UFOs: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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Abstract

• The concept of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) now called UAP (unidentified anomalous phenomena), will be discussed in an historical context. UFO stories will be presented from history. The current media hype about some recently released photographs will be reviewed within the context of historical examples, within a Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes approach.
What I’ll Be Talking About

• Numbers of Sightings in Time
• Some Definitions
  • Close Encounters
  • UFO
  • UAP
• Relevant Historical Examples
  • California
  • England
  • Montana
• Lessons to be Learned from History
What I’ll Be Talking About

• Modern Examples of UFO Sightings
  • The Triangle Video (Green Pyramid UFO)
  • The Flying Saucer (Gimbal)
  • The Go Fast Video
• Alternative Explanations
• Official UN Response In the Event of Future Contact
• A New Documentary
• Conclusions and Review
• What the Future Will Bring
• Questions From Audience
Numbers of Sightings in Time

- They are from two different sources (numbers do not agree)
- They cannot be combined to show a longer time series graphic
Some Mindful Definitions

• Close Encounters
  • First Kind
    • Sighting
  • Second Kind
    • Physical Evidence
  • Third Kind
    • Human-ETI Meeting

• UFO
  • Unidentified Flying Object

• UAP
  • Unidentified Anomalous Phenomenon
Relevant Historical Examples

- California  
  - November 1896
- England  
  - March 1909
- Montana  
  - August 1972
Relevant Historical Example

- California
  - 1896
- Here’s a newspaper sketch
  - What does UFO look like?
  - Consider the date
  - Consider the aircraft of the period
Relevant Historical Example

• England
  • 1909

• Here’s another newspaper sketch
  • What does UFO look like?
  • Consider the date
  • Consider the aircraft of the period
Earliest Relevant Historical Examples

• Think about it:
  • Both are exactly what people around 1900 would have expected aircraft to look like
• Think about it:
  • If ETIs are trying to conceal their presence by using terrestrial-style ships, why are they using searchlights?
• Think about it:
  • If we have effective night-vision devices today, why would an advanced ETI need searchlights?
• Think about it:
  • people saw a light (Venus, an airplane, a balloon, etc.?)
  • subconsciously added details
1972 Relevant Historical Example

- Sightings were completely unexpected
- Path of UFO crossed sparsely-inhabited region
- UFO was visible a total of 101 seconds
- UFO was visible no more than 30 seconds at any one spot
- There are dozens of clear photographs of this UFO
1972 Asteroid near miss
- Multiple sightings and photographs
- Entered atmosphere over Utah, travelling north, exited over Canada
- Object was size of bus
- Velocity was 15 km/sec
- No closer than 58 km to surface

Utah; Idaho; Montana; Alberta

Relevant Historical Example
Lessons to be Learned from History - Mars Canals?

- Percival Lowell saw canals
- But there are NO canals
  - human brain tendencies
    - connect unrelated points together by lines
- Most recent theories
  - Lowell’s telescope acted as an ophthalmoscope
    - caused Lowell to see the reflection of the radial pattern of his own retinal blood vessels
Lessons to be Learned from History - Superluminal Velocities?

• In the '70s/'80s
  • Some questioned Einstein’s Theory of Relativity because of discovered quasars
  • Further analyses showed otherwise
Lessons to be Learned from History - Size and Distance Relationships in Photographs

Credit: Bill Ingalls

Credit: Harold Geller
Lessons to be Learned from History - What Portion of Electromagnetic Spectrum?

• We must consider the entire electromagnetic spectrum
Recent Examples of UFO Sightings

• The Triangle Video
  • aka Green Pyramid UFO
• The Flying Saucer (Gimbal)
• The Go Fast Video
The UFO Movie THEY Don’t Want You to See

• A documentary written/produced/directed by Brian Dunning

A documentary bringing you the real science behind today’s UFO mania.

In an age when misinformation, alternative facts, and conspiracy theories have become mainstream, UFOs have risen to become one of the most-talked about pop culture phenomena. With all of this noise, how can anyone know how much of this is true? What is in our skies? What do we know, and how do we know it? And most importantly: Are we being visited?

FAQs

Who are THEY?

Obviously the title is tongue in cheek. But there actually are people who would prefer that you know less real science… because the less you know, the more susceptible you are to mainstream programming that promotes and sensationalizes old false UFO tales.

