

Introduction

Ufology – the study of UFOs – is equally exciting, educational, exhilarating, enlightening, exasperating, exhausting and embarrassing. It is also a subject that embraces all sorts of wonderful theories and explanations, so it is essential that the data used to support these claims is as well investigated and researched as possible.

The term 'unidentified flying object', or UFO, was introduced in 1952 by the United States Air Force (USAF) in preference to the more sensational 'flying saucer' label, which did not encompass the wide spectrum of things seen in the sky. When the USAF-funded Condon Committee started investigating UFO reports in the late 1960s, it noted that: 'An unidentified flying object (UFO, pronounced OOFO) is defined as the stimulus for a report made by one or more individuals of something seen in the sky (or an object thought to be capable of flying but seen when landed on the earth) which the observer could not identify as having an ordinary natural origin.'

However, even the term UFO does not meet with the approval of ufology purists. For a start, what is initially unidentified can become identified after a few moments of observation, or in the light of more exhaustive research and investigation. This means that the term UFO is only a temporary label for most sightings before they become categorised as identified flying objects (IFOs).

Another bone of contention is the use of the word 'object', as this implies that a sighting is generated by a solid 'nuts and bolts' vehicle, or at least something physically tangible that creates the stimulus for the sighting.

What is ufology?

Ufology is the study of UFOs, and ufologists are the people who investigate UFO reports and anything related to them. It encompasses a very wide range of subjects – everything from astronomy, hypnosis, physics, history, literature and genetics, to theology, sociology, parapsychology, meteorology, geology, archaeology, astrobiology and psychology. Indeed, virtually any 'ology' can be useful in the analysis and study of UFO reports and theories. No single person can adequately cover all these specialities, and the role of the ufologist is often to collect all the available evidence which can then be submitted to suitable experts for more detailed examination. This is often

the case when photographic evidence, or ground traces recorded at the site of an alleged UFO landing, are collected. Hypnotic regression experts have often been employed to uncover alien abduction experiences, and experts have been used to X-ray abductees to look for evidence of alien implants inside an abductee's body.

For a thorough investigation of UFOs you really need to take a multi-disciplinary approach, and a range of experts is needed to obtain the full picture. This rarely happens, though the Condon Committee – funded by the United States Air Force – did have a team that included astronomers, psychologists, a chemist, a physicist, an electrical engineer and several consultants from other disciplines.

Amateur UFO groups, which began being formed in the 1950s, gather members with the aim of investigating reports in more detail. Their memberships include people with different levels of expertise and specialist knowledge, but are ad hoc compared to the range of experts specially selected to work on the Condon Committee. So in reality, even in the most scientifically orientated UFO groups, analysis and investigation can often be a low priority. Instead, much of a group's efforts are often exhausted in running regular meetings, organising speakers and publishing a newsletter or magazine.

The British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) has developed a few special projects using the expertise of its nationwide membership. One is its 'Vehicle Interference' project, which chronicles cases where UFOs are alleged to have caused cars and other vehicles to stop, and only restart when the UFO leaves the scene. BUFORA states that: 'We have research specialists in many overlapping fields of study from specific cases or UFO effects, spirituality, media influence, the wider paranormal and crop circles. BUFORA prides itself on investigating in a scientifically factual approach the research of the physics of the universe and how this affects time, travelling distances and other dimensions, chemistry and propulsion. Psychology and how cases can be influenced and affected by belief systems and wider agendas are explored.'

All these efforts are the tip of the iceberg, and are only as good as the time, effort, expertise and finances that individuals or groups can devote to a project. It is sobering to learn that in Britain the average murder investigation costs £1.5 million;

OPPOSITE: Like a scene from H. G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds* featuring the invasion of Martians, a UFO terrorised the neighbourhood of Quiney-Voisin airfield, France, with beams of light on 30 September 1954.

Mary Evans
Picture Library

by contrast, amateur UFO investigators have nowhere near this budget to study the *entire range* of UFO phenomena, let alone to spend this amount on one investigation. Even if they did have such resources, you only have to look at the claims, counter-claims and evidence that are used and variously interpreted to acquit or convict a murder suspect. Like UFO cases, many criminal cases are never adequately solved, and fact, fiction, rumour and myth circulate and increasingly confuse matters as time passes (for example, the infamous Jack the Ripper serial murders in Victorian London, and – in terms of ufology – the Roswell ‘crash’ case, which has taken on a life of its own since 1947).

