

## UFOs By Dennis Powers

Dating back to the 19th Century, UFOs have been a subject of controversy. An “unidentified flying object” is an unusual anomaly in the sky that’s not readily identifiable to the observer as a known object. It is often associated with extraterrestrial life, government-related conspiracy theories, and especially flying saucers.

The phrase “flying saucer” gained national attention in 1947 when a commercial pilot reported seeing nine objects flying in formation near Mount Rainer. The pilot timed the sighting and estimated the speed of the discs to be over 1,000 mph. He described their movement to be like “a saucer skipped across water,” leading to newspaper accounts of “flying saucers”.

The majority of UFO sightings by independent study are proven to be misidentified natural occurrences; these are usually sights of aircraft, balloons, clouds, and even meteors or bright planets. A small amount of straightforward hoaxes--where people stage what seems to be a flying saucer--are just that; some are so outlandish as to look like they were taken from a 1950’s “B” Sci-Fi flick.

Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico in 1947 is the site of the most famous incident. A public information officer released a statement that personnel had retrieved a crashed “flying disk” from a ranch near Roswell, sparking intense media interest. The following day, the Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force stated that this--in fact--had been a high-altitude radar-tracking balloon that had crashed. This set the stage for countless books, articles, and movies about aliens, their spacecraft, and a government conspiracy, including different scenes at various hangers, from Hangers No. 18 (the remnants were allegedly flown to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio), No. 51, No. 84, and so on.

Most independent investigators agree, however, that between 5% and 20% of reported sightings remain unexplained, and therefore can be classified as unidentified in the truest sense. Trained observers such as pilots and the military have reported incidents that are credible, some including simultaneous radar tracking and visual accounts.

As to our area, the sightings are like any other location (and Google, “UFO Sightings Southern Oregon” or “Northern California”). A video of one UFO sighting in late 2012 showed a strange shape at night flying through the clouds to disappear behind trees, although there was no identity other than this having taken place in Southern Oregon. However, another UFO sighting in Ashland in the graveyard near the middle of town in 2011 was especially cute. This home video finally zoomed in on a strange green apparition--Kermit the frog!

But who knows?

Sources: Google, “UFO Sightings Southern Oregon,” for latest sightings; “Wikipedia: Unidentified Flying Objects,” at [UFOs](#).