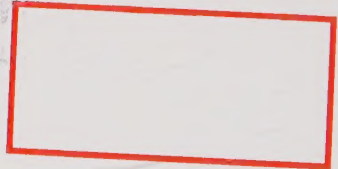


HANDBOOK TO
UFOs,
CROP CIRCLES,
AND
ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

BY SEAN McCOLLUM

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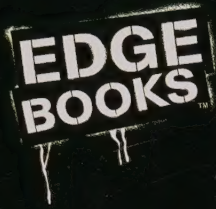
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PARANORMAL HANDBOOKS

HANDBOOK TO
UFOs,
CROP CIRCLES,
AND
ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

BY SEAN McCOLLUM

CAPSTONE PRESS
a capstone imprint



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Visitors from Outer Space

In the early morning hours of July 24, 1948, a passenger plane was cruising high over Alabama. The two pilots saw a red glow in the distance. At first they figured it was an approaching jet. Then something blasted past them. It let loose a burst of flame and instantly shot into the clouds and disappeared.

The pilots were stunned. They reported the sighting to the U.S. military. They described the object as “a wingless aircraft.” It was unlike any plane or jet they had ever seen. The Air Force investigated. Scientists could only guess what it might have been. Some concluded it was a type of meteor.

The military started a study of these unidentified flying objects, or UFOs. Some experts even wondered if they might be spaceships from other worlds.

The idea that alien astronauts might visit our planet has gripped us Earthlings for ages. It is a popular topic in science fiction books, movies, and TV shows. It fuels our fascination with crop circles and other mysterious phenomena.





People tend to wonder: *Are we alone in the galaxy?*
UFO hunters of every kind are searching land, sky, and
space for answers.

MYSTERIES IN THE SKIES*UFO-shaped clouds over Chile*

To many people, the term “UFO” suggests a spacecraft from another planet. But a UFO can be any unexplained object in the sky. Most are eventually revealed to be some form of manmade aircraft. Other sightings often happen during unusual weather events like lightning storms or strange clouds.

Airplanes took to the skies in the early 1900s. These new inventions led to more UFO reports. Humans first began experimenting with rockets and spaceflight in the 1940s and 1950s. That’s when interest in UFOs really took off. People found it easier to imagine spaceships from other planets flying to Earth.

FREAKY FACT

The first book to use the term UFO appeared in 1953. It was the nonfiction text *Flying Saucers from Outer Space* by Donald E. Keyhoe.

Flying Saucers

In 1947 a UFO incident grabbed Americans' imaginations. Businessman Kenneth Arnold was piloting his small plane above Washington State. He reported seeing nine super-fast objects flying in a V-formation. At first he thought they were military aircraft. But the military later reported it had no planes in that area. Arnold said the objects seemed to skip across the sky, like “saucers” skipping across water.

Newspapers across the United States picked up the story. One news reporter referred to the objects as “flying saucers” because of Arnold’s description. The term stuck. Some people **speculated** they might be alien spaceships.

A woman reads a book about UFOs in 1950.



speculate—to think about or discuss what is uncertain or unknown

The Roswell Incident

In 1947 another UFO incident occurred near Roswell, New Mexico. It has become a classic story of UFO lore.

In early July a ranch worker found strange **debris** in a field. This was reported to the nearby U.S. Army Air Force base. The base released a statement that a “flying disk” had crashed there. A local newspaper reported the army had captured a “flying saucer.”

Military officials soon changed the story. A weather balloon had fallen from the sky, they said. As proof they showed reporters material typical of shiny, silvery weather balloons.

For 31 years the story was mostly forgotten. Then it was shared again in *The National Enquirer*. This newspaper specializes in quirky, attention-grabbing tales. It suggested the Roswell crash had involved **extraterrestrials**. This time the



debris—the scattered pieces of something that has been broken or destroyed

extraterrestrial—a life form that comes from outer space

UFO Hunters

There are many groups that investigate and study UFOs. They collect reports, photos, and share information. Researchers meet at conferences to talk about their findings. Many members of these organizations believe extraterrestrials have visited Earth. However, no one has yet produced scientific proof.



