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The 2004  
CANADIAN UFO SURVEY:  
An Analysis of UFO Reports  
in Canada

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# The 2004 Canadian UFO Survey

## Overview

Since 1989, UFOROM has been soliciting UFO case data from all known and active investigators and researchers in Canada. Our goal has been to provide data for use by researchers as they try to understand this controversial phenomenon. No comparable studies are currently 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. 2004 thus marks our sixteenth year of collecting and analysing Canadian UFO report data. UFOROM presently has UFO data from 1993 to the present available online, and is working to add earlier national case data to the database.

## The 2004 Canadian UFO Survey: Summary of Results

< There were 882 UFO sightings reported in Canada in 2004 or more than two each day.

- There were about 31 per cent more UFO reports in 2004 than 2003. The number of UFO reports filed per year in Canada has been increasing steadily since 1998.
- Records show that more than 5,000 UFO sightings have been officially reported in Canada since 1989.
- Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Quebec all had all-time record high numbers of UFOs reported in 2004.

< In 2004, about 15 per cent of all UFO reports were unexplained. This percentage of unknowns falls to about seven per cent when only high-quality cases are considered.

< Most UFO sightings have more than one witness.

< The typical UFO sighting lasted almost 20 minutes in 2004.

The most important findings of this study include the fact that the number of UFO sightings in Canada has increased over the past sixteen years, and 2004 saw an all-time record high number of sightings reported. People continue to 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. The continued reporting of UFOs by the public and the yearly increase in numbers of UFO reports suggests a need for further examination of the phenomenon by social, medical and/or physical scientists.

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**Raison D=etre**

Why bother to collect UFO reports? In one sense, the answer may be 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 might ask why such a large percentage of the population is 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 and merit serious 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 needed. 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 there really well-documented and well-witnessed UFO reports, with no explanation as to their nature? Given the general public perception that aliens exist and 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 go far to provide necessary 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 (including the possible evidence of alien contact.) Abduction cases actually comprise a very tiny fraction of the bulk of UFO data. The Abroad and butter@ of UFO research lies not in fanciful discourses about aliens= genetic manipulation of humans but in what UFO witnesses are actually seeing and reporting.

This last point cannot be overemphasized. The UFO reports collected and analysed in our annual Surveys are the only data upon which studies of Canadian UFOs can be reasonably based. As UFOs are a worldwide phenomenon, the results of analyses of Canadian UFO reports can easily be applied to cases in other countries. In effect, this is the empirical data for research in this field. If one wants to know what people really are seeing in the skies, the answer lies within these reports.

### **The General Collection of UFO Data**

Many individuals, associations, clubs and groups claim to investigate UFO reports. Many solicit reports from the general public. Comparatively few actually participate in any kind of information sharing or data gathering for scientific programs. Some are primarily interest groups based in museums, planetariums, church basements or individuals= homes, and do essentially *nothing* with the sighting reports they receive. Because there is no way to enforce standards in UFO report investigations, the quality of case investigations varies considerably between groups and across provinces. 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, 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. (In fact, the Innisfree meteorite was found in Alberta through this system.)

This practice ceased as a result of budgetary restrictions, lowered prioritization of meteoric research and the perceived reduction in importance of UFO data. However, included among the NRC reports were many observations of meteors and fireballs, and these have 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 that UFO sightings reported to Transport Canada could then be referred to UFOROM for research into the phenomenon. This does not mean that UFOROM receives all official government or military UFO reports. UFO sightings reported to the RCMP, for example, will normally get sent only to RCMP Divisional Headquarters.

Another reason why UFO data should be collected and studied is found in official directives of 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 UFO sightings and assesses 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 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.

| 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             |

|      |     |      |
|------|-----|------|
| 2002 | 483 | 3699 |
| 2003 | 673 | 4372 |
| 2004 | 882 | 5254 |

The number of UFO reports per year has varied annually, depending on a number of factors. However, yearly totals have generally been slowly but steadily increasing since 1989. The year 2004 saw a 31 per cent increase in UFO report numbers over 2003, and during the past 10 years between 1994 and 2004, there has been a more than 380 per cent increase in the number of UFOs reported annually. This clearly contradicts comments by those who would assert that UFOs are a passing fad or that the number of UFO sightings is decreasing. In fact, since media coverage of UFOs has been decreased in recent years, it is more striking that without media stimuli, UFO sightings are being reported in greater numbers.

