

**REPORT ON THE
INVESTIGATION OF NOCTURNAL LIGHT PHENOMENA
AT TOPPENISH, WASHINGTON
AUGUST 1972**

Originally Submitted November 2, 1972
to Dr. J. Allen Hynek
By
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings made during a field study period extending from August 20, 1972 to August 31, 1972, near Toppenish, Washington U.S.A.

It is intended as a preliminary report, since investigation is still in progress. The report begins with a description of the study area. The following section presents a short history of UFO activity in the region. The next section deals with the objectives of the study, the investigative approach employed and instruments used. Detailed reports of each observation of apparent UFO activity made by this investigator comprise the fourth section of the report.

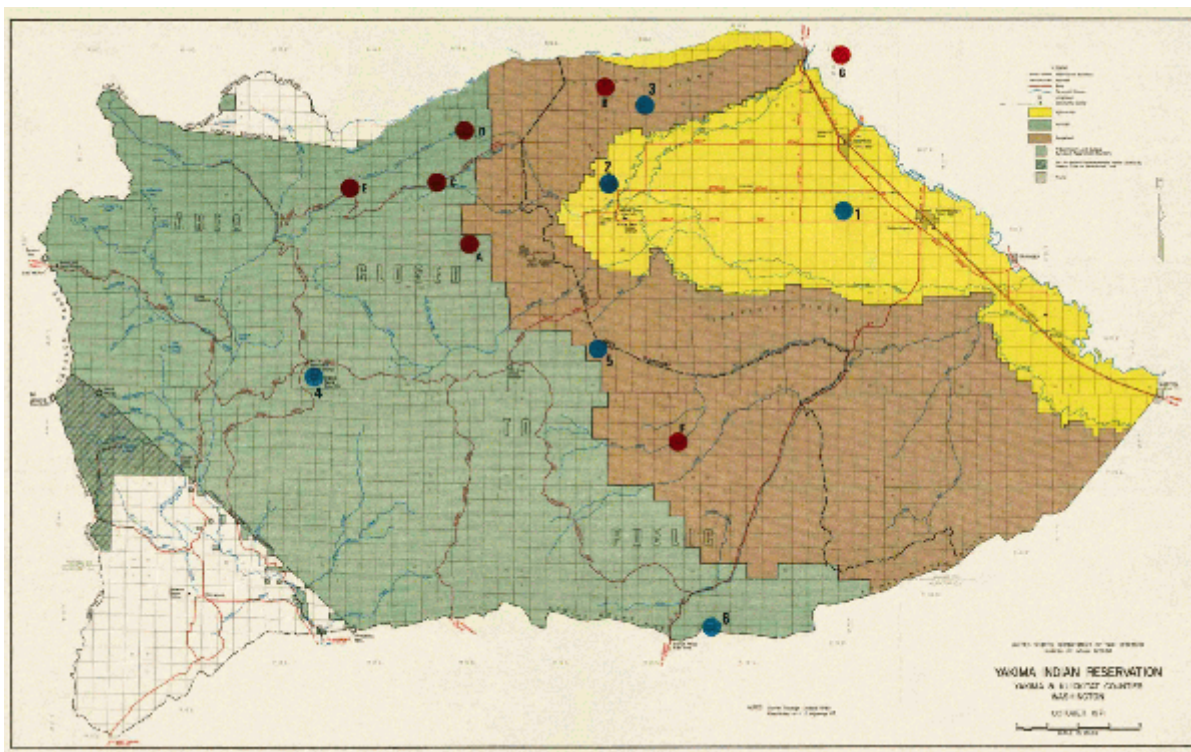
The final section of this report includes some preliminary assessments concerning the effectiveness of the study and some suggestions for improving equipment for present and future investigations. Care has been taken to report all unusual observations as accurately as possible and to refrain from analysis.

Appendix A summarizes additional observations by other individuals during the year of 1972, prior to the initiation of the field study described in this report.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The area involved in this study consists of a rectangular section, about forty miles wide and seventy miles long (2,800 sq. miles), located in south central Washington state. Almost all of the area is a part of the reservation of the Yakima Indian Nation. Approximately two-thirds of the reservation is closed to the public and special authorization is required to enter the area.

Eastern borders of the study area are marked by the towns of Parker, Wapato, Toppenish, Granger and Mabton. The western border is formed by the eastern slopes of the Cascade mountain Range, with Mount Adams (elevation 12,307 ft.) the dominating feature of the skyline. The northern border of the area is marked by Ahtanum Ridge (4,500 ft.). Bickleton Ridge and the Simcoe Mountains (max. elevation 5,500 ft.) from the southern border. Figure I (*below*) is a map of the study area.



The eastern quarter (144,325 acres) of the region is used for agricultural purposes; the principal crops being sugar beets, hops, mint, asparagus, corn, peas, grain, alfalfa, cherries, peaches, apples and grapes. This quarter is flat valley farmland. The remaining portion of the eastern half of the valley is used for rangeland and consists mainly of dry, rolling hills.

