

Our alien encounters

What is it about Victoria that acts as a magnet for interstellar travellers? Researcher Keith Basterfield says no other state has more intriguing UFO sightings — and he has his own theories as to why. He talks to ADAM ZWAR

It is 4.30 one July morning in 1994, 60km north-west of Melbourne, and Grace Kyriakidis is driving her friends home when she sees a series of oblong, orange lights moving parallel to the road.

Moments later, a large orange light is hovering 20m behind the car.

She stops and sees a large, diamond-shaped object, with writing on its tail, close to the ground.

A steady, droning sound seems to come from it. The object disappears behind a stand of trees.

The group pulls into someone's driveway, frightened by the sight of a shadowy, human-like figure.

They continue home, followed by the bright, orange light before it eventually vanishes.

The next day, all four suffer nosebleeds and headaches.

In 4½ years, the national UFO hotline has taken more than 13,000 calls relating to UFOs.

And a recent nationwide poll showed 31 per cent of Australians believe Earth has been visited by aliens.

NSW takes the honor for the first recorded UFO sighting: a surveyor told of seeing an "ark" that floated to a halt in Parramatta Park in July 1868, after which a "spirit" emerged to show him inside the craft.

Yet a co-ordinator for the Australian Centre for UFO Studies, Keith Basterfield, says Victoria is the home of Australia's most intriguing UFO sightings.

He details the case of the four women and their encounter with the orange light in a new book, *UFOs: A Report on Australian Encounters*.

He also relates an incident near Belgrave on August 7, 1993, in which six people in three separate vehicles reported a UFO sighting.

The groups independently stopped their vehicles to watch the large object descend in a paddock, following which several tall "beings" emerged and approached them.

One couple later recalled being back in their motor vehicle, both feeling ill, and that there was a blank period.

When the couple arrived home, the woman noted a red, triangular mark beneath her navel and a small "cut" similar to a surgical cut above her pubic area. She was later hospitalised for unexplained bleeding.

Two other women claimed they had been abducted and taken on board a UFO. They also found marks on their bodies.

Basterfield became fascinated by UFOs as a 10-year-old growing up in England in 1960.

But the event that compelled him to investigate the phenomena was the famous one in which Melbourne pilot Frederick Valentich disappeared over Bass Strait on October 21, 1978, after radioing that he was watching unidentified "aircraft" nearby.

"I don't believe some sort of psychological defect can explain the majority of these cases," Basterfield said.

"You can't keep putting it down to people being drunk or high."

He notes one case in which a 54-year-old farmhand and caretaker of a property 8km from Rosedale, near Sale, reported an unusual object had landed on his farm.

The witness, "Paul", had gone to bed at 10.30pm on September 29, 1980, but was woken about 1am by a screeching noise.

Cattle bellowed and a horse galloped around in panic.

Outside, Paul watched as a domed object moved about two or three metres above ground.

He said it had orange and blue lights on its surface and was about 8m wide and 5m high.

He rode towards it on his motorbike but stopped 15m away, deafened by its noise.

The object eventually lifted off the ground, dropping material that looked like stones, capeweed and cow pats, then hovered above a 45,000-litre water tank before disappearing in the eastern sky.

The next morning Paul discovered an 8m-wide, flattened ring of vegetation, burned black and brown.

He also found the water tank, full the previous day, now empty.

A year later, a trace of the ring could still be found on the grass. Soil analysis showed no apparent cause for the marking.

"Something extraordinary had happened there that night," Basterfield said.

He said the majority of UFO sightings happened in rural areas.

"If you are coming from out of space the logical thing would be to keep out of sight," he said.

● *UFOs: A Report on Australian Encounters*, by Keith Basterfield. Reed. RRP: \$14.95.



Have you seen him?

By DAVID DERBYSHIRE

It promises to give alien spotters close encounters of the familiar kind.

Next time they come across a visitor from outer space, a glance through a new guidebook should tell them what type it is.

More than 50 shapes of alien, including one who looks like a monster slouching around in a dirty overcoat, are classified and illustrated in the first definitive guide to unearthly intruders.

Launched this month, *The Field Guide to Extraterrestrials* will become a bible for the growing band of alien enthusiasts who believe we are not alone.

Author Patrick Huyghe trawled through more than 1000 recorded sightings the world over to draw up his list.

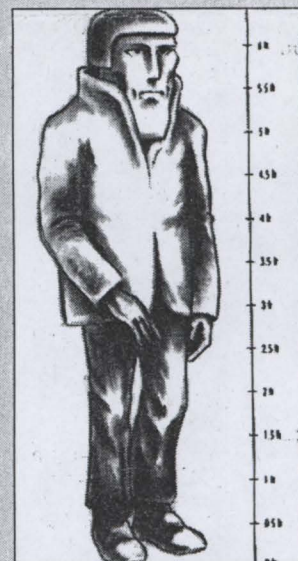
His aliens fit into four categories:

- Humanoids, which generally have two arms and two legs;
- Animalian, mostly ape-like trolly;
- Robotic; and
- Exotic, a group which includes giant pulsating brains and floating blobs.

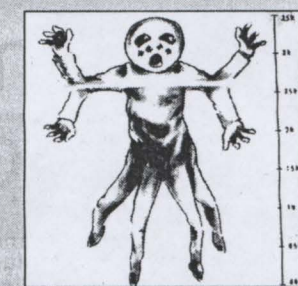
The most common or garden variety alien is a humanoid type known as "small grey", the creature featured in the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Rarer sightings include reptile-like dwarves, 1.2 metre-high grasshoppers, walking tin cans and headless moths.

Alien dress sense varies from long, overcoat-like gowns to shiny boiler suits. Others wear whippers of satin, or nothing at all.

"When you look at the range of aliens, there are only two possibilities," Huyghe said.



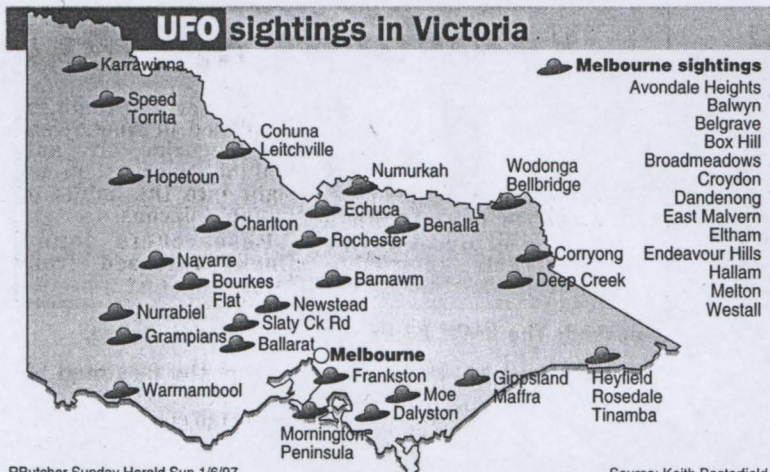
Man from space: Nice suit.



Scary: Too many limbs.



Wolf man: Dressed at least.



Sightings: A map showing where UFOs have been reported. Source: Keith Basterfield