Still, we must recognize that yearly figures are greatly dependent on many factors, especially the cooperation of contributors to the annual survey. The large number of UFO reports in 1993 was almost entirely due to a single major fireball event which spawned reports by hundreds of independent observers across the country. Similarly, the dramatic increase in UFO reports for 2003 is partly due to a single major event on July 28, 2003, in the Okanagan Valley, in which literally hundreds of people observed and reported seeing a band of white light arching across the sky. This spectacular sight was certainly not a fireball but may still eventually have a conventional explanation. There is no question that something was seen, due to the large number of witnesses reporting it over a very wide area. Nevertheless, the 2004 data represents the largest number of UFO reports ever recorded in a single year in the 15-year 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 on the horizon for hours and never conclude 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, some UFO investigators readily admit they do not record details about UFO reports 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 rightly logged as UFO reports. It seems reasonable that all UFO reports be included in statistical databases and in later studies on the phenomenon, regardless of the cases= later reclassification as IFOs.

The IFO question became more significant in 2004 as many more fireball and meteor reports than usual were added as data from astronomical sources. Brilliant fireballs have always been included within UFO data, especially the American military studies, and have been included in the UFOROM annual studies as a matter of course and to allow better comparisons with historical studies. As fireball reporting networks become more efficient, however, the number of IFOs in the UFO database increases dramatically. Many fireballs are reported as UFOs and are thus justifiably included in the UFO database. Others that are reported as fireballs and bolides might not be considered appropriate for inclusion, and this problem should be addressed in later analyses.

In 2004, 58 sightings of fireballs reported to the Meteorites and Impacts Advisory Committee (MIAC) to the Canadian Space Agency were included as data in the UFO survey. Although the sample size is small, the data seem to indicate that there are differences between MIAC and non-MIAC reports. There are many instances when MIAC recorded fireballs which were not reported to UFO investigators, and many obvious fireballs which were reported as UFOs to UFO investigators but were are not listed by MIAC.

Since most UFO reports can be explained and reclassified as IFOs, this fact 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: 2004 01 09 1530 Vernon BC DD 900 silver 2 ps 6 5 UFOBC p four objs. 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 2003, British Columbia had more than 45 per cent of the total number of UFO sightings reported in Canada, a substantial over-representation based on population alone. In fact, British Columbia has had the largest number of UFO sightings reported annually in Canada since 1998. This changed in 2004, when Ontario edged out a handful more cases overall. In 2004, the numbers of UFO reports in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were the highest ever recorded.

**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 |
| 2003 | 304 | 76 | 19 | 25  | 150 | 49 | 4  | 2 | 21 | 4 | 16 | 2 | 1 |
| 2004 | 247 | 99 | 45 | 112 | 254 | 64 | 21 | 2 | 23 | 9 | 2  | 3 | 1 |

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. Large metropolitan areas include their suburbs.

In 2004, for the second year in a row, Vancouver (including Surrey, North Vancouver, etc.) was cited as a location where UFOs were most frequently observed. (Toronto held this honour in 2002.) Winnipeg was second in 2004, while metropolitan Toronto and Edmonton appeared on the list as third and fourth. Making the top ten list for the first time were Saskatoon and Prince George. Calgary and Edmonton=s traditional rivalry persists in both cities making the list, leapfrogging positions this year. Vernon, Montreal and Ottawa also had significant numbers of UFO reports. When only unexplained UFO cases are considered, Saskatoon ranked highest, with 27.8 per cent unknowns.

### Canadian Cities With the Most UFO Reports in 2004

| Rank in 2003 | Rank in 2004 | City      | Province | Number of Reports |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 1            | 1            | Vancouver | BC       | 80                |
| 9            | 2            | Winnipeg  | MB       | 75                |
| 2            | 3            | Toronto   | ON       | 65                |

|   |          |               |    |    |
|---|----------|---------------|----|----|
| 8 | 4        | Edmonton      | AB | 26 |
| 7 | 5        | Calgary       | AB | 21 |
|   | 6        | Saskatoon     | SK | 18 |
|   | 7        | Dryden        | ON | 17 |
|   | 8 (tie)  | Vernon        | BC | 15 |
|   | 8 (tie)  | Prince George | BC | 15 |
|   | 10 (tie) | Montreal      | PQ | 13 |
|   | 10 (tie) | Ottawa        | ON | 13 |

### 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 generally 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 2003, a very unusual monthly variation was found. With the exception of a large peak in July/August and a lesser one in October, there was almost a constant level of UFO activity reported throughout the year. The yearly trough in May/June was slightly evident. It is commonly believed that more UFOs are seen when there are more people outside during warmer periods of the year. In 2004, there was a summer peak, with 113 cases reported in August alone. But this year, the fewest cases were reported in October, only two months later, and last year's May/June trough is instead part of 2004's summer high level of activity.

