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The 2002
CANADIAN UFO SURVEY:
an analysis of UFO reports
in Canada

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## **The 2002 Canadian UFO Survey**

### **Overview**

Since 1989, UFOROM has been soliciting UFO case data from all known and active investigators and researchers in Canada for analyses. UFO reports have been collected with the goal of understanding this controversial and popular phenomenon. There are no comparable studies produced by any other research group in North America. The only known similar program is one in Sweden, where UFO report data is analysed by the Archives for UFO Research. They have lists of Swedish UFO sightings from 1997 to the present online.

### **Raison D=etre**

Why collect UFO reports? In one sense, the answer is as simple as because they're there. Polls by both professional and lay organizations have shown that approximately ten per cent of all North Americans believe they have seen UFOs. Given the population data available, this implies 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 the delusion of seeing things that are not there. If, on the other hand, UFOs represent a real phenomenon, the data should be examined for insight into its nature. In either situation, it can be argued that UFO reports deserve scientific attention.

In general, the public equates UFOs with alien visitation. However, there is no incontrovertible proof that this is a real connection. In order to determine if there might be signs of extraterrestrial contact, research on the actual characteristics of UFO reports is desirable. Do the reports really bear out such a linkage? What, exactly, are people seeing and reporting as UFOs? Are they seeing a classic Hollywood-style flying saucers, like those portrayed in movies and television shows? Are UFO reports well-documented and well-witnessed, with no explanation as to their nature? Given the general public perception that aliens are present in our Solar System and that the answers to these questions may already exist in the beliefs and desires of popular culture, a thorough examination of actual UFO reports would provide insight into the phenomenon.

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, many books on UFOs and related subjects proceed on the basis of assumptions, theories and individual anecdotal accounts. Many books about UFO abductions on bookstore shelves give the impression that this aspect of the UFO phenomenon constitutes most 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. Abduction cases actually comprise a very tiny fraction of the bulk of UFO data. The Abread 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 General Collection of UFO Data**

Many individuals, associations, clubs and groups claim to investigate UFO reports and 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. UFOROM=s requests for data from Canadian UFO researchers and investigators include only basic information that can be used in rigorous analyses. This includes things such as date of the sighting, the time, duration, number of witnesses and their location C facts which are not subjective and can be used in scientific studies before interpretation.

### **The Official Collection of UFO Data**

Until 1995, the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) routinely collected UFO reports from private citizens, RCMP, civic police and military personnel. This collection of data was in support of the NRC=s interest in the retrieval of meteorites, with the idea that witnesses= reports of bright lights in the sky were mostly fireballs and meteors which could then be triangulated to locate fallen meteorites. (Indeed, the Innisfree meteorite was found in Alberta through this system.)

This practice ceased as a result of budgetary restrictions and the perceived reduction in importance of UFO data. However, 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 reported to Transport Canada, to then be referred to UFOROM for research into the 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 considered 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 recognized contributing and participating groups, associations, organizations or individuals (for a list of contributors see page 2 of this report) 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 results that can be compared with other studies. This is useful in understanding the nature of UFO reports not only in Canada, but can shed light on the nature of UFO reports elsewhere in the world.

### **UFO Reports in Canada**

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

|      | Number of cases | Cumulative total |
|------|-----------------|------------------|
| Year |                 |                  |
| 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 |
| 2002 | 483 | 3699 |

Although numbers of UFO reports have risen and fallen from year to year, depending on a number of factors, they have been slowly but steadily increasing since 1989. The year 2002 saw a 29 per cent increase in UFO report numbers over 2001, which was 42 per cent higher than the year 2000. Remarkably, between 1998 and 2002, there has been an almost 250 per cent increase in the number of UFO reports. This data clearly contradicts comments in the media by experts who state that the number of UFO sightings has decreased in recent years.

Still, we must recognize that yearly figures are greatly dependent on many factors, especially the cooperation of contributors to the survey. In addition, 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. Nevertheless, it is important to

note that the 2002 data represents the largest number of separate events for a single year in the history of the annual Canadian UFO Survey.

## **UFOs and IFOs**

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

Studies of UFO data routinely 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. Witnesses often report watching stationary flashing lights low to the horizon for hours and never realize that they are observing a star or planet.

Some UFO investigators spend many hours sorting IFOs from UFOs. Historically, analyses of UFO data such as the American projects Grudge, Sign and Blue Book all included raw UFO data which later were 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 reverse is also true.

