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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

You know what? I've been around for a while.

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00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:07,000

I've traveled the world, met some interesting people,

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00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:10,000

done some crazy things.

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00:00:10,000 --> 00:00:14,000

So you might just think there's not much that could take me by surprise.

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00:00:14,000 --> 00:00:18,000

You'd be wrong.

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00:00:18,000 --> 00:00:23,000

The world is full of stories and science and things that amaze

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00:00:23,000 --> 00:00:26,000

and confound me every single day. Incredible mysteries

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00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:30,000

that keep me awake at night. Some I can answer.

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00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:35,000

Others justify logic.

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00:00:35,000 --> 00:00:40,000

Like in Death Valley where rocks seem to be moving across the desert under their own steam.

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00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:43,000

Is there an explanation?

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00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:48,000

Or the strange unexplained light spotted in the mountains of North Carolina?

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00:00:48,000 --> 00:00:52,000

Are they the ghosts of Native American warriors?

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00:00:52,000 --> 00:00:56,000

And a secret tribe is redefining the limits of human endurance.

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00:00:56,000 --> 00:01:00,000

They can run 400 miles in one race.

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00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:03,000

Are they superhuman?

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00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:05,000

Yep.

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00:01:05,000 --> 00:01:08,000

It's a weird world.

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00:01:08,000 --> 00:01:11,000

And I love it.

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00:01:22,000 --> 00:01:29,000

The World

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:37,000

You know, there are some things that we all depend on that really don't get enough credit.

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:41,000

I mean, where would we be without the humble rock?

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00:01:41,000 --> 00:01:47,000

Think about it. The Earth's outer layer, the very ground under our feet, is made of rock.

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00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:53,000

This was mankind's first technology. Since the Stone Age, the entire history of human advancement

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00:01:53,000 --> 00:01:56,000

can be traced back to this little guy.

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00:01:56,000 --> 00:02:01,000

We've used rock as tools, as material to build our civilizations.

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00:02:01,000 --> 00:02:04,000

We've mined rock for the precious metals inside.

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00:02:04,000 --> 00:02:08,000

Without rock, there would be no modern world.

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:13,000

In short, rocks rock.

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00:02:13,000 --> 00:02:17,000

Death Valley, California. Here, in a harsh, hot and deadly terrain,

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00:02:17,000 --> 00:02:21,000

mysterious natural forces are at work.

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00:02:23,000 --> 00:02:30,000

Rocks appear to be moving around, totally independently, on perfectly flat ground.

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00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:38,000

This strange and seemingly impossible phenomenon has defied explanation for more than 60 years.

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00:02:38,000 --> 00:02:43,000

Now, weird or what, is going to put an incredible new theory to the test.

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00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:56,000

The mystery unfolds 3,600 feet above sea level in a three-mile-long dry lake bed known as the racetrack playa.

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00:02:56,000 --> 00:03:01,000

Surrounded by mountains, the playa is home to hundreds of dolomite fragments,

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00:03:01,000 --> 00:03:05,000

from tiny pebbles to 700-pound boulders,

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:09,000

all of which cruise across this level surface in all directions,

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00:03:09,000 --> 00:03:17,000

covering distances of up to a mile, leaving behind a telltale winding trail in the dirt.

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00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:26,000

Park Ranger Bob Greenberg knows the rocks on his watch are moving around,

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00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:31,000

but neither he nor anyone has ever actually seen it happen.

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00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:35,000

Well, people have tried to stay out, the weather's too harsh.

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00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:38,000

They can't deal with the high wind, the 100-mile-an-hour wind,

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00:03:38,000 --> 00:03:41,000

plus it gets pretty cold out there.

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00:03:42,000 --> 00:03:46,000

One reason we know, before we had today's technologies, they moved,

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00:03:46,000 --> 00:03:51,000

there was a study done where they actually went out and put pegs next to particular rocks,

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00:03:51,000 --> 00:03:55,000

and they'd come out periodically and see if it had moved.

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00:03:55,000 --> 00:04:00,000

But more recently, we've put video cameras out, and either the weather kills them

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00:04:00,000 --> 00:04:03,000

or someone has taken them.

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00:04:03,000 --> 00:04:08,000

But questions remain. How fast do they move? How often?

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00:04:08,000 --> 00:04:13,000

How can supposedly inanimate objects be moving at all?

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00:04:15,000 --> 00:04:18,000

Over the years, there have been plenty of wild theories,

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00:04:18,000 --> 00:04:21,000

and Ranger Greenberg has heard them all.

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00:04:21,000 --> 00:04:25,000

There's stories. Why did the rocks move?

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00:04:25,000 --> 00:04:29,000

I've heard leprechauns, which I find entertaining.

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00:04:29,000 --> 00:04:33,000

Some people accuse the Rangers of going out and pushing them around.

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00:04:33,000 --> 00:04:35,000

We don't do that.

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00:04:35,000 --> 00:04:36,000

No?

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00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:39,000

Yeah, I guess possibly someone could go out there and create a hoax,

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00:04:39,000 --> 00:04:43,000

but they'd have to be pretty driven to do that.

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:47,000

I think this is graffiti.

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00:04:47,000 --> 00:04:51,000

Someone has made a figure eight. Copy with this rock.

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00:04:53,000 --> 00:04:57,000

And I'm going to guess this one's graffiti.

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00:04:59,000 --> 00:05:04,000

Crazy explanations aside, there's no denying there's a genuine mystery of footwear.

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00:05:06,000 --> 00:05:10,000

Stones that weigh anywhere from seven to seven hundred pounds

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00:05:10,000 --> 00:05:15,000

are sailing across a dry desert floor, and no one has ever seen it happen.

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00:05:15,000 --> 00:05:18,000

Is that weird or what?

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00:05:19,000 --> 00:05:22,000

So what's going on here?

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00:05:28,000 --> 00:05:31,000

Geologists Dr. Paul Amosina has spent years

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00:05:31,000 --> 00:05:37,000

studying the stones of Raystrakplaya and theorizing how they might be moving.

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00:05:38,000 --> 00:05:44,000

She believes the answer could lie with Death Valley's strange wind patterns.

