

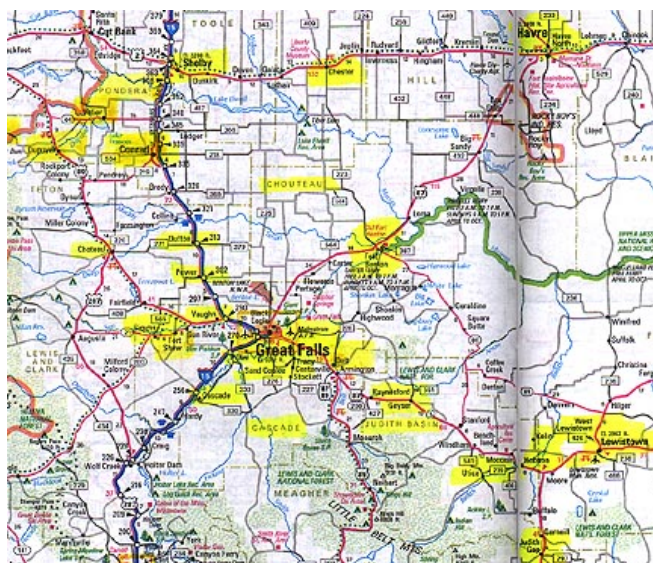


Mystery Stalks The Prairie

© 1976 by Roberta Donovan and Keith Wolverton

Chapter 7

Chasing Lights In The Sky



Yellow indicates the towns, counties and areas affected by animal mutilations, unidentified helicopters and mysterious aerial craft during 1974 to 1976. Twenty-seven years later, in 2001 to 2002, Pondera County and surrounding region experienced more than a dozen animal mutilations associated with unidentified lights and other high strangeness. See [Earthfiles 08/18/01](#).

Apparently whoever was at the controls of those unidentified helicopters the night of December 2 to 3 enjoyed harassing law and Air Force officials, as the following night (December 3), more sightings were reported. Officers were able to trace the crafts' course through a series of reports spanning a two hour and 40 minute period, but were unable to identify them.

This time the calls originated in Choteau and were based on phone calls received in the Teton County Sheriff's Office, as well as on reports of law officers and contacts with Malmstrom. A Teton County law officer radioed in at 6:59 p.m. to report a helicopter south of Dutton and headed east toward Fort Benton. Five minutes later, the officer said the craft was over the Juliet 11 missile site in that area.

A check with Malmstrom Air Force Base to determine if it was an Air Force chopper received a "negative" reply. The unidentified chopper, flying at low altitude, had a strobe light. Attempts by FAPCON (Radar Approach Control, a civilian agency) to pick it up on radar were unsuccessful.

At 7:40 p.m., the Teton County officer established that it was not one, but two, helicopters and at that time, one was heading east and one west. Eight minutes

later, another officer reported two helicopters over Bootlegger trail north of Great Falls, flying toward the city.

The helicopters seemed to multiply like rabbits. By 7:54 p.m., Malmstrom AFB received reports of two helicopters over Juliet 5 missile site between Great Falls and Fort Benton (northeast of Great Falls) and two northeast of Conrad (which is northwest of Great Falls) traveling toward Fort Benton. This was basically the same general area as the sightings of the night before.

At 8:11 p.m., Choteau reported choppers south and east of Dutton, near the Teton-Chouteau county line. At 8:33 p.m. there was a report of three helicopters with flashing red lights over the Juliet 5 missile site near Fort Benton. Within two minutes, all had left the area and at 8:52 p.m., they were reported seven or eight miles southwest of the missile site. Malmstrom's Wing Security verified that there were unidentified helicopters in the area.

At 9:40 that evening, two helicopters were reported ten miles north of Great Falls. Neither Malmstrom nor the tower at Gore Hill could confirm the report, nor could they identify the craft. Deputy Arne Sand wearily summed up the evening's activity in his report, saying, *the office sent me north of Great Falls chasing lights in the sky again, and they were similar to the ones the night before. Again, I was not able to see any shape of the objects behind the lights.*"

He was referring to his experience of the night before when he participated in the chase that took law officers over a wide area. At that time, he was sent to back up the Dutton town marshal, when the marshal saw bright lights in the sky. What happened is related in Deputy Sand's own words in his official report:

Between Power and Dutton, a bright white light, about 500 feet above the ground came from the west and crossed the highway behind me going east. I was not able to see any shape of the object. For the next two hours, the lights would come and go. At about 3:30 a.m. on 12/3/75, Dick Gasvoda and myself were just arriving at Fort Shaw when the office called and said that some type of aircraft was hovering over the missile site at Vaughn. So, back we went and when we got by the feed lots, west of Vaughn, we saw a bright white light over the feed lots. It was going west at a high rate of speed. The object crossed the highway in front of us and headed towards Great Falls. I talked to the sergeant at the missile site and he said the craft was over the site with a bright light, but could not see any shape and did not sound like a helicopter."

