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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Kenneth Arnold's testimony

From: DRudiak@aol.com
Date: Mon, 24 Nov 1997 21:09:11 -0500 (EST)
Fwd Date: Tue, 25 Nov 1997 02:14:11 -0500
Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold's testimony

>From: James Easton <pulsar@compuserve.com>
>Date: Sun, 23 Nov 1997 23:11:25 -0500
>Fwd Date: Mon, 24 Nov 1997 09:29:35 -0500
>Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold's testimony

Regarding...
>>Date: Sat, 22 Nov 1997 23:27:36 -0500
>>From: bruce maccabee <brumac@compuserve.com>
>>Subject: UFO UpDate: Re: Kenneth Arnold's testimony

Bruce wrote:
>>A strange bird is a pelican...

Bruce,
>They certainly seem to do a remarkable impression of alien spacecraft
>flying in formation!

James Easton seems to do a remarkable impression of a Ufologist
Pflocking in formation with debunkers.

Easton, still haven't dealt with some of the basic questions.
How does a flock of "pelicans" or any other bird:

1. Quickly outfly an airplane going 110 mph on a parallel course?
2. Avoid being flown into by Arnold's plane on his initial intercept course and therefore quickly recognized (when they can be no more than 1-3 miles away when first sighted)?
3. Flash brightly in the sunlight with an almost blinding light even against a snowy backdrop?
4. Have a length to thickness ratio on the order of 10 or 20 to 1?
5. Be flying in a close packed flock of unrecognizable objects when they are stretched out over a visual angle of about 11 degrees or .2 radian?

>Quite a talented bird.

Quite a talented bird. What's your Aviary name? 8-)

>>It flies over 100 miles per hour when everitcan....
>>especially when trying to race a small airplane while flying
>>southward past Mt. Rainier.

>100 miles an hour based on what?

Based on the basic case report and some real simple math, which you obviously missed out on in high school. Arnold said he was flying on a parallel course headed south at 110 mph. Yet the objects passed his position flying a southward course between Mt. Rainier and Mt Adams. Even if these had been itty-bitty sparrows flying just outside his window, this means they had to flying faster than 110 mph.

It only gets worse the bigger the birds and the further away they have to be to avoid recognition as birds (like seeing their wings flapping). For your giant white "pelicans," I gave an example of where they might have been about 7500 feet away. At this distance it might be possible to make out some crude detail, to try to fit your theory of how Arnold confused pelican anatomy with crescent-shaped saucers. Yet it might be just far enough that Arnold couldn't immediately recognize them as birds. (This is extremely doubtful, but I'm trying to give your pelican theory every bit of help that it can get.)

At this distance, for the pelicans to cover the visual angle of 80 degrees between Rainier and Adams in Arnold's clocked 102 second period, they would have to be flying at 170 mph. And the further ANY flying object gets from Arnold, the faster it has to go to do this. (This is where basic math comes in. Try reviewing geometric scaling with distance.)

>In his possible first interview, certainly one of the earliest he gave, Kenneth Arnold said:

>"I got down to Pendleton and I began looking at my map and taking measurements on it and the best calculation I could figure out, >now even in spite of error, would be around 1200 miles an hour, >because making the distance from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adams, in, >we'll say approximately two minutes, it's almost, well, it'd be >around 25 miles per minute.

>Now allowing for air, we can give them three minutes or four minutes to make it, and they're still going more than 800 miles an hour".

You just don't get it, do you? Arnold's figures hold for objects 25 miles distant. Closer objects will be computed to travel slower, but even next to his plane, their bare-bones MINIMUM speed will have to exceed 110 mph.

What flock of birds travels >110 mph?

Of course, they can't be right outside his window, or he knows their birds right away. They have to be much further away to the point where he can't see basic things like flapping wings. That means they have to be traveling well in excess of 110 mph.

>In your paper, "The Complete Sighting Report of Kenneth Arnold, >with Comments and Analysis", you state:

>"The distance from the flank of Mt. Rainier to the peak of Mt. Adams is about 45 miles (depending upon where on the flank one >picks as the starting p point). Since the length of the "chain" >of objects was about 5 miles (paragraph H above), the leading >object was about 5 miles south of Mt. Adams when the last object >passed Mt. Adams. Hence the total distance it (and the others) >travelled was about 50 miles in 102 seconds. This corresponds to >a speed of about 1,760 mph".