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00:05:44,000 --> 00:05:49,000

The Playa itself is like a mosaic of microclimates

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00:05:49,000 --> 00:05:53,000

that we find that wind speed in one location

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00:05:53,000 --> 00:05:57,000

can be as much as six times greater as in another location.

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00:05:57,000 --> 00:06:02,000

And I've measured the wind simultaneously at different spots to know that this is true.

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00:06:02,000 --> 00:06:09,000

So rocks that are fairly close to one another will do totally different things

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00:06:09,000 --> 00:06:14,000

because the nature of the wind is different at different parts of the Playa.

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00:06:16,000 --> 00:06:20,000

These super localized winds can reach up to 90 miles an hour

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00:06:20,000 --> 00:06:25,000

due to the valley's unique narrow canyons and mountain passes

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00:06:25,000 --> 00:06:30,000

that constrict the wind flow causing it to accelerate dramatically.

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00:06:31,000 --> 00:06:36,000

Air is a fluid and there are certain rules that fluids live by

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00:06:36,000 --> 00:06:40,000

and one of them is when you constrict the flow of a fluid it speeds up.

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00:06:40,000 --> 00:06:44,000

It's a little bit like putting your finger at the end of a garden hose.

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00:06:44,000 --> 00:06:47,000

The water will spray out a lot faster when you do that

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00:06:47,000 --> 00:06:50,000

than when you just leave the hose going.

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00:06:50,000 --> 00:06:55,000

And in the Raystrak there are two topographic corridors.

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00:06:55,000 --> 00:06:58,000

They're notches, they're like mountain passes.

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00:06:58,000 --> 00:07:01,000

And air comes from the west to the east

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00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:04,000

in the predominant motion out here in the southwest.

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00:07:04,000 --> 00:07:07,000

And it's coming up from a place called Saline Valley.

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00:07:07,000 --> 00:07:12,000

But it has to go through one or two of these very narrow canyons

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00:07:12,000 --> 00:07:14,000

in order to get to the Raystrak.

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00:07:14,000 --> 00:07:20,000

So I think that the air is moving very fast when it gets through those two notches

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00:07:20,000 --> 00:07:24,000

and that amplifies the wind speed on the Raystrak.

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00:07:24,000 --> 00:07:27,000

So even though we may be recording winds in the area

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00:07:27,000 --> 00:07:30,000

that may be only 50 mile an hour gusts,

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00:07:30,000 --> 00:07:33,000

at the Raystrak it's significantly higher.

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00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:40,000

So could this garden hose theory solve the mystery of the sailing stones?

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:45,000

Are the rocks of the Raystrak plier being subjected to some kind of natural wind tunnel?

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00:07:45,000 --> 00:07:49,000

The theory has never been tested.

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00:07:49,000 --> 00:07:51,000

Until now!

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00:07:57,000 --> 00:07:59,000

Hmm, okay.

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00:07:59,000 --> 00:08:02,000

Maybe I should leave this to the professional.

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00:08:03,000 --> 00:08:05,000

Wow!

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00:08:09,000 --> 00:08:14,000

Bruce Barrowman is a science teacher with a passion for stones.

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00:08:16,000 --> 00:08:18,000

Well that's a keeper.

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00:08:18,000 --> 00:08:21,000

And especially the sailing stones.

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00:08:21,000 --> 00:08:24,000

Barrowman has been chasing the wind theory for years.

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00:08:24,000 --> 00:08:26,000

Now he's ready to put it to the test

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00:08:26,000 --> 00:08:32,000

by attempting to recreate the atmospheric conditions of Death Valley in a wind tunnel.

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00:08:32,000 --> 00:08:35,000

It seemed like just a logical explanation to me

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00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:41,000

to take what we think happens in nature and test it on a smaller scale.

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00:08:41,000 --> 00:08:45,000

Barrowman can't bring a perfectly calibrated wind tunnel to the plier.

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00:08:45,000 --> 00:08:49,000

So he brought the plier to the wind tunnel.

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00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:52,000

This is a mixture of sand and clay.

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00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:55,000

We spread it out last night on the test pad

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00:08:55,000 --> 00:09:02,000

and then as the moisture evaporated out of this, the clay dried out and it fractured.

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00:09:02,000 --> 00:09:05,000

When you go out on the plier, this is exactly what it looks like.

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00:09:05,000 --> 00:09:11,000

The clay is all broken up in these little pieces and little sections, all fragmented.

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00:09:11,000 --> 00:09:15,000

This is a perfect representation of what the plier looks like.

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00:09:15,000 --> 00:09:20,000

Having created the perfectly flat, dry and cracked conditions of the plier,

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00:09:21,000 --> 00:09:27,000

Barrowman adds the rocks, five of them, ranging from one to 20 pounds.

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00:09:27,000 --> 00:09:32,000

So let's go ahead and turn this baby on.

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00:09:32,000 --> 00:09:34,000

Let's slide some rocks.

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00:09:34,000 --> 00:09:36,000

Rock and roll.

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00:09:36,000 --> 00:09:38,000

So what's our velocity now?

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00:09:38,000 --> 00:09:39,000

We're at...

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00:09:39,000 --> 00:09:42,000

Anybody see anything moving?

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00:09:42,000 --> 00:09:44,000

There goes one.

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00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:46,000

There goes rock number one, rolling off.

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00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:51,000

Even with winds of over 70 miles an hour, the experiment is inconclusive.

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00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:57,000

The stones roll, but they slide to create the distinctive tracks

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00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:00,000

and the only rocks that move are small.

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00:10:00,000 --> 00:10:05,000

The biggest rocks, like those on the plier, refuse to budge.

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00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:11,000

So even with winds over 70 miles an hour, the experiment is a blustery bust.

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00:10:11,000 --> 00:10:15,000

The stones just don't sail.

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00:10:15,000 --> 00:10:18,000

My experiment isn't working too well either.

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00:10:18,000 --> 00:10:21,000

There's something missing here.

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00:10:21,000 --> 00:10:23,000

But what could it be?

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00:10:23,000 --> 00:10:27,000

Back on the plier, Ranger Bob thinks he has the answer.

