

AN OVERVIEW OF SIGHTINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND HIGH STRANGENESS REPORTS IN 2020 AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021



As we navigate the waters at the beginning of 2021, during these unparalleled times of great uncertainty and loss, I would like to look back over 2020 to give an overview of the sightings, photographs, and high strangeness events that have been reported to BUFORA during 2020. In doing this I would like to explore the idea of whether the Covid-19 Pandemic was a factor in how reports were made to BUFORA

BUFORA received 583 reports, during 2020, which included Starlink Satellites, photographs, video footage, and high strangeness narratives to BUFORA enquiries. In addition BUFORA received many enquiries including media requests, and requests for researchers looking at historical cases, to name but a few. Therefore we remain very busy as a voluntary organisation

These annual figures show that in 2020 BUFORA received about 40% less reports than 2019. Certainly, Starlink Satellites, which had their first launch in May 2019, generated several hundred reports to BUFORA during that same year

During 2020, BUFORA received 159 reports that turned out to be Starlink Satellites. Members of the public became increasingly aware of how odd they could look when crossing the sky, sometimes in huge numbers. Sightings of Starlink decreased in number of reports during 2020."

In assessing the nature of reports coming in to BUFORA, during 2020, I would like to identify the specific types of sightings to BUFORA, as below:

General Sightings account for a majority of sightings at 239

Starlink Satellites reports account for 159

Photographs and video footage reports at 148

Hight Strangeness reports at 37

At 583 sighting reports for 2020, we are looking at approximately 48/49 reports a month and interestingly high strangeness reports amount to approximately 6.69 % of all reports to BUFORA. This is over the double the percentage of high strangness reports received by BUFORA in 2019. This amounts to approximately 3 reports a month.

It is a foggy area to understand why there is an increase for these more curious experiences. Certainly there are several reasons that may contribute to this with the media interest, publications and the internet showing a higher profile with the UFO subject and unchecked theories and belief driven investigation in some cases

Also, could there be a connection to an increase in these stranger reports to the anxiety felt by many people created by the Pandemic? It has been interesting how people have reported historical and recent narratives of their extraordinary human experiences to BUFORA through 2020.

During several phone calls I have received, I have observed more tension than is usual in how people talk about these strange experiences and certainly the pandemic is discussed in a way that appears to show a higher level of anxiety in how they describe and relate their interpretations of the experiences they want to share with BUFORA. This also applies to high strangeness email reports we received during 2020

Obviously, there has been an increase of immense concern across the world about the Covid-19 virus, unsurprisingly. As people look to the skies and hope for something to give comfort in these extraordinary and distressing times, they reach out and yearn for a force from 'out there' to defend and heal the unprecedented times we are living through.



Investigators Training Course

The ITC has been very busy during 2021, with a substantial increase in enquiries about the course, and several more people joining during the last few months. Certainly, the Pandemic has contributed to this as more people work from home and now into the third lockdown, it seems it has been a time

for those interested in ufology to feel that this is just the right time to enrol on to the course.

There are still a percentage of people who enrol on to the ITC who do not finish the course, due sometimes to work and family commitment, but more often because of expectations that the course will reflect their specific interests in the subject, particularly the more exotic framework involving the idea of non-human contact.

For some, it becomes disappointing that the course teaches candidates what can be observed and *misidentified* in the sky. This is a crucial part of UFO investigation, understanding the diverse objects and lights that are in the sky that can so often be misidentified, environmentally, technologically, astronomically, and atmospherically. It is also highly significant to understand the reality of how people observe the sky and how angles of viewing along an apparent trajectory do not give a full and accurate sense of the whole picture. In addition, estimating height, distance and speed can be very inaccurate in a night sky

In addition, a critical factor is the way in which the brain tries to understand something that we may consider to be curious and unknown in the sky, and therefore will access an extensive amount of imagery that we have downloaded within our subconscious mind, to seek out an image that we feel explains what we are seeing. This can be based on our beliefs, memories and various ufological information we have encountered over the years, particularly images which will reflect our own personal understanding of the subject.

The UFO subject embraces a vast and diverse landscape of many possibilities including some scientific disciplines folklore and mythology, psychology, the paranormal, extraordinary human experiences, religion and, sometimes, neuroscience, to name but a few.

UFO does not equate to an extra-terrestrial vehicle, but only to unidentified aerial phenomena, although understandably UFO has become forever linked to the idea of the extra-terrestrial hypothesis, which has been an enduring and very problematic label within ufology.

This has created a singular narrative in a way, as a percentage of the public focus their attention on the idea of close encounters with something of unknown origin, 'abduction' theories and rather bizarre concepts of implants

and being taken aboard a spacecraft and given various information. The result of this has conceived, for some, a rather narrow and limited framework for understanding the length and breadth of the UFO mystery, and all its related parts.

The UFO subject is a fascinating area of research because it encompasses so many different, yet closely connected components, and the realisation that this subject is far, far more complex than is understood when initially becoming involved. The 'human factor' lies at the epicentre of ufology and is a compelling influence in how we have come to understand extraordinary human experiences.

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Rex

There exists in our Cosmos a dynamic element, imponderable and invisible, diffused through all parts of the universe, independent of matter visible and ponderable, and acting upon it; and in that dynamic element there is an intelligence superior to our own...

...Camille Flammarion in The Unknown

Looking Ahead during 2021

Ufology can be a subject of many differing and multifarious views, which often do not come together in a way that shows an underlying pattern of understanding that could thread together easily.

