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Sky lights still a mystery

Authorities were mystified by sightings across the Northeast which provoked dozens of calls to police and fire departments about a "large white ball descending in the sky."

"We have no idea at this time what it was," said Federal Aviation Administration duty officer Bill Nantz in New York, dismissing the possibility it was a stray aircraft.

"Beats us," said Edward Yandrich of the National Weather Service.

Jim Chanarde of the Union City College Astronomer's Club in Cranford, N.J., said the observatory there sighted the object through a telescope at about 8:33 p.m. Tuesday.

Although the Comet Austin is in the evening sky this month it appears on the horizon and "has nothing of this brightness," said Chanarde, who believed it was a meteor.