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00:10:27,000 --> 00:10:31,000

You need rocks, wind and some kind of lubricant.

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00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:37,000

A dusty desert valley seemingly offers little in the way of lubricant,

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00:10:37,000 --> 00:10:41,000

but when the seasons change, so does the plier.

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00:10:41,000 --> 00:10:46,000

Here we are in the winter and the temperature is very cold

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00:10:46,000 --> 00:10:49,000

and in fact it's been raining.

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00:10:49,000 --> 00:10:53,000

So even though this place gets only about two inches of rain a year,

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00:10:53,000 --> 00:10:59,000

we're seeing a significant event in terms of the weather in Death Valley right now.

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00:10:59,000 --> 00:11:05,000

And with these rains, the usually dry lake bed becomes a shallow lake once again.

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00:11:05,000 --> 00:11:09,000

So Barrowman brings in another variable, water.

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00:11:09,000 --> 00:11:16,000

So what we're doing now is we've tried to simulate the flooding conditions on the pier.

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00:11:16,000 --> 00:11:20,000

With a small amount of water, the stones begin to move.

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00:11:20,000 --> 00:11:25,000

Look at rock one. There it goes.

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00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:27,000

There it goes too.

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00:11:27,000 --> 00:11:30,000

Two is starting to slide.

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00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:32,000

And so is four.

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00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:34,000

There it goes four.

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00:11:34,000 --> 00:11:39,000

Two and four to slide in 70 miles an hour.

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00:11:39,000 --> 00:11:41,000

We've kind of beaten that.

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00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:45,000

Even after adding water to the mix, the wind theory is looking doubtful.

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00:11:45,000 --> 00:11:54,000

But in the most bizarre way, the extreme conditions in Death Valley could yet provide the answer.

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00:11:54,000 --> 00:11:59,000

In winter, the plier's nighttime temperature drops from searing to freezing.

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00:11:59,000 --> 00:12:04,000

Any water on the valley floor soon turns to ice.

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00:12:04,000 --> 00:12:10,000

This fact combined with an afternoon watching winter sports may have led Dr. Messina to the answer.

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00:12:10,000 --> 00:12:15,000

I saw curling for the first time in one of the Winter Olympics a few years ago.

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00:12:15,000 --> 00:12:18,000

It was one of those Eureka moments.

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00:12:18,000 --> 00:12:20,000

I thought about the rocks.

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00:12:20,000 --> 00:12:26,000

I thought about, gee, this is really interesting to see how little force it takes to get something to move

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00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:29,000

when there's almost no friction.

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00:12:29,000 --> 00:12:33,000

As a Canadian, I consider myself somewhat an authority on winter sports.

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00:12:33,000 --> 00:12:38,000

So let's think about the marvelous mechanics of curling.

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00:12:38,000 --> 00:12:44,000

A 40-pound granite rock is pushed down the ice at a target.

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00:12:44,000 --> 00:12:49,000

The weight of the stone and the force of light melts just enough ice under the rock

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00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:53,000

to reduce the friction to practically nothing.

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00:12:53,000 --> 00:12:58,000

Allowing the rock to skim across the ice at the nearest fric.

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00:12:58,000 --> 00:13:04,000

So could the sailing stones of Death Valley be acting in a similar way?

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00:13:04,000 --> 00:13:10,000

Could the science behind an Olympic sport explain this mystery?

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00:13:10,000 --> 00:13:17,000

Back at the wind tunnel, it's time for one last try.

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00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:26,000

Berman lowers the friction by turning the cracked surface of his mini-playa into a makeshift curling rig.

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00:13:26,000 --> 00:13:34,000

What we're trying to simulate here is that the playa has flooded, and it's been wet for several days with a shallow lake.

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00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:37,000

And then on the rare occasion, it froze.

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00:13:37,000 --> 00:13:40,000

So we have a frozen solid surface.

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00:13:40,000 --> 00:13:47,000

We're going to go ahead and get this wet with a layer of water which simulates this rare occurrence on the playa that happens

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00:13:47,000 --> 00:13:54,000

with a shallow lake freezing temperatures, frozen solid surface with a thin layer of water on it.

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00:13:54,000 --> 00:13:57,000

And we're going to test this again just this way.

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00:13:57,000 --> 00:13:59,000

40.

186

00:13:59,000 --> 00:14:01,000

There it goes.

187

00:14:01,000 --> 00:14:03,000

Yeah, 45.

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00:14:03,000 --> 00:14:05,000

There goes rock 3.

189

00:14:05,000 --> 00:14:07,000

Rock 53.

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00:14:07,000 --> 00:14:09,000

54.

191

00:14:09,000 --> 00:14:11,000

Perfect.

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00:14:11,000 --> 00:14:14,000

Beautiful.

193

00:14:14,000 --> 00:14:18,000

Beautiful.

194

00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:20,000

Really nice.

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00:14:20,000 --> 00:14:30,000

With a thin slippery coat of mud now covering the ice below, the rocks sail along gracefully when hit with wind speeds known to exist in Death Valley,

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00:14:30,000 --> 00:14:35,000

leaving trails in the mud identical to the ones on the playa.

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00:14:35,000 --> 00:14:42,000

This shows that if the right conditions exist in nature and all of these different components come together in the right proportions,

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00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:47,000

it works. It happens. It's a logical explanation. It's not a mystery.

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00:14:47,000 --> 00:14:50,000

This is science. This is what it's about.

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00:14:50,000 --> 00:14:52,000

But a mystery remains.

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00:14:52,000 --> 00:14:58,000

Some trails are so twisty that even wind tunnels can't explain their erratic paths.

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00:14:58,000 --> 00:15:04,000

And the stones are just as active in the summer when there is no ice to help them sail.

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00:15:05,000 --> 00:15:10,000

I don't want to get too philosophical, but it's like, yeah, there's always going to be a mystery.

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00:15:10,000 --> 00:15:17,000

And when there are no mysteries, life is going to be boring.

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00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:23,000

Right? So, I mean, it's great that we don't have all the answers.

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00:15:35,000 --> 00:15:38,000

I

207

00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:47,000

I plan as a truly mysterious place filled with many phenomena that we simply cannot explain.

