

UFO probably 'ball lightning'

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Jim Trent and Linda Alderson didn't know what to make of it when they saw five dazzling red lights swoop down on their quiet Veneta neighborhood a week ago Sunday.

But on Monday, after comparing details of the sighting with other similar cases, an expert in the field of unidentified flying objects said the lights were most likely terrestrial and naturally caused.

Mark Rodeghier, a researcher and member of the board of directors at the Center for UFO Studies in Chicago, said that Veneta's strange red lights seem to fall into a category of UFOs tentatively identified as a rare natural occurrence akin to ball lightning.

Ball lightning is a rare lightning form emit-

ted in glowing balls rather than bolts. Several UFO sightings in recent years have been attributed to ball lightning.

Rodeghier recently completed a study of 441 UFO sightings in which automobiles were affected. Veneta's lights seem to fall into the same "subset of events" as 14 of the auto-related incidents. The red lights seem to be a "geo-magnetic terrestrial phenomena" somehow linked to cool, fair weather, he says.

In each of the 14 cases Rodeghier studied, motorists were confronted by the luminescent red lights and their cars were affected. In one case, a battery was partially melted. In another, the horn, headlights and radio became inoperable for several minutes before gradually regaining full power.

"I've surmised that it's a geo-magnetic terrestrial phenomena somewhat like ball light-

ning, but it doesn't occur in thunderstorms as ball lightning always does," Rodeghier says. "It (the red light phenomenon) tends to occur in cool, fair weather, generally as a cold front passed through."

On Oct. 4, the evening Trent and Alderson were "visited" by the red lights, the skies had cleared after a week of frequent rain. The low temperatures most of the week had been in the mid-40s, but thermometers dipped to 40 degrees on that Sunday night.

"I was never really scared, but I could feel the little hairs standing up on my arms and the back of my neck," says Trent, who was watching television with Alderson in her home when five ruby-red lights swooped down on quiet McCutcheon Street.

"I guarantee we hadn't had a thing to drink

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