Is this just more spooky storytelling like we’ve seen a million times?

Quite the opposite! And it’s not a “debunking” film either. Whatever questions we have about UFOs and aliens, science already has a lot of the answers and we’re working on answering the rest of them. The film features experts in:

• Physics & relativity
• Exobiology
• Exoplanetary spectral analysis
• Image analysis
• Pilot training and air traffic control
• Defense

The UFO Movie THEY Don’t Want You to See lays out for you exactly what we know and how we know it.
The UFO Movie THEY Don’t Want You to See

We all love the idea of visiting aliens — but when we visit astrobiochemist Dr. Kaitlin Rasmussen at the 107-inch telescope in Texas, she tells us of some of the deep problems with interstellar travel.

President Jimmy Carter once saw a UFO — and we solve his case, along with his grandson Josh Carter at the presidential residence in Plains, Georgia.

Astrophysicist Dakotah Tyler discusses the popular belief that aliens are probably smarter than us and therefore know the laws of physics better than we do. Is that true?

Lt Col Hal Bidlack, Ph.D (USAF, ret.), a former Minuteman missile officer, walks us through the rumored story that UFOs have been known to disable the US nuclear arsenal.
The UFO Movie THEY Don’t Want You to See

Everyone wants to know the deal with the US Navy UFO videos! We get the straight dope from Mick West, the world’s foremost UFO video analyst, whose ID on these videos was accepted by the Pentagon’s AARO.

Are pilots “trained observers”? Are they better able than anyone else to ID something weird in the sky? We fly with one of the nation’s top flight instructors, Chris Freeze, to learn what pilots can (and can’t) do.

How likely is the very popular explanation that some UFOs are probably secret military aircraft? There is a very firm answer for this — and most people have never heard it before.

Jason Bush, a pilot and senior Air Traffic Controller, tells what kind of mistakes military pilots make just as often as other pilots, and as ordinary people.
The UFO Movie THEY Don’t Want You to See

Congress keeps having UFO hearings. What are they doing right, and what are they doing wrong?

A popular story of Zimbabwe says a UFO landed in a schoolyard and gave a telepathic message to 62 children. What is the quality of evidence supporting this event?

A popular story from television says a UFO once landed at an Air Force base in Rendlesham Forest, England. What is the quality of evidence that this ever happened?

Finally, the most exciting news of all — what are we doing to reach out to possible alien civilizations, and how much do we know about how they’re most likely to reach out to us — and why?
Explanations of Incidents

• Watch/read these links
  • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxgTqGRs6eY
  • https://twitter.com/cuomoprimetime/status/1395924723721285638
  • https://www.salon.com/2020/08/16/sorry-believers-skeptics-say-there-are-rational-explanations-for-military-pilots-UFO-videos/
  • https://badUFOs.blogspot.com/
  • https://skepticalinquirer.org/2013/11/UFO_hoaxes_theres_an_app_for_that/?/si/show/UFO_hoaxes
All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO)

• New DoD website for AARO
  • https://www.aaro.mil/
The UFO Rogues Gallery Takes Over America - Part 1 [published 6 July 2021]

• [https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4787](https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4787)
  • “An unlikely group of paranormalists has persuaded the American public that the government takes UFOs seriously.”
  • “a long, long history involving the same cast of characters over many decades”
  • “by all accounts, government officials who were aware of AATIP and its predecessors resisted making the program public simply because it was such an embarrassment”
  • “if you assumed that the seminal New York Times article from 2017 … was the result of a serious journalistic investigation by one of history’s most respected newspapers … the answer is no, no it wasn’t”
Official UN Response In the Event of Future Contact

• Nine Principles
  • Seek to verify evidence
  • Alert other research organizations
  • Messages to IAU and UN under Article XI of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space
  • Disseminate detection “promptly, openly, and widely” including the media
Official UN Response In the Event of Future Contact

• Remaining (of the nine principles)
  • Release data for confirmation by others
  • Confirm and monitor more data recordings
  • Stop all noise at appropriate frequencies
  • Do not send a response signal
  • Advise and consult with other international organizations as to the procedure for further actions
Some Questions for Thought

