

SCENE

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'THE BEST GIFT EVER'

After decades of searching for her long-lost sisters, Velvet Martin finds her family. See page 22.

Bird? Plane? Oreo cookie in the sky???

A look at local UFO sightings and what to do when you see something up there that just doesn't make sense

BY SCOTT HAYES
 Staff Writer

I saw something that I couldn't explain, and still can't.

Around 20 years ago, I was living in Morinville but working in downtown Edmonton, so my commute took me down Highway 2 and St. Albert Trail. It was winter, so 7:30 a.m. was still pretty dark. Approaching the north end of the city, I saw two lights in the sky far off over Edmonton, not high enough to be an airplane and not moving in a straight line either. The lights were maybe at a helicopter's height but these two lights weren't connected. This was way before drones were ever a thing.

Moreover, sometimes these lights moved apart before coming back together. Two helicopters surely wouldn't want to be that close. I watched those two lights do their little dance over Edmonton for probably two minutes before I lost sight of them. I was driving so I was paying more attention to the road and not staring at the lights or taking photos either. At some point, they were just gone.

There. That's my UFO story. I saw flying objects that I couldn't identify. If someone can offer a proper explanation for what I saw, I would love to hear it.

I'm not alone in this universe

Outer space is a big place and there are lots of lights in the sky at any given time: aircraft, comets, celestial bodies, the International Space Station and satellites among them. Sometimes, however, they might not be.

St. Albert's Mike Krill has a few stories to tell and the first one takes place up in Mission. After giving his friend Joel Gionet a ride home to Marion Crescent, adjacent to St. Albert Catholic High School, they stopped to look up.

"I said, 'Have you ever seen a



US DEPT OF DEFENSE/Photo

This image was released by the U.S. Department of Defense showing in-flight video taken by Navy pilots who say they encountered objects in the sky which they cannot explain. The video shows the object moving at terrific speed and with otherwise unmanageable directions for humans or human-made aircraft.

satellite? There's one right there. It's going across the sky.' We're both looking at it and then this thing zooms in to us, like changes course of direction and comes in towards us. It gets larger and is visibly closer to us," Krill said, Gionet confirming the account.

As it got nearer, the light zipped closer, going from the size of a pinpoint

to a nickel, and it didn't stop moving.

"It shifted over to the side from here in the sky, here in the sky," Krill continued, holding his hands up like a 'Y' to estimate the distance, "and then it stopped. Then this thing went back up, got smaller as it went up, stopped again, and then it zoomed off."

That was a decade ago so he wasn't able to get a photo with his cellphone's camera. That wasn't the case two years ago, though, when Krill was on an airplane coming back from the U.S. when he looked out the window and saw something else. The plane was cruising at 40,000 feet (he asked) somewhere around Thunder Bay, and there was something off in the distance "tracking" the plane.

This time, he was able to take several photos of the object. If you zoom in on the best one, the object appears to be a band of white with dark above and below. It's rounded on the top but the bottom appears to have something protruding from it starting around the midsection.

"No flames out the back end that I can see. I can't see wings on it. I don't see a tail on it. It's a round something that is tracking us. It's above the clouds. I don't know what is. It's going along side of us and then it stopped and then it went back the other way, and then it was just gone."

Krill reported the sighting to the Mutual UFO Network, an international non-profit agency that has been collecting and investigating them for more than 50 years.

A close encounter

One city resident has been holding on to a story that is more than just a sighting. He asked to not be named but he gave a compelling account of something that happened down a dirt road more than half a century ago.

He was driving behind a schoolbus when his car lost power, rolling to a stop. The bus rolled to a stop, too, so he ran out to talk to the bus driver. She asked him if he saw it, pointing his gaze behind them. There, above the road, was a floating object that he said "looks precisely like an oilwell blowhole cover." The hat-shaped thing was difficult to describe in some ways.

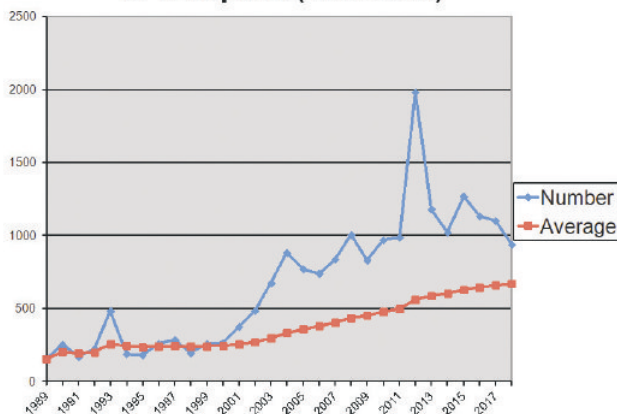
"It was stationary and it was moving. There was no noise, no vibration, no twirling. Nothing. The part about it that I can never quantify in my mind is how far away it was from me. I had no point of reference anywhere. I don't know if it was a quarter mile, half a mile, 300 feet, I don't know. I estimated it was 25 feet across but if it was further away it could have been much bigger," he said. "There it was. It climbed and looked like it was trying to be over the bus."

