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The 2001  
CANADIAN UFO SURVEY:  
an Analysis of UFO Reports  
in Canada

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# The 2001 Canadian UFO Survey

## Overview

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> year that UFOROM has solicited UFO case data from all known and active investigators and researchers in Canada for analyses. We have collected data in UFO reports with the goal of understanding this controversial and popular phenomenon. There are no comparable reports produced by any other research group in North America. The only known similar program is one in Sweden, where UFO report data are analysed by the Archives for UFO Research and have lists of Swedish UFO sightings from 1997 to the present online.

Why collect UFO reports? In one sense, the answer is as simple as "because they're there." Studies and polls by both professional and lay organizations have shown that approximately 10% of all North Americans believe they have seen UFOs. Given the population data available, this would seem to be a very large number of UFO reports. If UFOs are trivial and non-existent, as some claim, then one should ask why such a large percentage of the population are labouring under a delusion. If, on the other hand, UFOs represent a "real" phenomenon, we should study the vast body of cases for insight into its nature. In either situation, UFO reports deserve scientific attention.

Since the public generally equates UFOs with alien visitation, research on the characteristics of UFO reports is desirable. Do the reports really bear out such a linkage? Given the general public perception that aliens are present in our Solar System, a thorough examination of UFO reports should provide insight into this question.

What is generally overlooked by most writers and readers on this subject is that UFO reports are the foundation of ufology (the study of the UFO phenomenon). While this may seem an obvious fact, the reality is that most books on UFOs and related subjects proceed on the basis of assumptions, theories and individual anecdotal accounts. The many books about UFO abductions on bookstore shelves give the impression that this aspect of the UFO phenomenon constitutes the basis of ufology. This is certainly not the case; UFO research begins with the investigation of UFO reports. It is through later collection and study that researchers can theorise about the phenomenon and eventually write papers and books speculating about UFO origins and possible evidence of alien contact. And, as we will note later in this report, abduction cases comprise a very tiny fraction of the bulk of UFO data. The "bread and butter" of UFO research lies not in fanciful discourses about aliens' genetic manipulation of humans but in what UFO witnesses are actually reporting.

## The Collection of Canadian UFO Data

Many individuals, associations, clubs and groups claim to investigate UFO reports and otherwise solicit reports from the general public. Comparatively few actually participate in any kind of information sharing or data gathering for scientific programs. Many are only interest groups based in museums, planetariums, church basements or individuals' homes, and do essentially *nothing* with the case reports they receive. Because there is no way to enforce standards in UFO report investigations, the quality of case investigations varies considerably. Quantitative studies are difficult because subjective evaluations and differences in investigative techniques do not allow precise comparisons. Fortunately, UFOROM's requests for data include some basic information that can be used in rigorous analyses.

Until 1995, the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) routinely collected UFO reports from private citizens, RCMP, civic police and military personnel. This practice ceased as a result of budgetary restrictions and the perceived lack of importance of UFO data. Included among the NRC reports were many observations of meteors and fireballs, and these had been added into the UFOROM database since 1989. For several years, the collection of such reports was in an effective hiatus, but in 2000, an arrangement facilitated UFO sightings which were reported to Transport Canada could be referred to UFOROM for research into this phenomenon.

Another reason why UFO data should be collected and studied is found in official directives by the Department of National Defence regarding the actions of all pilots in Canadian airspace. In documents relating to CIRVIS (Communications Instructions for Reporting Vital Intelligence Sightings), both civilians and military personnel are instructed that:

CIRVIS reports should be made immediately upon a vital intelligence sighting of any airborne, waterborne and ground objects or activities which appear to be hostile, suspicious, unidentified or engaged in illegal smuggling activity.

Examples of events requiring CIRVIS reports are:

- unidentified flying objects;
- submarines or warships which are not Canadian or American;
- violent explosions; and
- unexplained or unusual activity in Polar regions, abandoned airstrips or other remote, sparsely populated areas.

[DND Flight Information Publication - GPH 204. Flight Planning and Procedures, Canada and North Atlantic, Issue No. 57, Effective 0901Z 20 May 1999]

In other words, it is in the best interests of everyone to report UFO sightings, and certainly of interest to the Department of National Defence. The annual Canadian UFO Survey looks critically at these sightings and reviews their nature.

For the purposes of this and other scientific studies of UFO data, UFO sightings which have been made to contributing and participating groups, associations, organizations or individuals are considered *officially* reported and valid as data in this study. The collection of Canadian UFO data is challenging. However, the data obtained for the present analysis yields similar results to previous studies and is useful in understanding the nature of UFO reports in Canada, and can shed light on the nature of UFO reports elsewhere in the world.

For this study, the working definition of a UFO is *an object seen in the sky which its observer cannot identify*.