“Roswell Incident” got a lot more attention. Some UFO researchers said the government covered up proof of alien visitors.

Years later the Air Force said the crash had not been a weather balloon after all. Instead it came from equipment from a top-secret spy program. They claimed they had covered up the truth to keep U.S. enemies from learning about it. For many people, though, the belief that an alien ship crashed near Roswell has never wavered.



Officer Irving Newton presents debris of a supposed flying saucer in 1947 at Roswell Air Force Base.

FREAKY FACT

Roswell is a tourist destination for people fascinated by UFOs. The town hosts a UFO Festival every July.

The Gorman Dogfight

Members of the military are expected to stay cool under pressure. They also have technology that lets them track almost anything that flies. That's why military sightings of UFOs are often taken more seriously.

On October 1, 1948, Lieutenant George F. Gorman was flying his F-51 fighter plane near Fargo, North Dakota. As he prepared to land, something with blinking lights flew past him. He chased it to get a better look. He described the object as a small "ball of light," about 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 centimeters) in diameter. Other witnesses said they saw a flying light too. Gorman pursued it, reaching speeds up to 400 miles (644 kilometers) per hour. But he said the object was faster. Finally it shot upward and disappeared.

Military investigators concluded Gorman had been fooled by the planet Jupiter or maybe a weather balloon with lights. Gorman disagreed.

Project Blue Book

In 1952 the U.S. Air Force started Project Blue Book. Its mission was to scientifically investigate UFO sightings. Officials wanted to be sure UFOs were not an unknown threat to the United States. After 17 years the project organizers concluded they had no evidence extraterrestrials had visited Earth.

FREAKY FACT

The rock band Foo Fighters takes its name from UFOs seen by World War II (1939-1945) pilots.

Enemy Over England?

On May 20, 1957, U.S. Air Force Captain Milton Torres got an urgent order. He was to scramble his fighter jet and chase down a UFO that had appeared on ground **radar**. Thick clouds blocked his view. But the target looked huge on Torres' radar. He was shocked when he was ordered to fire his weapons at the UFO. But it zipped away before he could pull the trigger.

Torres said that afterward he was warned by a government agent to never talk about the incident. But he shared his story years later. "I think it was an alien spacecraft," he told a reporter.



A photograph from 1957 shows a reported UFO near Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

radar—a device that uses radio waves to locate objects

Mistaken Identities

Most UFO sightings turn out to be explainable. Here are some of the most common sources of mistaken identity.

Weather Balloons

These giant balloons fly to super-high altitudes to help scientists study weather patterns.



An airman launches a weather balloon.

Unusual Weather Events

Strange cloud formations and lightning can trick people into thinking they saw UFOs.

Military Experiments

The military sometimes tests experimental aircraft. When spotted, their unusual speed or looks can make them seem like something from science fiction.

FREAKY FACT

The nearest star to our solar system is the star system Alpha Centauri, which is 4.35 light years away. The fastest spacecraft would take about 73,000 years to reach it.



A supercell storm brews over Nebraska.

The Moon and Planets

The moon and bright planets in the night sky have sometimes fooled people into reporting UFOs.

The Hudson Valley UFO Sightings

Tricksters sometimes go to great effort to fool witnesses about UFOs. One of the most creative UFO **hoaxes** took place in the mid-1980s. Thousands of people had spotted huge boomerang-shaped UFOs moving above New York's Hudson Valley. It turned out to be a hoax carried out by a model plane club. They attached lights to their model planes and then flew them in formation.

altitude—the height of an object above sea or ground level

hoax—a trick to make people believe something that is not true

THE PUZZLE OF CROP CIRCLES

On an August morning in 2015, English farmer James Hussey woke up to a mystery. Overnight, something had happened in his big field of golden wheat. Parts of it had been pressed down to form a picture of a giant bird. It was an example of a crop circle. When word got out, people flocked to Hussey's farm to see it. No one knew how it got there.

