

FOTOCAT REPORT # 6

AN APPROACH TO UFO PICTURES IN FRANCE

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INTRODUCTION

In the September 2008 issue of *UFOMania* we published the article "Project FOTOCAT France" to inform about both the development of a worldwide catalogue of UFO photographic cases, FOTOCAT **(1)**, and the corresponding national catalogue in preparation for France. At that time, it had 350 entries for French events (and 9,000 for the entire world).

The idea was to encourage French ufologists to contribute reports so that France FOTOCAT could be improved and enlarged. Since then, five *rapports de situation* (status reports) have been released in the magazine, showing the feedback received, the progress of the catalogue and some information on selected sighting reports.

The response has been quite significant, especially from major researchers, local students, organizations and authors, some of them long-time colleagues. As a result, the catalogue has increased to 500 records. (At the same time, the master database has grown to 10,100+ cases.)

A PRELIMINARY CATALOGUE FOR FRANCE

The main general purpose of Project FOTOCAT is to create the largest possible data bank, one that allows the consolidation of highly representative analysis reports by region, year or subject. To date, reports have been published on the global 1954 wave **(2)**, the 1965 wave in Argentina **(3)**, UFO photos in Norway **(4)**, and sphere-shaped UFO pictures from aircraft **(5)**. Other essays are being prepared on the photographs produced during the year 1947, UFO observations in Antarctica in 1965, UFO pictures in Chile, etc.

The present paper purports to be a very preliminary review of the phenomenon of UFO pictures achieved in France. With some exceptions, FOTOCAT basically collects cases occurring up to December 31, 2005. To this date, these are the comparative figures existing from nearby countries:

	<u>Entries</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Surface</u>
SPAIN	771 (*)	46.9 millions	504,600 km ²
ITALY	533 (*) / 700 (**)	60.2 millions	301,300 km ²
FRANCE	500 (*)	65.4 millions	675,400 km ²

(*) FOTOCAT records.

(**) Estimate by Maurizio Verga: cases up to the year 2000 (personal communication, June 2010).

Our estimate is that UFO picture events in France must equal or exceed the number of entries for Spain, and the final count could reach 800 cases, approximately. Therefore it is not practical now to launch a full-range study of the phenomenology because conclusions and results may change after feasibly adding some 300 more reports in the near future, or a 60% increase.

There are other reasons that make it advisable to wait to prepare the definitive study of French UFO photographic episodes. France FOTOCAT is an Excel spreadsheet with 18 data columns. A lot of work is still ahead of us: cases must be read in detail to extract data and feed a number of the columns, time and duration, among others. Many of the French UFO books in our library are still to be examined to capture reports and add the references to the Bibliography section of the catalogue.

Consequently, the present paper will simply provide a cursory examination of the information collected to date.

Interested readers can access to the full France FOTOCAT catalogue through the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/frafotocat>. Remember that the catalogue is still *under construction*, it is not final. In fact, we hope that local ufologists will contact this compiler in order to correct and improve the data, as well as to add new cases occurring up to year-end 2005.

Catalogue structure

FOTOCAT is an international program and the language used throughout it is English. The length of every line of the Excel spreadsheet is sorted into three different pages, according to the predetermined printing area established in the design. A brief explanation of the several data columns follows.

1st page

1st column. *Date.* (Day/ Month/Year)

2nd column. *Approximate Date.* (“Y” for approximate Year, “M” for approximate Month and “D” for approximate Day)

3rd column. *Time.*

4th column. *Description.* (“UFO” appears when there is not a proposed explanation known. It does not mean the phenomenon is unidentifiable, in many instances it is due to lack of information or a suitable investigation. When the event is solved, the explanation is given. “Non-event” refers to an occurrence that never happened, or else means that no picture was actually taken)

5th column. *Identification Code.* (“OK” defines the existence of a potential solution)

