

[Skip to main content](#)

Search form

Search

[View Archive](#)

[News](#)

- [Jim Hickey](#)
- Thursday, November 26, 2009 - 5:58pm

•



- [Print](#)
- [2 Comments](#)

On the evening of Sept. 19, eyewitnesses across the Island called the Dukes County communications center to report strange lights in the sky, lights that led many to think they were witnessing a UFO. Online, Twitter and Facebook networks were abuzz with Vineyarders' speculation about it. Dozens of people, many fishing the Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby, said they saw the multi-colored lights that danced along the Island's southern horizon.

Scott Castro was one of them.

He was fishing at Squibnocket around dusk with his son Adam and his son's friend Dorian Johnson when they saw a bright beam out of the southwest, far away and about a quarter of an inch in diameter. Then, unexpectedly, it turned into a football shape and started to grow in intensity, he said.

"It was like the brightest full moon you could ever imagine. It started to grow and grow, and the beam started to pan across the horizon like a spotlight. Then after a while the whole thing sort of exploded and disappeared like fireworks. The kids said to me, 'What do you think that was?' and I told them, 'I have no idea.'"

Mr. Castro said he went home and called 311 — the non-emergency line to the communications center — and the operator there said they'd received many calls about the strange phenomenon.

It soon became evident we were not alone; people from up and down the Atlantic coast had seen the same thing and called news stations and police. "The next morning it was all over the television, it was on the morning news," Mr. Castro said.

Within hours, however, the source of the lights surfaced, and it did not involve little green men: it was a Black Brandt XII four-stage rocket launched by NASA from Wallops Island Flight Facility in rural Virginia.

The rocket was launched to study an unusual phenomenon called noctilucent clouds, and it created an artificial cloud of exhaust particles from the rocket's fourth stage at around 173 miles altitude. This evoked a bright object with a fan-shaped tail, prompting calls of concern from residents from Virginia to Massachusetts.

And for those conspiracy theorists who suspected a cover story, the explanation from NASA about the rocket proved to be airtight. Footage of the rocket being launched was posted on the Web site YouTube, and a press release was sent to media outlets in Virginia before the rocket was even launched.

The Gazette archives are filled with reports of UFO sightings, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, coincidentally during the height of the Cold War.

An article in the Sept. 11, 1953 edition of the Gazette describes three different occurrences spotted by numerous eyewitnesses that were the talk of the Island all summer. The article's author, Colbert Smith, noted the blurred line between people's fears over nuclear attacks and flying saucers.

"The one report from Tower Hill in Edgartown and others in August from Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs described by the yet hazy term flying saucer carries with it uneasy connotations of visitors from other planets; or worse, visitors from Russia. Even the Air Force is now concerned," Mr. Smith wrote, adding:

"The whole conception of these apparitions, as expressed on the Island this summer, is indicative of the scientific atmosphere in

File: [2009 11 26_The Vineyard Gazette_Of Fishermen Facebook and Flying Saucers.pdf](#)

URL: <https://vineyardgazette.com/news/2009/11/26/fishermen-facebook-and-flying-saucers>

which we are living, when so much science fiction is becoming science truth.”

Vineyard UFO sightings were prolific in 1953. On Sept. 4 the Gazette reported that Mrs. Richmond Hoxsie saw strange orange lights east of Cassiopia. First they were stationary, then one started to move in a jerky fashion and the other seemed to come close to the other until they converged into one blinding light.

In an August, 1953 Gazette, Mrs. Harold E. Kinnecom of Daggett avenue in Vineyard Haven reported seeing light beams like searchlights shining in her yard around 3 a.m. “I looked up and there floating in the sky at about the height that planes fly over the village, were three shapes like moons. I called my boy to come and see them... and it almost seemed as if the things noticed that I moved because the searchlight was turned off and the shapes altered their positions until they no longer showed a circular outline, but a shape like half moons.”

In following years the Vineyard continued to be a nexus of UFO activity.

One report from April of 1958 headlined “Signs in the sky continue to disturb Vineyard residents” included an account from Mrs. Paul Mason of East Chop, who was watching television around 7:50 p.m. when she saw strange lights — some 14 of them — in different clusters and arranged horizontally in two tiers. “They were low in the sky and seemed to come and go off at brief intervals . . . like new lights on some of the highways,” she said.

Just a few months later, on July 20, 1958, Wilfred Lawrence called the Gazette to report an aerial phenomenon, “that seemed to be in two parts, with a reddish light revolving in a radius of probably five or six miles.”

But another small blurb appeared in the same edition; eight-year-old Kate Hadley reported seeing the Russian rocket Sputnik III pass over Edgartown. “The celestial traveler made a good show for about five minutes,” young Kate said. “The Sputnik blinked on and off as it passed me overhead.”

