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after night has fallen.

be 40 feet in diameter and reflect the sun from their canopies as they ascend to heights of as much as 100,000 feet, ^{and} a host of natural phenomena such as St Elmo's Fire, the Aurora Borealis and the 'green flash' that sometimes occurs just as the setting sun sinks below the horizon.

The list of possible explanations for UFOs is almost unlimited: flares released by aircraft, short condensation trails lit by the sun after dusk, meteorological searchlights, lights on distant towers, car lights in far-off hills - all have been mistaken for flying saucers at some time or other.

~~With~~ Positive radar responses from alleged UFOs are sometimes cited as evidence ~~that~~ that there is ~~the~~ 'something out there', but false reflections of radar beams are a well known occurrence, and during the much-publicised appearance of UFOs over New Zealand last December the atmosphere in the area provided classic conditions for the propagation of spurious radar echoes.

With such an astonishing diversity of feasible natural explanations, it seems unnecessary to invoke such an obscure, remote possibility as the arrival of alien space craft, for the existence of which there is no concrete evidence. Not once in its 30 years of operation has the huge radio-telescope at Jodrell Bank located anything that could not be attributed to some conventional phenomenon.

There is an entirely understandable desire to find something more significant in human existence than mere life and death on ^{our} ~~this~~ tiny planet. This has led in the past to the development of mystical religions and our Victorian great-grandparents' enthusiasm for ghost stories. Perhaps one of its modern manifestations is a persistent desire to believe in visitors from outer space and flying saucers.