### **UFO Reports in Canada**

The following table shows the numbers of reported UFOs per year since 1989.

| Year | Number of cases | Cumulative total |
|------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1989 | 141             | 141              |
| 1990 | 194             | 335              |
| 1991 | 165             | 500              |
| 1992 | 223             | 723              |
| 1993 | 489             | 1212             |
| 1994 | 189             | 1401             |
| 1995 | 183             | 1584             |
| 1996 | 258             | 1842             |
| 1997 | 284             | 2126             |

|      |     |      |
|------|-----|------|
| 1998 | 194 | 2320 |
| 1999 | 259 | 2579 |
| 2000 | 263 | 2842 |
| 2001 | 374 | 3216 |

Report numbers have risen and fallen from year to year, depending on a number of factors. Overall, however, report numbers have been slowly but steadily increasing since 1989. The average number of UFO reports per year has thus been increasing, and the rate now stands at almost 250 cases per year. The number of UFO sightings reported in 2000 was about 2% higher than 1999. In 2001, however, there was an unexpected and very substantial increase in the number of UFO reports, representing an increase of more than 42% over the year 2000. This was the second-highest number of reports ever recorded for Canada. Yearly figures are greatly dependent on many factors, especially the cooperation of contributors to the survey. And, since the all-time high count in 1993 was almost entirely due to a single major fireball event which spawned reports by hundreds of independent observers across the country, the 2001 data may represent the largest number of separate events recorded to date.

### **UFOs and IFOs**

Studies of UFO data include reports of meteors, fireballs and other conventional objects. In many instances, observers fail to recognize stars, aircraft and bolides, and therefore report them as UFOs. Some UFO investigators often spend many hours sorting IFOs from UFOs. Historically, analyses of UFO data such as American projects Grudge, Sign and Blue Book all included raw UFO data which later resolved into categories of UFOs and IFOs. Sometimes, observed objects are quickly assigned a particular IFO explanation even though later investigation suggests such an explanation was unwarranted.

The issue of including IFOs in studies of UFO data is an important one. One could argue that once a sighting is explained, it has no reason to be considered as a UFO report. However, this overlooks the fact that the IFO was originally reported as a UFO and is indeed valid data. It may not be evidence of extraterrestrial visitation, but as UFO data, it is quite valid. It must be remembered that all major previous studies of UFOs examined UFO reports with the intent to explain a certain percentage of cases. These cases were the IFOs - definitely part of the UFO report legacy.

IFOs are problematic in that they are not interesting to most ufologists. In fact, many UFO investigators do not record details about UFOs reported to them that seem easily explained as ordinary objects. This may be a serious error. The UFO witness may be conscientiously reporting an object that is mysterious to him or her - the exact definition of a UFO. Therefore, even late-night, anonymous telephone calls that are obviously reports of airplanes or planets should be logged as UFO reports. It is the opinion of the authors of this study that all UFO reports be included in statistical databases and in later studies on the phenomenon, regardless of the cases' later downgrading to IFOs.

Since most UFO reports can be explained and reclassified as IFOs, we can observe that this attests to the reality of the objects seen. UFO reports actually reflect *real* events which occur. When a UFO is reported, a *real object* has been seen and was not just a fantasy of a witness' imagination.

## **Method**

Data for each case was received by UFOROM from participating researchers across Canada. The information then was coded by members of UFOROM and entered into a Microsoft Excel database and statistically analysed.

An example of the coding key is as follows:

Example: 2001 01 09 1530 Vernon BC DD 900 silver 2 ps 6 5 UFOBC p four obj. seen

Field: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Field 1 is a default YEAR for the report.

Field 2 is the MONTH of the incident.

Field 3 is the DATE of the sighting.

Field 4 is the local TIME, on the 24-hour clock.

Field 5 is the geographical LOCATION of the incident.

Field 6 is the PROVINCE where the sighting occurred.

Field 7 is the TYPE of report, using the Modified Hynek Classification System.

Field 8 is the DURATION of the sighting, in seconds (a value of 600 thus represents 10 minutes).

Field 9 is the primary COLOUR of the object(s) seen

Field 10 is the number of WITNESSES

Field 11 is the SHAPE of the object(s) seen

Field 12 is the STRANGENESS of the report.

Field 13 is the RELIABILITY of the report.

Field 14 is the SOURCE of the report.

Field 15 is the EVALUATION of the case.

Field 16 includes any COMMENTS noted about the case.

## **Analyses of the Data**

### **Distribution of UFO Reports Across Canada**

In 2001, British Columbia had 33% of the total number of reported UFO cases reported in Canada, showing an over-representation based on population alone. This is thought to be due to the aggressive and successful marketing of ufology in BC by one particular organization, UFOBC. Ontario and Quebec together constitute more than 60% of Canada's population, but had only about 32% of the total number of UFO reports in 2001, and this does not vary much from year to year.

