

The NIDS UFO Database: Classification and Credibility Indices

Abstract

The main trends that we have found in our database are: (1) A significantly higher level of our close encounter cases (71.7%) have high credibility according to the Vallee SVP index. Although the numbers in the NIDS UFO database are still very small, there is no obvious geographical localized distribution of UFO behavior in the United States.

Introduction

Over a thousand initial reports in the past 15 months have come in by telephone and email since the inception of the NIDS hotline. NIDS has completed “Level 1” questionnaires, contacted and interviewed additional eyewitnesses, corroborated the stories and subjected the cases to Vallee classification and credibility indices for 660 investigations. An attempt has been made to eliminate hoaxes and obvious misperceptions of astronomical objects from the database. Thus, the 660 cases represent a filtered database.

The purpose of this report is to focus on the relationship between UFO behavior (Vallee classification) and the credibility of reports that NIDS received. UFO behavior is classified according to the Vallee classification system and the credibility of the report uses the three-number SVP rating system (see Definitions section below).

Methodology

Whether a report is received by email or by telephone it is followed up, mostly by a return telephone call. In the event that the witness is uncomfortable with speaking with a NIDS investigator, email is used to communicate. A 58-item questionnaire, culled from several different sources, provides the conceptual basis for the interviewers’ questions. A primary focus of the first follow-up call is to obtain the narrative description of the event and to try to organize a strategy for obtaining additional eyewitnesses. The purpose of the questionnaire is as a guide for the asking of questions during the interview. Attempts are made not to limit the eyewitness narrative by asking ONLY questions from the questionnaire. Additional eyewitnesses are then contacted and questioned. Discrepancies in the testimonies are noted.

Definitions

- (1) The Vallee UFO classification system. Published in *Confrontations* by Jacques Vallee (Ballantine Books, 1990). The reason that this classification is used is that it provides a very crude indicator for UFO *behavior*. The Vallee classifications have, by design, more to do with the broad brush-strokes of what the eyewitness saw or experienced. Thus, in these broad categories the eyewitness testimony is more general and hence less likely to be wrong. The classification system avoids the necessity of asking the eyewitness to remember the exact size, shape or altitude of the object they observed. These specific details in testimony, although still valuable, are easily criticized because of known errors in eyewitness recall.

AN RATING Classifies any Anomalous behavior	
AN1	Anomalies which have no lasting physical effects. i.e. amorphous lights, unexplained explosions.
AN2	Anomalies which <i>do</i> have lasting physical effects. i.e. poltergeists, materialized objects, areas of flattened grass, corn circles.
AN3	Anomalies with associated entities. i.e. ghosts, yetis, spirits, elves and other mythical/legendary entities.
AN4	Witness interaction with the AN3 entities. i.e. near-death experiences, religious miracles and visions, OBEs (out-of-body experiences).
AN5	Anomalous reports of injuries and deaths. i.e. SHC(spontaneous human combustion), unexplained wounds as well as permanent healing that results from a paranormal experience.

MA RATING Maneuvering behavior of a UFO	
MA1	A UFO has been observed which travels in a discontinuous trajectory. i.e., vertical drops, maneuvers or loops.
MA2	MA1 plus any physical effects caused by the UFO.
MA3	MA1 plus any entities observed on board.
MA4	Maneuvers accompanied by a sense of reality transformation for the observer.
MA5	A maneuver that results in a permanent injury or death of the witness.

FB RATING Fly-By rating	
FB1	A simple sighting of a UFO traveling in a straight line across the sky.
FB2	FB1 accompanied by physical evidence.
FB3	A fly-by where entities are observed on board.
FB4	A fly-by where the witness experienced a transformation of reality into the object or its occupants.
FB5	A fly-by which the witness would suffer permanent injuries or even death

CE RATING Close Encounter rating	
CE1	UFO comes within 500 feet of the witness, but no after effects are suffered by the witness or the surrounding area.
CE2	A CE1 that leaves landing traces or injuries to the witness.
CE3	Entities have been observed on the UFO.
CE4	The witness has been abducted.
CE5	CE4 which results in permanent physiological injuries or death.

