

It flew fast like a jet, made a whirling sound and left an odd glow.

That's how an amateur photographer described a flying machine he spotted in the skies near Rose Hill on Friday. The UFO world is now paying attention to his photograph.

On Monday, the photo appeared under the headline "Weird Object in Wichita," on UFO Digest, a Canadian Web site.

The object looks like some kind of new-technology fighter jet, possibly a prototype, said UFO Digest editor and publisher Dirk Vander Ploeg.

Jarrold Bartlett, spokesman for Boeing Integrated Defense Systems-Wichita, said in an e-mail that he checked with flight operations staff "and they were not able to identify the aircraft. We do not often get calls regarding unidentified aircraft."

McConnell Air Force Base declined to comment.

The man who captured the image said he took the photo at 8:42 a.m. Friday near 210th and Prairie Creek Road, about three miles south of Rose Hill.

"I was facing east when I shot the photo," the man, who asked not to be identified, said in an e-mail.

He described what he saw: "The object came out of the clouds really fast. It sounded kind of like a jet but much, much softer and had a whirling sound with it.

"I only got off one shot because it was really close before I realized it was something different. It went back upward, much like a jet, and was gone.

"There was a odd pinkish glow in the sky behind it."

In a telephone interview, the man said he takes still-life photos as a hobby. He said it was fortunate he had his camera out when the object flew into his view because he saw it for only a few seconds.

"The only problem was I had a real slow lens... I wasn't planning on taking a picture of anything moving," he said.

He said he used to work at Boeing and has seen a lot of aircraft over the years.

"It didn't sound like one of these jets that I hear all the time.... It was much quieter, much quieter," he said.

He noticed that the flying machine's exterior looked black and shiny.

He estimated the object came no closer than 1,000 feet above the ground. It swooped in as if it was on "a bombing run."

"Then in one smooth motion, it went back up," he said.

After he took the photo, relatives urged him to send it to the UFO publication. He was reluctant.

"I didn't want people to think I'm nuts," he said.

Vander Ploeg, the UFO Digest publisher, said he is a former small-plane pilot who is familiar with various aircraft. He said he was confident that the image is not a hoax.

"But I can't tell you what it is," he said.

"I've never seen a plane that looks like that."

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