Many local groups nationally and international organisations appear to exist as independent ventures and groups, often with widely diverging theories and opinions with much contention as to the nature of the phenomenon, and indeed whether there is a UFO phenomenon at all!

This could be a place to start, after all the UFO subject is a huge area of research, and includes an array of theories, which include many and varied parts. In addition to this is much speculation from the media, internet publications, conferences, investigators, researchers and the witnesses themselves

Gathering pace with all these factors is the most critical of all, the 'human face' of ufology wherein lie memories, beliefs perception and interpretation. Because of all the above, the UFO narrative lacks coherence in how it is developed and explored to understand the entire composition of this subject.

So many voluntary UFO groups give large amounts of their time and energy in examining the subject, holding conferences and using blogs and websites, for members of the public to attend and access information. Despite this, somehow, we still seem to struggle to move forward together in a way in which we can have healthy debates, despite opposing views, and try to make sense of the reasons we are so involved and passionate in this strange and fascinating UFO landscape.

Unfortunately, UFO 'plototics' are still around, and sometimes very robust, between those who hold extremely different views, not always based on informed and objective information. This is not unusual in many areas of discourse in life, but in a subject as bizarre as Ufology can be, it creates much division at times, which does not help the subject evolve in a meaningful and constructive way – and thus it has always been.

However, there is a very positive side to UFOlogy where great milestones have been taken in collating incredibly large amounts of information digitally from case files around the world in addition to digitising publications from so many countries including BUFORA. For this, and on behalf of BUFORA, we

would like to extend our deepest thanks and appreciation to Clas Svahn of UFO-Sweden and to Isaac Koi, whose tireless research and work in collating and digitising sightings and publications from across many parts of the world has significantly added to our knowledge of how the subject has evolved over many, many years.

Photographs and Video Footage



.Images have now become a high percentage of reports to BUFORA and are evaluated by Mark Easen and Dave Newton.

At 148 images over 2020, this comprises approximately 12 reports per month. BUFORA do not evaluate images without full supporting information via the sighting report form giving full details of the sighting and photograph and what may have been observed with the naked eye.

A majority of photographic reports have a perfectly rational explanation and there are many factors that have to be assessed and analysed to give a definitive explanation or probable solution for a photograph. It is sometimes more difficult to assess images when there are poor quality images and/or less than accurate details about what was observed with the naked eye.

There are sometimes cases where the photographer did not see anything at the time of taking the photograph, but upon uploading the photograph to a computer or zooming into the image on the photograph, there can appear to be curious objects in the sky. This can be quite disconcerting to the witness/photographer, who will then decide to send this in to BUFORA. The problem is that there are many optical effects that can create this effect, such as dust on the lens, insects close to the camera lens, a bird not seen by the photographer at the time and reflections, which can certainly sometimes give a startling image which appears to be in the photograph. Please read Mark Easen's excellent article 'Reflecting on UFO Images' on the BUFORA website

<https://www.bufora.org.uk/Reflecting-on-UFO-Images.php>

There are many other explanations for UFO photographs, and some can be rather perplexing and require longer analyses by Mark Easen and Dave Newton. It is certainly the case that all is not always as it seems with photographs that appear puzzling, because they require more in-depth evaluation and of course this requires more time for BUFORA as a voluntary and very busy organisation.

To illustrate this, a couple sent in CCTV footage, the camera of which was in their back garden, where they had caught some objects on the footage in the early hours of the morning. After some time-consuming evaluation, Mark Easen gave an analysis, which turned out to be several explainable items of flying litter, which included a crisp packet caught up in the gale force wind. In addition to this was a long thin object, which turned out to be toilet paper also caught in the flying debris

Mark was able to do a little more innovative research to establish that a nearby football stadium where a match has been played the day before, could have also been responsible for the amount of debris caught up in the heavy winds. Specifically rolls of toilet paper because sometimes fans can throw numerous toilet rolls on to the pitch!. Mark checked standard

measurements in the specific fence in the footage and these were 100mm apart, which was same measurement as the width of toilet roll paper, which were caught on the CCTV footage as 'objects appearing to come through the fence into the garden. .An evaluation was sent to the people concerned.

Problems can occur occasionally with image assessment when people feel they have captured an image of something they believe to be of non-human origin. When a rational explanation is provided for their photograph, some witnesses will not accept BUFORA's credible analyses, no matter how definitive the evidence.

To conclude on my comments on photographs, it is sometimes the case that beliefs become so entwined with a visual UFO report, that a completely rational explanation will be unacceptable to them, as this will dismantle the idea of an extra-terrestrial possibility.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of BUFORA to extend my thanks and appreciation to my colleagues, Mark and Dave, for their skilled and excellent evaluations, together with their energy and support in analysing all the photographs and footage, which come through to BUFORA.

I would also like to extend my thanks to my colleagues Michael Hudson and Tony Eccles for all their wonderful support and extensive work for BUFORA during 2020. Michael and Tony will be adding to this work during 2021 by giving links on the BUFORA website which will allow visitors to upload BUFORA videos and audio recordings to YouTube.

Working as a team during the difficult times of the pandemic certainly created a smooth and efficient year of dealing with many and varied enquiries in addition to the numerous sightings and high strangeness reports.

Last, but never least, I would like to take the time in this article to say a big thank you to everyone who visits the BUFORA site to report their sighting or to read our extensive information and articles of interest. We appreciate the time you take to complete the sighting or enquiry forms with all your various observations, thoughts and questions.

Heather Dixon

BUFORA

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