

You've Seen UFO: Now What To Do?

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OK, so you've seen an unidentified flying object (UFO).

What do you do? And when you find out who to report it to, what do they do?

Part Four of a six-part series on the subject looks into what exactly an investigator does once there has been a sighting.

According to John Micklow of Latrobe, who investigates cases for Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained (PASU), it can be very frustrating at times.

He terms a case involving an object reported crashed somewhere in Chestnut Ridge by someone driving along Route 217 as one of the most frustrating, not because of the report, but because of the difficulty in searching such a wide area for evidence.

Part Four

Fire departments cannot be called out unless there is a report of a missing craft, he said, and just organizing a search party would be difficult because of the distance. He notes in many cases what seems like an object landing just over a hillside can be miles away, due to that factor.

"What we try to do is go to the scene as soon as we can after getting a call," said Micklow, after talking to the witness by phone and securing as many details as possible. This often necessitates many hours in the field, searching, interviewing, and gathering evidence, something the retired police officer is very familiar with.

Now that he is retired, the 20-year veteran of the Latrobe Police Department, (he also has four years of experience working in intelligence in the Marines), Micklow can spend more time on his hobby, one in which he has had an interest in since he was a teen.

"When you conduct an investigation you have to be open-minded about it, until you get enough evidence to support one way or another," he explained. Re-enacting

the scene of the sighting not only puts witnesses at ease, he said, but helps them recall the particulars of the incident.

If a sighting occurred while the witness was in a car, Micklow said he will have the witness attempt to put the car in the position it was in at the time, and walk through it, himself often taking the part of the creature, if it was a creature sighting. This is done to give the investigator an idea of the distances involved, and a visual perception of what occurred.

Re-enacting a scene often provides a solution as to what it was the witness saw, he noted. One case involved a sighting of a bright object rising over the ridge area. After going out with the witness the next night, he said, he determined that it was a bright star rising in the sky, although looking at it through binoculars it did give the appearance of something moving.

His most recent case was an alleged Bigfoot sighting at Donegal Lake April 20. He has visited the scene several times to talk to the witness, in addition to phoning him to obtain information. The witness, who was a skeptic before the sighting, led Micklow through the re-enactment for a second time last week.

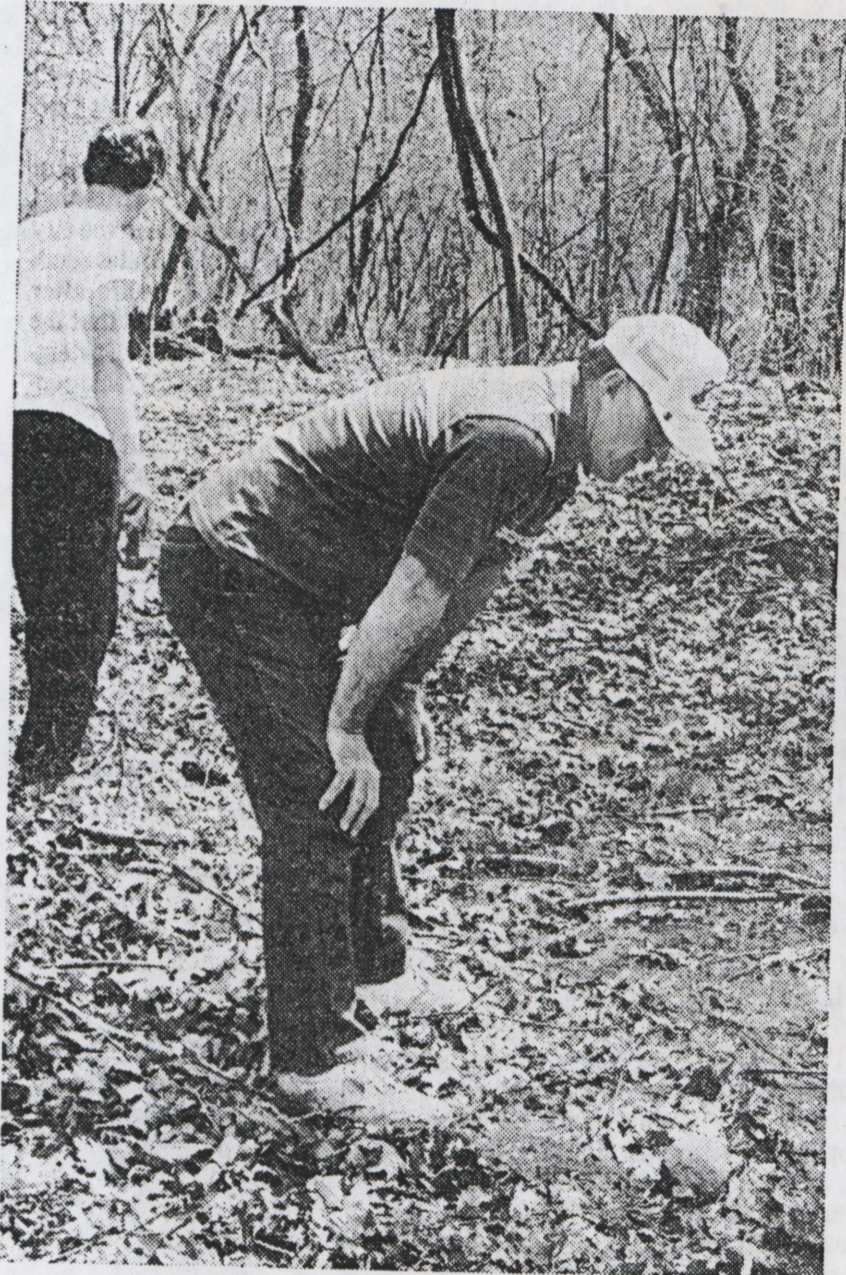
Micklow prefers to go over the information several times with each witness, to determine the facts, and see if the report differs in any way, as well as to try to get as much information as he can from the person.