6th column. *Location (Country).* (Municipality and Department, France. “Outer space” appears when the phenomenon lies beyond the atmosphere, and it is followed by the location where the picture was made)

7th column. *Nation Code.* (FRA for France)

8th column. *Department Code.* (Official department codes for France)

9th column. *Photo, Film, Video.* (Mode of photography)

Figure 1
Catalogue structure: detail of page #1

FRANCE FOTOCAT: NATIONAL CATALOGUE OF UFO PHOTOGRAPHS © Vicente Juan Ballester Olmos, June 2010												Photo
Date	Aprox									Nation		Film
Day/Mo/Yr	Y	M	D	Time	Description	OK	Location (Country)			Code	Department	Video
01/01/1894	Y	M	D		Ball lightning	OK	France?			FRA		PHOTO
23/10/1903				Night	Ball lightning	OK	Le Perray, Rambouillet, Yvelines (France)			FRA	78	PHOTO
01/01/1910	M	D		Afternoon	Tree branch	OK	France			FRA		PHOTO
01/01/1930	M	D		Night	Bead lightning	OK	France			FRA		PHOTO
01/01/1939	Y	M	D	Day	Fake	OK	Vincennes, Val-de-Marne (France)			FRA	94	PHOTO
13/12/1944					UFO		Paris, Ville de Paris (France)			FRA	75	PHOTO
01/01/1945	M	D			UFO		France			FRA		PHOTO
01/01/1950	Y	M	D		UFO		Paris, Ville de Paris (France)			FRA	75	PHOTO
01/06/1951		D			UFO		Saint Raphaël, Var (France)			FRA	83	PHOTO
06/06/1952					UFO		Tarbes, Hautes Pyrénées (France)			FRA	65	PHOTO

2nd page

10th column. *Close Encounter* (“CE” serves to highlight landing or humanoid reports)

11th column. *Ball Lightning*. (“BL” denotes photographs of ball and bead lightning)

12th column. *Photographer or Cameraperson*. (Full names, if they are known).

13th column. *Media*. (If the images are obtained by a professional photographer, it records the name of the publication or news media where the person works. It provides a clue to finding the original photographic materials, if this is ever attempted)

14th column. *Duration*. (Full lifetime of the event, expressed in seconds)

15th column. *Special Photo Features*. (Singular data related to the photography, the conditions in which it was taken, or other facts such as infrared or ultraviolet film, stereo photograph, underwater photography, automatic camera or *webcam*, gun camera, photographs from airplane, objects unseen by photographer, failure or blank photos, lost pictures or confiscated by authority, radar tracking, recordings of spectra or magnetic field, etc.)

16th column. *Blue Book Files*. (Cases entered into the files of the USAF’s Blue Book project, if pertinent)

17th column. *Airborne*. (When the images were obtained from aircraft)

Figure 2
Catalogue structure: detail of page #2

CE	BL	Photographer/Cameraperson	Media (for professionals)	Duration (secs)	Special Photo Features	Blue Book Files	Airborne
	BL						
	BL						
	BL	D. Roguet/A. Roguet			unseen by photographer?		

3rd page

18th column. *References and Sources.* (All bibliographic references known for each case)