He ran back to his car and got his camera but didn't get any photos with the bulky machine during such an exciting moment. Before too long, it just zipped off, "disappeared ... poof, it was gone."

Apparently, the local utility office had other reports of the power going out at the same time.

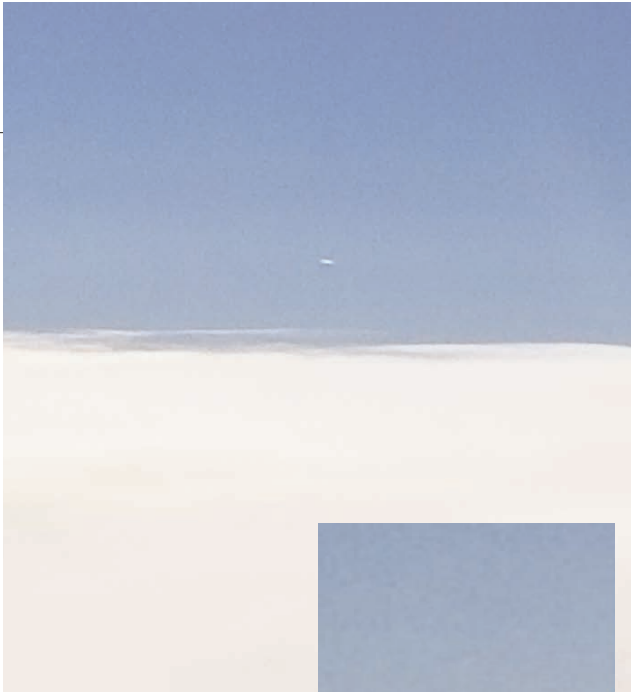
"When I come back to get the

UFO Reports (1989-2018)



UFOLOGY RESEARCH OF MANITOBA/Photo

Canadian UFO Survey Chart shows the growing number of UFO reports made over a 30-year period. This graph was found at the UFOlogy Research of Manitoba's website at www.canadianuforeport.com.



MIKE KRILL/Photo

St. Albert's Mike Krill was on a flight over the United States in October 2017 when he took several photos of an object off into the distance that seemed to be parallel to the plane's flight path and tracking the same position as well.

A zoomed-in screenshot of the unidentified flying object Krill witnessed. It has an Oreo cookie appearance with a white band in the middle with black above and below. There also appears to be an unevenness to one side below the object.



camera, I heard the radio. That's the part I never wanted anybody to know because when I went back to her after it disappeared, I said, 'Didn't you hear my car radio?' When I got back in the car, I tried to turn it off. It wouldn't. It was constant ... just as normal as could be with the key in the off position. When the craft left and I turned the key to start the car again, the volume nearly blew me out of the car. It was just an all around weird experience."

The truth is out there

Leah Utas has had a lifelong fascination in UFOs and related phenomena but only became a MUFON investigator after watching St. Albert Children's Theatre alumnus Damien Atkins' We Are Not Alone earlier this year.

There's a field investigator manual to study and a certification exam to pass but training is ongoing.

"There is always more to learn. I am a former newspaper reporter. This is a great help in remaining objective and forming and asking questions," she explained.

Questions are the key, she continued, in order to be able to get closer to the right answers for whatever people see in the sky. She, too, saw something years ago that lent to her interest in the subject.

"In Sedona, Arizona, in the early 1990s, my friend and I watched some star-like lights high in the night sky form geometric patterns and then break away," she offered. "What we saw that night may be easily explainable. It may have been an ordinary aerobatic show, a hoax. I don't know, but it sharpened my interest."

She said skeptics are important to getting to the truth but the important thing for people with sightings to remember is MUFON will take you and your report seriously.

"The more we can research, the more we learn."

Dave Palachik, national chief investigator for Canada, said the organization would be releasing its year-end results near the end of January 2020, but typically, each year still has four to six per cent of all case reports as being truly unknown. The National UFO Reporting Center and the Canadian UFO Survey also collect data on sightings, and receive eyewitness accounts.

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Resources

- mufoncanada.com
- canadianuforeport.com
- nuforc.org
- uforum.blogspot.com



COURTESY OF MUFON/Photo

A photo from a well-documented sighting in Maniwaki, Quebec in 1972. The Mutual UFO Network, or MUFON, was established in 1969 as an international non-profit network for the collection and investigation of UFO reports. It has many photos that can be requested for research purposes.

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