1. In your opinion, what is the cause of most unexplained UFO sightings?
2. Do you believe there is a massive conspiracy on the part of the governments of the world to cover up the truth about UFOs regardless of what that truth is?
3. Do you think there is intelligent life in other parts of the universe?
4. What types of aliens are visiting the Earth?
5. Regardless of what is currently true or arguable, if UFOs were proven to be alien craft visiting our planet for some sinister plot and this information was exposed to public view, what would be the reaction of the general populace?
6. What should the government do if information became available about alien visitors?
7. Have you ever been abducted by aliens?
8. Do you think we'll ever be visited by alien beings in the near future?
Conclusions and Review
What the Future Will Bring - Using the Past

- Need to learn from the past
- Experts at 1969 conference (published 1972)
  - Sagan, Drake, Morrison, Hartmann, Menzel
- Some conclusions and comments from 1969 (not all in agreement)
  - Continued decline of public interest in UFOs
  - Government should withdraw support of UFO studies
  - Scientists of the 21st century will call UFOs greatest nonsense of 20th century
  - Insufficient evidence to exclude possibility that UFOs are space vehicles from ETIs
  - People are finding science increasingly less attractive and less relevant to their problems than was the case for previous generations
For the Record

• **Upside**
  - Lots of planets discovered orbiting stars in our galaxy
  - We have discovered water on lots of worlds in Solar System
  - We have discovered many galaxies are out there
  - The universe is huge
  - Science is the way to know the universe

• **Downside**
  - ~1% of exoplanets discovered are in the habitable zone
    - (only 0.3% Earth-sized in HZ)
  - Just because you have water, doesn't mean you have life
  - The Fermi Paradox
  - Expansion of the universe
  - We are not the center of the universe
Some Popular Resources

- Exoplanets by Michael Summers and James Trefil
- Imagined Life by James Trefil and Michael Summers
- UFO's – A Scientific Debate by Sagan and Page (eds.)
- Extraterrestrial Altruism by Vakoch (ed.)

Contact for questions: hgeller@gmu.edu
Responding to Claims about Alien UFOs:
A Brief List of Resources on the Web
by Andrew Fraknoi (Fromm Institute, U. of San Francisco)

Mick West key article:
Mick West does excellent videos debunking some of the most famous recent cases:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF3UCTZiVg9wrIEzO7Om6jw See his CNN interview
about current claims: https://twitter.com/cuomoprimetime/status/1395924723721285638
of investigations and skeptical examinations. Updated at: https://badUFOs.blogspot.com/
McGaha, J. & Nickell, J. “The UFO Identification Process” from Skeptical Inquirer 2018:
Fraknoi, A. UFO’s: A Lot Less than Meets the Eye (short overview):
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258377682_UFO's_A_Lot_Less_than_Meets_the_Eye
Ian Ridpath UFO Skeptic Page: http://www.ianridpath.com/UFO/UFOindex.html British
science writer investigates UFO reports, and discusses astronomical causes of UFO sightings.

Investigation of cases by a veteran space journalist. See his useful video at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdkbJ-4r2ZY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdkbJ-4r2ZY)


Shostak, S: Aliens There but not Here (a thoughtful 2020 article from *Skeptical Inquirer*):

[https://skepticalinquirer.org/2020/05/aliens-there-but-not-here/](https://skepticalinquirer.org/2020/05/aliens-there-but-not-here/)


Debunking the famous video.


[https://skepticalinquirer.org/2015/03/alien_lights_at_phoenix_stephenville_and_elsewhere_a_postmortem/?/si/show/alien_lights_at_phoenix_stephenville_and_elsewhere_a_postmortem](https://skepticalinquirer.org/2015/03/alien_lights_at_phoenix_stephenville_and_elsewhere_a_postmortem/?/si/show/alien_lights_at_phoenix_stephenville_and_elsewhere_a_postmortem)

Apps to Create Your Own UFO Photos (from *Skeptical Inquirer*):

[https://skepticalinquirer.org/2013/11/UFO_hoaxes_theres_an_app_for_that/?/si/show/UFO_hoaxes_theres_an_app_for_that](https://skepticalinquirer.org/2013/11/UFO_hoaxes_theres_an_app_for_that/?/si/show/UFO_hoaxes_theres_an_app_for_that)
Questions From Audience?