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Westmoreland/Area

# Flying object sighting unexplained

By Michael A. Fuoco  
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There's nothing very unusual about Route 119 near New Stanton — unless you happen upon a flying 50-foot-long metallic object with multiple yellow-green lights.

That's just what 20 people say they saw Aug. 31 in a 10-mile area between New Stanton and Connellsville.

The sighting is one of more than 300 listed in the 1986 annual report of the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained, a Greensburg-based, non-profit research group and statewide clearing-house for UFO sightings and other phenomena.

While 90 to 95 percent of the 1986 sightings can be explained logically, the New Stanton event remains an

open case, said Stan Gordon, PASU director and founder of the 6-year-old group. Most sightings involve misidentified normal objects — planes, weather balloons, bright stars, meteors, satellites — observed under unusual conditions. The remainder cannot be explained easily, he said.

"It's a good one," Gordon said of the Aug. 31 sighting. "Many people saw it move low over their cars. We have a signed statement from an FAA [Federal Aviation Agency] traffic controller with 16 years experience who saw it and said it wasn't any type of conventional aircraft."

Motorists in the New Stanton area first believed the low-flying object was an aircraft in trouble and as they came around a bend, found a hillside on fire. Several people stopped their cars and climbed the

embankment where all they found were two rings of fire, Gordon said.

Other sightings are logically, if not immediately, explained, Gordon said. He noted an Aug. 12 incident in which thousands of East Coast residents, including Pennsylvanians, saw a bright spiraling object moving slowly across the night sky. For three days, the object remained unidentified, drawing nationwide media attention. NASA even called PASU to see if it had any information, Gordon said.

"One member of our group remembered seeing an AP [Associated Press] story about a Japanese satellite launching," Gordon said. "I called NASA and told them to look into that and they discovered it was fuel released from a rocket booster."

PASU received sighting reports last year from 28 counties in the

state, Gordon said. Among them were a metallic disc-shaped object hovering over the Birmingham Bridge in Pittsburgh Jan. 7; a metallic, cigar-shaped object in Salem June 21; and an elongated, silver object seen in daylight Aug. 12 in Monroeville and Mount Pleasant.

Also reported were sightings of cougars, extinct in the East since the late 1800s; Bigfoot, the tall hairy, ape-like creature; and animal mutilations.

About 80 people from various scientific backgrounds are members of PASU, which operates a 24-hour hotline — (412) 838-7768 — for reporting unexplained sightings. The names of observers are kept confidential.

PASU can also be contacted by writing Gordon at 6 Oakhill Ave., Greensburg 15601.

*B. Robinson*