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00:15:47,000 --> 00:15:53,000

In the USA, the hills of North Carolina are home to one such extraordinary mystery.

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00:15:53,000 --> 00:15:59,000

Look at the, oh, look at it. Look at it moving. Look at it moving down. It's going down the ridge. It's heading down.

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00:15:59,000 --> 00:16:05,000

Oh my God. That is smoking. Look at that in the mountain.

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00:16:05,000 --> 00:16:12,000

Spooky glowing orbs that regularly rise above the mountains and disappear into the horizon.

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00:16:12,000 --> 00:16:21,000

Are these weird lights? UFOs, ghosts, or even better, interdimensional beings?

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00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:27,000

Let's see if we can get to the bottom of this.

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00:16:29,000 --> 00:16:37,000

Northwest of Hickory, North Carolina lies Brown Mountain, a one and a half mile long ridge on the Pisgah National Forest.

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00:16:39,000 --> 00:16:47,000

Its appearance belies a strange history. The first recorded sighting of mysterious lights was reported in 1771.

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00:16:47,000 --> 00:16:51,000

People have been seeing them ever since.

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00:16:51,000 --> 00:16:54,000

Oh, yeah. There, there, there. Wow. See.

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00:16:54,000 --> 00:16:57,000

Yeah, there it goes.

219

00:16:57,000 --> 00:17:03,000

Paranormal investigator Joshua Warren grew up watching the Mountain Strange light show.

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00:17:03,000 --> 00:17:20,000

I first saw the lights when I was 12 or 13 years old. I was quite young and I got really lucky actually because my parents took me and my sister up to the overlook to finally see if we could catch a glimpse of these fabled illuminations.

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00:17:20,000 --> 00:17:30,000

So we were sitting at the overlook and all of a sudden this dark mountain in front of us lit up with a red, flaring light.

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00:17:30,000 --> 00:17:44,000

And that light expanded and then it dwindled, twinkled, and I was amazed because I knew that there was not supposed to be anything commercial or artificial on that mountain that could produce that kind of light.

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00:17:44,000 --> 00:17:54,000

And yet, there it was and that inspired me to discover what was happening there.

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00:17:54,000 --> 00:17:59,000

Joshua's captured this remarkable phenomenon film many times.

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00:17:59,000 --> 00:18:02,000

I've got like six or eight of them all lined up across here, folks.

226

00:18:02,000 --> 00:18:03,000

Yeah.

227

00:18:03,000 --> 00:18:04,000

Oh, my God.

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00:18:04,000 --> 00:18:05,000

See them all?

229

00:18:05,000 --> 00:18:06,000

Wow.

230

00:18:06,000 --> 00:18:07,000

Yeah.

231

00:18:07,000 --> 00:18:08,000

Oh, man.

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00:18:08,000 --> 00:18:15,000

That for me was so clear I realized there is something real happening at Brown Mountain.

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00:18:15,000 --> 00:18:23,000

Joshua's devoted his life to researching the Brown Mountain lights and now he thinks he's discovered the truth.

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00:18:23,000 --> 00:18:27,000

Until now there have been hundreds of competing theories.

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00:18:27,000 --> 00:18:29,000

Many believe the lights are produced by UFOs.

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00:18:29,000 --> 00:18:37,000

The glowing orbs perhaps being some kind of alien vehicle or probe.

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00:18:37,000 --> 00:18:41,000

Local resident Missy Hill has a different explanation.

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00:18:41,000 --> 00:18:47,000

I believe that the Brown Mountain lights is a spiritually charged area.

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00:18:47,000 --> 00:18:52,000

It's the spirits of the dead is what people are seeing.

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00:18:52,000 --> 00:19:01,000

I believe it's probably what's called an imprint, which means something is played over and over again.

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00:19:01,000 --> 00:19:05,000

It's not the same as a being manifesting.

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00:19:05,000 --> 00:19:09,000

It's more of just like a tape playing over and over.

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00:19:09,000 --> 00:19:16,000

Legend has it that back in the year 1200 Brown Mountain was the site of a bloody war between two Indian tribes.

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00:19:16,000 --> 00:19:32,000

The death toll was huge and it was said the heartbroken spirits of the warrior's wives still wander the mountain with lights looking for the remains of their slain husbands.

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00:19:36,000 --> 00:19:40,000

Brown Mountain isn't the only place where strange lights appear.

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00:19:40,000 --> 00:19:49,000

In central Norway strange oblong lights have been appearing over the Hazdalen Valley since the 1980s.

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00:19:49,000 --> 00:19:54,000

Southeast of Marfa, Texas unexplained lights have been reported for 200 years.

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00:19:54,000 --> 00:20:02,000

Hovering balls of light seem to float above the ground sometimes for up to hours on end.

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00:20:02,000 --> 00:20:05,000

So what's going on?

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00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:15,000

Are people seeing ghosts or can science unravel a very real mystery that has endured for hundreds of years?

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00:20:15,000 --> 00:20:22,000

Ghostly wanderings aside, could there be a more run-of-the-mill explanation for the Brown Mountain lights?

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00:20:22,000 --> 00:20:30,000

In 1913 the US Geological Survey proclaimed the lights were train headlights from a nearby valley.

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00:20:30,000 --> 00:20:32,000

Sounds plausible.

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00:20:32,000 --> 00:20:43,000

However, three years later a great flood swept through that valley and temporarily took out the railroad bridges, the roads and all the power to the area.

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00:20:43,000 --> 00:20:51,000

And guess what? The mysterious lights continue to appear above Brown Mountain.

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00:20:51,000 --> 00:20:57,000

So can modern science find an answer to this enduring mystery?

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00:20:58,000 --> 00:21:06,000

While it seems there are multiple explanations including swamp gas or reflected starlight,

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00:21:06,000 --> 00:21:12,000

Dan Caten, an astrophysicist who has studied the phenomena, also has a theory.

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00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:21,000

I got a lot of emails from people who had seen them and what was particularly interesting were people who reported seeing them from several feet away.

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00:21:21,000 --> 00:21:25,000

So this is not going to be a distance at which you're going to confuse things.