The western half of the study area is made up of heavily forested terrain, much of it primitive and inaccessible to normal ground transportation. Timber from this region is a major source of income for the area. Railroad tracks of the Burlington Northern Line run along the eastern border of the reservation. U.S. Highway 97 is the only major freeway in the area and, along with primary power transmission lines of the Bonneville Power Administration, cuts through the southeastern corner of the reservation.

Secondary roads, many of them dirt or gravel, crisscross the reservation. The town of White Swan, twenty miles due west of Toppenish, is the most western population center in the area and has about 300 inhabitants. The closest areas of industrial significance are the nuclear research facilities at Hanford, 28 statute miles to the northeast, and the Yakima Firing Range, 14 statute miles to the north of Toppenish.

Geology of the study area is interesting: Marine fossils found in the area indicate that the entire valley might once have been a huge lake or inland sea. Volcanic activity is still very much in evidence, especially in the vicinities of Mt. Adams and neighboring Mt. Rainier.

HISTORY OF UFO PHENOMENA IN THE STUDY AREA

Activity recognizable as classical UFO phenomena has been present in the Toppenish area for more than eight years. There is even some evidence to suggest that UFO reports are a part of Yakima Indian legends. A detectable increase in activity has taken place in the last three years. Reports have recently been made by law enforcement personnel from the Washington State Patrol, County Sheriff and reservation Law and Order department. Formerly, fire lookouts had been the primary source of reports. A majority of observations are made at night and consist mostly of the typical "nocturnal light" (NL) phenomenon described by Hynek(1). Primary characteristics of this particular phenomenon include:

1. Generally bright light, larger than a point source.
2. Colors reported cover the entire spectrum, but most usually are yellow-orange.
3. Kinematics are not attributable to balloons, aircraft or other natural objects and often give the appearance of intelligent action.

The NL in the Toppenish study area have generally conformed to the above description. The Toppenish manifestation does seem to differ slightly in that it is frequently observed on or near the ground. Predominant colors range from brownish-orange to pure white. Investigation of prior NL activity in the study area revealed that a few daytime observations have been made. These daylight sightings are very rare and have ranged from "fuzzy" appearing "blobs" to well-defined, metallic colored, disk shaped objects of the classical "flying saucer" variety. There was also one ten year old report of a physical impression made in the ground by an UFO.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Preparations for the Toppenish project began in April of 1972, following a survey of the extent of activity in the area by Dr. J. A. Hynek. It was determined at this time that the activity was of sufficient quality and regularity to justify placement of an observer equipped with instruments in the area during a period of expected peak activity. The Yakima Tribal council and the Yakima Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, along with the Agency Forestry Division gave their full cooperation to the project and plans were made to conduct a field study during the month of August (a period of prior high sighting probability).

A primary objective of the study was to determine the feasibility of "staking-out" a scientific observer in an area of high sighting probability, with the purpose in mind of obtaining hard data concerning UFO phenomena.

First priority was assigned to obtaining photographs, including spectrographs and position data. It was felt that this information would be of greatest use as scientific information and the easiest to acquire, given the transient nature of the phenomenon under study. Another priority was the acquisition of data relating to any magnetic effects which might arise from UFO activity.

The investigative approach used involved setting-up portable observation points at selected locations in the study area for several days at a time. This technique allowed the observer to become acquainted with normal activity in a given location and prepare him to detect any abnormal activity which might occur. No concerted effort was made to "chase" the phenomenon around the reservation. Instead, it was allowed to come to the observer. The temporary observation points and instruments were manned during the times of greatest sighting probability, i.e., between sunset and sunrise.

Additional time, during the day, was spent gathering background data, such as previous sighting reports, geographical and other supportive information. Accent was placed on flexibility of method, because of the large area to be covered and the elusiveness of the phenomenon under investigation. The investigator's presence was purposely made as unobtrusive as possible to avoid interference with routine business on the reservation.

Observation points were established at six points in the study area. Three of these locations were adjacent to Satus, Signal Peak and Sopelia fire lookouts (Slide Nos. 1, 2 and 3, respectively). The remaining observation points were positioned in the valley near White Swan. All of the observation points are numbered on the map of Figure I. (Satus, Signal Peak and Sopelia lookouts are numbered 5, 4 and 6, respectively.)



Slide #1. Satus Lookout in 1972



Slide #2. Sopelia Lookout in 1972

The Tribal Forestry Division radio system was available for communication between the investigator and fire lookouts. It was intended that such a communication link might provide a means of triangulating the position of a NL, should a sighting occur. All transmissions were coded because of previous reports of apparent NL responses to radio messages concerning them. When Possible, radio transmissions were avoided to keep from disturbing personnel who monitor the 110 unit radio network on a twenty-four hour basis during the fire season.