The Maritimes had a large increase in the number of sightings reported there, with only 15 cases reported east of Quebec in 2000, but 34 reported in 2001.

Higher than expected numbers of UFO reports come from Northern Canada. About 6% of all Canadian UFO reports came from the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut in 2001, much more than might be expected if sightings were somehow tied to population (Note: Nunavut was created by an act of Parliament in 1999, encompassing part of what was once Northwest Territories.)

**TABLE 1**

### **Distribution of UFO Reports by Province**

|      | BC | AB | SK | MB | ON | PQ | NB | PEI | NS | NF | YK | NT | NU |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1989 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 22 | 34 | 28 | 1  | -   | 3  | 3  | -  | 1  |    |
| 1990 | 76 | 9  | 10 | 20 | 21 | 36 | 7  | 3   | 5  | 4  | 1  | 2  |    |
| 1991 | 59 | 22 | 7  | 6  | 30 | 16 | 9  | 1   | 7  | 4  | 1  | -  |    |

|      |     |    |    |    |    |    |   |   |    |   |    |    |   |
|------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---|----|----|---|
| 1992 | 90  | 8  | 9  | 23 | 56 | 10 | 9 | - | 3  | 4 | 3  | 1  |   |
| 1993 | 157 | 56 | 93 | 74 | 51 | 32 | 3 | 1 | 3  | 7 | -  | 5  |   |
| 1994 | 14  | 39 | 8  | 10 | 51 | 34 | 6 | - | 9  | 6 | 3  | 3  |   |
| 1995 | 45  | 10 | 11 | 48 | 41 | 20 | - | - | 1  | 1 | -  | 4  |   |
| 1996 | 43  | 10 | 11 | 39 | 63 | 45 | 1 | - | 9  | 1 | -  | 35 |   |
| 1997 | 99  | 11 | 5  | 32 | 72 | 24 | 1 | 1 | 6  | 3 | 8  | 22 |   |
| 1998 | 58  | 6  | 14 | 15 | 59 | 15 | 1 | 1 | -  | - | 22 | 2  |   |
| 1999 | 118 | 19 | 1  | 6  | 79 | 8  | 1 | 1 | 0  | 6 | 20 | 0  |   |
| 2000 | 102 | 17 | 8  | 19 | 53 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 26 | 0  |   |
| 2001 | 123 | 40 | 12 | 20 | 87 | 34 | 5 | 2 | 21 | 6 | 18 | 1  | 5 |

This year, the geographical names of UFO sighting locations were examined for trends. Many cities were found to have multiple reports, and these are noted in the following table. It should be noted that some of these are really suburbs of larger metropolitan areas.

**Canadian Cities With the Most UFO Reports**

| Rank | City       | Province | Number of Reports |
|------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1    | Vancouver  | BC       | 17                |
| 2    | Ottawa     | ON       | 15                |
| 3    | Surrey     | BC       | 14                |
| 4    | Burnaby    | BC       | 13                |
| 5    | Whitehorse | YK       | 12                |
| 6    | Edmonton   | AB       | 9                 |
| 6    | Toronto    | ON       | 9                 |

|    |                 |    |   |
|----|-----------------|----|---|
| 6  | Winnipeg        | MB | 9 |
| 7  | Saskatoon       | SK | 7 |
| 8  | Victoria        | BC | 6 |
| 9  | Halifax         | NS | 5 |
| 10 | Montreal        | PQ | 4 |
| 10 | North Vancouver | BC | 4 |
| 10 | Thunder Bay     | ON | 4 |

### Monthly Trends in UFO Reports

Monthly breakdowns of reports during each year tend to show slightly different patterns. For example, in 1999, UFO cases had no clear peaks in monthly report numbers, but the year 2000 saw a very significant set of peaks in August and October and troughs in May and June. UFO reports are thought to peak in summer and trough in winter, presumably due to the more pleasant observing conditions during the summer months, when more witnesses are outside. In 2001, there was a pronounced peak in July and August, but the next-highest month for reports was January, which seems counter-intuitive. If we look at the overall picture of monthly report numbers for the last decade, sightings peak in August and October.

