disappearing from sight.

Mr Taylor, from the city's West End, said: "The light emitting from the object was extremely powerful, very focused and symmetrical, ranging from a yellowish core graduating out to very vivid red at the edge.

"The tracking motion was so slight that the object appeared to be in a holding pattern."

Using powerful binoculars, Mr Taylor studied the object carefully.

He said it seemed to have "a defined ball-like structure with no indication of pulsing or light flutter". It also appeared to have "a secondary-light shape attached to

Ian tells of glowing orb over Aberdeen



MYSTERY: A computer expert's impression of the glowing orb.

the main core" as though it was some kind of "appendage".

Mr Taylor - who has studied UFOs for 50 years - insisted the light was self-generating, not reflected.

He said its shape, movement and colour intensity placed it beyond a

rational explanation. He didn't believe it was a comet, insisting it was too bright and left no trail.

Mr Taylor asked his friend Terry Cook, a computer expert, to make an image of the object.

"The UFO expert added: "It was

certainly not a terrestrial device in orbit as it was travelling far too slowly and displayed none of the usual details one would experience viewing a satellite circumnavigating the Earth.

"Until we have a positive identification from some informed source, which can be verified beyond any reasonable doubt as to what this mystery object was, it can be assumed at this stage it will remain 'unexplained' and therefore should be placed on record as being a sighting of a UFO. It made a profound impression on me."

A spokesman for NATS, which provides air traffic control services for Aberdeen Airport, said there was no record of an unknown aircraft on radar at the time.

groberts@ajk.co.uk

Cigar-shaped UFO snapped and chopper buzzed

Close encounters above Sandwell

Sandwell Chronicle
England 1-8-09

UFO investigators have turned their attentions to Tipton after a resident spotted a strange object floating in the sky.

Back in September a cigarette in the garden took a mysterious turn for Sharon Derby, of Gordon Drive, when she went outside to light up and spotted an object in the sky.

At first Mrs Derby, aged 25, thought it was a balloon but after a while the object had not moved and she decided to fetch a camera to record the odd sight.

On her return to the back garden the object had rotated into a vertical position and, a few snaps later, it had disappeared.

Mrs Derby put the

camera in a drawer and forgot about the sighting until she came to show her holiday pictures to her father-in-law, Graham Rogers.

"I pulled up the picture on my laptop," said Mr Rogers. "It came up really clear and I could not believe it."

"The picture is incredible. I don't know what it is but it's there and it's strange."

"Sharon didn't really think about it after getting a bit excited when she took the picture."

"We thought it might be a balloon but after looking at it again, we're not so sure."

"It never moved, it was vertical, there were no markings on it and a balloon doesn't just disappear like that."

"I don't think we are on our own - the universe is a massive place," he added.

Mr Rogers contacted the The Birmingham UFO Group which sent Mike Hodrien to investigate the incident.

"Due to the unusual shape of the object, most explanations can be completely disregarded," he said.

"After interviewing the witness, I felt certain the photographs were genuine and that she saw the object described."

"The only mundane explanation for the object would be some kind of inflatable balloon. If it was a balloon, then it certainly wasn't tethered."

He added that as part of his investigations he con-

tacted the local pub The Shubbery, which confirmed there had not been any functions at the time of the sighting.

"Looking at all the evidence available, the balloon explanation does not seem to fit well with what was sighted," he said. "If it isn't a balloon then what is it?"

"There have been many reports worldwide by very credible witnesses of cigar-shaped UFOs, often backed up with photographic evidence. Could these recent photographs be an actual craft of some kind?"

"Perhaps in time other witnesses to this event will come forward but for now it remains a mystery."

Meanwhile Tom Watson, Labour MP for West Bromwich East, has called on local people to help solve another X-files style mystery after a police helicopter was buzzed by a UFO over Sandwell Valley.

Experts from the UK Airprox Board revealed that the helicopter almost crashed into the mysterious flying object on May 2 last year when it was flying over Sandwell Valley Country Park.

The helicopter pilot claims to have seen lights 100 metres away from him which forced him to swerve.

Mr Watson has said that the matter has become a local talking point, he added: "This is a fascinating report and it would be good if we could find out more about it."



Sharon Derby and her father-in-law Graham Rogers with her picture of the unidentified flying object

"The incident could well have been seen by people who live in homes which circle the country park or by the residents who walk in that area. They may not have thought much about it but it would be interesting to get more evidence on this and if anyone has any ideas I would be delighted to hear about it."

"A lot of people find UFOs fascinating - who knows what it could have been."

Anyone with views on the mystery can visit Mr Watson's blog at www.tom-watson.co.uk or send a letter to his office at Terry Duffy House, Thomas Street, West Bromwich, B70 6NT.



A close up of the Tipton UFO

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

with Richard D Hall



Hartlepool Mail
England 11-7-08

IN my daily life, now and again I will bring up the subject of UFOs, mainly out of curiosity to find out peoples general opinion.

On many occasions, not only do I hear somebody's opinion, but quite often people are convinced they have seen a UFO. On each occasion they have never reported it because of fear of ridicule.