All observation points were accessible by means of roads. However, a sturdy car was required to traverse them. The fire lookout locations afforded excellent visibility to the investigator and were free from interfering lights. Valley observation points were often subject to interfering lights and haze, but afforded the best views of ridges where much of the NL activity had been previously reported.

The instruments used included two single lens reflex (SLR) cameras, a 16mm motion picture camera, a 35mm range finder camera, a compass spin detector, recording magnetometer, standard time receiver and tape recorder. Other instruments for measuring nuclear radiation, infrared radiation, ultrasonic sound and frequency references were available, but not normally deployed .

One of the SLR cameras was fitted with a 500mm, f8 catadioptric design lens. This camera/lens combination had a 5° field of view and served as the primary instrument for recording visible light data (Slide No. 4).

The motion picture camera was normally fitted with an 18-86mm, f2.7 zoom lens, but could be operated with the same 500mm lens used on the still camera. The second SLR camera was equipped with a 55mm lens and replica grating to permit recording of spectral data. (Slide No. 5, right). These three cameras used Kodak High speed Ektachrome, Type B (EFB) film.

EFB film was selected because of its high exposure index, good resolution characteristics and reasonable exposure latitude. It was also found that the "B" emulsion gave the best color balance under night exposure conditions.

The range finder camera (Slide No. 5, left) was loaded with black and white Kodak High Speed infrared film and equipped with a Wrattan 89B filter. This camera could record radiation in the near-infrared spectrum (wavelengths 750 to 900 nanometers).



Slide #3. Signal Peak Lookout

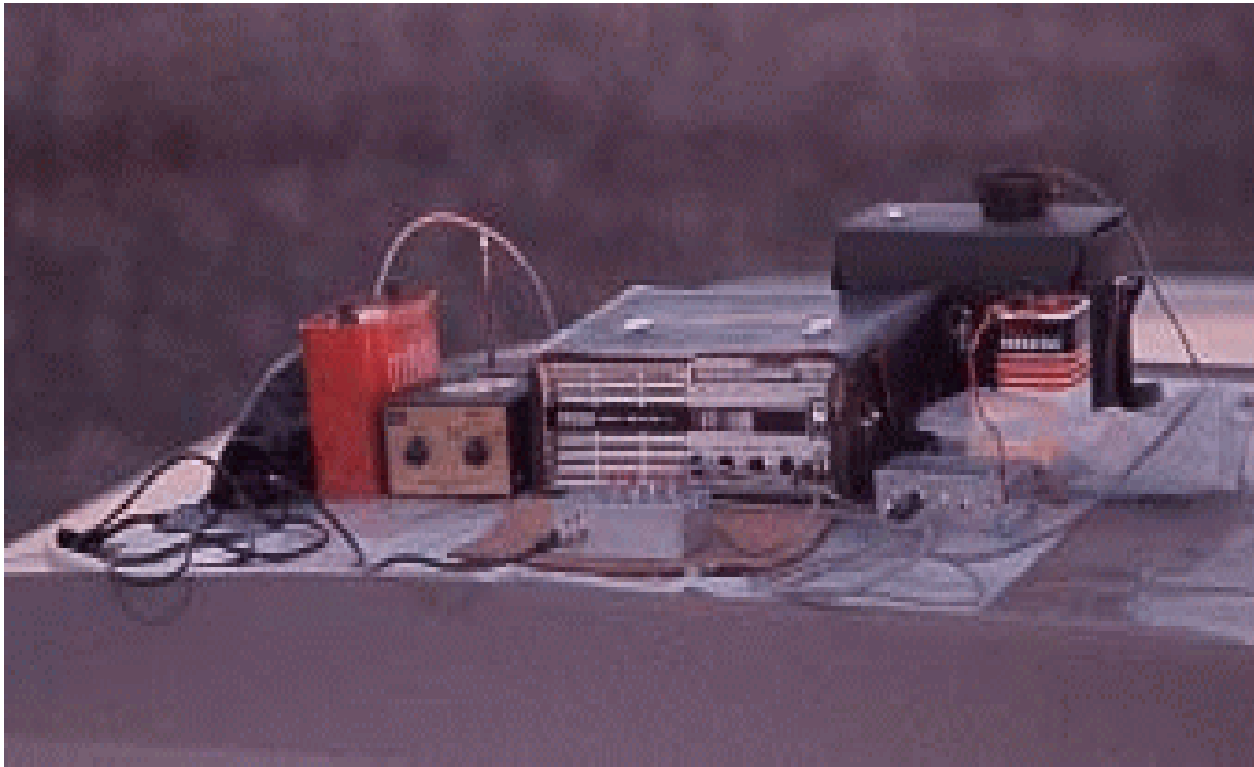


Slide #4. Long range camera



Slide #5. IR and spectrum

The standard time receiver picked-up National Bureau of standards time signals and served as a time reference for measurements. An electronic compass spin detector was also deployed during the observation periods. Signals from both devices were fed into the tape recorder, along with the observer's commentary. The latter instruments are shown in a typical field set-up in Slide No. 6.



