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Surveillance and full-time caretakers remain on the ranch in Fort Duchesne that has become known for paranormal activity. The property is still owned by the National Institute for Discovery Science. National Institute Of Discovery Science (NIDS)

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This calf was seen healthy just 45 minutes before it was found in this condition in a field. There wasn't a drop of blood

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anywhere on the carcass or on the ground. National Institute Of Discovery Science (NIDS)

By [Deseret News](#), Lezlee E. Whiting For the Deseret Morning News

In 1996 a Las Vegas billionaire bought a ranch in Fort Duchesne from a family who had, for all intents and purposes, been run off of their property by forces they could not explain. All they knew was that a series of bizarre events on their ranch had left them financially ailing, mentally anguished, and in the end, horrified and afraid.

Vanishing and mutilated cattle. Unidentified flying objects. Huge, otherworldly creatures. Invisible objects emitting magnetic fields capable of causing destruction.

A book has now been published about what went on in the late 1990s and early 2000s at what was dubbed the "UFO ranch," an area in west Uintah County known for its 50-year history of perplexing and even frightening events said to have taken place there.

Colm Kelleher, the co-author of the recently published "Hunt for the Skinwalker," was a research immunologist at the National Jewish Medical and Research Center, in Denver, when he came across "a very strange job-placement advertisement" in a respected scientific magazine. The wording caught his eye, he said. The ad's author was looking for scientists interested in "exploring the origin and evolution of consciousness in the universe."

Kelleher said he found the ad "so completely unusual" that he was compelled to respond. "I have had a long-standing interest in scientific anomalies," he said in an interview from his home in northern California. Kelleher is currently working as a senior scientist in biotechnology in the private sector.

A native of Ireland, with reams of scientific degrees behind his name, Kelleher answered the ad and joined a team of respected mainstream research scientists with backgrounds in physics, biochemistry and veterinary studies, who were working for the National Institute of Discovery Science (NIDS).

Founded by real-estate and aerospace tycoon Robert Bigelow, NIDS was intent on removing the crackpot element from the study of the paranormal. Bigelow's goal was to study paranormal events purely from an unbiased and authentic scientific angle, using the brightest minds and the latest technology.

"NIDS had a uniquely deep range of analytical capabilities," Kelleher explained.

That's how Kelleher and other NIDS scientists and researchers ended up living part time on the mysterious ranch in west Uintah County that borders the Ute Indian Reservation. The reservation itself, as they discovered through interviews with its residents, is not exempt from unexplained events similar to those that occurred on the neighboring ranch.

Kelleher worked on the book with award-winning Las Vegas investigative reporter George Knapp, the only journalist ever allowed on the ranch. Kelleher and Knapp detail the days and nights the family spent on their working cattle ranch, besieged by forces which, they found out, never played by the rules.

The book also relates the many haunting mysteries that happened to NIDS researchers after they arrived in March 1997.

One of those still unexplained events involved the mutilation of an 84-pound calf that occurred just minutes after the animal had been tagged by the ranch manager.

"We were fortunate to get the vet and full NIDS staff up there in five hours," Kelleher recalled. "It was 10 a.m., March 10, 1997. The ranch manager and his wife had just tagged it and their dog started acting strangely. They went back to investigate 45 minutes later, and in the field in broad daylight found the calf and its body cavity empty."

One of the strangest things was there was not a drop of blood on the animal or on the ground, said Kelleher. "Most people know if an 84 pound calf is killed there is blood spread around," he added. "It was as if all of the blood had been removed in a very thorough way."

The calf incident was the opening salvo, according to Kelleher. "That early summer and stretching into late summer, there were multiple incidents."

The researchers saw large, ferocious animals with piercing yellow eyes. Although they were seen, they left few tracks and in a few cases, were not injured when struck by bullets, Kelleher said.

"Three eyewitnesses saw a very large animal in a tree and also another large animal at the base of the tree," which was shot but never found, he said.

"We had videotape equipment, night vision equipment," Kelleher said. "We started hunting around the tree for the carcass and there was no evidence whatsoever."

The same problem was encountered when flying orbs were seen by several people. Expensive audio and video recording devices were meticulously placed but produced nothing, and one time the NIDS teams found their equipment vandalized, with taped wires ripped apart and no evidence at all to point to the culprit or culprits who had wreaked the havoc.

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"It was very difficult to gather the kind of evidence consistent with scientific publication," said Kelleher.

In the book, Kelleher and Knapp not only allow the reader inside the ranch, which remains off limits to the public, they also provide a detailed history of observances of phenomena such as skinwalkers, UFO sightings and flying orbs. They delve into Native American legends and curses that had some connection to the events they had witnessed or that people had recounted to them. The pair also spoke to a number of Uintah Basin residents who shared their own encounters with the paranormal in areas not too far from the ranch.

Kelleher and Knapp examine the gamut of possible explanations for what they had seen. Hoaxes, hallucinations, conspiracy theories, military experiments are all investigated and essentially eliminated. Despite plotting out close to 100 incidents or anomalies, the authors do not lay out the full array of scientific data and charts in the book, preferring to gear their narrative to a lay audience.

NIDS disbanded in 2004, after paranormal phenomenon at the ranch and indeed throughout the nation seemed to dramatically decrease, starting in 2000, Kelleher said.

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Did he feel his involvement with the group was worth it? While acknowledging that the field of the paranormal has "a bad reputation," his answer is unequivocal: "I firmly believe the study of anomalies can open doors into other fields."

For Kelleher, research into anomalies that occurred on the ranch are basic to the discovery process connected to science, because they ultimately open doors to advance mainstream knowledge.

"One hundred years ago meteors were not considered real in science. They were figments of imagination, hallucinations," he said. "That's the way science progresses."

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