In this Internet era most UFO organisations have stopped publishing their own magazines and now run websites. Fortunately, however, many back issues of old, obscure and hard to find UFO publications have been made available on such sites or on dedicated archive sites. Local and national groups still exist despite the Internet, and a few conferences are held annually, or on a one-off basis, to provide an opportunity to discuss the latest issues surrounding the subject. In the virtual world you can keep in touch with the latest ufological activities through Facebook, Twitter and similar social media groups.

Considering the vast amount of UFO information available, an amateur ufologist can either be a generalist who tries to collect all the pieces of the UFO jigsaw in order to achieve an all-embracing view of the subject, or, alternatively, a specialist who concentrates on just one or two particular areas. At its simplest, you can collect and investigate cases in your local area, or you can concentrate on specific types of cases, like close encounters, UFO photographs, car stoppages or abductions.

Within the loosely scientific realms of ufology there are two major types of ufologist: the field investigators who go out and interview witnesses and visit sighting locations, and the armchair ufologists who analyse UFO data and comment on cases. Armchair ufologists are generally frowned upon, and tend to be regarded as aloof and more sceptical than investigators who have taken the trouble to get out amongst the UFO spotters. However, the same person can, of course, take on both roles, and both approaches are equally valuable.

Another type of ufologist is the ‘virtual ufologist’ or ‘digital ufologist’. These are much like armchair ufologists, except that they rely on the Internet for all the information they use to study the subject.

US ufologist Jerome Clark terms ufologists who are overtly sceptical ‘pelicanists’. This tag derives from the famous 1947 Kenneth Arnold sighting being explained as having been caused by

a flock of pelicans, much to the disgust of those who regard the Arnold UFO case as being both significant and extraordinary.

Outside of the realms of ufology are numerous groups and cults that believe UFOs are operated by god-like or supernatural beings that take an interest in protecting humanity. Members of such UFO religions are generally known as cultists.

As might be expected with a controversial subject like ufology, there are many divisions between groups and individuals. Disputes mainly arise over the validity of different cases and the importance of one theory over others. There is a spectrum that runs from believers to outright sceptical debunkers. There are also groups that are more interested in crop circles, who are known as cereologists. Other groups are more interested in Ancient Astronaut theories, and look to such structures as Stonehenge and the Pyramids to obtain evidence that aliens visited us in the past and guided our early history and religions.

The past few years have seen a significant worldwide rise in the exopolitics movement, which accepts that UFOs exist and that human governments are in secret league with extraterrestrial civilisations. The movement’s mission is to campaign for full disclosure of the details of such contacts, and the release of alleged alien technologies that could revolutionise our lives. Exopolitics encompasses ufology, SETI (the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence), psychology, ecology, anthropology and politics, and the term came into common use after the publication of Alfred Webre’s e-book *Towards a Decade of Contact* in 2000.

Exopolitics obtains evidence of this suspected global conspiracy from UFO sighting reports, the testimony of whistleblowers who allege they have been involved in government cover-ups, documents gained from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, Ancient Astronaut evidence, reports of UFO crash cases, remote viewing and channelling. Overall, its supporters conclude that we are not alone in the Universe, and we never have been.

We all have our own prejudices and expectations regarding UFOs, but we can all work together to investigate UFO sightings and conduct research to the highest levels possible. This book provides the information that you will need to have a full understanding of the UFO phenomenon, and it will hopefully inspire at least some readers to carry out their own UFO investigations and research. For seasoned ufologists it provides a much-needed overview of the subject by utilising a variety of historical and theoretical perspectives.

Nigel Watson
July 2013

OPPOSITE: UFOs come in all shapes and sizes. When driving to Barmedman, New South Wales, Australia, Mrs Shirley Ryall and her brother, Bevan Adam, saw this UFO that even they admitted looked like it had escaped from a science fiction film or Jules Verne novel.
Mary Evans
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