We must make note of 2001 for its tragic event in September. One could suggest, perhaps, that September 11<sup>th</sup> might make people more aware of unusual aerial activity and hence report observations with less hesitation, creating an increase in UFO numbers. This was not the case; the increase in UFO reports began much earlier in the year and did not peak after the New York event. The reverse could also be inferred: that the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> might make a subject such as UFOs, perceived as trivial by many people, to be of little importance in relation to other concerns. Yet UFO reports in Canada continued unabated, even during the no-fly period immediately following September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**TABLE 2****Monthly Report Numbers**

|      | J  | F  | M  | A  | M  | J  | J  | A  | S  | O   | N  | D  |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|
| 1989 | 13 | 9  | 6  | 9  | 5  | 9  | 5  | 5  | 12 | 32  | 27 | 9  |
| 1990 | 17 | 7  | 6  | 47 | 10 | 10 | 9  | 47 | 15 | 16  | 10 | -  |
| 1991 | 13 | 7  | 17 | 12 | 7  | 12 | 16 | 25 | 16 | 12  | 11 | 17 |
| 1992 | 15 | 16 | 27 | 16 | 22 | 16 | 23 | 19 | 11 | 16  | 21 | 21 |
| 1993 | 59 | 15 | 20 | 22 | 14 | 38 | 27 | 49 | 41 | 152 | 24 | 21 |
| 1994 | 16 | 12 | 15 | 21 | 15 | 37 | 19 | 8  | 15 | 10  | 7  | 13 |
| 1995 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 9  | 9  | 10 | 28 | 33 | 28 | 11  | 11 | 5  |
| 1996 | 37 | 18 | 20 | 16 | 8  | 20 | 30 | 32 | 10 | 22  | 30 | 11 |
| 1997 | 19 | 11 | 31 | 29 | 17 | 13 | 29 | 29 | 22 | 16  | 26 | 37 |
| 1998 | 3  | 4  | 8  | 5  | 9  | 13 | 16 | 40 | 45 | 35  | 7  | 4  |
| 1999 | 8  | 20 | 22 | 7  | 31 | 10 | 27 | 36 | 30 | 29  | 30 | 7  |
| 2000 | 21 | 17 | 15 | 21 | 12 | 11 | 19 | 46 | 20 | 44  | 15 | 19 |
| 2001 | 36 | 19 | 33 | 25 | 17 | 26 | 51 | 81 | 25 | 17  | 27 | 16 |

Mention should be made here of a particular correlative exercise performed on the data this year. Out of curiosity, UFO reports were examined for the days of the week on which they occurred. In the 1960s, some UFO researchers claimed to have found a "Wednesday phenomenon" within UFO sightings, where that day was the most common for UFO experiences. Other studies could not confirm this effect and in fact found widely differing results. With regard to the 2001 Canadian UFO reports, there seemed to be a slight preference for weekends, but otherwise no provable trend.

## UFO Report Types

An analysis by report type shows a similar breakdown to that found in previous years. The percentage of cases of a particular type remains roughly constant from year to year, with minor variations. Nocturnal Lights (NLs), for example, comprised 76% of all reports in 1993, 51% in 1997 and 58% in 2001.

The percentage of DDs has also varied over the years. In 1991, there were only 7.9%, but in 1997 there were 18.4%. There were 14.7% in 2001.

NL and ND cases together comprise almost 80% of all 2001 UFO reports; about four out of five UFO sightings occur at night.

Only about 4% of all reported UFO cases in 2001 were Close Encounters. This is an important statistic, because the current popular interest in abductions and sensational UFO encounters is based not on the vast majority of UFO cases but on the very tiny fraction of cases which fall into the category of close encounters. The endless speculation of what aliens may or may not be doing in our airspace is almost completely unrelated to what is actually being reported as UFOs.

**TABLE 3**

### Report Types (Modified Hynek Classifications)

|         | NL  | ND | DD | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 |
|---------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1989    | 84  | 20 | 16 | 10 | 7  | -  | 2  |
| 1990    | 141 | 24 | 15 | 2  | 1  | -  | 4  |
| 1991    | 110 | 26 | 13 | 7  | 4  | 1  | 2  |
| 1992    | 136 | 44 | 20 | 15 | 5  | 2  | 3  |
| 1993    | 372 | 77 | 26 | 8  | 2  | 1  | 1  |
| 1994-95 | 234 | 78 | 28 | 21 | 1  | 1  | 5  |
| 1996    | 170 | 40 | 27 | 8  | 3  | 4  | 1  |
| 1997    | 145 | 62 | 52 | 4  | 2  | 5  | 8  |

|      |     |    |    |   |   |   |   |
|------|-----|----|----|---|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 115 | 23 | 25 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 1999 | 163 | 44 | 37 | 3 | 7 | 1 | - |
| 2000 | 179 | 31 | 26 | 4 | 2 | 2 | - |
| 2001 | 218 | 80 | 55 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 3 |

For those unfamiliar with the classifications, a summary follows:

NL (Nocturnal Light) - light source in night sky

ND (Nocturnal Disc) - light source in night sky that appears to have a definite shape

DD (Daylight Disc) - unknown object observed during daytime hours

C1 (Close Encounter of the First Kind) - ND or DD occurring within 200 metres of a witness

C2 (Close Encounter of the Second Kind) - C1 where physical effects left or noted

C3 (Close Encounter of the Third Kind) - C1 where figures/entities are encountered

C4 (Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind) - an alleged "abduction" or "contact" experience

The category of **Nocturnal Disc** was created by UFOROM for differentiation within its own report files.

