

UFOs — fact or fiction?

Colin Norris studies flying saucers, extra-terrestrials and other unidentified flying objects.

It may conjure up late-night movie visions of little green men, cigar-shaped spaceships, strange lights and circles of singed grass — but Colin is deadly serious.

"I am committed to the belief that there have been — and will continue to be — extra-terrestrial visitations to this planet," he says.

What's more, in the age of Star Wars and space shuttles, Colin thinks it's only a matter of time before we communicate with aliens.

Colin, who lives in Adelaide, is the president of the Australian International UFO Flying Saucer Research Organisation. He accepts that some people will label him a "lunatic or charlatan", but does not consider himself to be either.

"The cynicism is disappearing these days," he says. "A recent survey indicated that 50 per cent of the 225 million people living in America believe UFOs exist. I think it would be similar here."

He takes his theories a step further: he believes that governments around the world have proof that we have been visited by aliens and are hiding the facts from the public.

"The authorities know what many of us suspect. We are being slowly conditioned to accept as fact, a reality that is as awesome — even frightening — as it is exciting.

"Within our own galaxy there are probably at least 50,000 million stars. It follows then that many of these environments are likely to be capable of supporting some form of life."

Colin's interest in extra-terrestrial visitors began during the war, when, as a member of an aircrew, he saw his first UFO.

"It was in 1942, about 9.20 in the evening, and we saw an object in the sky," he recalls.

"It was overwhelming... like a round ball, a red ball in the sky. It went around us and hesitated for a while before it went away."

His interest grew into an obsession — as the UFO number plate on his car shows.

Colin says it is estimated that there are 400 'unknown' reports weekly around the world.

"If only 1 per cent of those reports is true, then that's the end of the story as far as I'm concerned," he says.

Australia has had its fair share of unexplained sightings. Recently an Adelaide farmer took photos of a brilliant, white, oval-shaped object which hovered above him for more than an hour. He sent the film to Colin to be analysed.

But few people take a clear photo of a UFO, according to Colin.

His hint to anyone lucky enough to spot a UFO — and have a camera handy — is: "Don't use a flash, even on the darkest night."

The UFO research organisation will develop the films and analyse the pictures. Interviews with people who sight UFOs are taped and filed on a computer.

Of course, many 'sightings' can be accounted for by unusual weather conditions, aircraft, reflected light or bright stars.

"Out of all the reports we get, only about 2 per cent are unexplained," Colin says.

"In the past few decades we have quite often had the same type of objects coming up, particularly extremely bright, diamond and oval-shaped craft."