

# UFO POTPOURRI

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## HALE-BOPP, NEW COMET?

It was announced on July 24, 1995 that a new comet had been discovered by Alan Hale of Cloudcroft, NM and Thomas Bopp of Stanfield, AZ.

Hale discovered the new comet around 11 pm on July 22 and Bopp discovered it about 30 minutes later.

Since the initial announcement there has been some speculation by the media the Comet Hale-Bopp is not a comet at all. Instead it is some kind of artificial structure headed for Earth.

Is it a comet or not? Well, it certainly has the characteristics of a comet. Initial observations indicated that the comet was between magnitude 10.5 and 11. It has some condensation and a short tail or elongation toward the north.

By August, the comet had been widely observed, with most observers agreeing that the comet was magnitude 10.5, 2 to 3 arc minutes across, and weakly condensed.

A very precise orbit has now been plotted, indicating that Hale-Bopp is moving in a long-period ellipse. Its current orbital period is 4,000 years. Orbital data is as follows (equinox 2000.0):

Epoch=1995 Oct. 10.0 TT

T=1997 April 1.3922 TT

e=0.996348

q=0.916702 AU

Argument of Perihelion=130.4405 deg.

Ascending Node=282.4733 deg.

Inclination=88.8797 deg.

## HUBBLE SEES HALE-BOPP

New pictures from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope of comet Hale-Bopp show a remarkable spiral "pinwheel" pattern and a "blob" of free-flying debris near the comet's nucleus.

Although the comet is still well outside the orbit of Jupiter (almost 600 million miles from Earth) it looks surprisingly bright, fueling predictions that it could become the brightest comet of the century in early 1997. The Hubble observations will help scientists determine if Hale-Bopp is really a giant comet or rather a more moderate-sized object whose current activity is driven by outgassing from very volatile ice which will "burn out" over the next year.

The bright clump of light along the spiral may be a piece of the comet's icy crust that was ejected into space by a combination of ice evaporation and the comet's rotation, which then disintegrated into a visible cloud of particles.

Although the ejected "blob" is about 3.5 times fainter than the brightest portion of the nucleus,

the clump appears brighter because it covers a larger area. The debris follows a spiral pattern because the solid nucleus is rotating like a lawn sprinkler, completing a single rotation about once per week.

Ground-based observations have documented at least two separate episodes of jet and pinwheel formation and fading. By coincidence, the first Hubble images of Hale-Bopp, taken Sept. 26, immediately followed one of these outbursts and allow researchers to examine it in unprecedented detail. For the first time, they saw a clear separation between the nucleus and some of the debris being shed.

By putting together information from the Hubble images and those taken during the recent outburst using a telescope at the Teide Observatory at Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain, astronomers found that the debris is moving away from the nucleus at a speed of about 68 miles per hour.

## TOUTATIS IS A STRANGE OBJECT

The Earth-crossing asteroid Toutatis is one of the strangest objects in the solar system, with a highly irregular shape and an extraordinary complex "tumbling" rotation.

The vast majority of asteroids and all of the planets spin about a single axis, but Toutatis flops in all directions.

One consequence of this strange rotation is that Toutatis does not have a fixed north pole like the Earth. Instead, its north pole wanders along a curve on the asteroid about every 5.4 days.

On September 29, 2004, Toutatis will pass by Earth at a range of four times the distance between the Earth and Moon, the closest approach of any known asteroid or comet between now and 2060.

Toutatis has dimensions of 2.9 miles by 1.5 miles by 1.2 miles. Numerous surface features, including a pair of half-mile-wide craters, side by side, and a series of three prominent ridges, are presumed to be the result of impacts.

Earth-crossing asteroids are of great interest to scientists for their relationships to meteorites, main-belt asteroids and comets; as targets of human or robotic exploration; as sources of materials with potential commercial value; and as long-term collision hazards. Nearly 300 Earth-crossing asteroids have been discovered, but the entire population is thought to include some 1,500 objects larger than one kilometer and some 135,000 objects that are larger than 100 meters.