There also were six 2001 cases which did not fall into the above categories, and were considered Unexplained Events (UX), such as an anomalous sound which was heard or a physical traces found, but no actual object was observed. These were not listed in the table above.

### Hourly Distribution

The hourly distribution of cases has usually followed a similar pattern each year, with a peak at 2200 hours local and a trough around 1000 hours local. Most sightings occur between 9:00 p.m. and midnight. Since most UFOs are nocturnal lights, this is not unexpected. The number of possible observers drops off sharply near midnight, and we would expect that the hourly rate of UFO reports would vary with two factors: potential observers and darkness. In 2001, this smooth, bell-shaped curve was again evident. An analysis of cases labeled "Unknown," however, showed two peaks, at 2100 hrs and 2300 hrs, but not 2200 hrs. Whether this is a statistical artefact is not known at this time.

## Duration

The category of **Duration** is interesting in that it represents the *subjective* length of time the UFO experience lasted. In other words, this is the length of time the sighting lasted *as estimated by the witness*. Naturally, these times are greatly suspect because it is known that people tend to misjudge the flow of time. However, some people *can* be good at estimating time, so this value has some meaning. Although an estimate of "one hour" may be in error by several minutes, it is unlikely that the correct value would be, for example, one *minute* (disregarding the claims of "missing time" during the abduction category of experiences). Furthermore, there have been cases when a UFO was observed and clocked accurately, so that we can be reasonably certain that UFO events can last considerable periods of time.

The average duration of a sighting can be calculated as the summation of all given durations divided by the number of cases with a stated duration. This value has varied somewhat, from 7 minutes in 1994 to 25 minutes in 1996. In 2001, the average duration of all cases was about 900 seconds, or about 15 minutes. But again, cases labeled "Unknown" seemed different from the majority of UFO reports: their average duration was about half of that, about 475 seconds.

Previous analyses have shown that long-duration sightings tend to occur in the early morning hours, from about midnight until 6:00 a.m. It is probable that the majority of observations at this time are those of astronomical objects, moving slowly with the rotation of the Earth.

Extremely short duration events are usually fireballs or bolides, while very long duration events of an hour or more are very probably astronomical objects. In between, there can be no way to distinguish conventional objects from UFOs solely with **Duration** data. A Canadian study by an Ontario UFO group which timed aircraft observations found that the duration of such sightings varied between 15 seconds to more than 8 minutes. There does not seem to be a clear relationship between the number of reports and the **Duration** of UFO sightings.

## Colour

In cases where a colour of an object was reported, the most common colour in 2001 was white (36%). The next most common colours were "multicoloured," orange and red, each with 11% of the total. Since most UFOs are nocturnal starlike objects, the abundance of white objects is not surprising. Colours such as red, orange, blue and green often are associated with bolides (fireballs).

The "multicoloured" designation is problematic in that it literally covers a wide range of possibilities. Some studies of UFO data have adjusted the category of colour to include both "primary" and "secondary" colours in cases where the observed UFO had more than one colour. The multicoloured label has been used, for example, when witnesses described their UFOs as having white, red and green lights. (Many of these are certainly stars or planets, which flash a variety of colours when seen low on the horizon. Aircraft also frequently are described as having more than one colour of light.) For the present study, the **Colour** classification refers only to the primary colour in the witness' description.

### **Witnesses**

The mean number of witnesses per case between 1989 and 2001 is approximately 2.00. This value has fluctuated between a high of 2.4 in 1996 to as low as 1.4 in 1990. In 2001, the average number of witnesses per case was 1.8.

This indicates that the typical UFO experience has **more than one witness**, and supports the contention that UFO sightings represent observations of real, physical phenomena since there is usually a corroborator present to support the sighting.

### **Shape**

Witnesses' descriptions of the shapes of UFOs vary greatly. In 2000, 23% were of "point sources" - that is, starlike objects. The next most common shapes were a ball and triangle, with 21% each. In 2001, however, the percentage of "point sources" more than doubled, jumping to 52% of the total. The next most common in 2001 were spheres (12%) and fireballs (10%).

Again, the caution is that the shape of a perceived object depends on many factors such as the witness' own visual acuity, the angle of viewing, the distance of viewing and witnesses' own biases and descriptive abilities.