Slide #6. Electronics

An automatic recording magnetometer, designed and built by the San Diego section of the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization (APRO), was also used during the field study period. This device required some initial setup, but afterwards was capable of unattended operation. Its primary features were high sensitivity to changes in magnetic flux, wide frequency response (to 1000 Hz) and the ability to detect rotational force vectors of possible paramagnetic nature.

OBSERVATIONS OF NL ACTIVITY MADE DURING THE STUDY PERIOD

A number of observations of apparent NL activity were made by this investigator during the field study period. Many of them were recorded on film. This section catalogs the sightings chronologically. Slides which are applicable to the particular observation are referenced by number. All time is recorded in Greenwich Mean Time, 24 hour format. All dates are given at location. Headings from observation points are magnetic (add 20° for true headings).

OBSERVATION I

Date: 8-20-72

APDF: 19720819001

Observer Location: Point 1 (Figure I)

Activity Location: Point A (Figure I)

One luminous, round light was observed at 0415 on a bearing of 240° from the observer. It was joined by another similar light at 0437. They were at an elevation of 10-20° and well below the ridge of the hills. Their apparent location was north of Hunt Creek and west of the Job Corps camp, at an estimated distance of 19 statute miles. Topography of the area is rugged, dry hills.

Sky at the time of the first observation was Partially overcast in cumulus, with openings to the south and overhead. The moon was high in the sky and intermittently visible through the overcast. Temperature was about 65°F and surface wind was from the NW at between 0 and 5 mph during the observation period.

The two objects were apparently round, with a reddish-orange glow and no clearly defined outline. The diffuse glow was evenly distributed over the surface of each object and no discontinuities were visible. The light flickered noticeably, in



Slide #7. Enlarged area of slide



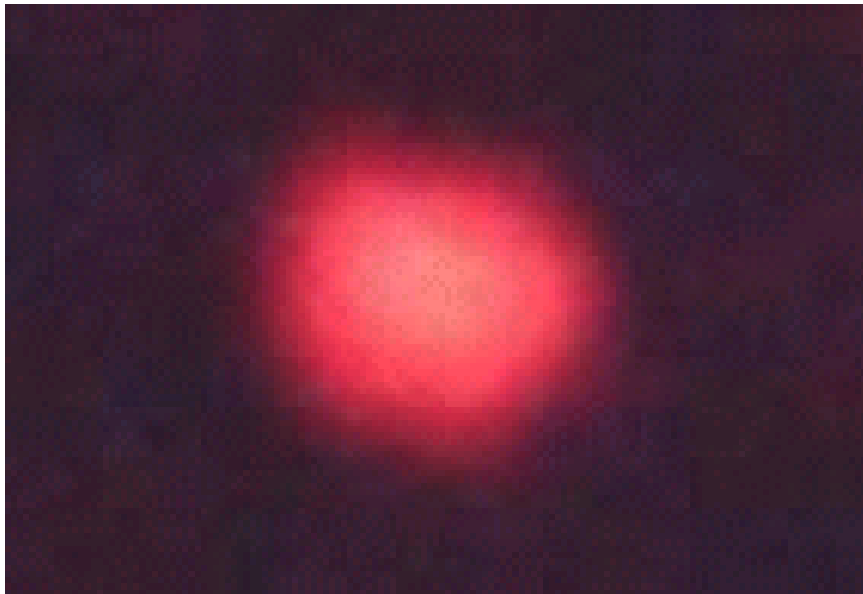
Slide #8. Enlarged area of slide.

much the same way as a flare might look when subjected to a strong wind. The object would appear and disappear as if being switched "on" and "off". Color hue and saturation appeared to remain constant as the light flickered, but perceived size appeared to change.

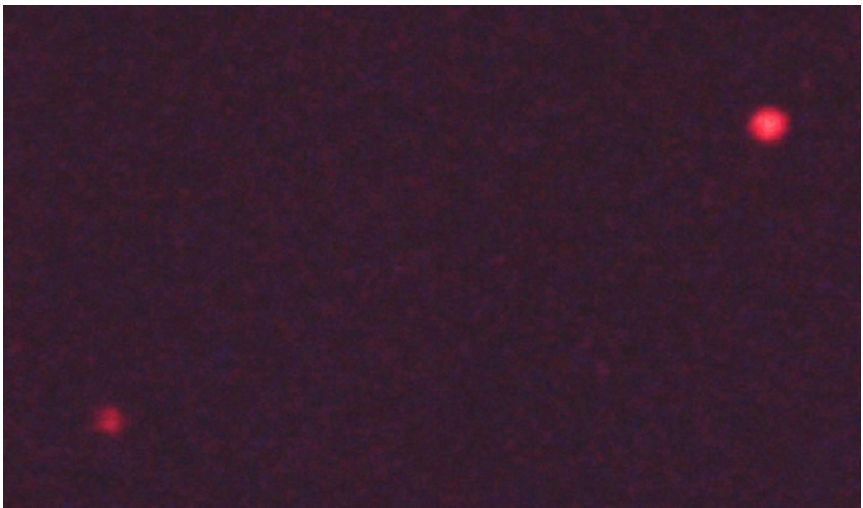
Movement of the objects was erratic and discontinuous. They appeared to move independently, circling and changing places in relation to one another.