Last week I was in the post office buying a local paper to see if an advertisement had been placed about a talk I was giving in Gateshead.

An elderly woman behind me in the queue tapped me on the shoulder, "Have you seen one?", her eyes were wide open with anticipation. "Actually I haven't," I replied.

To which she replied: "I have". Then she proceeded to tell me about it. "It was in Felling in 1960 and witnessed by 40 people," she said.

She then went on to explain how it was not an aircraft or any kind of natural phenomena, but said the witnesses kept quiet because they were afraid of being made fun of.

At the Gateshead presentation many people approached me afterwards to give me their stories about UFOs. In fact one

third of the audience had witnessed a UFO.

I received emails from many people and a comment in one of them summed up the feeling of many UFO witnesses. "This is one of many sightings I have seen over the years, from as far back as the 1970s and people laugh at me when I tell them, but I felt quite normal at your meeting."

I don't imagine that every instance of these sightings is an alien from outer space.

Researchers who investigate UFO stories, including the Ministry of Defence can usually find a logical explanation for about 95 per cent of sightings. The rest are unexplained.

But in my experience for each sighting that is reported there are many that are not.

I will be following up all the reports given to me at the presentation and reporting in this column any significant findings over the coming weeks. One man claims to have superb unpublished photographs of a UFO, only ever seen by him and his son.

I have arranged to meet him this evening to see these photographs.

Next time you are in a pub ask the person next to you if they have ever seen a UFO, you might be surprised.

Yes, there IS life on Mars AND 40,000 other planets



ALIENS exist on 40,000 other worlds and most are smarter than us, scientists claimed yesterday.

A shock new study has found that ET and his pals are thriving across the universe – and there IS life on Mars.

Experts even reckon the aliens are so far advanced that they will find us before we find them.

Conditions are right for life to exist on 361 planets in the Milky Way, say space experts. But they calculate the number of inhabited worlds is likely to be 100

■ by GEMMA WHEATLEY

team of astrophysicists at Edinburgh University created a computer model of the galaxy and fed in data such as how far each planet was from its sun and the availability of water and minerals.

"I believe the estimate of 361 intelligent civilisations to be the most accurate," he said. "These would certainly be the most Earth-like civilisations, but the bigger figures are certainly possible. We can't rule them out."

He added: "Most planets we have looked at are older than our own, so I would expect more advanced civilisations than ours existing. But that makes us ask why

we have not already seen them, though some would say we have."

Other researchers believe the best way to find extra-terrestrial life is to look at planets closer to home.

Dr Ian Crawford, of the University of London, said: "Searching Mars to get an answer to whether it ever had life would tell us a great deal about life forming on other planets."

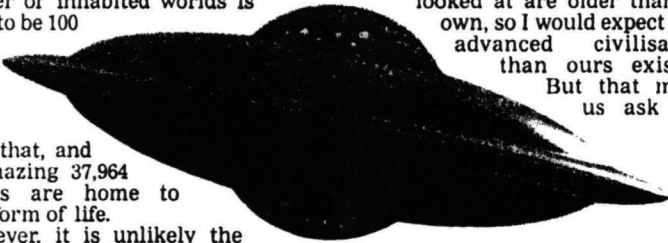
gemma.wheatley@dailystar.co.uk

times that, and an amazing 37,964 planets are home to some form of life.

However, it is unlikely the alien life forms will be little green men or like characters from sci-fi movies – and most of the worlds are so far away that it could take 30,000 years to reach them.

Duncan Forgan, who led the study, said: "I don't think it's quite like Star Trek, where they look like human beings but with pointy ears.

"They could also be so different from us that we are unable to communicate with them." Mr Forgan's



Fighter jets called to UFO over Athens

JET fighters were scrambled after the pilot of a London-bound passenger plane spotted a UFO over Athens.

By JAMES CLENCH

F-16 fighters. But it quickly vanished before they were able to make contact.

A spokeswoman for Olympic Airlines said: "I can confirm the incident. It is the first of its kind involving our pilots."

"They are all very experienced. I don't think they'd make up something like that."

Last night Greek Air Force officer Lt Col Dimitris Tsiroyannides finally confirmed the October 2007 sighting.

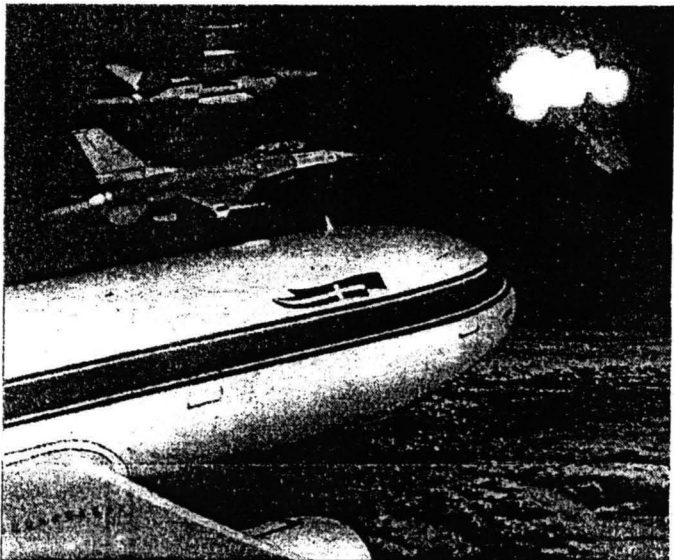
He added: "Every October there are reports about the brightness of Venus and that's what we think it was."

