

Mystery lights have Victorians asking ...

What is out there?

FORGET about black panther sightings or elusive Tasmanian tigers — unexplained lights in the sky have a Victorian community in a stir.

Almost nightly for the past year in a Grampians valley, in the state's west near Stawell, locals have watched in awe as the mysterious lights pulse and hover.

They report that up to 30 lights — mostly white, but some red or yellow — float through the uninhabited valley and silently congregate above the plains.

Australian UFO researchers have sent video footage of the phenomenon to overseas experts. They have invited a Norwegian UFO expert, who observed similar sightings in his own country for three years without identifying them, to visit the remote valley, to visit the site.

It is also hoped retired NASA scientist Richard Hazen will come and view what is described as the most consistent series of unexplained sightings in Australia.

The *Herald Sun* this week visited the valley and photographed a display of several lights.

Cyclist will point to weather balloons, fireflies, stars, atmospheric anomalies or hoaxes. But those are implausible explanations, according to veteran UFO researcher Paul Norman, regarded by enthusiasts as a "stratological investigator of strange events." The weather bureau doesn't have weather bu-

By MARK DUNN

looms in the area and the lights are too low to be stars. Mr Norman said they were too big and bright to radiate from animals or insects.

And atmospheric anomalies or hoaxes are not high on the list because nightly sightings have been reported for a year — regardless of weather conditions or the season.

If they are hoaxes, those responsible are persistent. Mr Norman says the only similar activity to the Grampians mystery is in Norway, where Professor Erling Strand heads the Hesseløen UFO research project.

For more than three years Professor Strand, defence experts and scientists observed lights in the skies above Hesseløen but failed to find the cause.

The lights in the Grampians — also claimed as an area for black panther sightings, even lightbulbs — are seen to fly in zig-zag patterns and then hide in concert.

Stawell abattoir worker Stephen Swarwick stands on the precipice of the valley cliff flicking his torch on and off at the distant lights in the hope they will respond.

Mr Swarwick, 46, said he had visited the site almost every night since June last year after claiming to have seen two large egg-shaped lights floating above the gorge.

He has taken dumbed-out workmates to the ridge to view the spectacle and has tens of video footage. The



Observers Stephen Swarwick with footage of strange lights near the Grampians. Picture: PAUL TREZISE

burly metalworker also claims to have seen silver disks during the day.

"To me it's simple," he said. "To me they are craft not from our planet. I don't care what anyone else says."

"They light up and you can see their core. They can turn orange, a strong pale yellow or red."

"A lot of people see these things and don't say anything because they are afraid of being laughed at."

Local bed-and-breakfast operator Barry Fryar has also seen the lights on four or five occasions since December.

"It looks like they are coming towards you and then they just about



Map showing the approximate location of secret valley near Stawell, Ararat, Horsham, Grampians National Park, and Melbourne.

MELBOURNE

approximate location of secret valley