Crop circles are designs that appear in farm fields. Most people believe they are the work of human artists. However, many crop circle buffs are sure some have non-human origins. Some blame aliens. Since 1980 more than 10,000 crop circles have been reported in nearly 30 different countries.

The Crop Circle Files

Crop circles come in all shapes, sizes, and designs. But most have these details in common.

- They happen in one night.
- No clear evidence of who—or what—made them exists.
- They appear in fields of grain, like wheat or barley.
- The plant stalks in crop circles are pressed to the ground, not cut.



a crop circle found
in Italy in 2014

FREAKY FACT

The study of crop circles is called "cereology." The name comes from Ceres, the Roman goddess of farming.

Supernatural Theories of Crop Circles

“Croppies” are people who seek proof that crop circles have **supernatural** causes. Here are three theories that croppies have about these **phenomena**.

Theory 1: Wind Vortices

In certain conditions strong winds can start spinning. They can even form mini-tornadoes known as vortices. If they touch ground, they may twist plants in a swirled pattern.

Researcher Colin Andrews stands in a crop circle in Wiltshire, Britain, in 1990.





Theory 2: Earth Energy

Invisible magnetic fields crisscross the earth. This energy is why compasses point north. Different areas, though, have different levels of electromagnetic force. Some croppies believe these forces may cause crop circles to form.

Theory 3: Extraterrestrials

Some people think the patterns mark landing sites for alien spaceships. Others wonder if aliens are sending messages hidden in the designs. They argue some circles have happened too fast and been too complex to be the work of pranksters.

phenomenon—very unusual or remarkable events
supernatural—magical or not explained by nature

Doug and Dave: Crop Circle Hoaxers

Starting in 1978, an area in England experienced a rash of crop circles. People gathered to see them. A popular theory was the crop circles were the work of extraterrestrials.

Meanwhile, a pair of mates was having a good chuckle. Their names were Doug Bower and Dave Chorley. They created the circles and other patterns in the dead of night using a board and their feet. The more they made, the more public excitement grew. Experts stumbled over themselves wondering what caused the mysterious patterns. Doug and Dave made about 200 crop circles, and kept their secret for 12 years.

Doug Bower (left) and David Chorley



Examples of Crop Art

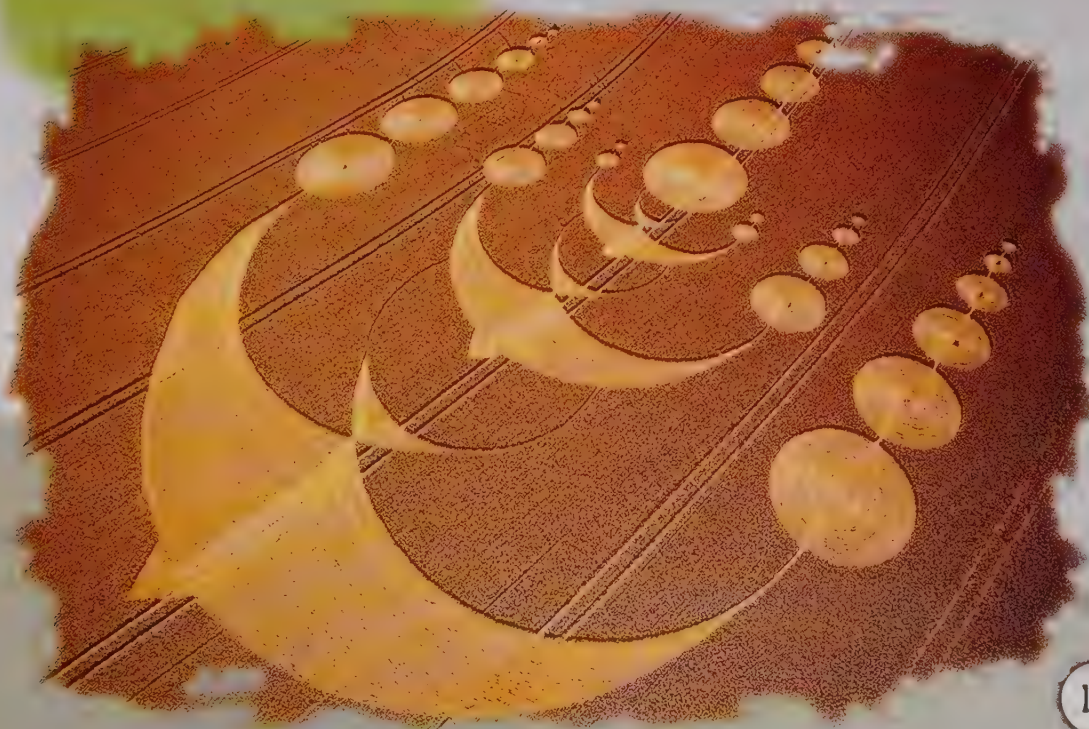
August 2002:
Winchester, England.
Alien face with
computer disc.
Measuring 330 feet
(100 meters) across.