Where to draw the line between unidentified helicopters and unidentified flying objects (UFOs) is difficult to determine. In some cases, the craft has been seen plainly enough to determine definitely that it looks like a helicopter. At other times, the bright light emitted by the craft made it impossible to exactly determine the shape or outline of the craft.

The method of flight often resembled a helicopter, but there were many more incidents when the speed and method of climbing was such that it could not conceivably be a helicopter. And sometimes the viewer's description of what he saw ruled out the possibility of a helicopter.

Helicopter or UFO - between August 1975, and May 1976, the Cascade County Sheriff's office received about 130 reports of sightings in the five-county area. Frustrated officers found that in many instances, by the time they reached the place where the sighting had taken place, the object in question was gone. It is difficult to investigate something that is no longer there.

Reports came in from many areas. The sheriff's office at Fort Benton reported a helicopter 20 miles east of that community. Malmstrom said there were no Air Force choppers in that area. A woman at Eden told of a helicopter flying low right over her ranch home. A resident of Chestnut Valley watched a helicopter flying for about an hour over the area where he lived. An unidentified helicopter reported flying over Cascade turned out to be one belonging to the Montana Air

National Guard.

On the night of December 4, 1975, immediately after the rash of sightings, which kept law officers busy for two nights, an officer saw a helicopter lift off from what looked to be the Deaconess Hospital landing pad at the southeast edge of Great Falls. He checked with the hospital's emergency room the next morning and was told that no helicopters had landed there during the night.

Late on the afternoon of December 8, the sheriff's office received a report that a missile team had spotted a helicopter about 1,000 feet above Fox 10 missile site, west of Choteau and Augusta in the mountains. It was also seen from Fox 9 and was believed to be headed toward that site. About an hour later, Malmstrom AFB notified the sheriff's office that there were lights on the ground two miles south of the Fox 10 site. There are no roads into this particular area and, in addition, the lights appeared too far apart to be the headlights of a car.

At about the same time, a Vaughn resident reported seeing three small helicopters flying in the area of Bootlegger Trail. He said one was at an altitude of about 50 feet and the other two at about 150 feet. All were dark colored. A check with the NORAD command center showed no evidence of the choppers on radar. NORAD confirmed that all Malmstrom helicopters were in.

A short time later, a report was received that a woman living near Portage had noticed some men around her farm machinery, but when they saw her they jumped in their helicopters and left. She told officers she saw two helicopters in a wheat field about 50 yards from the house.

A report was also received from the sheriff at Fort Benton who thought one helicopter was flying toward Great Falls while another was down in the Portage area. The mystery was solved - at least this time - when an officer in the Canadian Air Force phoned the Cascade County Sheriff's Department later in the evening to tell officers he was flying the helicopter that went down near Portage due to engine trouble. He said he landed as near a residence as possible and knocked on the door, but no one was home.

Another Canadian chopper pilot came to his rescue, helped him repair his craft and they both took off for Malmstrom. The distraught residents who reported seeing the helicopters were informed by the sheriff's office that there was nothing to be alarmed about.

A few days later, Malmstrom AFB notified the Cascade County Sheriff's Department that crews at a missile site near Ulm, south of Great Falls, had reported seeing three helicopters flying at 150 feet altitude around the site. They said they frightened one away by shining a large light on it.

Sheriff's officers were on their way to the site when they received a radio message to "disregard" as the choppers had been identified as belonging to the Army National Guard. The incident was almost forgotten when it happened to come up in conversation some time later between Captain Wolverton and an Army National Guard official. The latter denied the choppers had belonged to the National Guard. In some instances, the sightings of unidentified helicopters had a logical explanation, but in most cases they did not.

Chouteau County deputies reported seeing two helicopters flying about 300 to 400 feet above the ground. They were described as having a large red light and a white strobe light. NORAD confirmed no Air Force choppers were out and said they could not locate the craft on radar.

Reports of unidentified helicopters continued to come in from different areas. RAPCON reported a chopper sighting between Ulm and Cascade on December 22, 1975. And a Great Falls man reported hearing a helicopter fly over him while he was camped in Prickly Pear Canyon on February 18, 1976. These and all other reports were recorded as officers continued to piece together the parts of a baffling puzzle.

To be continued in **Chapter 8 - Teenage Girls Chased by UFO**

Credits

**Copyright © 1999 - 2009 by Linda Moulton Howe.
All Rights Reserved.
www.earthfiles.com
earthfiles@earthfiles.com**

Republication and redissemination of the contents of this screen or any part of this website are expressly prohibited without prior Earthfiles.com written consent.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)
[Refund Policy](#)

Copyright © 1999 - 2009, Earthfiles.com / DigitalEyeCandy.ca
All rights reserved.