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 useful. 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 C definitely part of the UFO report legacy.

IFOs are problematic in that they are not interesting to most ufologists. In fact, many UFO investigators admit they 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 C 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 reclassification as IFOs.

Since most UFO reports can be explained and reclassified as IFOs, 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 that 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: 2002 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 2002, British Columbia had 33 per cent of the total number of UFO sightings reported in Canada, showing a significant over-representation based on population alone. This is thought to be due to the successful public education and awareness campaign in BC by two major UFO organizations, UFOBC and HBCCUFO. Ontario and Quebec together constitute more than 60 per cent of Canada's population, but had only about 33 per cent of the total number of UFO reports in 2002, and this percentage does not vary much from year to year. Only 30 cases were reported east of Quebec in 2002. About 4.5 per cent of all Canadian UFO reports came from the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut in 2002, still more than might be expected if sightings were somehow tied to population. In 2002, the numbers of UFO reports in BC and Nova Scotia were the highest ever recorded over more than a decade.

**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 |
| 2002 | 176 | 51 | 6  | 36 | 128 | 34 | 4 | 0 | 23 | 3 | 20 | 0 | 2 |

In addition, 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.

In 2002, Toronto and environs jumped from 6<sup>th</sup> to last place in the list of places most cited as locations where UFO were most frequently observed. The Vancouver area dropped to second place, although two small towns in northern BC appeared on the list as third and fourth. Also making the top ten list for the first time were Calgary and Hamilton. Winnipeg, Edmonton, Ottawa and Whitehorse all returned as suburban areas with significant numbers of UFO reports.

### Canadian Cities With the Most UFO Reports in 2002

| Rank in 2002 | Rank in 2001 | City      | Province | Number of Reports |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 1            | 6 (tie)      | Toronto   | ON       | 34                |
| 2            | 1            | Vancouver | BC       | 31                |

|    |         |            |    |    |
|----|---------|------------|----|----|
| 3  |         |            | BC | 25 |
|    |         | Terrace    |    |    |
| 4  |         |            | BC | 24 |
|    |         | Houston    |    |    |
| 5  | 6 (tie) | Winnipeg   | MB | 20 |
| 6  | 6 (tie) | Edmonton   | AB | 15 |
| 7  | 2       | Ottawa     | ON | 14 |
| 8  | 5       | Whitehorse | YK | 13 |
| 9  |         |            | AB | 11 |
|    |         | Calgary    |    |    |
| 10 |         |            | ON | 8  |
|    |         | Hamilton   |    |    |

### 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 2002, there was a pronounced peak in July and August, but the next-highest month for reports was February, which seems counter-intuitive. It is not clear why this would be so.

**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 |
| 2002 | 31 | 54 | 41 | 28 | 36 | 44 | 73 | 74 | 42 | 26 | 19 | 14 |

### 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 per cent of all reports in 1993, 51 per cent in 1997 and 51 per cent in 2002.

The percentage of Daylight Discs (DDs) has also varied over the years. In 1991, there were only 7.9 per cent, but in 1997 there were 18.4 per cent. There were 15.8 per cent in 2002.

NL and Nocturnal Disc (ND) cases together comprise more than 80 per cent of all 2002 UFO reports; about four out of five UFO sightings occur at night.

Only about 3 per cent of all reported UFO cases in 2002 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 seems almost completely unconnected to what are 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 |
| 2002    | 293 | 94 | 76 | 8  | 5 | 0 | 1 |

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.

### **Hourly Distribution**

The hourly distribution of cases has usually followed a similar pattern every year, with a peak at 2200 hours local and a trough around 1000 hours local. In 2002, there was an unexpected slight shift in the peak from 2200 to 2300 hours, and a shift in the trough from 1000 to noon. There is no immediately obvious reason for this shift.

Since most UFOs are nocturnal lights, most sightings will occur during the evening hours. 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.

### **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 importance. 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*. Furthermore, there have been cases when a UFO was observed and clocked very 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 2002, the average duration of all cases was 920 seconds, or about 15 minutes.

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 these observations are of astronomical objects, moving slowly with the rotation of the Earth.

The duration of a sighting is one of the biggest clues to its explanation. 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. One 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.