These wildly varying monthly report levels from year to year suggests that the number of UFO sighting reports is not directly related to climate. Whatever stimulus causes UFOs to

be reported, it is not linked to warmer weather and the increase in potential witnesses in the outdoors.

**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 |

|      |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |    |    |    |    |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| 2003 | 41 | 46 | 46 | 46 | 31 | 30 | 131 | 102 | 46 | 64 | 43 | 47 |
| 2004 | 59 | 53 | 72 | 68 | 82 | 97 | 96  | 113 | 83 | 46 | 56 | 53 |

### 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 some variations. Nocturnal Lights (NLs), were 59 per cent of all cases in 2004. Daylight Disc reports increased from 11 per cent in 2003 to 15.4 per cent in 2004. In general, most UFOs are simply lights seen in the night sky, since about 82 per cent of all UFO sightings in 2004, including both NL and Nocturnal Disc (ND) cases, occurred at night.

Only about two per cent of all reported UFO cases in 2004 were Close Encounters. Very, very few UFO cases involve anything other than distant objects seen in the sky. 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 |
| 2003    | 431 | 152 | 74  | 5  | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| 2004    | 520 | 203 | 136 | 7  | 6 | 2 | 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

Note: The category of **Nocturnal Disc** was created in the 1980s by UFOROM originally for differentiation of cases 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 or 2300 hours local and a trough around 1000 hours local. Since most UFOs are nocturnal lights, most sightings will occur during the evening hours. And, since the number of possible observers drops off sharply near midnight, we would expect 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 badly 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 true duration 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 sum of all given durations divided by the number of cases with a stated duration. This value has varied somewhat, from seven minutes in 1994 to 25 minutes in 1996. In 2004, the average duration of all cases was 1158 seconds, or almost 20 minutes, twice as long as 2003's value of 613 seconds, or about 10 minutes. This increase may be due to more sightings which might be explainable as misidentifications of stars and other long-visible objects. In fact these analyses of case data suggests that any UFO sighting which lasts an hour or more, especially that of a Nocturnal Light, is very likely a misidentified star or planet. Short duration events are usually fireballs or bolides, although 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 eight minutes. Therefore, sightings with durations in this range could very well be aircraft, providing other observational data do not contradict such an explanation.

### **Colour**

In cases where a colour of an object was reported by witnesses, the most common colour in 2004 was white (35 per cent). The next most common colour was Amulticoloured,@ with

21 per cent of the total. Next in order were orange, red and blue. Since most UFOs are nocturnal starlike objects, the abundance of white objects is not surprising. Colours such as red, orange, blue and green often also 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 partitioned 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 our study, the **Colour** classification refers only to the primary colour in the witness= description.

### **Witnesses**

The average number of witnesses per case between 1989 and 2004 is approximately 2.00. This value has fluctuated between a high of 3.1 in 1996 to as low as 1.4 in 1990. In 2003, the average number of witnesses per case was 2.04, but in 2004, this value dropped to only 1.67.

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 2004, 46 per cent were of Apoint sources@ C that is, Astarlike@ objects. The next most common shapes were Afireball,@ with 16 per cent, Airregular@ with 13 per cent, Asphere@ at seven per cent and Atriangle@ at five per cent. The classic Aflying saucer@ or disc-shaped object comprised only about five per cent of all UFO reports, contrary to popular opinion.

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 the witness= own biases and descriptive abilities. Nevertheless, in combination with other case data such as duration, shape can be a good clue towards a UFO=s possible explanation.

### **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 2004 was 3.7, close to the 2004 value. The rating system adopts one as a case that is considered not really strange at all and nine is considered exceptionally unusual. Therefore, most UFOs reported are of objects which do not greatly stretch the imagination, and Hollywood-style flying saucers are, in reality, relatively uncommon in UFO reports.

### **Reliability**

The average **Reliability** rating of Canadian UFO reports in 2004 was 5.33, similar to 2003, indicating that there were approximately 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 data or description of the object(s) observed. Higher reliability cases might include actual interviews with witnesses, a detailed case investigation, multiple witnesses, 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. These are the Ahigh-quality unknowns@ which will be discussed in a later section of this study. 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 2004, about 28.5 per cent of the total cases were obtained through the private and non-profit National UFO Reporting Center (NUFORC) in the USA, which has an international toll-free telephone number for reporting UFOs and a large sightings list created through voluntary submission of online report forms by witnesses. This civilian, public UFO data reporting system allows witnesses to easily and anonymously report their sightings on the Internet or by phone. Since most Internet search engines will quickly find NUFORC as a place to report a UFO sighting, it is not surprising that such a large percentage of Canadian cases come from the NUFORC database.