The lights operated below the ridge of the hill at all times during the observation. They were last seen at approximately 0510. Intensities gradually diminished and time between "on" cycles became longer until they were no longer visible.

Four slides were obtained during the observation period. The camera was stationary during the whole sequence. Slide Nos. 7-10 were taken at 0437:48, 0438:16, 0439:35 and 0442:46, respectively.



Slide #9. Enlarged area of slide



Slide #10. Enlarged area of slide

Exposure was $\frac{1}{4}$ second through the 500mm, f8 lens. The film (EFB) was processed for its normal, ASA 125 rating. ~~Slide No. 11 is an enlargement of Slide No. 8. Note the presence of two objects on this slide.~~

Slide No. 10 also contained images of two objects. The second object was dim and missed in the original analysis of the slides. The images shown above are enlargements of the objects in the original slides. Reproduction of the entire slide frame is not practical in this document format.

The unusual kinematics and physical appearance of these objects strongly indicates that they did not arise from mundane causes, such as car or motorcycle lights.

OBSERVATION II

Date : 8-21-72

APDF: 19720820001, 19720820002

Observer Location: Point 2 (Figure I)

Activity Location: Points B and C (Figure I)

Equipment was set up in a field west of the intersection of Wesley and Branch Roads, northwest of White Swan. This location was chosen in an attempt to get closer to the activity observed on the previous night. At 0405, what appeared to be automobile tail lights were seen moving on a heading of 20° from the observation point (Point 8 of Figure I). No headlights were visible.

The red lights appeared to be near the base of the hill, at an estimated distance of 5½ miles. (Note: There is a road in this area.) The tail lights stopped moving and, shortly thereafter, two luminous, amber "balls" came rapidly down from near the top of Ahtanum Ridge, circled around each other and approached the red lights. All of the lights next went out, suddenly and simultaneously. The whole observation lasted less than two minutes and no sounds were heard.

At 0512, two "vehicles" with red lights were observed moving rapidly up and down the hill side, approximately 10° to the left of the first observation.

Their distance was again about 5 miles from the observer. Each "vehicle" had what appeared to be an amber headlight which swept rapidly back and forth over the ground ahead of its path. The actual source of the "headlight" was never seen, regardless of whether the object was going up or down the hill. Only the beam cast on the ground by this "headlight" and the red light were visible. The objects appeared to move independently of each other and traversed the distance from near the base of the hill to the top of the ridge (approximately 900 ft. of elevation), at an angle of 60° to horizontal in less than ten seconds.

Again, no sound was heard. The objects disappeared from view about ten minutes later. Weather was almost completely overcast with cumulus clouds. Openings in the overcast could be seen to the northwest and southwest. A thunderstorm was building to the southeast.

Another object appeared on a bearing of 270° at 0619 (Point C on Figure I). It was a large brownish-orange ball, apparently positioned above Rattlesnake Ridge. It might have been taken for a planet except for the fact that it was under the overcast. It appeared to flicker slightly and remained stationary. The object disappeared in the observer's field of vision, as if it were a light being turned-off. Estimated time for this observation was five minutes.

OBSERVATION III

Date : 8-22-72

APDF: 19720821001

Observation Location: Point 3 (Figure I)

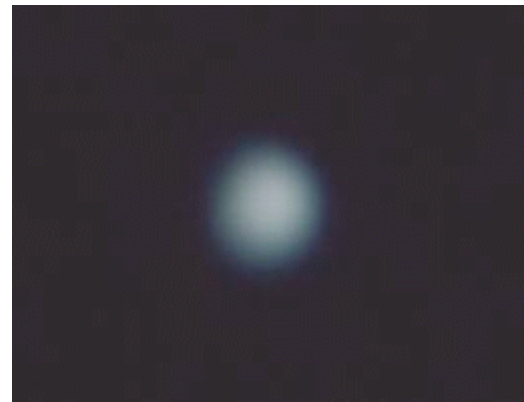
Activity Location: Point D (Figure I)



Slide #12. Full frame of slide

A luminous orange ball, similar to the one observed on 8-20-72 was seen at 0352 on a bearing of 250° from the observation Point. This object appeared to be stationary and was near the base of the hill. It blinked on and off several times. Slide No. 12 was taken with a $\frac{1}{4}$ second exposure through the 500mm, f8 lens. Again, EFB film was used and processed for normal ASA. The top of the ridge is shown and a mercury vapor street lamp appears at the lower left of the frame. The unknown object is to the right. Slide No. 13 is an enlargement of the mercury vapor light and object. (Note: Chromatic aberration in this slide is a result of the copy process.)