### **Strangeness**

The assigning of a **Strangeness** rating to a UFO report is based on a classification adopted by researchers who note that the inclusion of a subjective evaluation of the degree to which a particular case is in itself unusual might yield some insight into the data. For example, the observation of a single, stationary, starlike light in the sky, seen for several hours, is not particularly unusual and might likely have a prosaic explanation such as that of a star or planet. On the other hand, a detailed observation of a saucer-shaped object which glides

slowly away from a witness after an encounter with grey-skinned aliens would be considered highly strange.

The numbers of UFO reports according to strangeness rating show an inverse relationship such that the higher the strangeness rating, the fewer reports. The one exception to this relationship occurs in the case of very low strangeness cases, which are relatively few in number compared to those of moderate strangeness. It is suggested this is the case because in order for an observation to be considered a UFO, it must usually rise above an *ad hoc* level of strangeness, otherwise it would not be considered strange at all.

The average strangeness rating for UFO reports during 2001 was 3.6, where 1 is considered not strange at all and 9 is considered exceptionally unusual. Therefore, most UFOs reported are of objects which do not greatly stretch the imagination. Hollywood-inspired flying saucers are, in reality, relatively uncommon in UFO reports.

### **Reliability**

The average **Reliability** rating of reports in 2001 was slightly less than 5, indicating that there were about the same number of higher quality cases as those of low quality. Low reliability was assigned to reports with minimal information on the witness, little or no investigation and incomplete description of the object(s) observed. Higher reliability cases might include actual interviews with witnesses, a detailed case investigation, multiple witnesses and other supporting evidence.

**Reliability** and **Strangeness** ratings tend to vary together in classic bell-shaped curves. In other words, there are very few cases which were both highly unusual and well-reported. Most cases are of medium strangeness and medium reliability. However, there are also very few low-strangeness cases with low reliability. Low-strangeness cases, therefore, tend to be well-reported and probably have explanations.

### **Sources**

UFO data used in this study were supplied by many different groups, organizations, official agencies and private individuals. Since this annual survey began in the late 1980s, more and more cases have been obtained and received via the Internet.

In 2001, about 34% of the total cases were obtained through the private and non-profit National UFO Reporting Center in the USA, which has a toll-free telephone number for reporting UFOs and a large sightings list created through voluntary submission of report forms by witnesses. More than 26% of the 2001 cases came from UFO\*BC, which also has a toll-free number and a significant public presence in its province. One can speculate that if there were a well-advertised toll-free number and accompanying website for reporting

UFOs in each Canadian province, perhaps yearly report numbers would increase dramatically.

A little more than 8% of the cases in 2001 came as a result of information obtained through the federal department of Transport Canada.

### **Conclusions/Evaluations**

The breakdown by **Evaluation** for 2001 cases was similar to results from previous years. There were four operative categories: **Explained, Insufficient Information, Possible or Probable Explanation**, and **Unknown (or Unexplained)**. Readers are cautioned that a classification of **Unknown** does *not* imply that an alien spacecraft or mysterious natural phenomenon was observed; no such interpretation can be made with certainty, based on the given data (though the probability of this scenario is admittedly never zero).

In most cases, evaluations are made subjectively by both the contributing investigators and the compiler of this report. The category of **Unknown** is adopted if the contributed data or case report contains enough information such that a conventional explanation cannot be satisfactorily proposed. This does *not* mean that the case will never be explained, but only that a viable explanation is not immediately obvious.

The average proportion of **Unknowns** since 1989 has been about 13%, and 2001 was perfectly in line at 15.2%. This is a relatively high figure, considering that this would imply that more than one in ten UFOs cannot be explained. However, there are several factors which affect this value. The level and quality of UFO report investigation varies because there are no explicit standards for ufologists. Some "believers" might be biased to consider most UFO sightings as mysterious, whereas those with more of a skeptical predisposition might tend to subconsciously (or consciously) reduce the **Unknowns** in their files.

During the first few years of these studies, an evaluation of **Explained** was almost nonexistent. Contributors at first tended to ignore UFO sightings that had a simple explanation and deleted them as actual *UFO* data. However, because many IFO cases such as fireballs and meteors are initially reported as UFOs, the **Explained** category is necessary for a full review of UFO data. Early American studies of UFO data included such cases, so present-day comparative studies should include such data as well. Furthermore, since there are no absolutes, the subjective nature of assigning **Evaluations** is actually an interpretation of the facts by individual researchers.