## **Colour**

In cases where a colour of an object was reported, the most common colour in 2002 was white (39 per cent). The next most common colour was Amulticoloured,@ with 13 per cent of the total. Next in line were (in order) red, orange and yellow. 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 Amulticoloured@ 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 Aprimary@ and Asecondary@ 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 2002 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 2002, the average number of witnesses per case was 1.86.

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 2002, more than 49 per cent were of Apoint sources@ - that is, starlike objects. The next most common shapes were a Airregular,@ with 12.4 per cent, and a sphere or ball, with 9.4 per cent.

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 noted 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 2002 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-style flying saucers are, in reality, relatively uncommon in UFO reports.

### **Reliability**

The average **Reliability** rating of reports in 2002 was slightly more 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 documentation and other evidence.

**Reliability** and **Strangeness** ratings tend to vary 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 2002, about 32 per cent 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 online report forms by witnesses. Slightly more than 9 per cent of the 2002 cases came from UFO\*BC (a significant drop of about 67 per cent from 2001), 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 less than 5 per cent of the cases in 2002 came as a result of information obtained through Transport Canada and the Department of National Defence.

## Conclusions/Evaluations

The breakdown by **Evaluation** for 2002 cases was similar to results from previous years. There were four operative categories: **Explained, Insufficient Information, Possible or Probable Explanation, and Unknown (or Unexplained)**. It is important to note 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 technically never zero).

In most cases, evaluations are made subjectively by both the contributing investigators and the compiler of this study. 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.

Since 1989, the average proportion of **Unknowns** since 1989 has been about 13 per cent per year, but 2002 saw an increase to about 18 per cent. This is a relatively high figure, implying that almost one in five 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. But 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.

The process of evaluating UFO sightings is often complex, involving a series of steps that take into account errors of observation and unpredictable but natural phenomena. Checks with police, air traffic control operators and meteorologists are often performed. Where possible, witnesses are interviewed in person, and sketches or photographs of the area may be examined. The intent is to eliminate as many conventional explanations as possible before allowing an evaluation or conclusion.

**TABLE 4**

**Evaluation of Canadian UFO Data**

|      | Explained |          | Insuf. Info. |          | Poss. Explan. |          | Unexplained |          |
|------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|      | #         | per cent | #            | per cent | #             | per cent | #           | per cent |
| 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 |
| 2002    | 12  | 2.5  | 192  | 39.7 | 192  | 39.7 | 87  | 18.0 |
| Total   | 361 |      | 1405 |      | 1010 |      | 518 | 13.9 |

There were 87 **Unknowns** out of 483 total cases in 2002. If we look only at the **Unknowns** with a quality or **Reliability** rating of 7 or greater, we are left with 34 high-quality **Unknowns** in 2002 (about 7 per cent of the total). This is slightly more than the ratio in previous years, which found around five per cent or less were higher-quality **Unknowns**. (As a comparison, USAF Blue Book studies found only 3 per cent to 4 per cent 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 *2002 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 **Evaluation** value is a subjective value imposed by the investigator or compiler (or both) with a scale such that the low values represent cases with little information content and observers of limited observing abilities and the higher values represent those cases with excellent witnesses (pilots, police, etc.) and also are well-investigated. Naturally, cases with higher values are preferred.

The interpretation of the 87 Unknowns is that these cases were among the most challenging of all the reports received in 2002. 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**

Since 1989, rate of UFO reporting in Canada has been an average of 20 cases per month, although this has been increasing during the past five years. In 2002, the monthly rate was 40 per month, or at least 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 2002 Canadian UFO Survey: Summary of Results**

< There were 483 UFO sightings reported in Canada in 2002 or at least one sighting each day.

- There were about 29 per cent more UFO reports in 2002 than 2001. The number of UFO reports

per year in Canada has increased almost 250 per cent since 1998.

< In 2002, more UFOs were reported in the late summer than any other time of the year, although the month of February also had an unexpectedly large peak in UFO report numbers.

< In 2002, about 18 per cent of all UFO reports were unexplained. This percentage of unknowns falls to about 7 per cent when only high-quality cases are considered.

< Most UFO sightings have two witnesses.

< The typical UFO sighting lasted approximately 15 minutes in 2002.

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.