But UFO expert Mike Cohen dismissed that.

He said: "It is hardly surprising that if aliens visit Earth they would take an interest in Greece, the cradle of Western civilisation."

j.clench@the-sun.co.uk

LITTLE GREEK MEN



Flight-seeing . . . how planes may have seen UFO in skies

Government UFO expert denies claim that MoD is 'rewriting history'

2374

By Tristan Cork
t.cork@bepp.co.uk

The man who used to keep the Government's UFO files denied claims that the Queen, Margaret Thatcher and the Ministry of Defence covered-up official interest in crop circles.

Nick Pope, Britain's leading UFO expert, was responding to a report by West crop circle expert Colin Andrews, who claimed the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were fascinated by the phenomenon in the late Eighties and early Nineties.

Mr Andrews produced a letter from Prince Philip saying he believed the circles were made by some invisible force.

The mystery of a 20-year 'cover-up' over crop circles

But Mr Pope said he was reading too much into Government interest at the time.

"He is implying I was involved in a cover-up. Some of the issues Colin highlights have arisen because the line between official and private interest - even within Government, the military and the intelligence agencies - can be blurred," he said.

"There are particular sensitivities and political difficulties when members of the Royal Family are involved. I agree that the MoD has downplayed its interest and involvement in the crop circle issue, as it has with the UFO phenomenon.

“Military aircraft over crop circles were commonplace
- circle expert Colin Andrews

"This has been the policy for many years and it's no secret that I had to play my part in this when I worked for the Government."

The spat between the two experts has revealed more about the summer of 1989, when the world's attention was focused on Wiltshire as it appeared aliens were trying to communicate with the people of Warminster and Alton Barnes.

And Mr Andrews' royal theories overshadowed a more serious debate about what the Government knew about crop circles, and why it pretended not to be interested.

Wiltshire's fields and lanes were packed with Japanese and American TV news crews and the hilltops were full of crop circle devotees watching the fields at night.

Mr Andrews was the leading expert on the phenomenon at the time, and



Official secrets? A crop circle at West Kennet, which Colin Andrews, inset, believes the Government investigated during the late Eighties

wrote the first crop circle book, which was on the Queen's summer reading list that year.

At the time, and for years since, the Government and the MoD denied they were interested in crop circles and what caused them.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher dismissed the phenomenon and denied the MoD investigated them. But Mr An-

draws claims he was in constant communication with MoD officials and Whitehall. He said panicking MoD bosses gagged the media for a few hours when they thought they captured a crop circle being formed during Operation Blackbird in 1989.

Mr Andrews has released letters and documents which reveal the MoD investigated what caused crop circles and

dealt with theories that military helicopters created them.

"Throughout the late Eighties and early Nineties military aircraft over crop circles were commonplace and witnessed by all who visited the circles.

"Military aircraft were witnessed taking photographs and manoeuvring over the formations regularly," he

said. Mr Andrews said he released his report to counter a "rewriting of history" by the Government and Mr Pope, its former UFO investigator, over official interest. He said: "I find it ironic that in the Eighties and Nineties I was accused of being a Government cohort because of the help I was given, and now I am accused of making up Government involvement," he said.

Flying saucers spotted in Collier Row

Mystery of new UFO sightings

Romford Recorder
England 11-7-08

A DOUBLE sighting of UFOs above our skies was reported by different witnesses within hours of each other.

One local family-of-three claims to have seen a pair of strange black and silver flying discs frenetically pirouetting above rooftops in Collier Row, just after 6pm on October 3.

And later in the early hours of the following morning a witness in Dagenham also claims to have seen unexplained aerial phenomena.

Logging their accounts on Canadian-based UFO websites, ufoinfo.com and HBCC Research, the witnesses both describe seeing

By JANE BALL

low-flying ovalar craft passing quickly and silently above homes.

The Collier Row dad said: "Just happened to look out of the window and two dark objects came into view.

"The second trailing object caught my instant attention due to its strange flight pattern. It seemed to rotate not only round in one direction but also on its axis revealing a silver underside. It gave off the effect of doing a figure-of-eight-type manoeuvre."

The man added: "What we have

witnessed has left us in no doubt that what we saw were flying saucers - whether they're alien technology is another matter."

The Dagenham witness is equally puzzled by what he saw: "I don't know if it is craft but I have never seen anything like it before in my life," he said. "It passed behind the house at a distance of about 15 feet in the air and made no sound."

The sightings follow a report in last week's Recorder of former councillor Martin Sinclair's close encounter with a mysterious orange hovering space craft over Romford in 1994.

