

Unexplainable ...

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Interest in the subject became widespread during the 1920s and 1930s when a journalist named Charles Fort wrote four books on "damned facts" — those that science wouldn't record. The first organization was formed in 1937, disbanded in the 1950s and reorganized in 1965, Bouche said. Originally in New York, the International Fortian Organization is now located in Washington. Bouche is state sectional director for the Mutual UFO Network in Texas.

The unexplained does not deal simply with UFOs, and different groups specialize in different areas, he said. Crypto-zoology studies the existence of species of animals not recorded — the Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, or that fish Bouche heard about 18 years ago. Psychic phenomena includes investigating and testing claims of psychic ability, haunting, poltergeist activities or telepathy. Another area of the unexplained is

animal mutilation. Research began in late 1973 after a series of cattle mutilations in the Midwest. Cattle had been mutilated in such a way that no known predator could have done it, Bouch said. The cuts on the animals are often surgical-like, and certain organs or parts of the hide are removed, he said.

"In some cases it goes beyond what seems possible with current technology," Bouch said. There was a cow in Wyoming, he said, that had had its rectum and vulva removed, and autopsy revealed that the heart had been removed without cutting the tissue sack that surrounds it.

Theories about who or what has mutilated the animals differ greatly, and none can apply to all the reported cases, he said. Some say it was done by predators, others that it was the work of a satanic cult. One theory says it could be the work of mining companies looking for traces of minerals in the animals' blood, to see if the land is worth mining. Others theorize

government involvement in testing weaponry and chemical warfare, and some say alien beings are responsible. Bouch said.

Yet another type of study is called Fortain phenomena. This is a catch-all term that covers everything else, Bouch said. An example is the rather common occurrence of objects such as fish, frogs or mushroom spores falling out of the sky from nowhere, he said.

The Nebraska Association has explored all the areas of the unexplained. They have checked into a lot of UFO sightings and reports of phantom cats, he said. Phantom cats look like black mountain lions that appear and disappear suddenly, but leave tracks, he said.

Most UFO sightings are lights in a night sky, and about 90 percent can be identified as normal objects that were misidentified, Bouche said. In the 10 percent that are unidentifiable, it is important to have "qualified observers," such as law enforcement officers, he said.

Last December, there was a really unusual case outside Nebraska City, Bouche said. A family spotted a large purplish-pink glowing object that moved across their pasture to the yard of their neighbors, who also reported seeing it, Bouche said. Then three different law officers saw a flashing light moving north in the sky. One reported it sounded like a helicopter, one that it was a biplane, and one reported just a flashing light. Then there was a flash of light seen over five counties, he said.

It was a quality sighting, he said, because there were radar operators on duty who reported nothing tracked on the radar

at the time.

Bouche said the group is trying to establish themselves with the law enforcement officers in Nebraska so they can refer cases to the association that they do not want to investigate, or tell the association about anything reported.

The group is also planning a conference for November 11 through 13. It will be the group's second conference. It will include 10 speakers, Roy Mackall, a biologist who studies crypto-zoology and has organized trips to the Congo to look for alleged dinosaurs that have survived unnoticed, and Linda Howell, a researcher and TV reporter who won a local Emmy for her documentary on cattle mutilation, Bouche said.

Bouche said he thinks that as time goes by and more serious work is done on the unexplained, a theory will have to be presented that shows an interrelationship between all the types of unexplained phenomena. Part of the problem, he said, is that a lot of the explanations that science comes up with now are really harder to swallow than the wildest explanation.

"Scientists seem to be locked into a scientific paradigm of sorts — the way the whole realm of science is perceived today," he said. They will not accept anything that would alter existing knowledge, he said, because they don't want to change their way of thinking.

People fear phenomena like this because they don't understand it, Bouche said.

"Personally, it doesn't bother me," he said. "I'm intrigued by it."

"Actually," he said, "thinking about that, it does get a little spooky."

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