There is no mention in the paper if these two sightings were related.

There were dozens of sightings between 1958 and 1961, many explicable.

In November of 1959, for example, a reddish luminosity in the western sky around 5:45 p.m. caused quite a stir across the Island, although it was later explained as a sodium flare from a rocket launched from Virginia. Then in January of 1960 there was an account of a great question mark in the sky, which one observer described as a city street at night as seen from a plane; this was attributed to a 10-story experimental balloon released by the Navy from Virginia, reflecting radio signals sent from M.I.T in Cambridge.

But in April of 1967, Sara Hanson, age 12, wrote an essay for the paper about a strange incident she had the week before. She and her three siblings were in a car in Oak Bluffs waiting for their father when, all of a sudden, they saw a flash in the sky over the ocean.

“At first I thought it was just my eyes playing tricks on me, but then there was a flash and a big red ball appeared in the sky, then a green outline appeared circling the red,” she wrote. “When my father came to the car we told him about it. He said this is what people said looked like flying saucer, then all of a sudden there was another flash and the same thing happened again.”

Later that year, about two dozen people having dinner at the Navigator Room in Edgartown at the height of the summer season were startled to see three strange lights hovering over the harbor which seemed to pulsate and jump around the night sky. One man fled the restaurant in terror, and never returned to pay his check, the paper reported.

The volume of UFO sightings on the Vineyard and across the nation began to taper off by the late 1960s and 1970s, as Cold War hysteria began to subside and the nation focused on domestic concerns — hippies, John F. Kennedy’s assassination and Watergate.

There is one last story that needs mentioning, involving President Kennedy, near the Vineyard, during the summer of 1963, just months before he was shot in Dallas. His assassination, of course, would become the subject of irrepressible conspiracy theories, not unlike those about government cover-ups of UFO crashes and alien visits.

The story appeared in a recent news article by UFO buff Bill Knell on the online newspaper Home Highlight. It explains that President Kennedy, vacationing Hyannisport, was on a pleasure cruise with several guests when he encountered a menacing looking silver disc in the sky.

Just a few minutes into the cruise everyone on board the launch, including President Kennedy, was stunned when the object appeared within several hundred feet of their boat. The object was about 60 feet in diameter, and the middle was slightly raised and part of a top that was a dull, metallic grayish color, Mr. Knell wrote.

The object seemed noiseless, and no means of propulsion could be seen.

“Everything went into chaos. Secret Service Agents on board the launch and nearby in smaller boats scrambled in all directions. The

incident did not last long enough (under a minute) to allow for any kind of a response. The object moved straight up at a tremendous speed and vanished,” Mr. Knell wrote.

“The launch immediately headed back to the dock. After a short conversation with his Secret Service detail, President Kennedy told the small group of about 12 people that had been on board, ‘We don’t talk about this!’ That’s all that was ever said,” he wrote.

Former Gazette editor Henry Beetle Hough, a pragmatic and often skeptical newspaperman, wrote an editorial about UFOs in July of 1966.

“The best reason for Vineyarders to doubt the reality of flying saucers, to use the science-fiction term, or unidentified flying objects ... has been that [most people] have never sighted one on the Vineyard. This is the reason that most people have for unbelief — they still haven’t seen one themselves.”

Mr. Hough then cited a UFO event that occurred weeks earlier in Katama, in which strange lights jumped around the sky before disappearing over the horizon. “Did it disappear for good, or will it be back?” Mr. Hough asked, with a dash of curiosity. “This will be a good winter for watching the skies, and one hopes that the fog will stay away.”

bob cornelius, mensha bay martha's vinyard

Sep 11 2014 around 6:30 pm three round brightly lit appeared in the sky stayed for a minute the slowly got smaller till they were gone many others others watched this

September 25, 2014 - 1:02pm

- [reply](#)

bob comrluis, menesha

I have a photo any intrest email me at bobbyluphole@yahoo.com

September 25, 2014 - 1:05pm

- [reply](#)

Comments

Add a comment

Save

Preview

[Comment policy](#) »

[English](#)

[English](#) [French](#) [Portuguese](#) [Serbian](#) [Spanish](#)

[Subscribe](#) or become a [Friend of the Vineyard Gazette](#) and receive our free newsletters and free and discounted tickets to Gazette events along with our award-winning news and photography.

ENHANCED BY Google



- [Advertise](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Store](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Site Policies](#)
- [About the Newspaper](#)
- [About the VG Media Group](#)

File: 2009 11 26_The Vineyard Gazette_Of Fishermen Facebook and Flying Saucers.pdf

URL: <https://vineyardgazette.com/news/2009/11/26/fishermen-facebook-and-flying-saucers>

- [RSS](#)
- [Newsletters](#)