The Houston BC Centre for UFOs (HBCCUFO) had the lion's share of contributions, with 32 per cent, slightly down from 38 per cent in 2003. It, too, has a toll-free number for reporting UFOs across Canada. The Meteor and Impacts Advisory Committee to the Canadian Space Agency (MIAC) was the source for more than six per cent of all fireball reports. Ufology Research of Manitoba (UFOROM) contributed 11 per cent of all case data, much higher than in previous years, despite not having a toll-free number or prominent public visibility. About 4.5 per cent of the cases in 2004 came as a result of information obtained through Transport Canada and the Department of National Defence.

### **Evaluation (Explanations)**

The breakdown by **Evaluation or Conclusion** for 2004 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 solely on the given data (though the probability of this scenario is technically never zero).

In most cases, an Evaluation is made subjectively by both the contributing investigators and the compilers 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. Cases are also re-evaluated periodically as additional data or information is brought to attention or obtained through further investigation.

Since 1989, the average proportion of **Unknowns** has been about 13 per cent per year. In 2003, this was about 17 per cent, and in 2004, this dropped slightly to 15.5 per cent. This is still a relatively high figure, implying that almost one in seven 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 and rigorous standards for UFO investigation. Investigators who are Abelievers@ might be inclined 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. At first, contributors tended to ignore UFO sightings that had a simple explanation and deleted them as actual UFO data. Hence, the only UFO reports submitted by contributors tended to be high-strangeness cases. Contributors were then encouraged to submit data on all UFO reports they received, so that a more uniform assessment and evaluation process could be realized. Because many IFO cases such as fireballs and meteors are initially reported as UFOs, the **Explained** category was considered necessary for a full review of UFO data. As noted previously, 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 star charts, 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   |
| 2003    | 110 | 16.3 | 166  | 24.7 | 286  | 42.5 | 111 | 16.5 |
| 2004    | 76  | 8.6  | 200  | 22.7 | 469  | 53.2 | 137 | 15.5 |
| Total   | 547 | 10.4 | 1771 | 33.7 | 1765 | 33.6 | 766 | 14.6 |

There were 137 **Unknowns** out of 882 total cases in 2004. If we look only at the **Unknowns** with a **Reliability** rating of 7 or greater, we are left with 41 high-quality **Unknowns** in 2004 (4.6 per cent of the total). This is in agreement with previous studies. As a comparison, USAF Blue Book studies found three to four 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 **2004 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 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 mysterious 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 higher-quality unknowns among the mass of 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 137 Unknowns is that these cases were among the most challenging of all the reports received in 2004. 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**

In 1989, the rate of UFO reporting in Canada was about 12 cases per month, but the rate has been steadily increasing. In 2002, the monthly rate was 40 per month, or at least one UFO sighting each day somewhere in Canada. The rate jumped significantly in 2003 to more than 50 sightings per month, and in 2004 is now at 75 UFO sightings each month, or more than two each day somewhere in Canada.

The 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.

### **Contributing Organizations**

AUFOSG (Alberta UFO Study Group)

[www.aufosg.com](http://www.aufosg.com)

e-mail: [jim@amhsa.net](mailto:jim@amhsa.net) (Jim Moroney)

National UFO Reporting Center

[www.ufocenter.com](http://www.ufocenter.com)

e-mail: [director@ufocenter.com](mailto:director@ufocenter.com) (Peter Davenport)

UFO Nova Scotia

[www.donledger.com](http://www.donledger.com)

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

MUFON Ontario

[www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/mufonontario/mufonindex.html](http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/mufonontario/mufonindex.html)

e-mail: [mufonont@virtuallystrange.net](mailto:mufonont@virtuallystrange.net) (Errol Bruce-Knapp)

HBCC UFO Research

[www.hbccufo.org](http://www.hbccufo.org)

e-mail: [hbccufo@hbccufo.com](mailto:hbccufo@hbccufo.com) (Brian Vike)

UFO\*BC

[www.ufobc.ca](http://www.ufobc.ca)

e-mail: [contactus@ufobc.ca](mailto:contactus@ufobc.ca) (Gavin McLeod)

UFOROM (Ufology Research of Manitoba)

[www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/7998](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/7998)

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

[www.geocities.com/aristotl.geo](http://www.geocities.com/aristotl.geo)

e-mail: [LOCTL789@hotmail.com](mailto:LOCTL789@hotmail.com) (Geoff Dittman)

