

UFOs seen again near area town

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BELLEVILLE — Once again people have reported seeing strange objects in the sky near Belleville.

Just this past weekend, two men noted some unusual "clouds of smoke" off to the west on Friday and others observed a cigar-shaped object Sunday.

The small community has been the focus of considerable UFO activity since mid-January when a Belleville police officer reported a lighted object which lingered throughout the night and was tracked on radar.

Those following the Belleville UFO reports have begun to wonder what makes the area so unique.

Don Schmitt, with the Center for UFO Studies, said the center is currently probing more than one dozen independent sightings in the Belleville area.

The majority reportedly occurred Jan. 16, the night of the initial report, and other sightings were recorded each of the following three weeks, mostly on Thursday nights or Friday mornings.

"It's one thing if we have an isolated sighting and we just generally deal with it just as a UFO sighting, but when you have a high concentration of sightings in one particular area, obviously we are starting to look around for other things," Schmitt said. He is a director and investigator with the Center.

"We obviously have to question the fact that if it is...some attraction, that there may be something else going on," he said.

Schmitt said he checked with Special Effects International of Lake Geneva to see if the company had launched something in the area to test public reaction.

According to Schmitt, Special Effects had developed a cigar-shaped object with red, blue and white lights in the mid 70s. It was on display for a period of time, but it is in California now, he said.

Schmitt said he was assured by company officials that they hadn't launched anything near Belleville.

In the most recent Friday night report, Fred Gochenaur was with Harvey Funseth when they noted something odd in the sky around 6 p.m.

Gochenaur said they both saw it at the same time, but neither said anything right away. The object resembled a kite, he said.

Gochenaur described it as four narrow clouds of dark gray smoke. The pair drove toward it because it "didn't look right."

They watched for about 20 minutes as it gradually broke apart and one of the four clouds took off like a jet, only slower, Gochenaur said.

The Belleville man described the cloud as being similar to a jet trail, but the wrong color.

Funseth took pictures of the scene, but it is unknown how they will turn out. He was not available for comment on the sighting.

According to an Associated Press report, Lavonne Freidig

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said she saw something she first thought was a distant flock of geese, but closer observation showed an object shaped like an airplane fuselage with no wings.

"It just hung there. I watched it and watched it," she said Monday of the object or objects she and her son, Bill, saw in the sky at dusk Sunday.

After several minutes, the hitherto motionless object took off without a sound, leaving a vapor trail and several smaller objects behind it, she said.

"It was really strange," said Freidig, adding that a local businessman and several of his out-of-town relatives, as well as residents of nearby Paoli also saw the object, and that someone also photographed it with a camera he had in his car.

She said she and her son called the Dane County sheriff's office and were given the number of a national unidentified flying object reporting center to call.

The cigar-shaped object appeared to be about as large as a pen held at arm's length, she said.

In mid-January, Belleville police officer Glen Kazmar reported seeing lights much brighter than a star suspended in the sky west of Belleville for more than a half hour one evening.

He said at the time that a Federal Aviation Administration radar center in Illinois detected a slow-moving object on its radar screens on the night in question.

Jack Smith, manager of the FAA control tower at the Dane County Regional Airport in Madison, said Monday that tower operators did not report any unidentified objects on their radar screens Sunday evening.

He said the tower received no reports of sightings from pilots.