**For further information, contact:**

Ufology Research of Manitoba, E-mail: rutkows@cc.umanitoba.ca

**Note: A toll-free telephone number to report UFO sightings in Canada has become operational. This AUFO Hotline@ is: 1-866-262-1989.**

**Contributing Organizations**

AUFOSG

<http://www.aufosg.org> (Gord Kijek)

e-mail: gordkijek@yahoo.com

National UFO Reporting Center

<http://www.ufocenter.com> (Peter Davenport)

Maritime UFO File

<http://www.donledger.com>

e-mail: dledger@ns.sympatico.ca (Don Ledger)

MUFON Ontario

<http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/mufonontario/mufonindex.html>

e-mail: theofa@idirect.com (Tom Theofanous)

e-mail: nikolaos@yorku.ca (Nick Balaskas)

e-mail: ufoman@ican.net (Michel Deschamps)

HBCC UFO Research

<http://www.geocities.com/hbccufo>

e-mail: hbccufo@telus.net (Brian Vike)

UFO\*BC

<http://www.ufobc.ca>

e-mail: dave@ufobc.ca (Dave Pengilly)

et al.

Ufology Research of Manitoba

e-mail: rutkows@cc.umanitoba.ca (Chris Rutkowski)

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/7998>

e-mail: loctl789@hotmail.com (Geoff Dittman)

<http://www.geocities.com/aristotl.geo>

CHUCARA

Box 61

La Prairie, Quebec J5R 3Y1

<http://www.chucara.com>

e-mail: jpoulet@chucara.com (Jacques Poulet)

UFODatabase.com (now offline)

UFO Updates

<http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates>

e-mail: ufoupdates@virtuallystrange.net (Errol Bruce-Knapp)

UFO Roundup

<http://ufoinfo.com/roundup>

e-mail: masinaigan@aol.com (Joseph Trainor)

Filer=s Files

<http://www.filersfiles.com>

e-mail: majorstar@aol.com (George Filer)

Para-Researchers of Ontario

<http://pararesearchers.org> (Sue Darroch)

Newfoundland UFO Research (NUFOR)

<http://members.xoom.com/nufor>

e-mail: nufor@hotmail.com

Newfoundland UFOs

e-mail: nfufos@hotmail.com (Jen H.)

UFO Yukon Research Society

<http://www.ufobc.ca/yukon/index.html>

e-mail: mjjasek@shaw.ca (Martin Jasek)

Transport Canada

Department of National Defence

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

### **Most Interesting Canadian >Unknowns= in 2002**

#### **January 12, 2002 9:40 pm Inkerman, NB**

A large object with flashing lights and brightly-lit windows flew slowly and silently over a highway as a couple stopped their car and watched as it moved down behind some trees out of view. Later, dozens of other people came forward to report their own sightings about the same time.

#### **March 28, 2002 10:30 pm Hamilton, BC**

A pale-coloured light source rose up from a mountainside, then disappeared. It repeated this performance several times.

#### **April 7, 2002 1:57 am Over Hudson's Bay, NU**

The aircrew of a cargo flight watched as a small light source grew in size to become a jagged ball, then it fizzled out.

#### **May 7, 2002 11:23 pm Winnipeg, MB**

A fuzzy patch of light was seen and photographed near the Big Dipper by an experienced astronomer and physicist. It was not a comet, cloud, or any other known phenomenon.

**May 26, 2002 11:44 pm Winnipeg, MB**

A dark object with three red circles on its underside silently glided across the sky as three witnesses watched its progress.

**July 28, 2002 10:00 pm Smithers, BC**

A barrel-shaped silver object flew across the sky towards the southwest.

**August 13, 2002 1:00 am Waterville, NS**

Twelve witnesses watched two luminous silver objects flying silently over an RV park, and then one of the objects angled sharply away and was lost to sight.

**August 13, 2002 2:15 am Cow Bay, NS**

A huge, slow-moving black triangular object appeared to block out the sky. Inquiries with radar operators confirmed that a large unknown object had indeed flown over the area at that time.

**August 23, 2002 7:00 pm Houston, BC**

A shiny white cylindrical object flew overhead, and was videotaped.

**September 1, 2002 8:47 pm Molega Lake, NS**

Two witnesses watched an object with rectangular slitlike lights and a large red flashing light flying slowly eastward.

**September 22, 2002 3:13 pm Vancouver, BC**

A small orange object moving slowly in the sky, changing direction and shape, was observed for a few hours by more than a dozen people.

**October 22, 2002 10:25 pm Granisle, BC**

An orange disc-shaped object hovered over a mine, then slowly rose up and flew towards the north out of sight.