JOHNWOODHOUSE

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

EMAIL: columnists@thesentinel.co.uk or read more columns by John Woodhouse at www.thisisstaffordshire.co.uk/woodhouse



Aliens are coming — armed with cigars and grapefruits

OVER the years, North Staffordshire has seen more than its fair share of alien activity. The annals record, for example, that unidentified small men have been seen in Baddeley Green. Then there was a claim of alien abduction at Werrington. Not to mention a vertical sausage in the sky at Meir. And all this before the advent of all-day drinking. Add to this a golden ball (Rudyard), red, roundish, elongated object (Chesterton), and glowing, orange-red, cigar-shaped object (Werrington) and it seems this area is positively overrun with little green men.

One report even mentions a UFO hovering for several minutes over Bucknall before speeding off in the direction of Stoke, possibly to take advantage of late night shopping. The latest incidents saw residents in Bradeley baffled by a spinning grapefruit on Sunday evening and a woman in Penkhull faced with four dull, dark pink objects while walking her dog on Saturday night. I'm not quite sure why aliens should be so fascinated with North Staffordshire.

But I shouldn't be surprised if one of the major potteries announces an outsourcing deal with Ursa Major in a few years' time. I myself have never seen a UFO although alien abduction could explain why I woke up naked in the garage in 2005. The wife says it was sleepwalking but that fails to account for the green slime. There's no way I could have got the lid off the Swarfega in that state of mind.

It's my considered belief that people have been subconsciously coerced into believing in flying saucers since the advent of television.

As far as I can remember, never in my school history textbooks was there a mention of Henry VIII asking Wolsey to look into reports of a cigar-shaped object seen flying over the bushes at Hampton Court. Then The X-Files came along and suddenly everyone was an expert.

I tend to think there is a rational explanation for 99 per cent of UFO sightings. If someone has seen a vertical sausage in Meir, chances are it was someone rather energetically discarding an out-of-



OUT OF THIS WORLD: Did you see the spinning grapefruit-like object in the sky this week?

cigar-shaped object in Werrington was simply the Havana-loving Columbo quizzing a suspect at the detention centre. Spinning grapefruits are, admittedly, a little more difficult to rationalise. I can only think it was the man from Del Monte.

Many believe that UFO sightings are actually people on the ground getting a glimpse of top secret armaments being trialled by the Ministry of Defence. Possibly the grapefruit is the latest weapon in the war on terror. From a height, it

the added humanitarian advantage of giving the victim one of their five a day.

The other one per cent must account for the 11 North Staffordshire sightings since 1999 that even the Ministry of Defence claims to be baffled by. Maybe we do need to be vigilant. Who's to say the Martian invasion of Normacot isn't imminent?

Naturally, no pictures exist of these sightings for, like the Loch Ness monster, UFOs have the uncanny habit of disappearing the minute

it that people who claim alien abduction have never been given a little memento of their visit to the mastership? A message for their human leader or, at the very least, a fridge magnet.

I'd actually like to put out a plea to aliens for me and my family to be abducted. A couple of weeks in another galaxy would save a fortune on a holiday. We promise not to tell anyone. Especially not Mulder and Scully.

Have you ever seen a UFO? Email

What if aliens smash your car?

FOLLOWING recent news stories about a UFO allegedly wrecking a wind turbine at Conisholme, near Louth, earlier this month, specialist car insurance broker Adrian Flux had a call from a curious customer asking what would happen if a UFO crashed into his car. Which got the company boffins thinking about what bizarre accidents were or weren't covered.

Amongst the potential disasters that are covered by normal car insurance schemes, assuming the driver has a comprehensive policy, are:

- Monkeys wrecking the car on a drive through a safari park.
- A block of frozen urine dropping from the sky and striking the car.
- Ditto a meteor.
- Crashing into a grand piano left on a hairpin bend of an Alpine pass (this one assumes the insurance includes European cover).
- A kangaroo, on the hop from the local zoo, jumping over the car and wrecking the roof en route.
- A mastermind criminal, operating from a satellite in geostationary orbit, holding the city council to ransom by taking over the traffic lights and causing gridlock in the streets, during which chaos the car is smashed.
- A UFO crashing into the car.

However, if the UFO causes



Alien accidents: What would happen if your car got hit by aliens?

an accident by attacking the car, with, say, a photon torpedo, then that would be considered an act of war, and thus would not be covered. Similarly, if an intergalactic war led to Armageddon and resulted in the car being damaged, it would not be covered.

"It gets more complicated if a UFO hits a wind turbine, causing a rotor blade to shear off which then crashes into the car," says Gerry Bucke of Adrian Flux Insurance Services. "In that case, the car driver's best hope is that the UFO pilot's

policy is completely up to date, as it would be simplest to make a claim on the alien's insurance. Otherwise there may be arguments as to who is responsible for the damage to the car.

"In the worst case scenario, though, the car would be covered by our policy – it's just that a claim on it would affect the driver's No Claims Bonus."

For details contact the Adrian Flux quote line on 0800 505 3000, or email the company at quotes@adrianflux.co.uk www.adrianflux.co.uk.

Daily Telegraph
England 2-6-09

Intelligent
life 'on
37,964
planets'

By Ben Leach

UP TO 40,000 planets in our galaxy could support alien life, scientists believe.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh have calculated that up to 37,964 planets in the Milky Way could be hospitable enough to be home to creatures at least as intelligent as ourselves.