(2) The Vallee Credibility Index from Confrontations by J. Vallee (1):

SVP RATING	
Three categories of source reliability (first digit), site visit (second digit) and possible explanations (third digit). A rating of 222 or higher indicates the case was reported by a reliable source, the site has been visited and a natural explanation would require a major alteration of at least one parameter.	
SOURCE RELIABILITY RATING	
0	Unknown or unreliable source.
1	Report attributed to a known source of unknown or uncalibrated reliability.
2	Reliable source, second hand.
3	Reliable source, firsthand.
4	Firsthand personal interview with the witness by a source of proven reliability.
SITE VISIT RATING	
0	No site visit, or answer unknown.
1	Site visit by a casual person not familiar with the phenomena.
2	Site visited by persons familiar with the phenomena.
3	Site visit by a reliable investigator with some experience.
4	Site visit by a skilled analyst.
POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS RATING	
0	Data consistent with one or more natural causes.
1	Natural explanation requires only slight modification of the data.
2	Natural explanation requires major alteration of one parameter.
3	Natural explanation requires major alteration of several parameters.
4	No natural explanation possible, given the evidence.

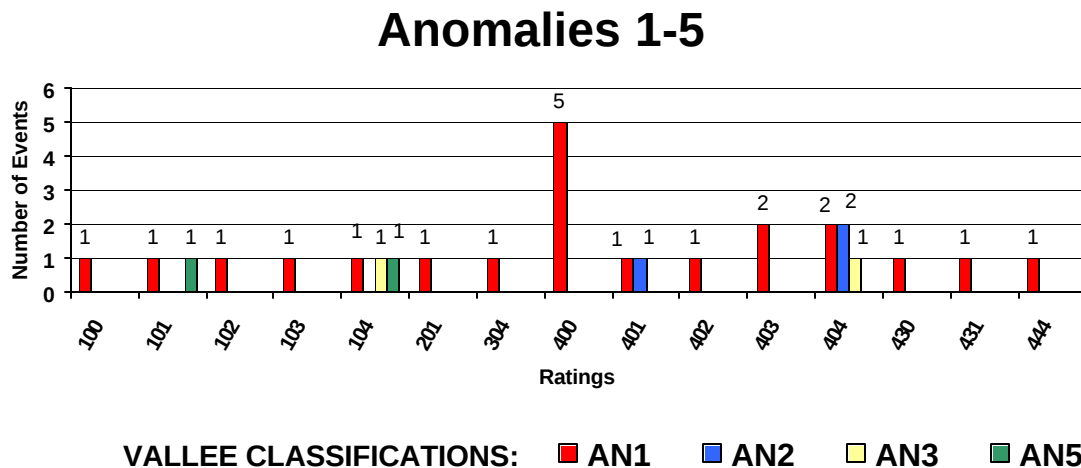
Results and Discussion

(1) UFO Behavior versus Credibility of Report

In addition to the Vallee classification of the incident, each report was subjected to the numerical SVP rating. The reports from the NIDS database were classified into 20 different categories: Anomalies (AN 1-5), Fly-Bys (FB 1-5), Maneuvers (MA 1-5) and Close Encounters (CE 1-5). Figures 1-4 show the distribution in SVP credibility indices of the AN, FB, MA, and CE reports respectively.

As a general rule, the more cases that converge to the right hand side of the figures, the higher the credibility of that database. The lower credibility numbers indicate either the eyewitness was not judged credible, no site visit was done or the explanation for the sighting may be inferred if one or two variables in the eyewitness account is changed. Thus, the lower credibility figures may indicate fraud, delusion or misperception of commonly experienced phenomena (e.g., weather phenomena, weather balloons, astronomical objects, aircraft, etc). It should be noted that NIDS attempts to screen obvious fraud, delusion and misperception before reports are entered into the database.

Figure 1. Anomalies 1-5 and SVP Credibility Indices



Examining Figure 1 indicates that the total number of anomalies (AN 1-5) in the database is only 28 cases. Of the 28 AN cases, only 8 (28.5%) scored 404 or higher.