July 2002: Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England.
Measuring 750 feet (230 meters) in diameter.

August 2003: West Kennet
Long Barrow, Wiltshire, England.
A formation of birds in flight.



TALES OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Stories about unexplainable UFOs fire up people's imaginations. Scary tales about being kidnapped by aliens can flame their fears. Scientist and UFO researcher J. Allen Hynek came up with definitions of different kinds of contact with UFOs. He called them "close encounters."

First Kind—viewing of a UFO that seems less than 500 feet (152 m) away

Second Kind—feeling or seeing physical effects from a UFO

Third Kind—sighting robots or living beings from a UFO

Fourth Kind—being **abducted** by beings from a UFO

Stories about Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind are the most dramatic—and chilling.

Abduction of the Hills

On the night of September 19–20, 1961, Barney and Betty Hill were driving home in New Hampshire. After midnight they said they were followed by a bright flying light. The couple arrived home early the next morning. But it seemed about two hours were missing from their memories. Betty started having nightmares about being captured by strange beings.

abduct—to kidnap

hypnosis—a trance sometimes used to bring back memories



The Hills tried **hypnosis** to try to recover their lost memories. They described a pancake-shaped flying saucer. They recalled seeing creatures inside it that could communicate without speaking. Barney remembered being terrified when he was dragged onboard. They both said they were medically examined. Betty also described having a needle bigger than any needle she'd ever seen stuck in her navel.

The Hills' story became famous and made national news. To many, they seemed believable witnesses to an alien abduction.

FREAKY FACT

A roadside marker in New Hampshire marks the spot where the Hills said they were abducted by aliens.





Maine wilderness

The Allagash Waterway Abduction

In 1976 four buddies went camping in northern Maine. While fishing one night, they said they saw an orb-shaped UFO with flashing lights. It began flying toward them. Panicked, they paddled their canoe toward shore. The object, though, overtook them. They woke up several hours later back on shore. They watched the UFO fly off. But their memories about what happened seemed to have been erased.

Afterward, the group began having nightmares. Under hypnosis they described being abducted. They said they had been beamed aboard the UFO. There, they were examined by strange creatures with long necks and big heads. The four men all passed lie detector tests about the incident. Their similar stories made them more believable.



depiction of the Allagash
Waterway Abduction

Legends of Area 51

In the Nevada desert is a place few people will ever see. UFO researchers refer to it as Area 51. Guards patrol the area to keep anyone from getting near the site. For many years the U.S. military did its best to keep it from even showing up on maps.

To UFO researchers Area 51 is legendary. They wonder whether the place hides evidence of close encounters. Some researchers believe wreckage of the Roswell UFO was sent there. They suspect engineers at Area 51 have taken apart the alien spacecraft to figure out how it worked. There also have been rumors that alien bodies and even living aliens have been studied there.

SETI: The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence

Some researchers think video or radio broadcasts from other worlds offer our best chance of discovering intelligent life in the galaxy. That is the strategy of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) program. It aims radio telescopes at the sky to search for radio signals from alien civilizations.

