

# Green men over Wikieup? Probably just Red Planet

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**WIKIEUP** — The Arizona Department of Public Safety said the people were sober and on their way to, not from, Las Vegas.

The motorists reported that an other-worldly light on the western horizon followed their car as they traveled toward Las Vegas shortly before dawn Thursday.

However, an expert on heavenly bodies said later Thursday that the light probably was nothing more than the planet Mars.

A member of a group that compiles reports of UFO sightings does not agree.

At this point, officers of the DPS don't really care what it was. They are tired of all the hoopla.

A motorist, who DPS spokesman Alan Schmidt said wants to

remain anonymous, told an officer that she, another adult and her two sons were driving to Las Vegas, Nev., on U.S. 93 early Thursday when she and her sons spotted a strange orange light that hovered above the western horizon and appeared to follow the car as it traveled north.

The object was said to "pulsate like a star" and was described as appearing "about twice as bright and twice as big as a star."

Patrolman Veronica Minch, Schmidt said, had spotted the object earlier.

"She thought little of it and went on about her business," Schmidt said.

"Meanwhile, down the road, these people see it."

The DPS phoned Nellis Air Force Base, near Las Vegas, "to

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see if any rockets or balloons had been launched," Schmidt said.

"They said they had no activity like that."

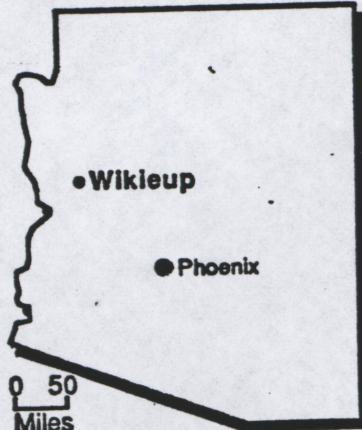
The DPS then reported the incident to the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, a private, non-profit organization that fields reports of UFO sightings.

Meanwhile, Carl Posey, Tucson-based spokesman for the National Optical Astronomy Observatories, which include Kitt Peak National Observatory near Tucson, said the motorists most likely saw Mars, which now is nearly as close as it ever gets to the Earth.

"Every 15 to 17 years, Mars makes a very close approach to Earth," Posey said. "That is what we are seeing now."

Reddish-orange Mars is now the brightest object in the sky other than the sun, the moon and the planet Venus, which is now clearly visible near the moon at sundown, Posey said.

"Mars is rising in the southeast right after sundown and setting



in the southwest just before sunrise," Posey said.

"Because it is low in our southern sky, we are looking at it through a lot of atmosphere, which would cause it to twinkle, or pulsate, especially in this kind of heat.

"There have been a couple of other reports of the same kind of thing from Green Valley and from people who have been traveling through.

"They all report a brilliant object in the southern sky which, because it is seen setting below a mountain ridge, gives it a sense of motion."

Robert Gribble, a member of

the staff of the National UFO Reporting Center, who spoke to Minch after the incident, said, "Witnesses said what they saw appeared to ascend and move about.

"That would not, in any way, shape, or form, match a description of Mars."

Gribble, who said his organization receives six to 25 calls of UFO sightings per day, says this about such sightings:

"Based on studies since 1974 of 'unknowns,' studies of cases that date back into the 1940s, we have concluded that we are dealing with superstructures, or wingless vehicles, both manned and unmanned, that come from places other than the Earth."

Despite Gribble's claim, extensive scientific investigations have turned up no evidence that extraterrestrial vehicles have visited Earth.

Of the scientifically minded "establishment," Gribble says:

"They don't say 'yes'; they don't say 'no.' We say, 'Yes, indeed. There is not the slightest doubt in our minds that these things come from outer space, and that is based on sightings by very credible observers.'"

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