**TABLE 4****Evaluation of Canadian UFO Data**

|         | Explained |      | Insuf. Info. |      | Poss. Explan. |      | Unexplained |      |
|---------|-----------|------|--------------|------|---------------|------|-------------|------|
|         | #         | %    | #            | %    | #             | %    | #           | %    |
| 1989    | 0         | 0    | 74           | 52.5 | 47            | 33.3 | 20          | 14.2 |
| 1990    | 0         | 0    | 90           | 46.4 | 78            | 40.2 | 26          | 13.4 |
| 1991    | 2         | 1.2  | 80           | 48.5 | 69            | 41.8 | 14          | 8.5  |
| 1992    | 17        | 8    | 83           | 37   | 74            | 33   | 49          | 22   |
| 1993    | 154       | 31.5 | 170          | 34.8 | 115           | 23.5 | 50          | 10.2 |
| 1994-95 | 71        | 19.1 | 124          | 33.3 | 131           | 35.2 | 46          | 12.4 |
| 1996    | 24        | 9.3  | 105          | 40.7 | 87            | 33.7 | 42          | 16.3 |
| 1997    | 17        | 6.0  | 106          | 37.3 | 122           | 43   | 39          | 13.7 |
| 1998    | 10        | 5.1  | 75           | 38.7 | 87            | 44.8 | 22          | 11.3 |
| 1999    | 10        | 3.9  | 82           | 31.5 | 135           | 51.9 | 32          | 12.3 |
| 2000    | 22        | 8.5  | 94           | 36.4 | 108           | 41.9 | 34          | 13.2 |
| 2001    | 22        | 5.9  | 130          | 34.7 | 165           | 44.1 | 57          | 15.2 |
| Total   | 349       |      | 1213         |      | 818           |      | 431         | 13.4 |

There were 57 **Unknowns** out of 374 total cases in 2001. If we look only at the **Unknowns** with a quality or **Reliability** rating of 7 or greater, we then are left with 20 high-quality **Unknowns** in 2001 (about 5% of the total). (As a comparison, USAF Blue Book studies found only 3% to 4% of their cases were "excellent" **Unknowns**.)

It should be emphasized again that even high-quality **Unknowns** do not imply alien visitation. Each case may still have an explanation following further investigation. And of those that remain unexplained, they may remain unexplained, but still are not incontrovertible proof of extraterrestrial intervention or some mysterious natural phenomenon.

### **Summary of Results**

As with previous studies, the *2001 Canadian UFO Survey* does not offer any positive proof that UFOs are either alien spacecraft or a specific natural phenomenon. However, it does show that some phenomenon which often is called a UFO is continually being observed by witnesses.

*The typical UFO sighting is that of two people together observing a moving, distant white or red light for several minutes.* In most cases, the UFO is likely to be eventually identified as a conventional object such as an aircraft or astronomical object. However, in a small percentage of cases, some UFOs do not appear to have an easy explanation and they may be given the label of "unknown."

What are these "unknowns?" From a completely scientific standpoint, we have no way of extrapolating a definitive explanation based on this data. Biases for or against the view that UFOs are extraterrestrial spacecraft often hinder the scientific process and cloud the issue. A 'debunker' who has a strong belief that UFO reports are all fabrications or misinterpretations may tend to dismiss a truly unusual case out of hand, whereas a 'believer' who believes aliens are indeed visiting Earth may read something sinister into a case with a conventional explanation.

All that a study of this kind can do is present the data and some rudimentary analyses. The recognition that there really are only a handful of true unknowns among the UFO cases might lead a debunker to believe they, too, might find an explanation if enough effort were to be expended, but to a believer this might be the required proof that some UFOs have no explanations.

The interpretation of the 57 Unknowns is that these cases were among the most challenging of all the reports received in 2001. It should be noted that most UFO cases go unreported, and that there may be ten times as many UFO sightings that go unreported as those which get reported to public, private or military agencies. Furthermore, it should be noted that some cases with lower reliability ratings suffer only from incomplete investigations, and that they may well be more mysterious than those on the list of Unknowns. And, above all, these cases are *not* proof of extraterrestrial visitation.

### **Other comments**

Throughout the past twelve years, the rate of UFO reporting in Canada has been an average of 20 cases per month. In 2001, the monthly rate was 31 per month, or about one UFO sighting each day somewhere in Canada.

The gradual increase in the numbers of UFO reports with time likely does not have a simple explanation. It could be related to a growing awareness within the general population that there are agencies which collect UFO reports. It could be that there really are more UFOs physically present in the sky. It could be that the collection of UFO data is becoming more efficient. While media have been noted as playing a definite role in UFO waves (a national increase in UFO sightings), media coverage of UFO reports has significantly declined over the past decade while the number of reports has risen. Perhaps a cultural factor is at work as well, where "aliens" and UFOs are now well-entrenched within the societal mindset and are accepted as more probable than fiction. This question by itself is deserving of scientific study.

UFO witnesses range from farmhands to airline pilots and from teachers to police officers. Witnesses represent all age groups and racial origin. What is being observed? In most cases, only ordinary objects. However, this begs a question. If people are reporting things that can be explained, then the objects they observed were "really" there. Were the objects we can't identify "really" there as well? If so, what were they?

