

Reports of UFO sightings on rise

AP PHOTO

'Quiescent period' over, watchers say

A Lorette man returning home very late one night last week didn't believe his eyes at first.

A brilliant disk followed his truck, then hovered above as he got out and ran for the house.

Ed Barker, director of the Manitoba Centre for Unidentified Flying Object Studies, who received the report, says it appears to be part of a new worldwide resurgence in sightings.

Barker, who is also a production manager for the Manitoba Planetarium, says the Lorette incident is under investigation.

Together with two or three more reports received during the last three weeks and other UFO sightings in other parts of the world, the Lorette incident appears to mark the end of what professional UFO watchers call a "quiescent period" which has lasted about two years.

Barker has investigated and catalogued sightings for the past 20 years. The study centre he runs at the planetarium became operational in 1975.

Since then, he says, there have been almost 500 reports of strange flying objects, both nocturnal and during daylight hours. Many remain unexplained.

"It seems to go in waves on a worldwide basis," the mid-40ish director says. "When sightings are up, we get them in series, often constituting separate observations of the same phenomenon. It's easy to get three or four reports in one day."

"Sometimes we don't hear of any for months on end. Right now we have the Lorette report and two independent additional ones from



Sightings such as this reported near Salem, Mass. in 1952 are being heard again.

the Thompson area that are still being checked. Both times there were moving lighted bodies and no noise at all."

Seen by pilot

Barker says the current worldwide series of reports started with

the sighting of a large object travelling alongside a Japan Air Lines passenger jet over Alaska several weeks ago. A leading U.S. aviation magazine has since said the pilot had actually seen Venus or Jupiter.

"It's not that easy, however.

This sighting was observed and confirmed on radar by trained air traffic controllers. You don't pick up Venus or Jupiter on radar," Barker says.

He says there are no explanations as to why the frequency of sightings changes over the years.