"It gives them (the witness) more ease of feeling when you're out there working with them," he said. "They understand that you're trying to help them rather than to ridicule them, and that you want to help them try to piece it all together."

At the lake, Micklow and an associate initially went with the witness less than 24 hours after the sighting, and conducted an interview as well as an outer perimeter search of the area where the fisherman spotted the creature.

A search in the immediate area, within 100 yards of the sighting, was done first, with the men looking for footprints, hair, broken twigs or other signs something had been there. Then the group widened its search, spending several hours looking for something. Although nothing was found, Micklow said it would not prevent another look for something that might have been overlooked.

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(Bulletin Photo)

Checking The Signs

John Micklow of Latrobe, a former police officer and now a UFO investigator, checks for signs of possible sightings in a wooded area near Donegal Lake. Micklow says investigations can be frustrating at times.

The Weather

Becoming cloudy tonight with chance of showers after midnight. Low around 50. Showers and thunderstorms Friday. High in low 60s.

UFO

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He investigates creature sightings as well as UFO reports, and notes all witnesses are asked to fill out forms on the sighting to provide PASU with documentation. This can be useful in the future for recalling the details of the report, as well as for comparison to other sightings.

The UFO form is nearly twice as long as the creature form, about four pages, because descriptions of UFOs are more varied, Micklow said.

"Like the police you've got to be thorough," he said. "You've got to set up a pattern and know how to search."

He notes he will usually criss-cross an area, and search in "opposite directions" going one way first and then coming back because things look different from a new perspective.

Depending on the evidence, PASU, which includes many technical persons, such as engineers, scientists, and electronics experts, will analyze it or send it to a laboratory for analysis as soon as possible, if the case warrants it.

Photographs can be computer-enhanced to determine if an unidentified object is present or if it is just a pattern of light. Tapes can be analyzed to discover whether the sound was man or machine-made. And footprints, metal objects, hair samples, etc. are looked at as well.

"We have many contacts and they do a lot of work for us. They're reliable and give us good reports because they do that type of testing all the time. It really gets pretty involved and I don't like to take it for granted. If you find something you hope you can find something else to go along with it, support it, so you sent it to get analyzed to see what you can do with it."

The identities of witnesses are kept confidential, unless the witness agrees to have his or her name released. Witnesses are often asked to attempt to sketch what they have seen or to work with a PASU artist to make up a sketch of what was seen, and the forms help document the case in the event there are questions about it later.

Although he has uncovered some hoaxes, most witnesses are sincere, he added. "They just want us to help explain what it was they saw.

"I think you have to be open-minded about it, until you find the evidence to support it one way or the other. You just go out there and try to uncover as many facts as you can."

Part Five of the series will look at PASU's founder, Stan Gordon, and how he got started in the field, as well as others interested in the field.