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### **CYLINDRICAL OBJECT HOVERING IN GLOWING GREEN HAZE**

From: SHROPSHIRE STAR, Wellington, England,  
August 24, 1995

Three police officers saw flashing lights of a different kind today when they were on patrol in the Midlands.

The uniform officers were in Aldridge at 1 am today when they saw a cylindrical object with a glowing, green haze hovering over the Great Barr area of Birmingham.

They immediately rang Walsall police station in Green Lake before contact a UFO investigation unit in Birmingham.

Today the force helicopter was circling the area to look for burnt areas of something which could explain the phenomenon.

Police are playing down the sighting saying it may have been caused by meteor activity. But research astronomer Dr. Robin Catchpole at the Royal Greenwich Observatory said the night skies had been quiet this week and he could not think of any logical explanation.

A police spokeswoman said three on-duty officers reported seeing the haze. They investigated the area but could not find anything.

### **SOLDIER SEES A SAUCER!**

From: ADNEWS, Willenhall, England, Aug. 3, 1995

Aliens do exist and have come to Earth to monitor us. That's the firm belief of soldier Rob Cleverdon.

His whole family saw a saucer over their Broreton home just two years ago. Yet, despite holding Ministry of Defense documents which confirm there was an unidentified object in the sky but fail to explain the March 1993 sighting. Instead, 32-year old Rob claimed he was "fobbed off" with a number of other excuses.

"They refuse to accept there's something out there," he said. "It's just a big cover-up."

Explanations for the sighting, which was also spotted hundreds of miles away on the same night, were laser beams, low orbits, satellites, or reflection from clouds. Even a leading ufologist failed to put his finger on the out-of-this-world experience.

Rob, a Territorial Army member, said the craft was spotted over his home, at The Green, on a balmy March evening. It stood out in the light from the full moon, he said.

"My daughter went out on the yard with the dog and came running back inside screaming. Myself, my wife, my sister's boyfriend and my son all came out and saw it too."

He said the object which lit up the sky had a bright, creamy light and was the shape of two saucers side by side. And it had a source of light underneath it.

"It was about 300 meters wide by about 150 high," he said. "It was hovering above the sky before we watched it just shoot out of sight. It was gone within a matter of seconds."

The saucer was spotted several miles away on the same night, including by military police at RAF Cosford. Rod had even checked with airport authorities. There was no record of aircraft flying out at that time.

"It traveled across the coast - up to 400 miles in just a few minutes."

### **CAT REACTS TO UFO**

From: EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES, Ipswich, England, July 19, 1995.

Rachel Lowden was happily watching Richard Burton and Liz Taylor giving their all in the film of Edward Albee's masterpiece "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" when her cat gave the first inkling that all was not as it seemed.

"the cat ran to the window and started acting strangely - you know, the way they do when they've seen something."

When Rachel got to the window of her home in Valley View Close, Highwoods, she saw two big round orange lights apparently hovering over the trees of the country park nearby.

Much larger than airplane lights, the lights sent down beams to add to the ghostly atmosphere. "I'm not a believer in these things," said Rachel, "but it was just the way it moved which was abnormal."

The sighting took place at 2:20 am on July 18.

### **CABBIES' UFO SHOCKER**

From: SOUTHERN DAILY ECHO, Southampton, England, Aug. 18, 1995

Two taxi drivers watched open-mouthed as a mysterious glowing ball of light with a long tail sped across the sky above Southampton.

Michael McMahon and Mike Swatridge were on the late shift for Streamline Taxis when they spotted the low-flying UFO. Mr. McMahon said; "It was fantastic. I've never seen anything like it before. It was a shining ball of light moving horizontally across the sky. It was shifting so fast. It was unbelievable."

The pair gazed as the object - which they described as nearly as big as the moon - zoomed across the city yesterday morning,