

# THE SCU REVIEW

explorescu.org

Publication No. 22

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## What's Going on in SCU

- SCU is pleased to announce that our inaugural distinguished scholar award was presented to Dr. Kevin Knuth at the SCU 2025 Conference.
- A big welcome to Deborah West, who is helping Jennifer Roche and Kevin Wright with public relations, social media, and press releases.

Several SCU members have had articles published in academic journals during the last few months. The author and the article can be found here: Kevin Knuth, "[The New Science of Unidentified Aerospace-Undersea Phenomena](#)," Robert Powell, "[Evolving Paradigms in the Search for Advanced Extraterrestrial Intelligence](#)," Stephen Bruehl "UAP Cluster Analysis from Witness Reports," (not yet available) and Matthew Syzdagis, "[Initial Results from the First Field Expedition of UAPx to Study Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena](#)."

- One or two SCU members will present remotely at the IFEX UAP Conference being held in Germany. Dr. Laura Dominé represented SCU remotely at a conference held by Sigma2-3AF in Paris.
- Stay tuned for SCU outgoing emails and press releases as new information comes your way during the next three months.
- *The SCU Review* needs your thoughts, articles, and writings. Please send them to us.

# OPINION

## **The Evidence for UFO Sentience: Reviving a Neglected Hypothesis**

*By Michael Jawer, Member, Society for Scientific Exploration*

UFOs, or Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) in current parlance, are a conundrum unlike any other. On the one hand, anyone inclined to dismiss as fantasy or trickery the mass of worldwide reports over the decades must contend with ever more thoroughly documented accounts, courtesy of accelerating technology. On the other hand, the essential character of such accounts—spectacular in many cases, merely head-scratching in others—has changed little over the centuries. Yet the most concentrated study and the most advanced capabilities have failed to disclose the essential nature of these bizarre intruders into our everyday reality.

The situation has changed little since a careful, thorough, and sober report by the British Ministry of Defence in 2000 (since declassified) reached this conclusion: “The phenomena occur on a daily, worldwide basis... That UAP exist is indisputable.”<sup>1</sup> Strange, then, that studies by so many governments under the rubric of national security would turn up so relatively little.

As Robert Powell has argued in his recent book,<sup>2</sup> a major shift in orientation is called for if we are to make progress on this apparently intractable problem.

I want to propose that renewed consideration be given to a possibility raised soon after Kenneth Arnold’s 1947 sighting but never given much credence—that UFOs could be sentient.

Arnold came to regard UFOs as a kind of living energy.<sup>5</sup> According to his daughter, what he had seen in the skies near Mount Rainier weren’t “vehicles,” nor did they look like “saucers.” A local reporter had garbled his description of the way the UFOs move—as if they were skipping over water, like a pie plate or saucer. Arnold actually said their shape and undulating motion reminded him of stingrays.<sup>6</sup> They seemed to pulsate, akin to the beating of a heart. He concluded that “they were not mechanical in any sense at all.”<sup>7</sup>

Although a US Air Force report in 1949 observed that UFOs acted “more like animals than anything else,”<sup>3</sup> the press and public quickly embraced the idea that they must be extraterrestrial vehicles. This occurred despite contrary arguments by the likes of science fiction luminary Arthur C. Clarke, who emphasized the phenomenon’s tendency to violate all physical laws a normal machine would be subject to.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1960s and ‘70s, the hypothesis that UFOs are alive gained an all-too-brief renaissance through zoologist Ivan Sanderson, who was intrigued by characteristics that seemed to parallel the offbeat capacities of the creatures he studied. UFOs’ multicolored lights, for example, reminded him of a South

American beetle larva that has green lights at the front and red behind—and of other beetles “that have two blue-green lights at the top of the thorax...and an amber light beneath their abdomen, which they flash on landing or taking off.”<sup>8</sup> The “searchlights” that often figure in UFO reports reminded him of a fish in the East Indies that, when scanning the seabed for food, casts “two bright and concentrated beams” downward.<sup>9</sup> He remarked on creatures that are able to change their size and shape (including viruses),<sup>10</sup> and on the ability of flies, bees, and wasps to hover motionless or to go “forward, backward, up, down, to either side, or in any other direction” instantaneously.<sup>11</sup> Sanderson also compared the buzzing noises of UAPs to the mechanical thrum of cicadas.<sup>12</sup>

We are living in an era when science is finally granting that consciousness is likely possessed by numerous creatures besides ourselves—mammals for a start, probably birds, at least some cephalopods (e.g., octopuses and cuttlefish), and possibly fish and insects, as well. All are at least sentient.<sup>13</sup> Even plants might be, since their behavior can be deemed “intelligent.”<sup>14</sup>

In line with Sanderson’s approach, one is tempted to classify UFOs as a species akin to insects given their aerial skittering and the buzzing or humming noises they often make. And if insects are sentient, then why not UFOs? I’m not being facetious. As one science journalist puts it, insects are basically “alien minds...lurking in the shadows of our houses and gardens.”<sup>15</sup> UFOs might lurk in their own peculiar way and with their own otherworldly exoskeletons, demonstrating behaviors uniquely “other.”

