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Easing Into Ufology, Or The Study Of UFOs

The people who believe most fervently that UFOs are real are those who have seen one. For most of them, it was an unusual light or object in the sky some distance away. Others have had close encounters, meaning the UFO was less than, say, five hundred feet away.

The figure is just a general one. So far as is known, no one's ever run a tape measure out to a hovering UFO to see if it qualifies as a close encounter. Usually, anyone that close is too scared to wonder how close it is. More than likely they're praying that nothing bad will happen to them.

The figure of five hundred feet is simply a general guide that investigators use to help identify different types of sightings. What counts is whether the object is close enough to see any details, like windows or lights.

Most people who have had sightings or encounters remember them vividly years later and generally are unshakable in their belief that what they saw was real. Those of us who've never seen a UFO but believe they're real do so because we've talked to people who have seen them or have read about them.

French scientist Claude Poher became interested in UFOs because of something he read. It was a report issued by University of Colorado scientists who had been commissioned by the U.S. Air Force in 1966 to study the question of UFOs.

The chairman of that committee, ignoring the fact that a fourth of the cases studied couldn't be explained, concluded in 1969 that further study of the phenomenon was not warranted.

This made the Air Force happy. It had been saddled with the annoying UFO problem for twenty years and promptly ended its investigations. But the French scientist Claude Poher read the nine hundred thirty seven-page report, came to the opposite conclusion – and persuaded the French government to establish a scientific

agency to study UFOs.

People who believe UFOs are real outnumber those who don't. At least that is what a number of Gallup Polls taken since 1966 have shown. If you don't believe UFOs are real, you're in a minority that you probably didn't know existed.

If you're undecided, what follows may be considered as sort of a guide to the world of UFOs... Ufology 101, you might say.

START 'SMALL' AND GROW

My belief is that it is better for the uninitiated to start off with "small" or "simple" sightings and work their way up to the more complex types of UFOs or encounters. The average person, if he or she ever thinks much about UFOs, usually envisions a disc-shaped object, perhaps with a dome on top and measuring twenty to thirty feet across.

But a UFO is many things, many sizes, many shapes and, often, many colors. If someone told you he had seen a UFO three hundred yards wide, you might give up before you start. But if you started out accepting the possibility that "small" ones exist and gradually hear about bigger and bigger ones, then you might eventually accept the idea that some UFOs can be bigger than two or three football fields.

A few people have told me about seeing UFOs no bigger than a basketball and many have told of seeing huge triangular-shaped objects a hundred to three hundred yards wide. I have no way of proving it, but I believe the large triangular object has been the most commonly seen size and shape in the United States since the mid-1970s. (For more on triangular objects, [click here](#).)

In my own baptism, most of the UFOs I first heard about were strange lights doing things in the sky that no aircraft can do. Things like right-angle turns at extremely high speeds, stopping and starting in midair, going slowly and then accelerating at unbelievable speeds, bobbing up and down, rocking from side to side, swinging back and forth like a pendulum, fluttering down like a falling leaf, zigzagging through the sky, and simply disappearing only to reappear an instant later elsewhere in the sky.

When I first heard of such antics, I was puzzled and fascinated. I have been an aviation buff all my life and know the maneuvers being reported are impossible. They violate the laws of physics, at least as we know them. Yet, many people have said they've seen UFOs doing such things. Many people.

'JUST LIGHTS' STILL IMPORTANT

After a while, I learned that these weird lights are seen rather often. Seasoned UFO investigators consider them ordinary and most pay little attention to such reports because not much new can be learned from them. However, such lights still intrigue me because they're a reminder that "those things" are still out there.

On April 1, 1975, the same night that a woman named Susie and her sons saw "[Popcorn UFOs](#)," a series of unusual sightings occurred just a few miles away along the Minnesota shore of Lake Superior between the cities of Two Harbors and Silver Bay. More than a dozen witnesses in several locations along that twenty-five-mile stretch saw a group of UFOs that I call the "April Fool's Lights."

Todd Lindahl, one of those who'd seen them, suggested the name to me. They may very well have been the same lights as the Popcorn UFO but with slightly different behavior. Todd easily remembered the date.



