

# Unexplained phenomena has Launceston residents guessing - Strange lights in sky lead to talk of UFOs

BY DANIELLE BLEWETT  
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DID YOU SEE THE STRANGE LIGHTS OVER LAUNCESTON?

Phone The Examiner with your UFO story today after 10am on 6336 7355.

WHETHER you were outside watering the lemon tree or having a smoke on the sly you weren't seeing things when you spotted strange lights over Launceston on Thursday night.

The Examiner set out to perform its own X-Files alien investigation.

The Northern Tasmania representative of the TasUFO Centre, Phillip Polden was planning to interview people who saw the lights.

The centre was established in 1965 after the local priest, school teacher and some farmers at Cressy saw a UFO.

Mr Polden has investigated about 20 sightings in two years.

"There's usually an explanation for 90 per cent of calls - hot air balloons, Chinese lanterns, pranks or a hoax, but there are a large number of sightings that are simply inexplicable," Mr Polden said.

For South Launceston's Emmaleen West, Thursday's lights caused a flurry. Her boyfriend Joshua Furley was outside watering the lemon tree at 10.30pm when he looked up and saw seven, orange lights.

"He called for me to come outside. At first I thought it was a plane, but it was way bigger and quite high up. They were flying in formation, but moving about with seven orange lights, three at the back and four at the front, flashing," Ms West said.

The couple turned on their radio and listened hoping other people "out there" were calling with reports.

The Bureau of Meteorology's Bruce Copplestone said there were no weather phenomenon to explain the sighting.

Launceston man Russell Duck had popped outdoors to have a sly smoke of his pipe after his wife Sandra went to bed at 10.30pm.

"I saw five orange lights, pulsing slowly and heading west. At first I assumed it was a plane, but there was no sound, just five distant objects. They kept in order and moved about in formation. They were not weather balloons and they were not a satellite, I have seen those before," Mr Duck said.

Meanwhile, at Newnham Michele Charlesworth saw a light so bright she was expecting a "big bang".

"We are on top of the hill and have a fantastic view. I saw an extremely bright light. It was orange with a greenish tail. It was like a falling star or flare but just too bright. It was travelling very fast and I was waiting for a big bang," Mrs Charlesworth said.

UTas philosophy lecturer and sky watcher, Michael Kidd, had a plausible explanation - the lights were the debris of two satellites which smashed in orbit over Siberia last week, he said.

"I have been tracking the debris from the satellites for a week and this was presumably, uniform, orbital debris," Mr Kidd said.

The last celestial word goes to star junkie Martin George of the Queen Victoria Museum.

Not satellites. Not aliens. Not space ships, said Mr George.

"It's my strong opinion they were little hot air balloons lit by candles," Mr George said.

The truth is out there somewhere.

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