

New Zealanders on Their Extraterrestrial Encounters

By Sasha Borissenko

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This article is supported by [Alien: Covenant](#), out in cinemas on May 11. To celebrate the film's release, we spoke to a bunch of New Zealanders who have witnessed what they believe to be UFOs or signs of alien life.

On 22 December 2010 at 1.30pm, the New Zealand Defence Force **released** their classified sightings between 1952 and 2009 on the grounds of huge public interest. The process took 14 months.

The files contained information relating to the infamous **Kaikoura lights sightings of 1978**, where hundreds of people saw lights of varying sizes appearing, and reappearing, in the region. The lights were even spotted playing a game of duck, duck, goose, of sorts, with a cargo aircraft.

The reports also documented the **1959 Moreland sightings**, where a Mrs Eileen Moreland was walking across a paddock to collect some cows for milking—as you do—before she was confronted by a green glow. She'd stumbled across a UFO trying to land in her paddock. They were harmless, sure, and they were also wearing metallic suits. The controversy fuelled Cold War fears of Russian involvement.

Even though it's been almost 60 years since the Moreland case—and people still often report extraterrestrial sightings—explanation around what's out there still remains unclear. To unshroud the mystery around the phenomenon, we spoke to some New Zealanders who have been spooked by what they claim to be signs of alien activity.

Sarah* was sixteen when she and two friends spotted a UFO in Christchurch in 2006. It was a completely clear, hot, and dry summer night. She was leaning up against her car when her mates noticed something out of the ordinary. All three of them witnessed three bright white lights move together at a steady pace across the sky in what seemed like a perfect lateral triangle.

“We were like, ‘Whoa, that’s kind of cool’, not really thinking too much of it. I thought it must have been a meteorite, plane, or comet, but then they just stopped and froze for about five to ten seconds. We were caught a bit off guard.”

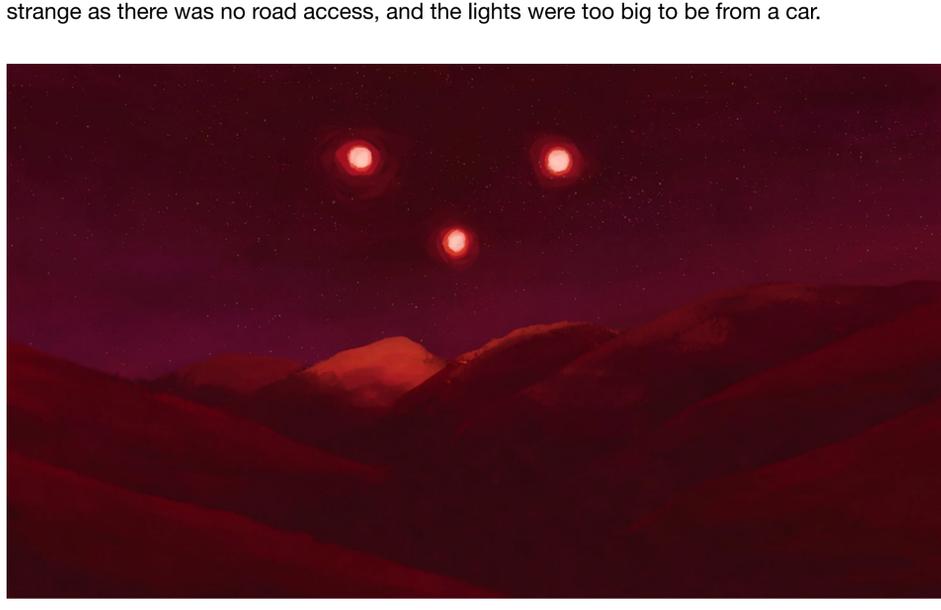
“Then, out of nowhere, they each burst away from one another and shot out in different directions really bloody quickly and disappeared.”

Before the encounter, Sarah was a sceptical, non-believer type of person. And while she's not going to jump up and down and join forums anytime soon, she says the whole thing was extremely odd. “All of us were a little shocked afterwards, we just looked at each saying, ‘No... really, that didn't... But you saw that too, right?’”

She'd had a few drinks earlier, but insists it made no impact as to what she saw. But based on this, friends immediately dismissed the credibility of the story.

“If I'm thinking about representations of alcoholics in film, they are always seen as the village idiot until some knight-in-shining-sober-armor comes along to confirm what this guy has been saying the whole time.”

Finn Erikson's UFO encounter also happened last year in Christchurch, between Taylors Mistake beach and Godley Head east of Christchurch. He was parked in a car park up in the valley, chatting to his friend, when they noticed darting small lights above the hillside. While they were akin to light laser points, they were huge and moved erratically. The lights disappeared and were replaced by big red lights on the hillside below, which was particularly strange as there was no road access, and the lights were too big to be from a car.



“The lights were too big to be from a car.”

“We were majorly spooked and both agreed it was an authentic brush with UFOs. A major *X-Files* vibe set in and we gapped it toot sweet to avoid more shocking encounters.”

Erikson has always been, and still is, an emphatic believer in life beyond earth. “I love the possibility that we could, as a planet, make alien contact within our lifetime. I think aliens would be peaceful and would have a lot to offer, such as wisdom to solve world crises or advanced alien technologies to help the planet and humanity. Hey, a guy can dream right?”

Where people may try to rationalise the unexplainable as earthly phenomena, Erikson's belief comes down to statistics and odds.

“Given that we know there are billions of stars and planets within our own galaxy, and there are billions of galaxies within the universe, there are overwhelming odds that there are millions of planets with the conditions to promote life.”

The cultural fascination with space and UFOs has been a great platform from which to have explored his own musings on the subject too, he says. “I think agent Mulder made believers out of a lot of '90s kids, despite agent Scully's attempts to always find a rational explanation.”

Wellington's Jim Chipp also thinks he had an extraterrestrial encounter, but he's still not so sure. He was driving south between Eketahuna and Masterton mid-evening in January over ten years ago. A light appeared over the eastern horizon, 10-12 kilometres away and came toward the car very fast. It veered south above the car then flared brightly before vanishing.

A few seconds after, there was another one, and then another, with six in total. Chipp began counting as they approached, and based on them covering the distance from the horizon to the car in six seconds, he thinks they were travelling at about 7000 kilometres per hour, far too fast for anything man-made.

Chipp read up on it, and found there were similar sightings in the area, but he also found scientific reports suggesting that methane gathers high in the atmosphere and is ignited by lightning, creating a fireball effect.

He has an open mind when it comes to the existence of extraterrestrial life, but seeing their aircraft is a different matter.

“If they were capable of travelling here they are more advanced than us, probably by millions of years. We would only see them if they wanted us to and if they wanted us to see them, they wouldn't leave room for doubt. I don't believe people have seen alien craft.”

In all of these circumstances one thing's certain. Whether you're open to the idea of UFOs or not, you still might find yourself being scared silly by erratic flashing lights trying to dominate New Zealand's beautiful vistas.

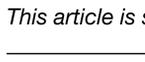
** Names have been changed*

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