Figure 2 shows 145 FB cases of which 38 (26.2%) score 404 or higher.

Figure 3 indicates a total of 241 cases classified as MA, of which 87 (36.09%) score 404 or higher. The 404 cut-off point for high credibility is arbitrary. However the trend suggests that the AN and FB databases contain the lowest number of credible sightings, the MA contains slightly more, but the Close Encounter (CE) database contains a high number of credible cases.

Figure 2. Fly By Cases Graphed According to SVP Credibility Index

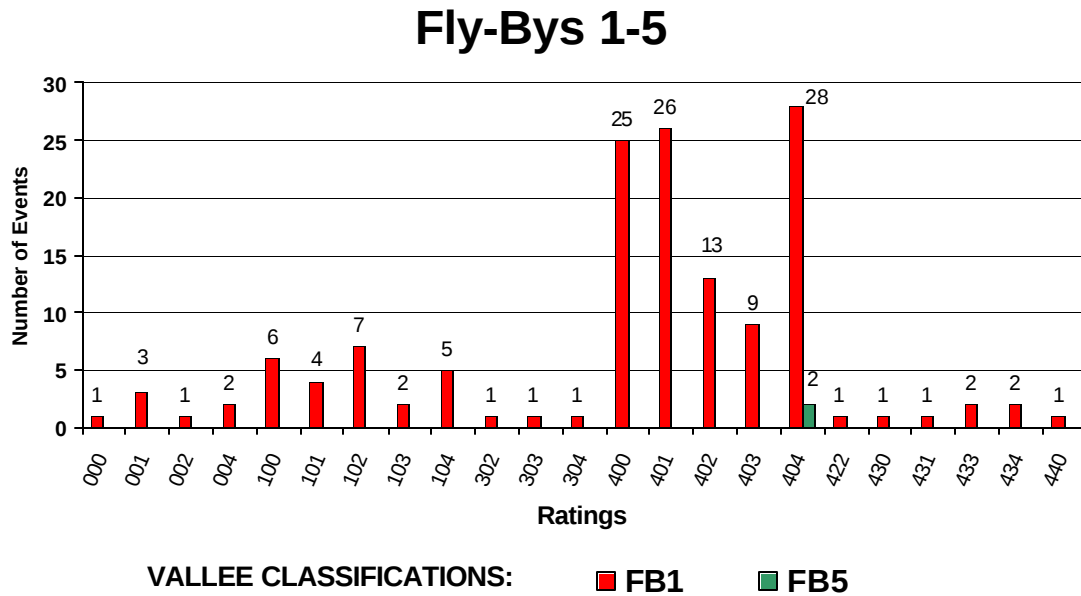


Figure 3. Maneuver 1-5 Cases Versus SVP Credibility Index

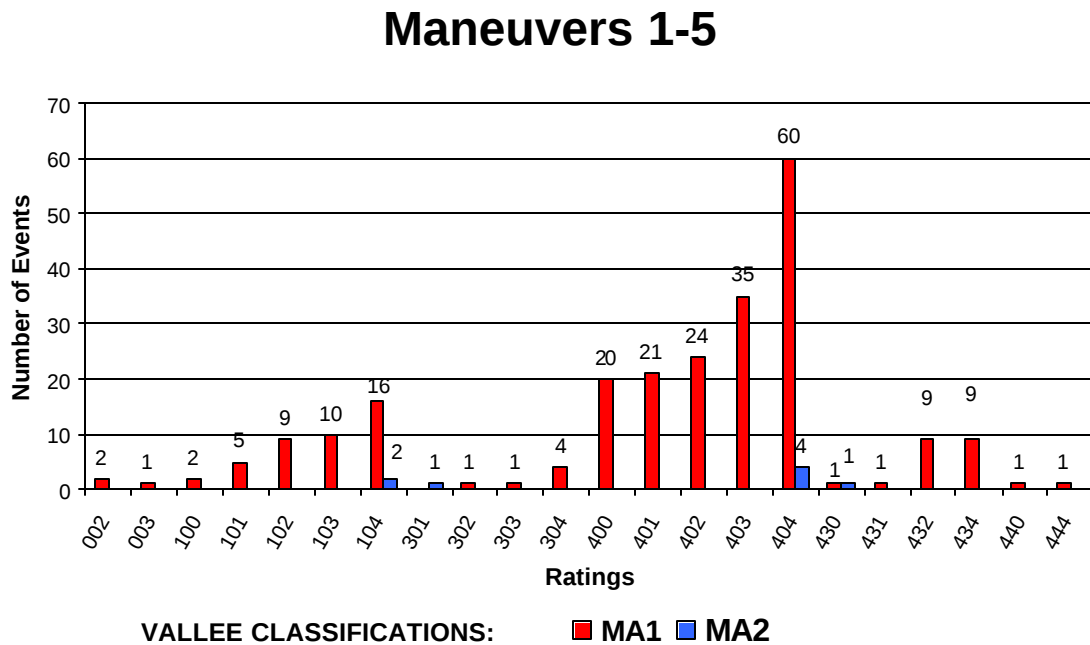
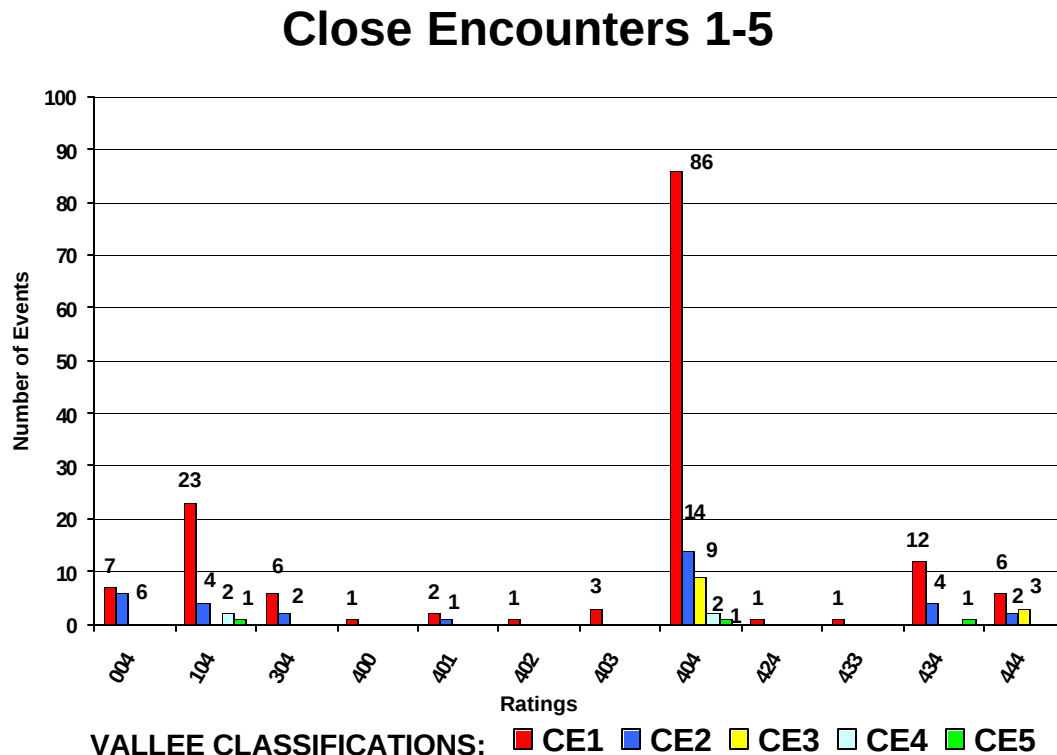


Figure 4 is the CE 1-4 ratings chart. The total number of Close Encounters in the database is 198. Most of the Close Encounter cases have been assigned a relatively high credibility, but many were also judged not to warrant a site visit. A large number of CE cases, 111 out of 198, warranted the 404 SVP rating indicating that they scored highly on two out of the three indices of credibility but did not have a site visit. Indeed, 142 cases out of 198 (71.7%) had a credibility of 404 or greater. The reasons for not conducting a site visit are: (a) only one eyewitness, (b) failure of additional witnesses to contact NIDS, (c) difficulty in following up, or (d) a general lack of cooperation from the local people, or (e) no reported trace evidence. We recognize that theoretically, ALL cases deserve a site visit, but NIDS confines site visits to those cases that it deems of interest. Therefore, the middle digit in the SVP criteria is low, even with the others being high.