"At first I thought it was some kind of April fool's joke," said Todd, then twenty-three. He lived in Two Harbors and worked on an ore-crushing machine at the Reserve Mining Company in Silver Bay. At the time of the sighting, nine fifty-five p.m., he and two fellow employees were riding together in a car.

"We were on our way to work on the midnight shift," Todd said. "We were four or five miles north of Two Harbors on U.S. 61 when we saw these four lights out over the lake. They were sort of ahead of us and to the right. They were bright orange and disc shaped."

The lights were spread out one behind the other horizontally, each a little higher than the one behind it. Almost immediately, trees obscured their view.

Todd and his companions speeded up to get to a place called Silver Creek Cliff, where they hoped to get a higher, unobstructed view of the lake. But once at the cliff they saw nothing. Then a minute later, less than a mile farther north, they saw the lights reappear.

EIGHT TO TEN IN A LINE

"All of a sudden, the lights just went on again, only this time there were eight or ten of them," Todd said. "This time, they were straight out over the lake from us and were in more of a vertical pattern. They were the same color. Suddenly, we lost sight of them again and that's the last we saw of them."

A few minutes later, two fellow employees in another car also saw the lights while driving to work.

"It was about ten-fifteen and Mike said, 'Look out over the lake!'" Allen Michaelson, who was driving, told me. "I could see some kind of yellowish-orange lights way off in the distance, kind of faded and not real bright. I couldn't tell how many there were and when we got up on the cliff they just faded out."

Just a few minutes earlier, about ten after ten, wildlife biologist James Breyen and his wife Ranae were driving home after visiting friends in Knife River Valley west of Two Harbors. This was just a mile or so from where Susie and her boys saw the Popcorn UFO.

"We were headed east into Two Harbors on Route 11 when all of a sudden there was a set of reddish-orange lights in the sky ahead of us and to our left," Breyen said.

"There were half a dozen or so in a sort of oval pattern, and they were moving

along and all of a sudden they just went out. It was like they went behind trees, but there were no trees there. I assumed the lights were out over Lake Superior.

"Then, when we got to the top of the hill, the lights came on again. We watched for just a short while and then they went out again."

Of all the "April Fool's" sightings, Jerry LaVigne made one of the clearest. Then eighteen, he lived in Silver Bay.

"It was about five minutes to ten and I had just come into the house and happened to look out the window," he said. "I saw four lights quite a ways out over the lake. When I first saw them, they were all on and then they went out, one, two, three, four! Just like that, from left to right!"

Fascinated, Jerry called his sister to come and look.

"A few minutes later they came on again," he said, "much farther to the south, and they came on in sequence, one, two, three, four, from left to right! They didn't seem to be moving at all but were more or less stationary. After about thirty-five to forty seconds, they went out again in the same order.

"We kept watching and we saw them again, only this time there were eight of them and they were even farther to the south. They were the same color, sort of a light bulb color, and they came on one at a time, left to right. After half a minute or so, they went out, again from left to right, and that's the last we saw of them."

Whatever the lights were, they exhibited curious behavior for which, as we say in the trade, there is no earthly explanation.

TOO MANY WITNESSES

Fred Du Fresne, the deputy who answered the call to Susie's home earlier that evening, probably would have felt right at home watching those lights out over Lake Superior. The lights that he and the other deputy had seen fifteen months earlier also went out in sequence, one, two, three, four. (For details of Susie and Fred's sightings, [click here](#).)

So, what is the significance of all this? Here we have a "fleet" of UFOs that go off and on in sequence and apparently, depending on your vantage point, hopping around like popcorn popping. And the things just possibly might have been around for fifteen months or more, sort of like a UFO in residence at that time for that part of Minnesota.

Too many people in too many locations saw the lights for them to be a figment of somebody's imagination. Secondly, there were a number of them, apparently acting in unison or according to some pattern or command. Thirdly, the fact that the lights went on and off in sequence, rather than all at once, and the fact that they flew in a more or less well defined formation indicates that some kind of intelligence was behind it all.