The light was closer in color to white than orange. It was difficult to determine whether the object in this case was a motorcycle headlamp or "genuine" NL. The source appears to be too bright and large for a motorcycle headlamp.



Slide #13a. Hg lamp-Left



Slide #13b. Unknown object-Right

OBSERVATION IV

Date: 8-24-72

APDF: 19720823001

Observer Location: Point 5 (Figure I) Satus Fire Lookout

Activity Location: Point E (Figure I) Piscoe Meadow

At 0510, the investigator and fire lookout spotted one (?) bright white light moving very rapidly through a wooded area southeast of Piscoe Meadow (bearing approximately 358° true). Distance to the sighting area was about 18 miles.

The light moved so fast that it gave the impression of a streak. It would appear stationary for a moment, then, almost instantaneously, appear some distance away (typically 10° of arc through 7x50 binoculars). After another brief pause, it would dart back in the opposite direction. When stationary, the object appeared through the binoculars as an intense pinpoint of white light.

The sky was clear and the moon was rising, but there was considerable haze in the valley. All car lights observed this evening had an orange cast. The observation lasted about one minute and no photographs were obtained.

A radio message from an observer in the valley was received at 0730. He asked the fire lookout if the investigator was "up and around." The lookout's reply was affirmative and the transmission was terminated.

The following day it was learned that the observer in the valley had spotted a tan or light orange, slow moving light from the freeway near the town of Parker (18 miles NE of the lookout). It moved slowly down the valley to the town of White Swan, turned and appeared to move directly over the Satus lookout. It next turned and headed east, where it disappeared behind Toppenish Mountain.

The person in the valley assumed that the observer at the fire lookout could not have missed the object and he did not want to make any direct mention of the object over the radio.

Nothing was seen from the observation point at Satus lookout before or after the radio message. There was no reasonable way the light could have been missed by the investigator and the fire lookout. Yet, nothing was seen. The observer in the valley is known to be extremely reliable and there is no reason to doubt his word. This "non-observation" rates very high on the strangeness scale.

OBSERVATION V

Date: 8-26-72 APDF: 19720825001

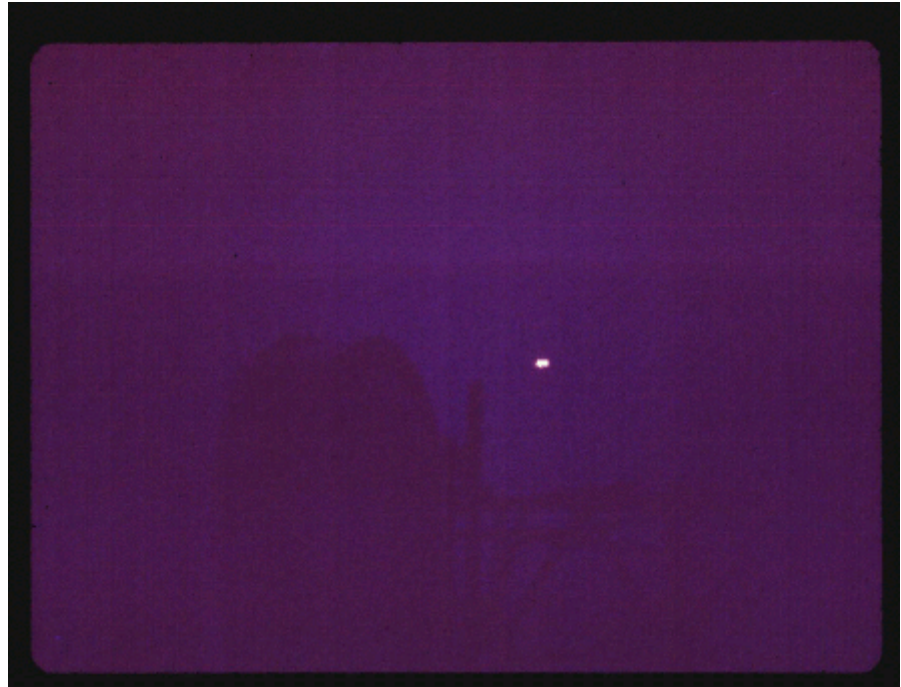
Observer Location: Point 5 (Figure I) Satus Fire Lookout