We can also consider recent discoveries beneath the waves. Of late, scientists have found more than 5,000 new species living at the bottom of the sea.<sup>16</sup> The only reason we know they are there, is because companies are looking to mine that particular zone of the Pacific. In fact, an estimated one-third to two-thirds of all the species in the ocean are as yet undiscovered. When deep-sea explorers find one, it feels like “encountering some alien species.”<sup>17</sup>

If UFOs are sentient, they must be a life form far from what we’re conversant with. One intriguing possibility is that they are a form of plasma, i.e., superheated matter. The British Ministry of Defence study stated the following: “Almost certainly, the [UFO phenomenon] has a plasma basis....All [its] exceptional characteristics can be explained if the objects are gaseous buoyant charged plasmas.”<sup>18</sup>

Intriguingly, a team of physicists in 2003 showed that plasma under certain conditions mimics the functions of a living cell. In their experiment, an electric spark applied to a plasma of argon gas formed spheres with a nucleus of gas, an outer layer of negatively charged electrons, and an inner layer of positively charged ions. These spheres satisfied the traditional criteria for a biological cell: self-containment; the ability to grow and replicate; and the capacity to communicate.<sup>19</sup> (“Communication” was in the form of electromagnetic emissions, which made atoms within fellow spheres vibrate at a particular frequency.)

Opinions differ on whether plasma can ever be considered alive, yet no less an authority than the renowned plasma physicist David Bohm had the impression that once electrons were in a plasma, they stopped behaving as individuals and more as if they were part of a greater whole that seemed to be, in some sense, alive.<sup>20</sup>

This might lend credence to the long-held observation that UAPs resemble ball lightning in some ways. Ball lightning is an offbeat natural phenomenon, known since at least the ancient Greeks, where balls of light—ranging from the size of a pea to that of a beachball or larger—appear mysteriously and seem

to float around of their own accord. Ball lightning can take on many colors and appear anywhere from translucent to opaque. As with UFOs, these glowing globes can hang motionless or execute sharp turns, expand in size or contract, swoop or spin, and dissipate into nothingness. Also, like UFOs, they tend to not make noise, though some reportedly hiss, crackle, and even explode. One way in which they *differ* from UFOs is that they tend not to hang around for very long. Stuningly, ball lightning has been known to enter houses, cars, and even high-flying aircraft through small cracks, frightening anyone who witnesses such a display.<sup>21</sup>

The “foo fighters” observed by Allied pilots in World War II could have been ball lightning. A report filed with the US Army Air Force on Oct. 16, 1943 – two days after a massive (and ill-fated) bombing run over Schweinfurt, Germany—read as follows:<sup>22</sup>

306 Group...reports a cluster of discs observed in the path of the formation near Schweinfurt, at the time there were no E/A [enemy aircraft] above. Discs were described as silver-colored – one inch thick and three inches in diameter. They were gliding slowly down in very uniform cluster. A/C [aircraft] 026 was unable to avoid them and his right wing went directly through a cluster with absolutely no effect on engines or plane surface. One of the discs was heard striking tail assembly but no explosion was observed...Also observed 2 other A/C flying through silver discs with no apparent damage.

In this case, at least two planes went right “through” the phenomenon with virtually no physical consequences. This is possible with plasmas that most definitely behave in non-ordinary ways.<sup>23</sup>

A firsthand, “up-close” description of ball lightning captures its high strangeness:<sup>24</sup>

My wife and I were driving one night...I was in the passenger seat, and I saw a strange light sitting in a tree about fifty feet away...It was an eerie glowing sphere of mixed red, white, pink, and orange light. My estimate...is that it must have been about four feet across (about 1.3 meters). It did not move; it sat motionless on a tree branch.

Because my wife was driving very slowly...I was able to observe the ball for a minute or two clearly. It seemed to consist of a luminous gas, which was effervescent and fiery....

I also had the uncanny feeling that the ball was ‘alive,’ which I then decided could not have been true, but nevertheless, that was the subjective impression it gave, as I had a distinct feeling of being watched by it.

This witness’ account parallels a recurring impression people have of earth lights—that the phenomenon exhibits a self-awareness or rudimentary intelligence.

Earth lights are localized oddities, well known in places such as Marfa, Texas; southeastern Missouri; the Uintah Basin of Utah; the Hessdalen Valley of Norway; the Pennine uplands of England; and the outback of Queensland, Australia. Over generations in such places, luminous balls of various colors appear and disappear, bob up and down, divide and recombine, instantly relocate, and sometimes seem to play games with human observers.<sup>25</sup> Much of this behavior is reminiscent of UFOs.