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00:21:25,000 --> 00:21:33,000

And then I began to think that this sounded a whole lot like the reports of ball lightning.

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00:21:33,000 --> 00:21:43,000

An extremely rare phenomenon never successfully captured on film, ball lightning is a luminous orb that can be as large as a soccer ball and can hover above the ground

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00:21:43,000 --> 00:21:45,000

or move around wildly for several seconds.

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00:21:45,000 --> 00:21:52,000

It has been observed occurring just before or after a lightning strike.

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00:21:52,000 --> 00:22:00,000

We don't understand ball lightning but it has been reported for centuries and seems to be real.

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00:22:00,000 --> 00:22:03,000

There's just one problem with this theory.

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00:22:03,000 --> 00:22:08,000

Most sightings of the Brown Mountain lights occur on clear, dry nights.

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00:22:08,000 --> 00:22:13,000

No thunderstorms means no ball lightning.

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00:22:13,000 --> 00:22:17,000

This is where Joshua Warren's theory comes in.

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00:22:17,000 --> 00:22:24,000

He thinks the Brown Mountain lights are similar to ball lightning but without the lightning.

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00:22:24,000 --> 00:22:33,000

We've been able to reproduce a similar phenomenon on a miniature scale in our lab.

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00:22:33,000 --> 00:22:44,000

Now as you can see, the stream of carbon that's floating up in the smoke has ignited this ball of plasma at the top of the jar.

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00:22:44,000 --> 00:22:49,000

It's easy enough in the lab but to produce the effect of nature requires a source of energy.

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00:22:49,000 --> 00:22:56,000

Energy that Joshua believes is coming from Brown Mountain itself.

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00:22:56,000 --> 00:23:05,000

We're trying to measure any kind of strange electromagnetic interference that might be produced by the anomalous lights.

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00:23:05,000 --> 00:23:16,000

We're just to see if they will create some type of interference that say a conventional light maybe from a campfire or a lantern would not produce.

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00:23:16,000 --> 00:23:19,000

Just for some radio microwaves.

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00:23:19,000 --> 00:23:25,000

Joshua claims to have detected erratic surges in the natural levels of electrical current running through the ground.

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00:23:25,000 --> 00:23:31,000

And we think that could be because the mountain stores up electricity over time and then discharges it.

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00:23:31,000 --> 00:23:40,000

These discharges intersect at various angles that all come together to create what looks like a ball of light.

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00:23:40,000 --> 00:23:46,000

According to Joshua, Brown Mountain could be acting like a giant electrical capacitor,

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00:23:46,000 --> 00:23:54,000

storing a constant trickle of static electricity between its rock strata and then discharging it quickly in very large bursts,

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00:23:54,000 --> 00:24:00,000

bursts strong enough to turn the air into a plasma.

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00:24:01,000 --> 00:24:08,000

Plasma is a super excited form of ionized gas that has released its electrons.

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00:24:08,000 --> 00:24:19,000

Our sun is a massive ball of plasma and closer to home, plasma is used to light up fluorescent tubes and flat screen plasma TVs.

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00:24:19,000 --> 00:24:28,000

Joshua has designed an experiment. He says proves the Brown Mountain lights are plasma balls caused by the mountain itself.

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00:24:28,000 --> 00:24:39,000

So we have a special plasma tube that we have created to try to reproduce what might be happening at Brown Mountain on a miniature scale.

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00:24:39,000 --> 00:24:49,000

This tube is made of clear acrylic and we have a primary electrode and a secondary electrode.

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00:24:49,000 --> 00:25:01,000

What makes it most interesting is that we have this array of third electrodes here on the side and they reproduce some of the angles that we get from the slope of Brown Mountain

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00:25:01,000 --> 00:25:12,000

to see how these interactions might come together and give us some type of an interference pattern that makes something like ball lightning hover in the middle of that tube.

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00:25:12,000 --> 00:25:23,000

And so we have this hooked on a vacuum pump. The reason we've done that is because we cannot recreate the amount of voltage happening in Mother Nature at Brown Mountain.

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00:25:23,000 --> 00:25:34,000

So to compensate for that, by taking some of the air out of here, the voltage we do have will become enhanced and act more like it would in nature at higher voltages.

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00:25:34,000 --> 00:25:44,000

We have a DC power supply. This power supply is going to be producing about 1200 volts of DC, 10 to 25 milliamps.

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00:25:44,000 --> 00:25:55,000

And it's going to take it a second for us to reach our maximum vacuum we need for this experiment, which is about two millitore worth of pressure.

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00:25:55,000 --> 00:26:01,000

I'm going to apply some voltage.

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00:26:01,000 --> 00:26:12,000

If we were looking at, say, a cliff on Brown Mountain, this bottom wire would represent one discharge coming from a shelf of earth.

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00:26:12,000 --> 00:26:18,000

The top wire would represent the atmosphere, which has its own charge.

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00:26:18,000 --> 00:26:30,000

The third wire would represent another charge coming from another spot on the cliff that happens to intersect with that original charge.

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00:26:30,000 --> 00:26:35,000

It's that intersection that gives you the spin that gives you what looks like a blob.

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00:26:35,000 --> 00:26:44,000

So we're looking at a representation of the atmosphere and two shelves of the earth.

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00:26:44,000 --> 00:26:51,000

Right now you can see a plasma ball that's hovering between these three electrodes.

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00:26:51,000 --> 00:26:57,000

And we have created this by reproducing many of the conditions at Brown Mountain.

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00:26:57,000 --> 00:27:13,000

Therefore, we think that a Brown Mountain light is very similar to the type of plasma that you're seeing that appears to be hovering in the middle of this tube that actually is just part of a much larger electrical system.

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00:27:13,000 --> 00:27:23,000

Plasma created in a lab does seem to appear strikingly similar to the mysterious lights witnessed on Brown Mountain. Joshua is confident he's found the answer.

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00:27:23,000 --> 00:27:38,000

The moment that I saw that ball of light appear hovering between those electrodes, I understood so many things all at once that I never understood before.

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00:27:38,000 --> 00:27:43,000

I think we have a lot to learn still about the way our planet works.