Activity Location: Point F (Figure I) near Dry creek

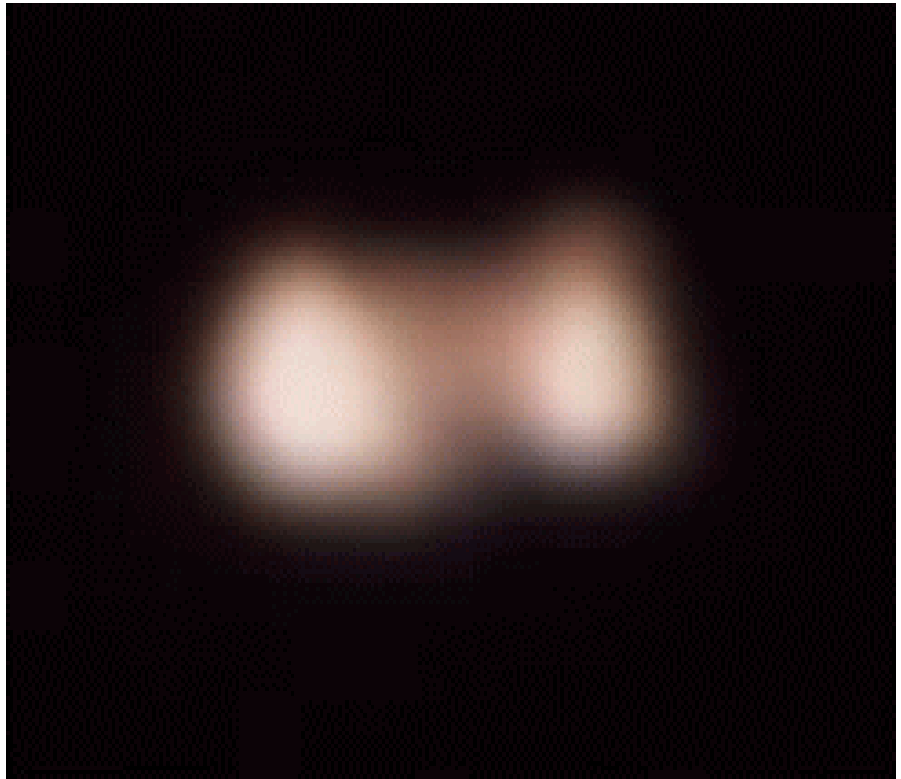
Intermittent lights were observed along the ridge southeast of Satus Lookout for much of the night. They seemed to appear and disappear at random and were thought to have been lights from cars or campers. sky was clear with bright moonlight. Haze was moderate in the lower elevations.

A 2.5 minute time exposure was taken of the area between 0845 and 0847 with the 500mm, f8 lens and EFB film. Slide No. 14 is the result. The two(?) lights appearing on the slide were not seen during exposure. Note that the microwave antenna on the relay station also appears dimly in the left hand foreground of the picture. Slide No. 15 is an enlargement of No. 14.

The closest ridge from the point where the slide was taken is about 5½ miles away. Knowing the distance to the ridge and angle of view of the lens (5°), it should be possible to determine whether or not the light source was a car. Further analysis of this slide is needed.



Slide 14. Antenna in foreground



Slide #15.

OBSERVATION VI

Date: 8-31-72

APDF: 19720830001

Observer Location: Point 1 (Figure I)

Activity Location: Point C (Figure I) At first observation

A luminous ball, identical in color and kinematics to that observed on 8-20-72 was seen at 0518 on a bearing of 240° from the observation point. The object moved through an arc of about 10 to 15° in three minutes. It appeared to follow the hills, about 11 miles away, and was situated vertically about half of the way between the base and top of Ahtanum Ridge.

Slide No. 16 is a 60 second time exposure made through the 500mm, f8 lens. ~~Slide No. 17 is an enlargement of No. 16.~~ Note how the object appears to move in "spurts" or flicker (there were no known obstructions between the object and camera during the exposure).



Slide #16. Enlargement of original

The object was seen briefly again by this investigator at 0739. It was apparently on or near the side of the hill, directly below and in line with a microwave tower 8½ miles due north of the observation point (Point G). The object was clearly visible through binoculars and appeared as a sharply defined, brownish-orange disc. It gave the impression of being flat and the ground near it could be seen illuminated by the glow. The object disappeared by "turning-off" before the camera could be trained on it. The foregoing observations could not be accounted for in normal terms. One additional observer verified the sighting.

SUMMARY

The primary objective of demonstrating the feasibility of the "stake-out" technique of UFO field investigation appears to have been met during the study period. Nocturnal light activity was observed and recorded on film. Unfortunately, the closest activity was at a distance of about eight miles.

The long working distance did not permit the acquisition of any physical data other than a few slides. However, given the technical and position data available, it should be possible to arrive at a reasonable estimate of the size, light output and form of the objects observed. It is in this area that primary effort is needed.