These are questions that only continued and rational research can answer, and only if researchers have the support and encouragement of both scientists and the public.

### **The 2001 Canadian UFO Survey: Summary of Results**

< There were 374 UFO sightings reported in Canada in 2001 — or about one sighting each day.

< There were about 42% more UFO reports in 2001 than 2000.

< In 2001, more UFOs were reported in the late summer than any other time of the year.

< In 2001, about 15% of all UFO reports were unexplained. This percentage of unknowns falls to about 5% when only high-quality cases are considered.

< Most UFO sightings have more than one witness.

< The typical UFO sighting lasted approximately 15 minutes in 2001.

The most important findings of this study include the fact that UFO sightings have continued to be reported at a more-or-less constant level over the past several years. People still report observing unusual objects in the sky, and some of these objects do not have obvious explanations. Many witnesses are pilots, police and other individuals with reasonably good observing capabilities and good judgement. Although most reported UFOs are simply lights in the night sky, a significant number are objects with definite shapes observed within the witnesses' frame of reference.

Popular opinion to the contrary, there is yet to be any incontrovertible evidence that some UFO cases involve extraterrestrial contact. However, the continued reporting of UFOs by the public suggests a need for further examination of the phenomenon by social, medical and/or physical scientists.

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Department of National Defence  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

### **Most Interesting Canadian 'Unknowns' in 2001**

Note: an asterisk (\*) indicates cases with the highest reliability.

#### **January 5, 2001 10:30 am Whitehorse, YK**

A white, "self-lit," cigar-shaped object with a small vapour trail was observed to "hop forward" in its progress through the sky before it moved out of view behind a mountain. It returned and flew back again.

#### **January 31, 2001 3:30 pm Gjoa Haven, NU**

As many as 10 witnesses observed two cigar-shaped "shining lights" in the sky, hanging motionless in over the horizon. One suggested explanation was that of "condensation trails from a jet."

#### **March 11, 2001 6:30 pm Calgary, AB \***

An irregularly shaped object, like a cluster of red spheres, flew against the wind over a witness, who managed to take a photograph.

#### **April 1, 2001 10:30 pm Etzikom, AB**

"Funnel shaped flames" were observed descending and then rising again over a field. Later, a 100-foot-wide "crater" was discovered in the field.

#### **July 9, 2001 11:30 pm Portage la Prairie, MB**

A man and his daughter watched six orange, oval objects flying in a "V" formation flying towards the west.

#### **July 17, 2001 9:00 pm Hull, PQ**

This was the first of three consecutive nights when two witnesses observed "cette lumiere pendant, intensite compare a la Mars," which after several minutes seemed to "explode".

#### **July 18, 2001 9:10 pm Hull, PQ**

A luminous stationary object "exploded" after 15 minutes.

**July 19, 2001 9:00 pm Hull, PQ**

A ball of light seen in telescope "exploded" after several minutes.

**August 12, 2001 12:25 am Victoria, BC \***

Five people watched seven grey objects flying in a straight line, changed position in flight into a hexagonal formation and ascended into the sky over the city. They were lost to view after 15 minutes.

**August 17, 2001 9:30 pm Mitchell, MB \***

An astronomer heard loud booming sounds and ran outside to see three steady light in triangular formation moving east to west.

**August 18, 2001 11:00 pm Malloy Lake, MB**

Six people watched a trio of lights flying together in formation. They said that the lights were not the International Space Station in orbit.

**August 25, 2001 12:30 pm Dorval, PQ**

A man saw "an armada" of eight disc-shaped objects flying in pairs over Dorval airport.

**August 25, 2001 3:27 pm St-Laurent, PQ**

An astronomer and others watched two solid-appearing objects moving slowly through the clear sky. Photographs were taken.

**August 28, 2001 4:07 pm Richmond, BC**

Three dots of white light "played tag" with one another and otherwise maneuvered in an unusual manner along an airport flight path.

**September 2, 2001 10:00 pm Sydney, NS**

A triangle of lights were seen moving from the northeast to the southwest. An air traffic controller told the witness: "We've got nothing showing on radar."

**September 16, 2001 2:00 am Edmonton, AB**

A "shooting star" moving in the western sky zoomed to the east, then returned along its original path.

**November 11, 2001 4:00 am Policeman's Point, YK**

An oval object with several lights flew on an irregular path in the sky.

**November 13, 2001 5:00 pm Beaverlodge, AB**

Two children saw a domed, disc-shaped object flying through the sky.

**December 11, 2001 8:06 pm Craik, SK**

Pilots of a commercial airliner saw lights they believed were on another aircraft at a higher altitude, but air traffic controllers did not have any others on their radar.

**December 21, 2001 Chesterfield Inlet, NU \***

Pilots on a supply plane saw a stationary light near the ground in an