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00:27:43,000 --> 00:27:53,000

That's why it seems to me it's valuable to try to see if we can recreate these things that happen that we cannot explain.

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00:27:53,000 --> 00:28:01,000

But the Brown Mountain lights are so unpredictable and rare that studying them scientifically is virtually impossible.

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00:28:01,000 --> 00:28:10,000

For the foreseeable future, it seems this remarkable mystery will remain weird. What?

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00:28:10,000 --> 00:28:35,000

In the remote mountains of northern Mexico, a little known tribe is redefining our knowledge of the limits of human endurance.

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00:28:35,000 --> 00:28:46,000

They can run up to 435 miles, 16 times further than a marathon in just over two days. How could this be possible?

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00:28:46,000 --> 00:28:53,000

Experts are attempting to uncover the secrets to their superhuman ability. Is it unique or do we all have it?

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00:28:53,000 --> 00:29:01,000

Finding the answer could change the future of medical science. Is that weird or what?

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00:29:06,000 --> 00:29:13,000

Oh, I could imagine running a marathon over 26 miles. I can only make it around the block.

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00:29:13,000 --> 00:29:20,000

Oh, yeah. Today's elite marathon runners are quite an incredible bunch.

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00:29:20,000 --> 00:29:26,000

But then again, they do have the most sophisticated modern training available.

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00:29:26,000 --> 00:29:34,000

Advanced nutrition programs, state-of-the-art facilities, physiotherapy, sports psychologists, world-class coaches, everything.

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00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:40,000

To help them push their bodies to the extremes of what's humanly possible.

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00:29:40,000 --> 00:29:51,000

But what if I told you there is a mysterious and virtually unknown group of people who with no formal training can literally run circles around most Olympians?

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00:29:51,000 --> 00:30:02,000

Completely normal men and women who can run the equivalent of not one, but ten marathons back to back with a hangover.

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00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:09,000

In the remote Sierra Madre mountains of northwest Mexico lies Copper Canyon,

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00:30:09,000 --> 00:30:15,000

a rugged region home to a tribe called the Tira Humara, or the running people.

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00:30:19,000 --> 00:30:24,000

The Tira Humara have inhabited this terrain for 500 years.

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The name comes from their superhuman ability to run superhuman distances without running shoes.

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How do they do it?

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00:30:35,000 --> 00:30:44,000

Chris McDougall is a former marathon runner. He is astonished by the Tira Humara's extraordinary endurance.

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00:30:44,000 --> 00:30:49,000

I assume it's a simple trick. You just do one thing and you're good to go.

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00:30:49,000 --> 00:30:53,000

And then when I started to look into the tribe, I realized that this guy was not unique.

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00:30:53,000 --> 00:30:58,000

That this is an entire tribe of people that can run distances well beyond 100 miles.

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00:30:58,000 --> 00:31:02,000

They routinely run 200, 250 miles at a time.

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00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:06,000

And not just some people, but all of them, men and women, old and young alike.

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00:31:06,000 --> 00:31:11,000

There are men in their 70s and 80s who are still running 150 miles at a time.

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00:31:11,000 --> 00:31:19,000

Remarkably the tribe record for the single longest run is a staggering 435 miles in just over 48 hours.

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00:31:20,000 --> 00:31:26,000

435 miles is the equivalent of running from New York to Cleveland, Ohio.

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00:31:29,000 --> 00:31:36,000

To run this distance over 16 times further than a marathon in one session defies belief.

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00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:41,000

But even more remarkable is how they do it.

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00:31:44,000 --> 00:31:48,000

Either barefoot or these thin homemade sandals made out of either deer skin,

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00:31:48,000 --> 00:31:54,000

or whenever people chuck old tires down into canyons, they'll actually scamper out,

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00:31:54,000 --> 00:31:57,000

salvage the tires and cut them into sandals.

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00:31:59,000 --> 00:32:05,000

So men and women capable of feats of endurance that seem impossible,

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00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:09,000

long distance runners that are very pinnacle of athleticism.

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00:32:09,000 --> 00:32:15,000

So now this is the point in the story where I'm supposed to scratch my head and say,

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00:32:15,000 --> 00:32:18,000

oh my, is that weird or what?

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00:32:18,000 --> 00:32:21,000

How can the tire of a man or people be doing what they do?

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00:32:21,000 --> 00:32:27,000

But perhaps the really weird thing, and the actual question to be asking here,

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00:32:27,000 --> 00:32:33,000

is why can't the rest of us normal folk do what the taro maro do?

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00:32:33,000 --> 00:32:39,000

I mean, why can't I run hundreds of miles at a time?

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00:32:41,000 --> 00:32:43,000

What?

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00:32:46,000 --> 00:32:49,000

To look for answers, let's talk to the experts.

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00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:56,000

Sports nutritionist John Barotti thinks that their remote environment plays an important role

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00:32:56,000 --> 00:32:58,000

in their extraordinary ability.

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00:33:00,000 --> 00:33:05,000

These individuals run as an integral part of their culture.

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00:33:05,000 --> 00:33:10,000

They run for survival, they run for inter-village communication, and they run for sport.

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00:33:12,000 --> 00:33:15,000

The taro mara live to run.

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00:33:15,000 --> 00:33:20,000

They regularly compete in two or three hundred mile races through rugged, mountainous terrain.

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00:33:21,000 --> 00:33:26,000

Delivering mail, they can run up to five hundred miles in a week.

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00:33:28,000 --> 00:33:34,000

So you can imagine if you lived in a culture where running was the only means of athletic expression,

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00:33:34,000 --> 00:33:39,000

and you had to run for survival as well, you actually get pretty good at running.

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00:33:39,000 --> 00:33:43,000

So how do the taro mara run these superhuman distances?

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00:33:43,000 --> 00:33:46,000

Could diet be the answer?

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00:33:47,000 --> 00:33:53,000

During a 26 mile race, an average marathon runner will burn around 2600 calories.

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00:33:53,000 --> 00:33:59,000

To endure this distance, their bodies need to consume large amounts of carbohydrates,

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00:33:59,000 --> 00:34:02,000

like those found in sports trains.