Figure 3
Catalogue structure: detail of page #3

References and sources
Stanley Singer, <i>The Nature of Ball Lightning</i> , Plenum, 1971, p 51, quoting Dunn, <i>Les Nouveautés photographiques</i> , Librairie Illustrée, 1894, pp 253-259; and C. de Jans, <i>Ciel et Terre</i> , 31, 1910, p 499; ditto, 32, 1910, p 155; ditto, 32, 1911, p 255; ditto, 32, 1911, p 301; ditto, 33, 1912, p 18; and ditto, 33, 1912, p 143. James Dale Barry, <i>Ball Lightning and Bead Lightning</i> , Plenum, 1980, p 131.
Henri Mathouillot, <i>Compte Rendu</i> (Hebdomadaire Séances Academie des Sciences), Vol 146, March 16, 1908, p 603. Stanley Singer, <i>The Nature of Ball Lightning</i> , Plenum, 1971, p 52. James Dale Barry, <i>Ball Lightning and Bead Lightning</i> , Plenum, 1980, p 131.
Larry Robinson. Stéphane Bernard, <i>Top Secret</i> (special issue #5), July-September 2008, p 4. Wendelle Stevens & August Roberts, <i>UFO Photographs Around the World</i> , p 24.
James Dale Barry, <i>Ball Lightning and Bead Lightning</i> , Plenum, 1980, pp 28-29 & 142, quoting E. Touchet, <i>Bull. Soc. Astron. Fr.</i> , 45, 1931, p 84.
Archive Michel Monnerie.
Not consulted: The Associated Press photo, <i>Flying Saucers. UFO Reports</i> (Dell), 1969, p 17 (SOBEPS catalogue).
Stéphane Barnard catalogue.
Jean Bastide, <i>La mémoire des OVNI</i> , Mercure, 1978, p 188 & 266, quoting <i>Science et Vie</i> , 1950.

Photographic cases distributed by year

In FOTOCAT, every *entry* or data line comprises one single event; one event is defined as a single source photographer. One actual UFO sighting (a *case*) may generate multiple events, i.e. several lines in the body of the catalogue. This is a register of unique photographs or series of photographs taken by different individuals, irrespective of the fact that they share the same visual phenomenon. Typically, rocket or missile launches or spacecraft reentries produce many images from different photographers. This may produce some distortion in the statistics, but we prefer to make the proper adjustments at the time of performing an analysis, other than losing data about different takes of a given phenomenon observed from different places or by different people.

The following tabulation shows the annual distribution of the 500 entries collected in France FOTOCAT.

Table 1
Number of entries per year (Total=500)

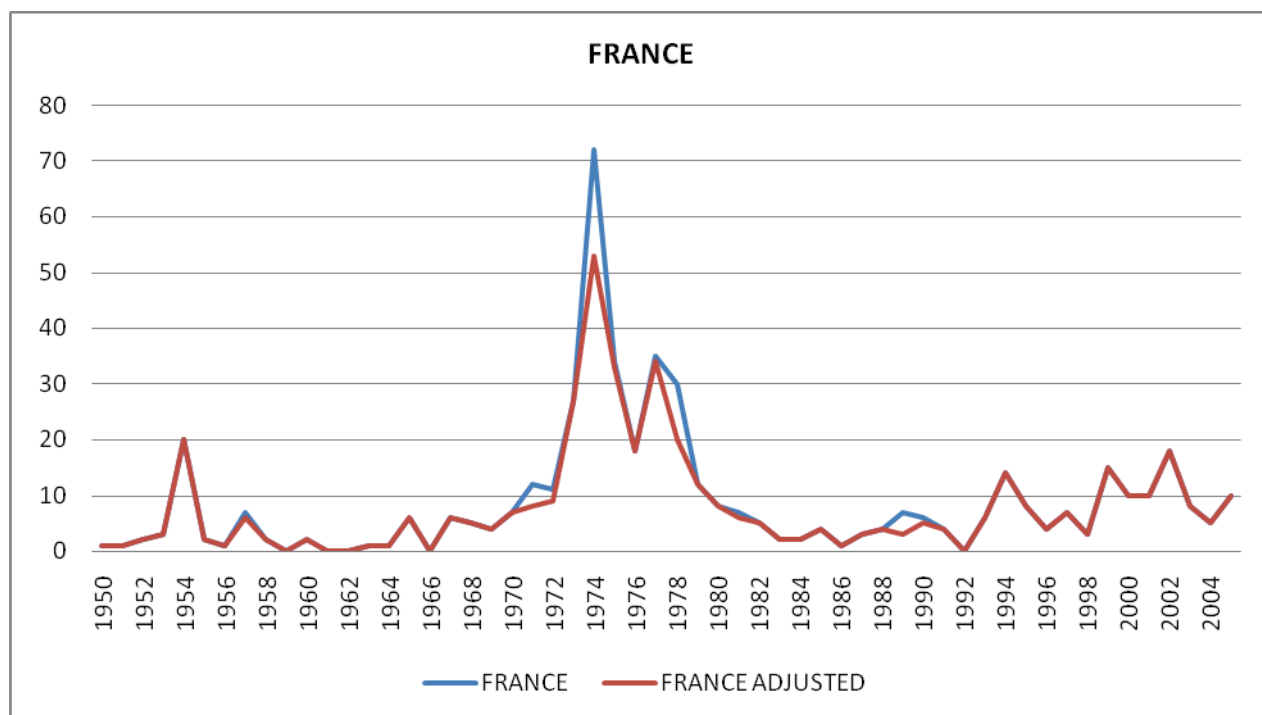
YEAR	NO.	YEAR	NO.	YEAR	NO.	YEAR	NO.	YEAR	NO.
<1950	7	1961	0	1973	27	1985	4	1997	7
1950	1	1962	0	1974	72	1986	1	1998	3
1951	1	1963	1	1975	34	1987	3	1999	15
1952	2	1964	1	1976	18	1988	4	2000	10
1953	3	1965	6	1977	35	1989	7	2001	10
1954	20	1966	0	1978	30	1990	6	2002	18
1955	2	1967	6	1979	12	1991	4	2003	8
1956	1	1968	5	1980	8	1992	0	2004	5
1957	7	1969	4	1981	7	1993	6	2005	10
1958	2	1970	7	1982	5	1994	14		
1959	0	1971	12	1983	2	1995	8		
1960	2	1972	11	1984	2	1996	4		