Duncan Forgan, an astrophysicist, created a computer programme that collated all the data on the 330 or so planets known to man and established what proportion would have conditions suitable for life then extrapolated the results across the galaxy.

Different models suggested a minimum number of Earth-like civilisations at 361 and the maximum closer to 40,000.

Mr Forgan believes it will take 300 to 400 years to make contact and said the estimate of 361 intelligent civilisations was "most accurate".

"These would certainly be the most Earth-like civilisations but the bigger figures are certainly possible. We can't rule them out," he said.

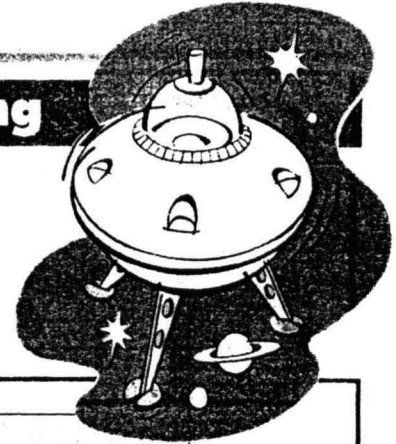
"Most of the other planets we have looked at are older than our own – so I would expect to see more advanced civilisations than ours."

Meanwhile, a multi-coloured spacecraft seen opposite the Houses of Parliament was one of hundreds of UFOs reported last year, it has been disclosed.

The number of UFO sightings logged with the Ministry of Defence more than doubled to reach 285 last year.

VICTORIA TURTON looks at why Wakefield x-files are increasing

Watch the skies!



Tutor: UFOs are 'nosey'

BY day Martin Blackburn works as an English tutor – but by night he dedicates his

time to analysing reports of UFOs around the globe.

He says that while the majority of sightings are lies or hoaxes, others point to genuine evidence there may be alien life.

Some strange objects spotted by people could be explained by freak weather conditions or top-secret military experiments, but he believes others can only be the work of extra-terrestrial life forms.

Mr Blackburn, of Northgate Court, said: "I think 90 per cent of what people claim to be signs of aliens can be absolute rubbish.

"But I've spoken to enough intelligent people with proper jobs and families who are totally convinced about what they have seen and it sends shivers down my spine.

"About 20 years ago

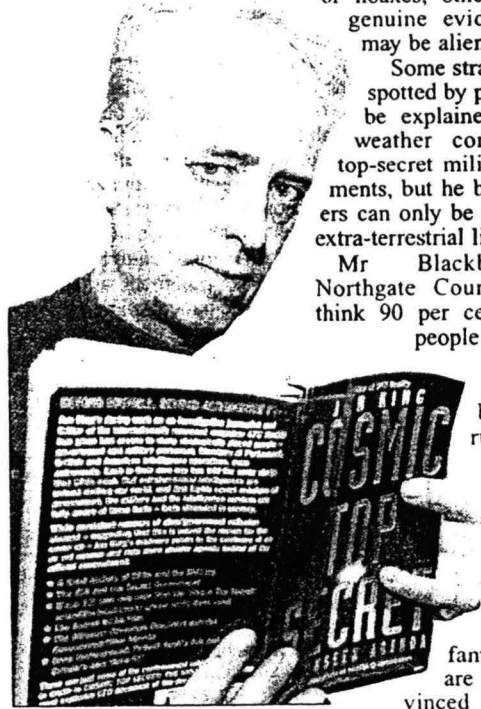
the idea that there could be aliens seemed to be in the realms of science fiction but with all the books that have been written and evidence that has been found, people are starting to accept that we may not be alone."

From the wealth of research and analysis he has carried out Mr Blackburn, 45, thinks if a UFO landed in front of Wakefield Cathedral tomorrow we humans would have nothing to fear.

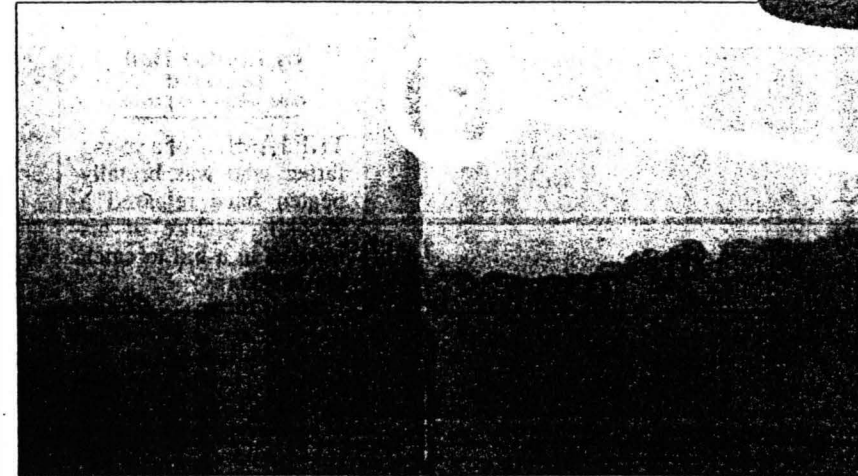
He said: "Some people believe they are coming to harm us or steal our technology, but I have a different view. They could be coming here because they're in trouble or because they need our help or they could just be nosey."