For example, earth lights appear highly attracted to moving vehicles. One woman recollected that, as a girl returning with her friends from a carnival near Joplin, Missouri, the “spook light” gave them quite the thrill. “The light had evidently...decided to do a little hitchhiking on our bus. [It] perched on the rear window as though trying to get in...We were scared half to death.”<sup>26</sup> A similarly nerve-wracking experience occurred to a woman and her children driving in Scotland.<sup>27</sup> And a man driving near Marfa reported that a glowing ball entered his speeding car through an open window and stayed there for two miles.<sup>28</sup> Such accounts thoroughly jibe with drivers of cars, vans, and trucks reporting that UFOs chase, harass, or even levitate their vehicles.<sup>29</sup>

UFOs also resemble earth lights through their apparent connection to or interest in the local topography. Some UFOs have been seen to follow or investigate the contours of the land,<sup>30</sup> just as earth lights are wont to do.<sup>31</sup> Based on a wide-ranging analysis, British researcher Paul Devereux and colleagues have postulated that earth lights occur proximate with local faulting.<sup>32</sup> Intriguingly, they present evidence that UAP sightings have often taken place in conjunction with tremors.<sup>33</sup>

Devereux’s research points toward earth lights and UFOs not only being related phenomena but of this Earth and *not* extraterrestrial. His study quotes witnesses observing odd lights submerging into lakes,<sup>34</sup> vanishing into the ground,<sup>35</sup> and emerging from the ground.<sup>36</sup> Of special interest are accounts of earth lights’ apparent connection with minerals underground; strange lights have long been associated with mines and quarries.<sup>37</sup> Devereux infers that not just faulting but geomagnetism (locations with a high mineral content and accompanying high subterranean levels of radiation) are responsible for the lights’ production.<sup>38</sup> Once created, he speculates, they are drawn to power lines, cell phone towers, and the like because of the electromagnetic fields around them.<sup>39</sup> (Earth lights, like UFOs, are often reported around such installations.<sup>40</sup>)

Another notable similarity between earth lights and UFOs is the sense of a rudimentary intelligence: the human witness feeling that he or she is being observed, mimicked or played with.<sup>41</sup> An additional overlap is the pronounced responsiveness, by both earth lights and UFOs, to lights being shone on them.<sup>42</sup> For that matter, consider this remark by a researcher in the Hessdalen Valley, who noticed that the phenomenon in a few cases “disappeared into nothing when I was trying to photograph it.”<sup>43</sup> Many witnesses to an outbreak in the Uintah Basin in the mid-1960s likewise reported that the UFOs seemed to react to their actions or even their thoughts.<sup>44</sup> While human beings are susceptible to presuming we have more influence on others than we actually do, much evidence in the case of earth lights and UFOs points toward volitional behavior – ranging from shyness to inquisitiveness and, in some cases, outright aggressiveness.

It may be that UFOs turn out to share a “lineage” with ball lightning and earth lights, each of them being natural phenomena and sentient life forms. As humans are to chimpanzees, bonobos or gorillas, perhaps these, too, are essentially cousins, sharing some fundamental characteristics but also distinct in certain ways. Ball lightning, for example, does not display curiosity or intentionality, whereas people do get that impression from earth lights and often from UFOs.

Just as human beings are finally ascribing sentience to many other creatures on this Earth, so I suspect science can advance a great deal by putting aside the presumption that UFOs are alien vehicles and consider the possibility—bolstered after 60-plus years by new evidence—that UFOs constitute some form of aliveness.

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## **USOs: The Underwater UFOs, Part II**

*By Marco Bianchini, Attorney  
CISU President (Italian Center for UFO Studies)*

In the April 2025 issue of *The SCU Review*, we covered the general aspects of the USO phenomenon; now we are going to analyze some interesting and “curious” cases.

### **How many USOs are there and where were they observed?**

The number of USO sightings in history, or at any rate from 1900 to the present, are a very small percentage when compared to the total number of UFO sightings cataloged by international UFO associations.

Estimating an exact and up-to-date number of total UFO reports is complex for several reasons: the database is constantly being updated, the criteria for including a report in the database may change over time, and not all reports are deemed reliable or detailed enough to be included in the statistical data. That said, we can say that total reports amount to hundreds of thousands of sightings worldwide.

By comparison, the international USO catalog has about 1,800 reports. While this is a very low percentage of the total, the USO phenomenon is considered among the most fascinating because of the natural context in which the reports occur.

Obviously, most of the reports occur in coastal areas and countries bordering the sea. The US has the highest number of sightings, but 360 of the 1,800 reports occurred in Italy, a peninsula surrounded by