Now we examine the graph of French sightings from 1950 to 2005. The full catalogue is adjusted by eliminating multiple entries for one single event and leaving 1 entry per case.

Table 2
Catalogue entries and cases

FULL CATALOGUE ENTRIES	1950-2005 ENTRIES	ADJUSTED CASES
500	493	449

Figure 4
France entries (blue) and cases (red) by year



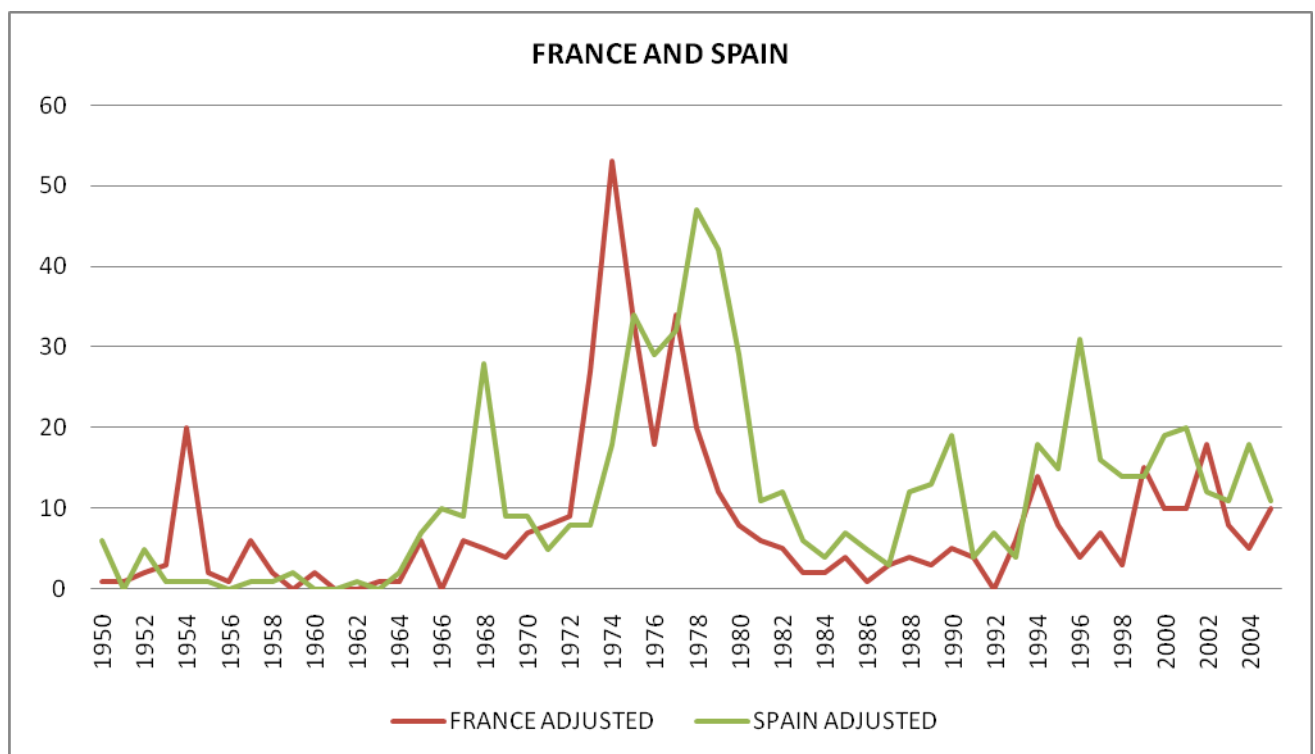
We observe the effect of the 1954 wave, also a large peak in 1974 followed by another in 1977 which in reality encompasses a period of strong reporting from