What do you think?

● Write to the Wakefield Express, Express House, Southgate, Wakefield WF1 1TE, ● Telephone: 433013, ● E-mail: editorial@wakefieldexpress.co.uk



BELIEVER: Martin Blackburn has never seen an alien but lives in hope he will see one soon. w6767a903



UFO?: Experts believe the object circled here may be a genuine picture of a flying saucer.

More city sightings

SINCE the *Express* reported a strange object hovering in the sky above Kirkthorpe there has been other reports of unidentified flying objects right across the city.

And ufologist experts from *UFO Data Magazine* think the photograph taken by nature enthusiast James Ward could be solid evidence there is definitely something out there.

Features editor Philip Mantle wants to analyse the image to make sure it is not a hoax.

This week more people have come forward with UFO reports.

Last Friday Adam Haigh was walking back from a shop in Stanley when he saw a very bright comet shaped light which had a tail flying behind it.

He said it was travelling fast, about 100ft above the ground.

Elsewhere, an eagle-eyed couple spotted a strange formation of orange orbs in the sky above Shay Lane, Walton, last month.

Eye witnesses said the orbs were moving at a similar speed as a helicopter in a very controlled way.

On January 2 another orange

light was spotted by people in Horbury, but this light moved very quickly. At first residents thought it would be a military aircraft, but they couldn't hear any engine noises. Before anyone had a chance to take a photograph it shot off into the night sky.

On Christmas Day in Sandal two bright orange triangles was seen. Shocked residents said the first one was brighter than a star but then faded away.

A few moments later another appeared and then disappeared in the same way.



San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco, CA 11-13-08

OUTDOORS

Officials doubt park visitors are seeing panthers, but...

BLACK CATS ARE ON THE RADAR

Best-chance parks

Animals resembling "black panthers" or black mountain lions have been reported at these parks and watershed lands in the Bay Area.

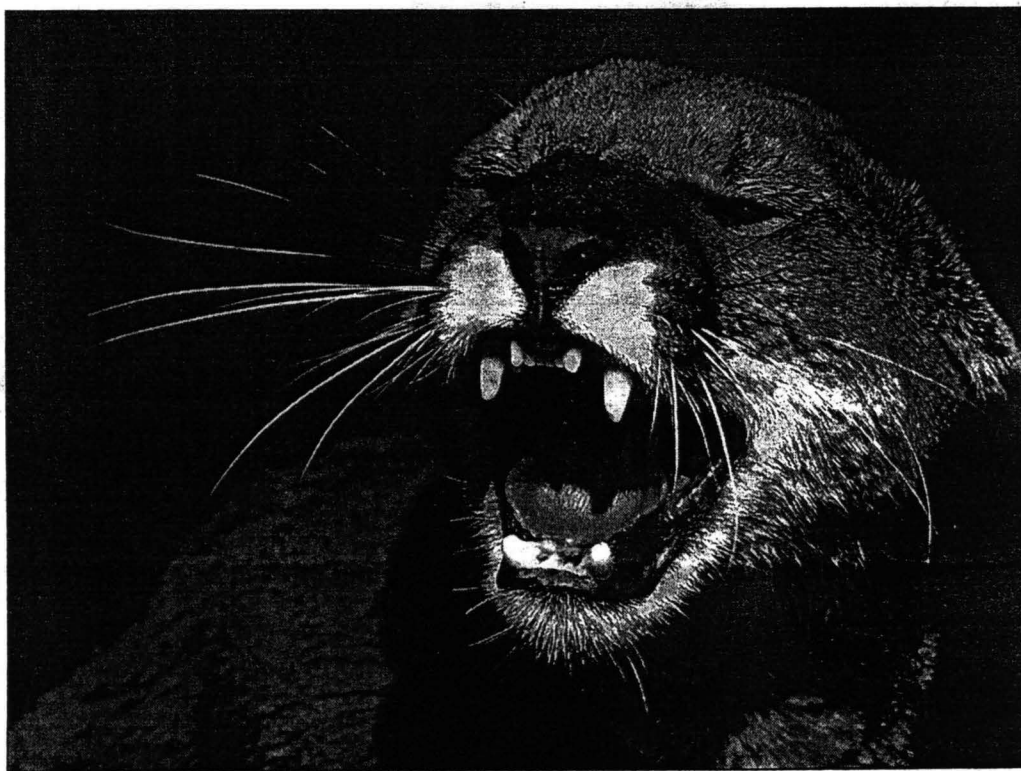
Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, San Ramon: Black panther sightings are higher at Las Trampas than any other park in the Bay Area, shocked hikers occasionally show up at the adjacent Las Trampas Stables and tell their tale. The park has ideal habitat for mountain lions, with water (Bollinger Creek), space (5,430 acres plus miles of adjoining EBMUD land) and food (lots of deer and squirrels). Info: (888) 327-2757, option 3, ext. 4537; ebparks.com