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00:34:03,000 --> 00:34:09,000

Carbohydrates are stored as glycogen in the muscles and are gradually converted to energy.

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00:34:10,000 --> 00:34:17,000

But on a 435 mile run, it's estimated the taro mara can burn up to a staggering 43,000 calories.

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00:34:20,000 --> 00:34:23,000

Where do they get this energy?

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00:34:23,000 --> 00:34:27,000

Chris McDougal studied the taro mara diet.

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00:34:27,000 --> 00:34:30,000

He was astonished at what he found.

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00:34:30,000 --> 00:34:35,000

They drink like crazy, particularly at harvest time.

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00:34:35,000 --> 00:34:41,000

They do a thing called tesguinadas, and tesguinadas are just fond.

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00:34:41,000 --> 00:34:45,000

Anything goes, drink till you die raves.

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00:34:45,000 --> 00:34:47,000

It actually serves a purpose.

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00:34:47,000 --> 00:34:51,000

When you live in a culture where everyone relies on his or her neighbor,

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00:34:51,000 --> 00:34:53,000

you can't afford to have grudges and resentments.

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00:34:53,000 --> 00:34:57,000

So every once in a while, you need to sort of blow off steam and get it all out of your system.

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00:34:57,000 --> 00:35:04,000

During harvest and before races, the taro mara consume large amounts of a corn beer called Tespueno.

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00:35:05,000 --> 00:35:11,000

Could this be the key to the extraordinary endurance of the taro mara?

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00:35:11,000 --> 00:35:18,000

They actually may be increasing their hydration status and their glycogen status with this corn beer.

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00:35:18,000 --> 00:35:22,000

It's very high in carbohydrate and the alcohol content is low.

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00:35:22,000 --> 00:35:30,000

It's actually been estimated that it would take about four liters to get intoxicated using their corn beer or their corn beverage.

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00:35:30,000 --> 00:35:34,000

So if you think about it, the amount of carbohydrates that would come with that

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00:35:34,000 --> 00:35:39,000

and the amount of just simple fluid load would be very high.

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00:35:39,000 --> 00:35:45,000

Amazingly, loading up on a high carb beer before a race may help the taro mara.

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00:35:45,000 --> 00:35:52,000

But this alone can't explain their incredible long distance abilities.

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00:35:52,000 --> 00:35:54,000

So what is it then that makes them so special?

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00:35:54,000 --> 00:35:57,000

Well, apparently nothing.

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00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:04,000

They just never stop doing something that, once upon a time, willed it.

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00:36:13,000 --> 00:36:22,000

To uncover the incredible truth, we need to go back in time and delve into humanity's evolutionary history.

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00:36:23,000 --> 00:36:30,000

Dan Lieberman thinks the answer might be found in humanity's shared evolutionary history.

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00:36:30,000 --> 00:36:37,000

The taro mara's abilities to run really long distances really comes from our evolutionary history as hunters.

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00:36:37,000 --> 00:36:44,000

We live in a world that's so different from the world for which we evolved that we have lost a lot of those abilities.

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00:36:44,000 --> 00:36:50,000

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, early human hunters had to pursue their prey over long distances.

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00:36:50,000 --> 00:36:54,000

They would literally chase the animals until they died of heat exhaustion.

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00:36:54,000 --> 00:37:00,000

It's called persistence hunting and is still practiced by the taro mara today.

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00:37:00,000 --> 00:37:05,000

What you do is you run at a speed that makes an animal gallop.

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00:37:05,000 --> 00:37:08,000

Most quadrupeds, the way they cool down is by panting.

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00:37:08,000 --> 00:37:11,000

When an animal gallops, it can't pant.

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00:37:11,000 --> 00:37:14,000

So it slowly heats up and heats up and heats up.

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00:37:14,000 --> 00:37:16,000

But we, of course, cool by sweating.

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00:37:16,000 --> 00:37:24,000

So if you can make an animal, you can chase an animal, make it gallop for 10 or 15 minutes when

it's really hot, that animal will die.

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00:37:24,000 --> 00:37:29,000

Evolution has provided humans with many ways to endure long distances.

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00:37:29,000 --> 00:37:32,000

Were we born to run?

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00:37:32,000 --> 00:37:39,000

You know, starting 2 million years ago, we evolved these abilities to run very long distances in order to hunt.

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00:37:39,000 --> 00:37:45,000

We have features all throughout our bodies, literally from our heads to our toes, that help us run long distances,

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00:37:45,000 --> 00:37:53,000

both in terms of storing up and releasing mechanical energy, in terms of cooling, in terms of recruiting energy and storing energy.

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00:37:53,000 --> 00:37:59,000

And what the taro mara have done is they've kept those mechanisms and they keep developing them as they grow up.

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00:37:59,000 --> 00:38:03,000

Most of us have those abilities, it's just that we don't use them.

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00:38:03,000 --> 00:38:10,000

With little or no need for exercise, Dan believes our modern lifestyle is to blame.

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00:38:10,000 --> 00:38:12,000

Why would you want to persistence hunts nowadays?

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00:38:12,000 --> 00:38:19,000

I mean, we can go to our supermarket, we can buy our meat fully packaged in a container with, you know, wrap all over it.

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00:38:19,000 --> 00:38:26,000

And in fact, for the last maybe 50 or 100,000 years, people probably didn't have to do that very much because of the invention of the bow and arrow.

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00:38:26,000 --> 00:38:34,000

So this kind of hunting is probably very ancient and it's become much less common probably over the last 20, 30, 40, 50,000 years.

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00:38:34,000 --> 00:38:36,000

Nobody's exactly sure when.

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00:38:39,000 --> 00:38:47,000

So it turns out that the taro mara are just doing what any of us was designed to do by evolution.

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00:38:47,000 --> 00:38:56,000

Run. Our bodies were honed over hundreds of thousands of years to be the perfect long distance endurance machine.

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00:38:56,000 --> 00:39:03,000

But what use is having such a formidable tool if you don't know how to use it properly?

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00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:08,000

You see, there is still one crucial thing that separates them from us.

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00:39:08,000 --> 00:39:10,000

Technique.

