

Two scientists put moth theory

MELBOURNE: Some sightings of UFO's may be insect swarms, according to U.S. scientists.

Their research is discussed in a recent edition of the British scientific journal New Scientist.

In a recently published paper, two U.S. Government laboratory researchers, Philip Callahan and R. W. Man-kin, have linked UFO sightings with infestations of spruce budworm moths.

The researchers have shown that light can be generated by placing the insects in an electric field.

The spruce budworm moth can swarm in clouds as big as 100km long and 25km wide.

The light from such a big swarm might be mistaken for a UFO, their paper said.

"The very strong atmospheric electric field that can arise under certain weather conditions could cause electrons (negatively charged particles) away from conducting materials, such as the body fluid of an insect," New Scientist said.

"An avalanche of such electrons would excite atmospheric gas molecules, which would then emit visible light."

New Scientist said that the light produced by a single insect was visible from seven metres.

West Australia 4/1/79

West Aust 8/1/79

Professor has UFO theory

MELBOURNE: The dean of RAAF studies at Melbourne University has offered his own theory into the recent spate of sightings of unidentified flying objects.

Professor Victor Hopper, a physicist, said that experiments that he had conducted during the past five years uncovered a situation known as anomalous propagation.

This was caused by electro-magnetic waves being trapped in the atmosphere.

"As a result, from time to time we have been able to pick up objects on our radar screens that are over the horizon," he said.

"Normally our radar has been able to pick up only objects that are in direct line of sight.

"Light waves too are part of this same spectrum, and hence it might explain why people are seeing objects that are unidentified."

A distortion, by Jupiter . . .

SYDNEY: A Sydney amateur astronomer says that the UFO filmed by a Channel 10 crew over New Zealand this week was the planet Jupiter.

Mr Robert Lanigan-O'Keefe, an amateur astronomer of Cammeray, put the Channel 10 film through a line-scan analyser and picked up four additional objects, which corresponded with the biggest moons of Jupiter.

The acting news director of the 0-10 network's Melbourne office, Mr Neil Miller, had no comment.

"I thought that they were having a distant encounter with Jupiter as soon as I saw it," Mr Lanigan-O'Keefe said.

"After making a videotape of the pictures I went through it until I found seven frames in which the image seemed to be at its most stable, and not thrown about by the motion of the aircraft.

"Then I put them

through a line-scan analyser—there is a lot more information contained in a television signal than is registered by the eye.

"It picked up four much fainter dots adjacent to the big image which the television reporter said appeared to be covered by a perspex dome.

"Then I picked up a table giving the locations of the four big moons which orbit Jupiter. The positions of smaller dots and those of Jupiter moons fitted perfectly."

Mr Lanigan-O'Keefe said he had tentatively identified the great red spot—a distinctive feature of Jupiter—on the UFO film.

He had since plotted faint signals corresponding with the position of Jupiter's moons on another 30 frames of the film.

. . . or flights of fancy?

WELLINGTON, Thurs: Flocks of birds flying inland to mate and gases capable of moving at high speeds are the two latest theories put forward by experts to explain the rash of UFO sightings in New Zealand.

A Christchurch ornithologist, Mr Geoffrey Harrow, said yesterday that flocks of up to 500,000 birds flew inland nightly to mate in the area in the South Island where New Zealand's two televised UFO sightings have been made.

Mr Harrow said that the huge flocks of birds—Hutton's Shearwaters, or Mutton birds—could be causing the strange radar blips picked up on screens at Wellington.

He said that the birds had shiny white undersides which could reflect the lights from squid boats anchored off the coast, producing the sightings.

But in OSLO, Norway, an aerospace expert, Mr Eric Tandberg, said he believed that atmospheric plasma was the most likely explanation for the sightings.

He said that the plasma consisted of gases caused when electrons were separated from atoms and were capable of moving at very high speeds.

After more UFO reports yesterday the New Zealand Defence Ministry said it had concluded that the sightings were due to a combination of lights from a Japanese fishing boat fleet 260km off the coast and the rising of the planet Venus.

An air traffic controller, Mr Geoffrey Casner—who tracked scores of UFOs on his screen—said that the theory did not explain how the object was tracked moving around a plane.

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per A.H. Debnam