In 2013 the U.S. government admitted the base existed. The U.S. Air Force calls the place Air Force Flight Test Center, Detachment 3. It is described as a top-secret airfield for testing spy planes and other experimental aircraft. Some UFO enthusiasts, though, do not trust the story. They think it is part of a government cover-up to hide the truth about alien visitors.



IS THE TRUTH OUT THERE?

UFOs and extraterrestrials have a powerful grip on our imaginations. Our ideas about them are shaped by science fiction books, movies, and video games. People are fascinated by the possibility of alien worlds. What would extraterrestrials look like? How would they communicate? What would they eat?

We also wonder whether alien visitors would be friendly or dangerous. Many popular movies have explored these hopes and fears. Interestingly, experts note that UFO reports often jump after new movies about extraterrestrials.

FRIENDLY MOVIE EXTRATERRESTRIALS

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

UFO encounters lead humans to first contact with beings from another planet.

E.T., the Extraterrestrial (1982)

An alien explorer is accidentally left behind on Earth. A group of kids work together to help E.T. get home.

Contact (1997)

A scientist makes radio contact with an alien race. She is then sent to meet them.





Close Encounters of the Third Kind won the 1978 Academy Award for best cinematography.

DANGEROUS MOVIE EXTRATERRESTRIALS

War of the Worlds

An overpowering force of Martians invades Earth. Science fiction master H.G. Wells wrote the novel upon which the movie is based. The story has been adapted for film and TV several times.

Mars Attacks (1996)

In this comedy Martians attack Earth and the President of the United States. Others must quickly figure out a plan of survival.

Independence Day (1996)

Humans face extinction when aliens attack Earth.

FREAKY FACT

In the 2002 movie *Signs*, mysterious aliens leave crop circles as messages.



Watching the Skies

Almost all reports of alien visitors and spacecraft are based on stories by witnesses instead of scientific research. Investigations indicate these witnesses are unreliable. No one has yet found scientific proof aliens exist. Still, seeing mysterious objects in the sky can be exciting. It is understandable that observers might believe they came from somewhere besides Earth.

There are always wonders to be seen in the night sky. Maybe someday they will include a spacecraft of extraterrestrial astronauts who have come to say hello.

HANDBOOK QUIZ

1. What is a UFO?
 - a. a spacecraft from another planet
 - b. any flying object that cannot be identified
 - c. any phenomenon that cannot be explained
 - d. a secret military aircraft
2. According to Chapter 1, UFO sightings increased after what?
 - a. the U.S. Air Force began searching for them
 - b. aliens sent messages from outer space
 - c. humans began experimenting with aircraft and rockets
 - d. the invention of the flying saucer
3. What are designs called that mysteriously appear in farm fields?
 - a. wind vortices
 - b. magnetic fields
 - c. extraterrestrials
 - d. crop circles
4. "Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind" refers to what?
 - a. witnessing UFOs or aliens up close
 - b. being kidnapped by aliens from outer space
 - c. capturing a UFO
 - d. finding physical evidence that UFOs exist
5. According to Chapter 4, people's ideas about UFOs and extraterrestrials are shaped mostly by what?
 - a. scientific evidence
 - b. science fiction
 - c. UFO researchers
 - d. military reports

Answers: 1-b. 2-c. 3-d. 4-a. 5-b.

GLOSSARY

abduct (ab-DUKT)—to kidnap

altitude (AL-ti-tood)—the height of an object above sea or ground level

debris (duh-BREE)—the scattered pieces of something that has been broken or destroyed

extraterrestrial (ek-struh-tuh-RESS-tree-uhl)—a life form that comes from outer space

hoax (HOHKS)—a trick to make people believe something that is not true

hypnosis (hip-NOH-sis)—a trance sometimes used to bring back memories

phenomenon (fe-NOM-uh-non)—very unusual or remarkable events

radar (RAY-dar)—a device that uses radio waves to locate objects

speculate (SPEK-yuh-late)—to think about or discuss what is uncertain or unknown

supernatural (soo-per-NACH-ur-uhl)—magical or not explained by nature

READ MORE

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UFOs, CROP CIRCLES, AND ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

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