Pierce Ranch, Point Reyes National Seashore: The swath of land from Pierce Ranch to Tomales Point provides the best wildlife viewing in California, home for more than 500 elk, along with deer, foxes, bobcats and mountain lions. Wildlife thrives across the park's 71,000 acres, with plenty of food, water and protection. The best of it is at Pierce Ranch. From the ridge-line, you also get sweeping views of Tomales Bay to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

Note: In one two-hour sequence near the water hole at Pierce Ranch, I counted 13 elk, six deer, three rabbits and a fox, and a week later on a return trip, saw a mountain lion and 200 elk. Info: (415) 464-5100; nps.gov/pore

Sunol Regional Wilderness, Sunol: Sunol is at the center of an extensive stretch of hilly wild lands. The park covers 6,800 acres, but is surrounded by other parks and watershed lands that encompass more than 50,000 acres. A high density of ground squirrels provides food for the large numbers of golden eagles that spend the winter here. Mountain lions are occasionally spotted above the rim of Little Yosemite by hikers heading out to see the waterfalls on the headwaters of Alameda Creek. Info: (888) 327-2757, option 3, ext. 4559; ebparks.com

Chabot Regional Park/EBMUD watershed, Alameda County: These adjoining parcels, split by Redwood Road, provide ideal mountain lion habitat and lots of



Associated Press

Mountain lions, such as this smiling fellow, are found in California but have never been known to have black coats.

The sudden rash of "black panther sightings" this fall at Bay Area parks has given new spark to the region's greatest wildlife mystery: Are the sightings cases of mistaken identity, as wildlife scientists believe?

Or is there another explanation?

Scientists say they have no proof of black panthers in the region.

"I really think that most of the black cat sightings are either house cats or occasionally where someone saw a mountain lion in bad lighting," said Steve Bobzian, a wildlife biologist for 14 years with the East Bay Regional Park District, where most of the reported sightings have occurred.

"I've had people send photos of what people thought were mountain lions, and they ended up being bobcats, house cats, and one time a fox, another time a coyote," Bobzian said.

One thing for certain is that hikers are seeing something out there that is unexplained. From the perspective of a scientist, here are the different rationales for the sightings:

Seeing is believing

Accounts of recent sightings:

Once fooled, twice right: "People seem to think I'm 'crazy' when I told them today that I've seen this big black cat that was not a housecat; approximately four feet long or so without the tail, jet black, very beautiful and sleek. I have this big ridge, part of Miller-Knox Park, right in front of my house. Every morning I hike it up to Point Richmond and walk back on the middle-level ridge trails. The first time I saw it I only got a glimpse of it from the side. I saw something black run past me. When I turned my head I just saw the back. I immediately had the thought 'mountain lion' and then immediately thought 'Nah, they don't have mountain lions here' and 'mountain lions are brown.' I thought that it's maybe a dog or maybe a deer that looked very dark. Talked myself into thinking that it must have been some kind of black deer. This morning around 8:30 a.m. or so, when I was walking in a little canyon I saw it again. No questions, a big black cat, no housecat, but a large cat. Jet black, no other colors."

— Michaela Graham, Richmond

Like a jaguar in the jungle: "I was curious about EBMUD's protected watershed off Redwood Road in Castro Valley, so I obtained a permit and checked it out. I decided to navigate into the gully, walked maybe 30 or 40 feet to the east and suddenly found myself locked eyes with this big black cat. It was roughly 50 feet from me, through several barriers of logs and overgrowth. The first thought is that it looked like a panther, but the weird thing is that sort of animal should be in Africa, not the East Bay. It was so out of place

Larz Sherer, Berkeley

deer. Chabot spans more than 5,000 acres and features gorgeous Grass Valley, eucalyptus forest and adjacent Lake Chabot. East Bay MUD lands here are stunning, with pristine Redwood Creek feeding into huge Upper San Leandro Reservoir.

Note: When the sloped meadow in Grass Valley sprouts fresh growth from winter rains, you can often spot deer browsing in the early morning. Where you find deer, you have a chance to find the critters that eat them.

Info: (888) 327-2757, option 3, ext. 4502; ebparks.com; trail use permits required for EBMUD watershed at (925) 254-3778; form available online at ebpud.com — click on services/recreation.

Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline, Martinez: This park covers 1,415 acres of hills, bluffs and waterfront along Carquinez Strait. There's a great shoreline bike ride here, but better yet is the trek up to Franklin Ridge, at an elevation of 750 feet it provides sweeping views of the lower delta.

Note: On one exploration here I came across a herd of goats, including some that looked like unicorns with horns sticking out of their foreheads. You couldn't ask for better bait for mountain lions. Info: (888) 327-2757, option 3, ext. 4514; ebparks.com

Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline, Richmond: Some might be surprised that this park is on the list. That is because it's best known for its gorgeous swimming cove, Keller Beach, located in a protected area at the north end of the shoreline. From here, the wildlands extend north to Point Pinole, an area where mountain lions have been verified multiple times. The park also extends into the Richmond hills, with a ridge connecting to excellent wildlife habitat. Info: (888) 327-2757, option 3, ext. 4544; ebparks.com

— Tom Stienstra

► **Black panther:** The definition of a black panther is that it is a melanistic leopard, that is, a condition that could cause it to be born with black hair. This occurs very rarely in Africa and China. There's no explanation for how a family of them could end up in the East Bay foothills.

