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UFO was probably Canopus: expert

Hobart: An unidentified flying object flashing red and green lights off Tasmania's east coast on Monday night probably was a star, Launceston Planetarium curator Martin George said yesterday.

Professional fisherman Noel Freeman was one of several people who reported the UFO to the UFO Report and Sightings Hotline. Mr Freeman was at home at Swanport Bay, about 70km north-east of Hobart, when he noticed the flashing lights in the sky.

"It was so extremely bright that it was reflecting in the water like a stream of light from the moon," he said.

"It was as bright as the strobes in a disco."

Mr Freeman, whose photographs of the phenomenon came out a disappointing blank yesterday, said he thought at first that the lights were from a helicopter. However, as they moved so slowly across the sky he realised that they must be something else.

Mr George, an astronomer at Queen Victoria Museum as well as its planetarium curator, said the UFO watchers were probably seeing Canopus, the second brightest star in the sky. "When it's low down in the sky, it can appear to change colour quite dramatically."