This investigator is satisfied that genuine NL activity has been and is still taking place on a more or less regular basis in the Toppenish area. However, there was nothing in the nocturnal light observations made during the study which would suggest conclusively that the source of the activity is extra terrestrial. On the other hand, something very unusual is taking place. The problem warrants continued very careful and objective examination.

A few words should be said concerning the measurements -- or lack of measurements -- made during the study period: One camera was responsible for all of the "hard" data obtained. The only other camera capable of working at the distances involved was the 16mm camera/500mm lens combination. It was discovered early, however, that the motion picture camera could not be aimed with the very dim light available. The reason is that the reflex viewing system in the camera, utilizing a half-silvered prism, did not transmit enough light to the viewfinder. (The camera has since been fitted with an auxiliary viewfinder.)

All of the NL activity was too far away to permit spectrograms, because of the relatively short focal length lenses required by the replica grating. Additional work is being done on spectrograph instrumentation which will allow working longer distances.

The use of the tape recorder for commentary and time logging was invaluable in determining the times at which photographs were made and recalling details of observations. A great deal of information would have been lost without the time and recording equipment.

There were no abnormal magnetic disturbances sensed by instruments at any time during the study period. The compass spin detector was deployed most of the time during observation periods and no anomalous compass deflections were sensed. The recording magnetometer was used less than the compass spin detector, because of its extreme sensitivity to normal magnetic disturbances. The instrument appears to have potential, however, and a separate report dealing with the instrument will be forthcoming.

In conclusion, a great deal in the line of hard, practical experience has been gained from this study. It was learned what things would work - what would not. Hopefully, the mistakes made during this initial study period can be avoided in the next.

At any rate, study of the activity in the Toppenish area will continue indefinitely until some explanation for the phenomena there is obtained.

All material collected during the study period, including the original slides, is available for inspection by any qualified investigator. Questions, suggestions and comments will be welcomed.

FOOTNOTE

1. Hynek, J. Allen, *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry*, Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1972

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Mr. Neil Davis and the San Diego chapter of APRO

Dr. James Harder

The people who wish to remain anonymous, but who supplied sighting reports as background for this study.

APPENDIX A.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS FOR THE PORTION OF 1972 PRIOR TO THE FIELD STUDY

1. Date: June 7, 1972 -- Between 9:30 and 12:30 am local time

Activity location: South fork of Toppenish Canyon (7 miles from the observer)

Summary:

Spherical shaped object going up and down, bouncing. Had a bluish "metal-flake blue" sheen and was at least 30 to 40 feet across. Disappeared with big flash of light arcing into air. Weather was towering cumulus with 7% cloud cover. Wind from SW at 5 mph (2:00 pm reading). Visibility was 12 miles. Cloud-to-cloud lightning observed after 2 pm. Note: Pet dog reacted strangely, as if its ears were hurting, for approximately one hour on the evening following the observation. Nothing was visible on the latter occasion.

2. Date: June 29, 1972 -- 10:20 pm local time

Activity location: Red Butte

Summary:

Object sat for about 10 minutes. "Kind of pear-shaped" with fairly sharp outline. About four minutes before it moved, yellow, red and green lights were observed. The object was sitting motionless and then shot straight up to a high altitude. Object next shot straight east. Sharp angular motion and very high speed. Weather was clear, with variable westerly wind. Visibility was 17 miles.

3. Date: July 31, 1972 -- 9:05 pm local time

Activity location: South slope of Shinando Canyon

Summary:

Baseball sized, very white light floating along just below tree top level. No noise as object moved slowly from west to east. Observer was above the tree tops in the canyon and above the object. Distance to the object was less than one-half mile.

4. Date: August 2, 1972 -- 9:10 pm local time

Activity location: Yego Pasture

Summary:

Big "blob" with no definite shape. Observed for ten minutes before it shot straight up, made an instantaneous turn and shot north. Weather clear, NE wind. Humidity 35% and lower, with 15 mile visibility,

5. Date: August 3, 1972 -- between 10:00 and 11:15 pm

Activity location: NE of fire lookout (Satus)

Summary:

Big, white, bright "thing", something like a cloud came and went. It would appear dim, then become brighter and brighter, and then "like something melting fast", disappear. Angle of elevation was 30° and object was fairly close to lookout. Bright streaks or rays came from the object and lighted up the interior of the lookout, making things inside visible, The sky was dark above and below the object.

Size of the object was estimated to be as large as the lookout (about 12x12x8 feet). No moon was visible.

6. Date: August 11, 1972 -- 12:30 pm local time

Activity location: 1000 to 2000 feet above observer

Summary:

Hemispherical object with multicolored, stippled streamers observed below cloud cover. Observed less than a minute and disappeared almost instantaneously into clouds.

7. Date: August 15, 1972 -- 11:00 pm

Activity location: T9, R19, Sec 22 26' (approximately)

Summary:

Three bright lights on top of butte. Described as pure white and very intense balls. Observed for two hours.