Figure 4. Close Encounter Cases have a High Level of Credibility



It is to be acknowledged here that the SVP system is still a subjective system, in that the numbers are assigned based on the best collective judgment of the investigators. Nevertheless, when standardized, the SVP system allows a comparison of the quality of sighting reports in the database. The clear trend from this phase of the study is that the NIDS database has a much higher percentage of high credibility CE cases, than high credibility AN, FB, or MA cases. The first explanation for this big difference is that by definition eyewitnesses are a lot closer in CE cases. The FB and MA cases in general are potentially

easier to explain than the majority of CE cases even though these cases have been rigorously examined by NIDS. The AN cases are actually a catch-all for assorted anomalies.

(2) Distribution of Reports by State

Since there was such a marked difference in credibility between CE cases and the others, NIDS is publishing the distribution by state of CE, AN, FB and MA. This was to examine whether there was a geographical distribution for UFO behavior (Vallee Classification). Figures, 5, 6, 7 and 8 serve as an initial look at these numbers. The number of data points is currently much too small to derive any meaningful trends as yet. We hope to add to the data in the coming months.

Summary

In summary, analysis of the NIDS database using Vallee classification and SVP numerical assessment of credibility indicates a trend. The database has a higher number of credible CE cases than either AN, FB, or MA cases. As yet there is no apparent geographical localization of any UFO behavior.