>Pick a number, any number...

Are you really this dense, or are you just pretending to be? It's not a matter of arbitrary "picking" a number. It's what the required speed would have to be at a given distance given the details of the sighting. You really need a refresher math course.

Speeds scale with distance. The MINIMUM speed is still in excess of 110 mph (Arnold's air speed), and the further away the objects actually are, the faster the COMPUTED speed will be. At 25 miles, they would be traveling at Arnold's 1700 mph. Two inches from his pilot's window they still have to be traveling at 110+ mph.

>What if the "the length of the 'chain' of objects" wasn't "about >5 miles"?

Then the objects would be closer, be still going too damn fast to be birds.

Sheesh!

Further, the nine objects would be too far apart to be birds flocking together. Your linear "pelican" formation at 7500 feet would be strung out over 1500 feet. Again, that's where SCALING comes in. 1500 feet at 7500 feet distance covers an equivalent visual angle as 5 miles at 25 miles distance.

So your "pelicans" would be flying approximately 200 feet apart from one another, hardly an example of birds in close formation flight.

>Your reference to "paragraph H above", relates to a statement
>which Arnold made in his letter to the USAF, in which he says:

>"I observed the chain of these objects passing another
>snow-covered ridge in between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams, and as
>the first one was passing the south crest of this ridge the last
>object was entering the northern crest of the ridge. As I was
>flying in the direction of this particular ridge, I measured it
>and found it to be approximately five miles so I could safely
>assume that the chain of these saucer like objects were at least
>five miles long".

>This is a subjective calculation,

No, it's Arnold's description of an observed VISUAL ANGLE based on an identifiable landmark (the ridge): 5 miles of spread at 25 miles distance or 0.2 radians. Your flock of "pelicans" would still cover the SAME visual angle at closer distance and appear to span the same 5 mile distant ridge, only they would be closer together (again think geometric scaling). Unfortunately, your pelicans are going to be too damned spread out at even a much closer distance to be engaged in formation flying.

> Arnold claiming he was watching
>"saucer like objects", when he may have been observing pelicans,
>something he apparently didn't account for.
>Do you think Arnold's mention of "saucer like objects" might have
>been influenced by the "flying saucer" hysteria his story was
>responsible for?

Do you think your inability to understand simple arguments might be influenced by the flying saucer debunking hysteria that seems to be epidemic among so-called British Ufologists?

>Arnold of course never having originally claimed to see "saucer
>like objects" at all...

So? What difference does that make?

>>Incidentally, you should check with the bird experts to find out how
>>high the pelicans typically fly....or maximum height and speed.

>I had already asked about this and in view of the uncertainty,
>I'm looking for a more definitive answer. A copy of "All You Ever
>Wanted to Know About the American White Pelican", would be
>useful, but in the absence of that, it's a case of asking various
>people who might be able to offer an informed opinion.
>I'm quite happy to do so as time permits, although I can't help
>wondering why it's apparently taken 50 years for such obvious
>enquiries to be made.

Maybe because various people who've looked into it over the last 50 years ago had some basic reasoning ability and realized that a flock of birds couldn't outfly Arnold's plane.

>Maybe if this scenario had already been examined by "ufologists"
>and proven to be impossible, there might be something to laugh
>about.

We're laughing because the arguments against birds are so simple and devastating, and yet you just don't get it. You just plod on with a bunch of handwaving arguments instead of thinking through what people are trying to tell you.

>>If mistaken by Arnold for distant aircraft flying (apparently) nearly
>>at horizon level to him, then they would have been essentially at his
>>level.

>Not necessarily. This is also subjective

No, it's NOT "subjective," because he's again comparing the objects against known landmarks. If he's flying at 9200 feet, and the objects appear to be just skimming the peaks and ridges of the Cascade range, then we can again compute a worst-case figure for what their downward visual angle would have been. Assume Arnold was grossly in error on his estimated height, and the objects were really appearing to skim the Cascades at only 5000 feet instead of his estimated 9000-10000 feet. This still places them at a downward angle of only 2 degrees. This angle will be INDEPENDENT of whatever distance the objects happen to be. Arnold's subjective impression of distance doesn't enter into it at all.