► **Black mountain lion:** According to the reports, the size and appearance of "black panthers" look exactly like black mountain lions. But according to mountain lion specialists at the Department of Fish and Game, scientists have never encountered such a thing in more than 12,000 cases in North America. "If you look at all the pelts that are out there, nobody has even one mountain lion pelt that looks black," Bobzian said.

► **Black bobcat:** There are many verifiable cases of jet black bobcats in the wild, including in the East Bay foothills. The problem with this, however, is size. Recent reports describe the animals as typically about 4½ feet long, 100 to 150 pounds, with long, swaying tails, consistent with the appearance of a mountain lion. Most bobcats are only about 2 to 3 feet long, 20 pounds, with short "bobbed" tails. "You do have black bobcats out there," Bobzian said. "About 30 to 40 percent of people reporting mountain lions turn out to be seeing bobcats. We know this from images we're provided where we can pick out characteristics. We just had one on Monday at Las Trampas, where a person thought they'd seen 'The Missing Lynx.' Turned out to be a bobcat."

► **Black jaguar:** Photos of a black jaguar look like an exact match to the descriptions of eye-witness accounts of black panthers. The problem is that jaguars live primarily in Central America. One theory is that a wealthy eccentric imported a black jaguar for a personal exotic game farm, and then the animal escaped. But the jaguar would have to be registered and have a state permit. An escape would make big news. And it would not account for multiple sightings in different regions.

► **Black house cats:** This past summer, The Chronicle received a photo of a

Point Reyes surprise: "We came up a short rise through a grassy swale (near Tomales Point), and then, looking up, saw a large, jet-black mountain lion calmly sitting, eyes half asleep, looking out at us from about 30 yards away. This lion was not darkish, not a brownish-tawny like some I've seen since, but jet black. My friend (Burke Richardson) and I stood there, stunned. It then started to slink away from us in a large semi-circle, attempting to hide in the grass. We were sadly without a camera, which was not like us at all, but, oh well."

— John Balawejder, Santa Cruz

"black panther," which was forwarded to the Department of Fish and Game for expert analysis. After studying it, scientists responded with a clear verdict: "This is a black house cat." Bobzian agreed: "I really think people are seeing house cats most of the time." According to Shelly Lewis of East Bay parks, the rash of sightings of black panthers at Las Trampas Regional Wilderness was "a story that someone let loose several black cats" about 10 years ago.

Sightings of mountain lions have become far more common than at any time in the past 100 years, Bobzian noted, but even then, are a rare event.

"Just the idea of seeing one, a mountain lion, is a very special event," Bobzian said. "I know wildlife biologists who have

spent their entire career outdoors and have never seen a mountain lion. They are people right here in this park district who are out all the time and who have never seen one. A big shift in the outdoors is that a lot of people are very happy to see a mountain lion and they want to tell somebody about it."

Bobzian said he has seen eight mountain lions in his career, most recently at the Sunol-Ohlone Wilderness and Brushy Peak Regional Preserve near Livermore.

Tom Stienstra's Outdoors Report can be heard Saturdays on KCBS (740 AM) and FM 106.9 at 7:35 a.m., 9:35 a.m. and 12:35 p.m. E-mail Tom Stienstra at tstienstra@sfgchronicle.com.



The Chronicle 1994

Black jaguars, such as this gal shown moving into the San Francisco Zoo in 1994, are natives of Central America and are not likely found in these parts.

Russian priest to investigate bigfoot sighting in Siberia

KEMEROVO, February 19 (RIA Novosti) - A group of people led by the Russian Orthodox Bishop of Kemerovo and a regional official set out on Thursday in search of a bigfoot sighted in the Tashtagol area by hunters, a regional spokesman said.

Earlier this week, the Kemerovo regional administration released a report that local hunters had spotted "some hairy humanoid creatures with a height of 1.5-2 meters [5'6"-6']" near the Azass Cave on Mount Shoriya. The report was illustrated with a photograph from inside the cave showing the track of an unidentified creature.

"From the nearest village of Ust-Kabyrz, the bishop, regional head and a group of others will reach the Azass Cave by the only transportation possible: snowmobiles," the spokesman told RIA Novosti.

He added that the priest would also make a private visit to Mount Shoriya, where he will open and bless a small church at a gulag barracks open to tourists. In the Soviet era, there were a large number of gulag camps in the area northeast of Novosibirsk.

According to the head of the department of anthropology at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow, anthropologists have never seen or studied the body of a bigfoot or yeti, although there are numerous reports of their sightings throughout the world.

He also noted that yetis for some reason are always spotted singularly, which is "biological nonsense," as a large population must exist in order to create generation after generation. According to the anthropologist, Earth has been studied so thoroughly that if a population of yeti existed it would have been confirmed.

The Kemerovo regional spokesman said a scientific expedition is being organized for the summer to investigate the sighting. The financial details of the expedition are being worked out and there are already many enthusiasts, businessmen and hunters ready to help.