Quebec UFO Abductions

<http://www.quebec-ufo-abductions.com>

email: [webmaster@quebec-ufo-abductions.com](mailto:webmaster@quebec-ufo-abductions.com)

UFO Updates

[www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates](http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates)

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

UFO Roundup

[www.Ufoinfo.com/roundup](http://www.Ufoinfo.com/roundup)

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

Para-Researchers of Ontario

[pararesearchers.org](http://pararesearchers.org)

e-mail: [sue@pararesearchers.org](mailto:sue@pararesearchers.org) (Sue Darroch)

Haunted Hamilton

[www.hauntedhamilton.com](http://www.hauntedhamilton.com)

e-mail: [info@hauntedhamilton.com](mailto:info@hauntedhamilton.com) (Stephanie Lechniak)

Hauntings Research Group (Ontario)

[www.hauntingsresearchgroup.homestead.com/](http://www.hauntingsresearchgroup.homestead.com/)

e-mail: [agoodrich\\_hrg@yahoo.com](mailto:agoodrich_hrg@yahoo.com) (Anita Goodrich)

Paranormal Phenomena Research & Investigation (PPRI) (Nova Scotia)

[www.ppri.cjb.net](http://www.ppri.cjb.net)

e-mail: [foxmulder@accesscable.net](mailto:foxmulder@accesscable.net) (Elliott van Dusen)

Newfoundland UFO Research (NUFOR)

e-mail: [nufor@hotmail.com](mailto:nufor@hotmail.com)

Newfoundland UFOs

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

Northwest Saskatchewan UFO Research Centre (NWSURC)

[www.nwsurc.com](http://www.nwsurc.com)

e-mail: [contactus@nwsurc.com](mailto:contactus@nwsurc.com) (Barb Campbell)

Moonbeam Community UFO Project (MCUP)

[www.dravidia.com/moonbeamufo/](http://www.dravidia.com/moonbeamufo/)

e-mail: [moonbeamufo@hotmail.com](mailto:moonbeamufo@hotmail.com)

Also, files from:

Transport Canada

Department of National Defence

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

**Most Interesting Canadian >Unknowns= in 2004**

**The following are those Canadian UFO reports in 2004 which had a Reliability Rating of 7 or greater, a Strangeness Rating of 6 or greater and which were also assigned an Evaluation of Unknown.**

**January 17, 2004 11:00 pm St-Louis-de-Kent, NB**

A husband and wife were travelling on the Trans-Canada Highway when they saw two flashing lights descend rapidly towards them and swung across in front of their car. The lights took up a position over some trees and hung motionless, one light above the other, for several minutes.

**January 25, 2004 1:35 pm Moncton, NB**

A large object shaped like a red ring flew over the city in broad daylight.

**January 25, 2004 6:26 pm Richibucto, NB**

A large grey object with a round Adoor@ on its underside and with sparkling yellow lights along its edge flew slowly north over the ocean.

**March 7, 2004 9:10 pm Decker Lake, BC**

An odd elongated object with a ring of blue lights around its midsection flew over a mountain, stopped, then began moving again, disappearing into the distance.

**June 8, 2004 3:30 am Winnipeg, MB**

Two people were driving in south-central Winnipeg when they saw an oblong object with white lights moving around its midsection fly over their car and move away. When they had driven about a kilometre, the same or similar object rose up out of a clump of trees and swooped over their car.

**June 13, 2004 2:00 pm Shipshaw, PQ**

Five people watched a white, disc-shaped object that was stationary at first, then began to rise, moved sideways left and right, then spiraled downward, over the course of about 15 minutes.

**August 26, 2004 3:30 am Sydney, NS**

A lone witness saw two lights stationary in the sky for about an hour, at which time a haze or fog filled the area and he became unconscious. He woke up across his yard, with unusual marks on his body, believing he had been abducted by aliens.

**September 12, 2004 11:10 pm Westlock, AB**

A witness heard a whooshing sound and looked up to see a large black triangular object, the size of a house, with three orange lights on its underside, fly quickly overhead from north to south.

**September 19, 2004 10:30 pm Ile des Soeurs, PQ**

A stationary object with white windows on its underside was seen over some chimneys, then several lights approached it and appeared to enter into it.

**November 12, 2004 3:15 pm Prince George, BC**

A woman watched a strange object like a long, fluid spring, moving through the sky and changing shape from a circle, to a disc, a V-shape and a tip.

**November 29, 2004 3:45 am North Bay, ON**

A grey object shaped like a boomerang giving off a green glow, slowly moved left to right, back and forth, then moved behind a cloud and disappeared.