If nothing else, this should prove that those lights were not a natural phenomenon of some kind. Beyond that, who knows? (This "UFO in Residence" may have been around a lot longer because in 1959, a UFO was tracked on radar near [Finland](#), Minnesota, just twenty-five to miles northwest of Silver Bay.)

Not all strange lights appear in the sky, as Dale Marg can testify. One morning



before daybreak several weeks earlier, in March 1975, he was driving to work from his home near Gordon, Wisconsin, which is fifty miles south of Two Harbors, as crows and UFOs fly. Then thirty, Marg was an engineering technician with the Wisconsin state highway department in nearby Superior.

"I was coming up County Road G, driving toward Gordon, and saw lights in my rearview mirror," Marg said. "I thought it was a car. A little further on, the thing started gaining on me rapidly, coming up behind me real fast.

"I thought it was going to ram the back of my car and I cringed, but it just went up over the top of my car and on out of sight. It was circular and all white, pulsating."

That could be a little unnerving. Whatever it was – it certainly wasn't a big Mack truck – it was white and pulsating and zooming along close to the ground, much like the one Susie saw from her home near Two Harbors on the morning of April 1.

ROTATING OBJECT

From strange lights in the night sky, you graduate to UFOs seen in the daylight. Just as dawn was breaking at three minutes after six on April 3, less than forty-eight hours after Susie's first sighting, Arlene Shelhorn and her teenage daughter saw a disc-shaped object. They lived about a mile from Susie in the Two Harbors area.

"My husband was in the shower and my daughter woke me up, saying, 'Mom! Mom! Come here! A UFO!'" Mrs. Shelhorn told me. At the time she worked as a biological technician for a federal agency in nearby Duluth.

"She was so excited she could hardly talk. I looked out the window and saw this thing about a quarter of a mile behind the house. It was round and sort of disc-shaped. It was going very slowly and appeared to be rotating. It had about three lights that were going around it. I hollered to my husband but he didn't hear me.

"It was heading behind this big evergreen tree and just before it got there, the object tipped up on its side a bit and I could see it was shiny, metallic looking and had a rim about a third of the way from the edge. Then it was gone and we didn't see it any more.

"That was the strangest thing. I thought, 'Boy, this is really something and all I can do is sit and look at it.' When my husband came out of the shower, I told him and he said, 'Well, they've been seeing them all over Knife River Valley for the last two weeks.'"

One fantastic story after another, each by itself mind-boggling for anyone who hadn't encountered such tales before.

If they were true, what did they mean? It seemed to me that someone or something from an alien culture was in our midst, in fairly large numbers.

It was more than mind boggling. Hearing these stories and many more in just a

week was a jolt, a wrenching of the mind that was more sobering and maturing than perhaps any other experience in my life.

I did not believe UFOs were real before that week in the Superior-Duluth area started. Accepting these strange tales requires a monumental change in thinking. In my case, it soon destroyed forever the egotistical conviction that I knew what could and could not be in this world.

TOTAL IMMERSION

I was more fortunate than most people in getting involved in the UFO phenomenon. I had what amounted to a total immersion course in which I was able to interrogate many people about many different kinds of cases in just one week. On my first assignment I interviewed more UFO witnesses than most investigators do in ten years.

The ordinary citizen who isn't involved in UFO investigations probably wouldn't know more than two or three people who would admit to having seen a UFO. Yet, it is likely that many more friends and acquaintances have had UFO experiences that they don't talk about.

I was subjected to a massive bombardment of UFO testimony – and jumped to all sorts of unwarranted conclusions. In the beginning, I could accept some kinds of UFO reports and not others. Some were simply too weird. But gradually I found myself considering these other things might also be possible. For me, it's been a growth process that hasn't stopped.

Who knows what will come up next in this fascinating world of UFOs? It is an extremely complex phenomenon, and I doubt that anyone knows just how complex it is.

We do not yet know what UFOs ultimately mean for our earth and us. But we do know that for some reason they seem to be looking us over, very closely at times. We should return the favor and keep an eye on them as well.

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