Figure 5. Anomalies by State

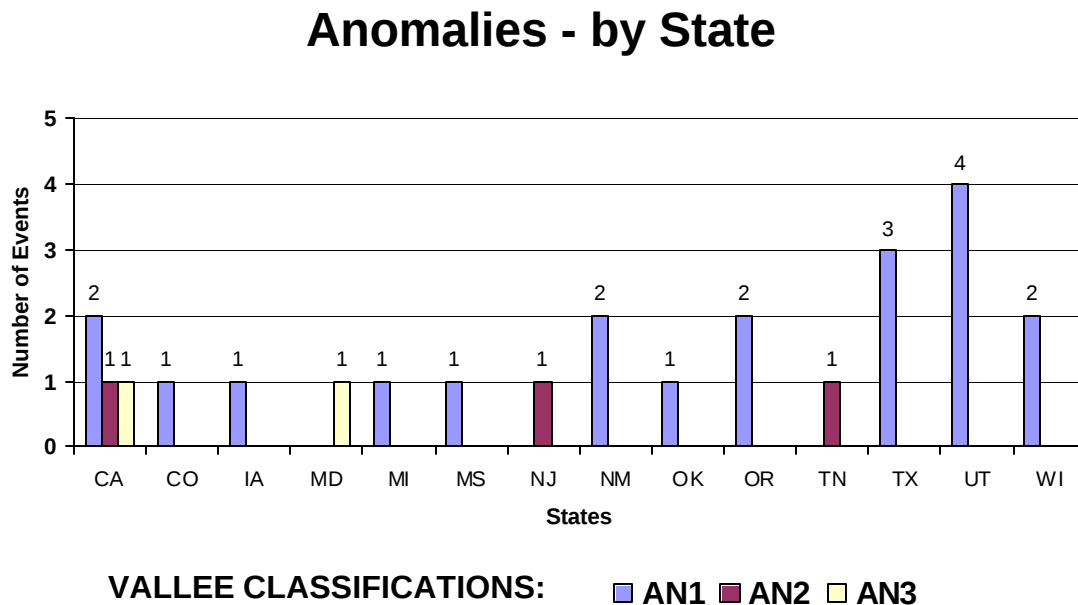


Figure 6. Fly-Bys By State

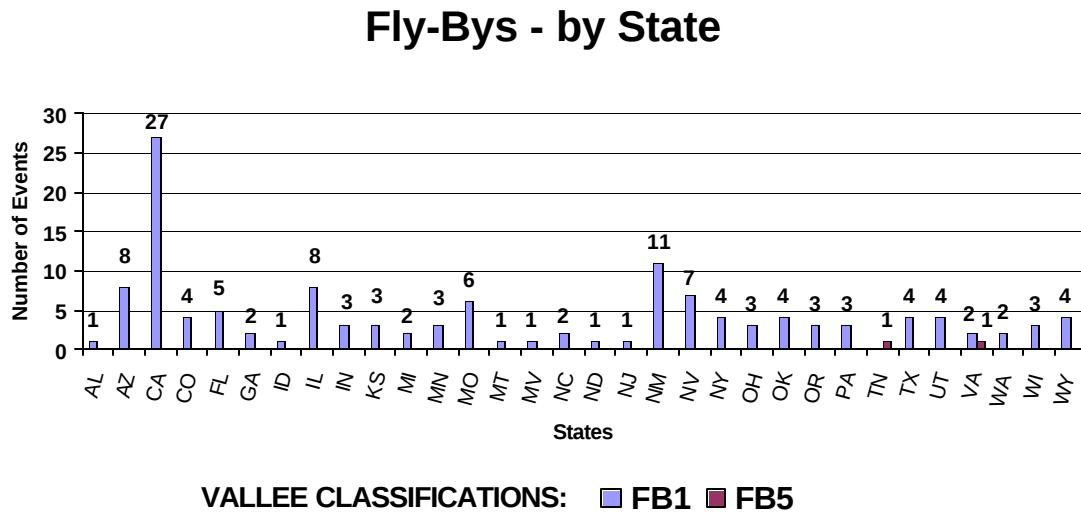


Figure 7. Maneuvers By State

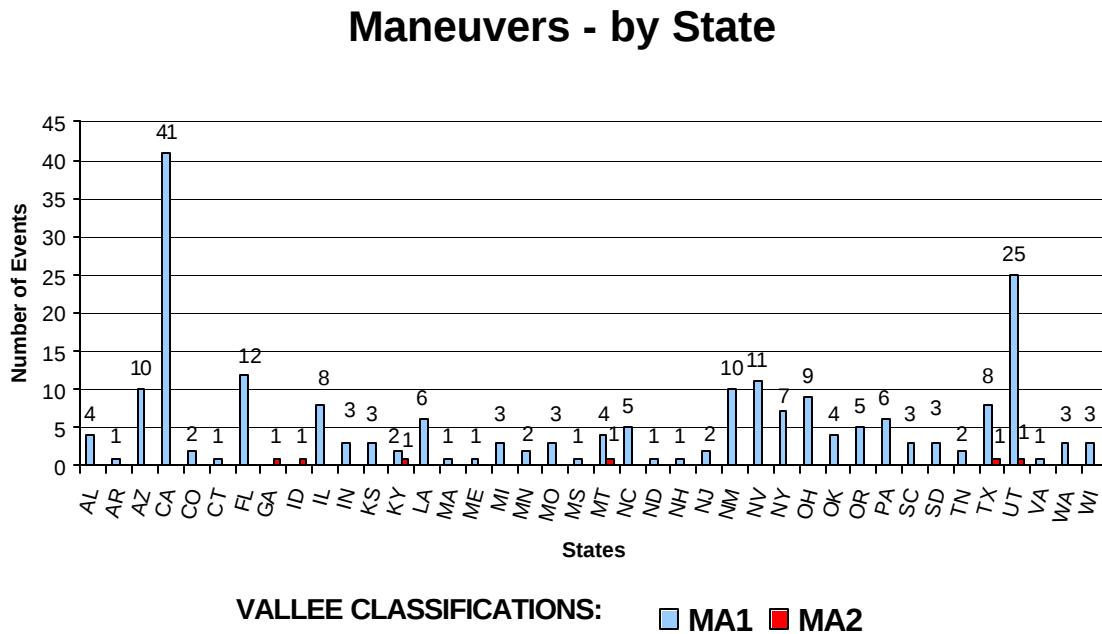


Figure 8. Close Encounters by State

