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Recent sightings 'unexplainable'

By Dave Lester
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A metallic object twice the size of the Goodyear blimp hovered over an electrical power plant. Lights suddenly flicker at a nearby shopping mall.

An incredibly bright light from an overhead object one evening is beamed at a woman in her backyard, leaving her temporarily paralyzed.

Sound far out? Such occurrences may be closer to home than you think, say UFO investigators who have been deluged with reports of UFO sightings in recent months.

By one account, a huge object was seen hovering over a power station near Greengate Mall in Hempfield Township. Its appearance coincided with an electrical disturbance at the big retail complex. In Southwest Greensburg, a woman putting the trash out at her home on a quiet residential street was suddenly overwhelmed by a strange light that she says she was unable to move from.

"These are definitely very significant sightings," says Stan Gordon, director of the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained. "What's been reported here is very similar to what's been reported around the country and throughout the world."

As with previous reports of UFO sightings, Gordon says many of them can be explained as natural phenomenon — a bright planet, exhaust trails from a rocket launch, even a low-flying plane displaying advertising signs.

But Gordon says he has not been able to draw any quick conclusions about the latest sightings. Similar reports from a wide area of Pennsylvania have convinced him that what the observers witnessed are not isolated occurrences.

"Something seems to be going on," says Gordon. "We have no definitive idea what this all means."

Three off-duty policemen were among the four who could make out a large metallic shape at dusk near the mall. It traveled from west to east more or less crossing Route 30 near McDonald's Restaurant.

Red lights could be seen on the front and back and white lights running lengthwise, including a stationary white light.

One observer said what struck him about the object was that it did not make a sound. Nor was there an exhaust trail.

They observed it for five to six minutes then drove to another area where they witnessed

an even stranger spectacle. The oblong object appeared to pivot on its axis, executing a 90-degree turn before disappearing beyond the treeline. When it hove into sight again, it was a much greater distance away.

"I've never seen anything like that before," said one of officers. "It definitely was not an airplane."

The object that reportedly directed a beam of light at a Southwest Greensburg woman also was described as noiseless.

"It was above me and illuminated the whole yard, a huge object, with stationary, pulsating lights," the woman said, recalling

the incident one night in her backyard. "I was so scared I couldn't move."

The lights from the platter-like object were arranged in a circular pattern and were pulsating rapidly. Despite the intense light, no noise other than what was perhaps a faint hum emanated from the object.

"It took off slowly," she said. "That's when I screamed for Mom."

Aside from the momentary paralysis that the women reported, both she and her mother complained of headaches.

The object tilted somewhat as it took off over the treetops slowly in a northeasterly direction and then accelerated.

PASU, a Greensburg-based clearinghouse for such reports, saw their number peak in May and June. That was followed by a "big wave" of reported sightings in July and August. In October, PASU sent directives to federal and state agencies alerting them of the unusual amount of UFO activity.

Warm-weather months generally bring more sighting reports, which Gordon says can be attributed to a greater number of people staying out of doors for longer periods. But what makes the reports unusual, Gordon says, is the number that cannot be easily explained. He says the objects were first reported being seen here in early August, though not publicized. That was followed by incidents in Virginia, which drew widespread attention.

Gordon also describes them as "high quality." The objects were at low level and clearly visible rather than distant lights in the sky. Even the reports of strange lights have been unusual.

While PASU occasionally publicizes some of its reports their sources are kept confidential.

"A lot of people are very reluctant to talk publicly about it because they're concerned their reputations would suffer; they're afraid of being ridiculed and laughed at," says Gordon.

Gordon decided to publicize the two unusual occurrences because they occurred in heavily populated areas and may have been observed by others.

"We feel that other people did see these things and didn't call, possibly because they didn't know who to call," says Gordon.

But PASU delayed the release of information to the media to see if other reports would come in.

Reports of similar occurrences in western Virginia have generated great attention. Gordon has exchanged information with investigators there but again says he can draw no conclusions at this point. "I can't say it's the same thing but a number of the reports from there seem to be very similar in description," says Gordon.

The Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained is a volunteer, statewide, scientific organization for the investigation of UFO sightings and other phenomenon. Its members are for the most part drawn from scientific, engineering and other technical fields. The PASU center can be reached at 412-838-7768. The address is: 6 Oak Hill Avenue, Greensburg, Pa. 15601.

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