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00:39:11,000 --> 00:39:23,000

When we started studying barefoot running and minimalist shoe running, we learned that there are some interesting aspects to the way the taro mara run that may be actually of some use to us.

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00:39:23,000 --> 00:39:34,000

The taro mara don't use conventional running shoes. They run in thin homemade sandals called huraces or they run completely barefoot.

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00:39:34,000 --> 00:39:38,000

Could this be the answer to their superhuman abilities?

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00:39:40,000 --> 00:39:50,000

Sports scientist Dr. Irene Davis suspects that because the taro mara run without shoes, they run differently than most modern marathon runners.

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00:39:50,000 --> 00:39:59,000

And that this may be the key to their amazing endurance. It's time to put this theory to the test.

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00:39:59,000 --> 00:40:04,000

We're going to start shopping, we're going to have you walk to kind of get you warmed up and then we'll break into a run.

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00:40:04,000 --> 00:40:11,000

And I want you to just land your natural type of a landing. We're going to collect some data with you running naturally.

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00:40:11,000 --> 00:40:17,000

Wearing running shoes, the test subject lands on his heel first, then the rest of the foot connects.

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00:40:17,000 --> 00:40:27,000

In runners terms, this is called a heel strike and it's long been considered the ideal running style.

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00:40:27,000 --> 00:40:31,000

But the experiments results offer a different perspective.

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00:40:31,000 --> 00:40:43,000

This is a skeleton depiction of you running and that red arrow is actually the ground reaction force as it goes through your heel and through your foot and actually up through your center of mass.

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00:40:43,000 --> 00:40:49,000

Over here on this graph, what you're seeing is this is the ground reaction force as you land.

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00:40:49,000 --> 00:40:54,000

What's interesting about this is that you've got a very distinct impact peak.

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00:40:54,000 --> 00:40:58,000

This impact is the area that we think might be related to injury.

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00:40:58,000 --> 00:40:59,000

OK.

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00:40:59,000 --> 00:41:02,000

OK, so you can see that with each foot strike, you get this impact peak.

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00:41:02,000 --> 00:41:03,000

OK.

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00:41:03,000 --> 00:41:04,000

OK.

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00:41:04,000 --> 00:41:12,000

The test suggests that when we run in shoes, there is more impact on our legs and feet increasing our chance of injury.

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00:41:12,000 --> 00:41:21,000

And that's because the extra support running shoes provides actually prevent our muscles from doing their job properly.

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00:41:21,000 --> 00:41:29,000

The shoes are over supportive, then the muscles aren't working so hard and if the muscles become weak, then you're going to have a greater tendency to get injured as well.

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00:41:29,000 --> 00:41:34,000

But is there a difference when the subject runs in bare feet?

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00:41:34,000 --> 00:41:41,000

So Jason, are you thinking about the way that you're landing or you just let your feet land the way they want to naturally land?

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00:41:41,000 --> 00:41:45,000

I'm not my feet naturally land the way they want to land.

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00:41:45,000 --> 00:41:48,000

I feel I'm definitely landing more midfoot, forefoot.

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00:41:48,000 --> 00:41:54,000

I mean, there's definitely less impact.

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00:41:54,000 --> 00:42:00,000

Now what we're looking at you running barefoot, you can see that you're not landing so much on your heel.

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00:42:00,000 --> 00:42:05,000

Do you see that you have less distinct impact peak?

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00:42:05,000 --> 00:42:12,000

I think it's crazy how much the force, the impact, how much less impact there was.

448

00:42:12,000 --> 00:42:16,000

In the end it seems the Tarumara secret isn't a secret at all.

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00:42:16,000 --> 00:42:18,000

It's their birthright.

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00:42:18,000 --> 00:42:23,000

And apparently ours too.

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00:42:23,000 --> 00:42:28,000

Could we all be superhuman if we ran without shoes? Probably not.

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00:42:28,000 --> 00:42:40,000

But finding the answer to the mysteries of the Tarumara's remarkable endurance may take us a step closer to understanding the secrets of the human body.

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00:42:40,000 --> 00:42:48,000

I think there's an enormous amount that we can learn from people like the Tarumara because they teach us about how our bodies were designed to function.

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00:42:48,000 --> 00:42:51,000

They teach us about basic human capabilities, right?

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00:42:51,000 --> 00:42:55,000

We think, we still think it's extraordinary that they can run so far.

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00:42:55,000 --> 00:43:00,000

But actually what they teach us is that it's actually normal that we can run so far.

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00:43:11,000 --> 00:43:18,000

So three bizarre mysteries yet many possible explanations.

458

00:43:18,000 --> 00:43:21,000

Spookiness in Death Valley.

459

00:43:21,000 --> 00:43:27,000

Rocks and stones moving around the flat desert floor without human or animal intervention.

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00:43:27,000 --> 00:43:29,000

But how?

461

00:43:29,000 --> 00:43:31,000

An elaborate hoax, aliens?

462

00:43:31,000 --> 00:43:38,000

Or are these rocks just acting like natural curling stones?

463

00:43:38,000 --> 00:43:44,000

Mysterious lights spotted for hundreds of years on a U.S. mountain.

464

00:43:44,000 --> 00:43:47,000

Are they the spirits of long dead Native Americans?

465

00:43:47,000 --> 00:43:49,000

Are they simply campfires?

466

00:43:49,000 --> 00:43:56,000

Or is the mountain itself conjuring a fantastic natural phenomenon?

467

00:43:56,000 --> 00:44:01,000

In Mexico, a remote tribe capable of running hundreds of miles at a time.

468

00:44:01,000 --> 00:44:03,000

How can this be possible?

469

00:44:03,000 --> 00:44:05,000

Is it their diet?

470

00:44:05,000 --> 00:44:06,000

Their choice of footwear?

471

00:44:06,000 --> 00:44:12,000

Or are the taro huma are simply doing what all our early ancestors did?

472

00:44:12,000 --> 00:44:15,000

Were humans born to run?

473

00:44:15,000 --> 00:44:17,000

You decide.

474

00:44:17,000 --> 00:44:24,000

Join me next time for more stories that will undoubtedly be weird or what.