So if your "pelicans" were 10,000 feet away, this 2 degree downward angle translates into less than 400 feet difference in altitude between the "pelicans" and Arnold. Again SCALING. The "birds" would have been up around Arnold's altitude and he would have been looking at them from the side, not from the top or bottom.

For God's sake, review your math!

>and as Arnold comments

>in that early interview, "And, they seemed to flip and flash in the sun, just like a mirror, and, in fact, I happened to be in an angle from the sun that seemed to hit the tops of these peculiar looking things in such a way that it almost blinded you when you looked at them through your plexiglass windshield".
>It could therefore be argued that Arnold was looking down on the "tops of these peculiar looking things"

It could therefore be argued by YOU if you don't think about it. But he couldn't be looking down on the "tops of these peculiar things" and still have them appear to be skimming the top of the Cascades, which is a downward angle of only 2 degrees or less.

>>And, I suppose Arnold could see the white bodies but not the bills/beaks.

>Obviously this is possible. So far as I know, he didn't have binoculars with him, or was blessed with telescopic vision.
>If you were observing a formation of birds at a considerable distance, would you clearly make out every detail?

If he could see enough to describe them as crescent shaped or chopped in the back, then he is going to be close enough to clearly make out gross body features like wings, in particular flapping wings.

Otherwise, if they are too far away, they are going to look like nothing more than nondescript dots with NO detail at all. That's why it is possible to put bounds on the distances that would likely be involved for an object of any size.

>A million and one experienced birdwatchers might disagree.
>Kenneth Arnold was unquestionably a highly experienced pilot and his original testimony should be given due consideration.

His original testimony has the objects passing by his plane on a southward course as they swung through the visual angle between Rainier to the north and Adams to the South. Therefore, whatever distance they were, they were outflying his plane, which was traveling at about 110 mph. What pelicans fly well in excess of 110 mph?

His original testimony has the objects strung out in a formation covering 0.2 radians or about 11 degrees. If they were pelicans, they would be flying too far apart to be flying in a formation.

His original testimony has them flying near the horizon, about even with the tops of the Cascade range, meaning his visual angle looking down on them would have been extremely shallow. He couldn't have had a top view of birds flying beneath him.

His original testimony describes details in the objects which places limits on their distance for an object of any given size. Not only would he have seen birds flapping their wings, he would

have quickly flown into them on his original intercept course.

You have yet to deal with any of these objections. And there are more, like his original descriptions of bright specular reflection and length to thickness ratios, totally unlike that of birds.

>The suggestion that Arnold's unidentified objects are perhaps
>consistent with the characteristics of American White Pelicans
>was not mine, and the factual correlations I took time to
>highlight, were a contribution to the investigation of this
>case.

No problems bringing another theory to our attention. What's beginning to really bother some of us, however, is how you continue to blow off the very straightforward devastating objections that have been raised against it.

>There are clear objections to this conceivable explanation; let's
>look at them in perspective and consider the respective merits.

Which you don't seem to be doing. No matter how much this is explained to you, you fall back on Arnold's report being nothing but subjective impressions poisoned by flying saucer hysteria. In other words, instead of dealing directly with the objections, you are resorting to stale debunking arguments.

>Introducing new evidence doesn't mean I'm on a mission to proselytise.

You could have fooled us James with statements like:

>They certainly seem to do a remarkable impression of alien spacecraft
>flying in formation!

>Do you think Arnold's mention of "saucer like objects" might have
>been influenced by the "flying saucer" hysteria his story was
>responsible for?

>There seems to be compelling evidence that the unidentified
>objects reported by Kenneth Arnold, may have been a flock of
>American White Pelicans."

>Michael Price, suggested a "possible candidate species in the
>area at that time of year (sporadically) whose color, size,
>flight profile and proclivity for formation flight at sometimes
>quite high altitude would even more produce *every* detail of the
>phenomenon which Arnold observed: a flock of non - or failed -
>breeder, southbound White Pelicans".

Sounds like proselytizing to me.

David Rudiak

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