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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Noctilucent Clouds and UFOs

From: Nick Balaskas <nikolaos@YorkU.CA>
 Date: Wed, 30 Jun 1999 19:09:30 -0400 (Eastern Daylight Time)
 Fwd Date: Thu, 01 Jul 1999 01:39:47 -0400
 Subject: Noctilucent Clouds and UFOs

Hi everyone.

Dr. Michael DeRobertis is a York University professor of Physics and Astronomy and the editor of Ontario Skeptics Electronics News, a weekly publication which is sent out by e-mail to subscribers. Below is an article in the latest issue which some UFO UpDates list members, and Dr. Kevin Randle in particular, would be interested in since it involves Noctilucent Clouds (Ambiguous Astronomical and Meteorological Stimuli) and the suggestion that these clouds may be identified as UFOs (Influence of Pre-existing Belief in UFOs). In this case, I would think everyone could readily tell the difference between even rare very high altitude clouds and UFOs. Witnesses to the famous case of a large UFO obscured in the clouds hovering above a landmark downtown Montreal hotel for a long time didn't confuse the two.

Because of their great height, noctilucent clouds would seem to be stationary and would glow bright in the dark sky from the reflected light of the sun even well after sunset. Has anyone who has seen such clouds have any doubts that they were seeing something other than just clouds?

Nick Balaskas

 Ontario Skeptics Electronic News #11 June 28/29 1999

<snip>

Noctilucent Ice Clouds Spotted Over Colorado for First Time -
 there is speculation that these are responsible for some UFO
 reports

June 24, 1999

Silvery-blue ice clouds known as noctilucent clouds that appear each year in the far northern and southern latitudes in the middle atmosphere were spotted over Colorado for the first time on June 22.

Some scientists believe the clouds form from increases in gaseous methane rising unimpeded through a natural "cold trap" located about eight miles above Earth's surface, said Gary Thomas, a professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder's Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics. The rising methane may react with sunlight to form large quantities of water vapor that eventually freeze and circulate to the top of the atmosphere, facilitating noctilucent cloud formation.

Thomas, one of the world's leading experts on noctilucent clouds, predicted in 1994 that the clouds would brighten by five to ten times and be visible over the continental United States by the 21st century. "This is a big event," he said. "While they are a beautiful phenomenon, these clouds may be a message from Mother Nature that we are upsetting the equilibrium of the atmosphere."

The clouds, which bask in the late sunlight some 50 miles over Earth's surface, were observed on June 22 at about 9:30 p.m. by CU-Boulder meteorology Instructor Richard Keen while driving up Coal Creek Canyon southwest of Boulder. They also were spotted that evening by Utah State University physics Professor Mike Taylor from his home in Logan, Utah.

"I saw silvery clouds to the northwest that were distinctly brighter and higher than the other clouds," said Keen. The previous record for the southernmost sighting of these clouds in the continental United States was in North Dakota, some 500 miles to the north, said Keen.

Noctilucent cloud formation is likely hastened by increasing amounts of rising carbon dioxide from Earth. While CO2 is thought to contribute to global warming in the lower atmosphere, it ironically cools the middle and upper atmospheres, helping to facilitate noctilucent cloud formation.

<snip>

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