1973 to 1979, and a general decline that lasts practically up to the new century, with an increase in the creation of UFO photographs from 1999 to 2005.

By adjusting the figures to one entry per event we have realistically minimized excess input for several years, mainly 1971 (February 23, *Tibère* rocket launch, 5 independent series of photos taken), 1972 (March 18, *Tibère* rocket reentry, 3 series of photos), 1974 (June 12, *MSBS* missile launch, 20 series of photos), and 1978 (December 2, *SSBS* missile launch, 11 series of photos).

Are there national peculiarities in the yearly distribution of UFO events, and does the phenomenon mutate when crossing borders? Are local features triggered by culturally-centered conditions contained within the country? Initial responses to these questions could be provided by comparing a nation's UFO reporting structure to that in a neighboring country. To the south, France shares a natural frontier of 660 km with Spain (Pyrenees Mountains). For the sake of comparison, we have plotted also the Spanish cases (also adjusted from the original 770 entries to 655 cases between 1950 and 2005).

Figure 5
France and Spain cases per year



To begin with, some important discrepancies are seen. Some waves in one country seem to pass unnoticed in the other, like 1954 (France), 1968 (Spain), 1990 (Spain), 1994 (France), or 1996 (Spain). Do they obey local socio-cultural patterns? On the other hand, the big multi-year wave of 1973-1979 in France is followed by a large period of reports in Spain from 1974 to 1980, with just one lag year. Although peak years differ, 1974 in France and 1978-1979 in Spain, both sets of years collect 44% (France) or 35% (Spain) of all the cases in the

period under study. This coincidence (the bulk of cases centered on a few years' term) is the main feature of these statistics.

In order to assess the resemblance or not of these annual curves, we have calculated the correlation coefficient of the two series, and we have found a 0.50 correlation (statistically significant at 1%), which is far from low. The two series seem to be somehow interrelated.

The challenge to the analyst is to interpret whether there are common causes in the production of the reports, like media attributes, book publishing and other factors, or if we are left with the development of an optical phenomenon unrelated to sociological stimuli. Statistics and emerging patterns will only be reliable when databases are narrowed to strictly unidentified observations. Today, most collections of raw cases are contaminated by non-UFO sightings, which therefore spoils any resulting findings.

Good cases and bad cases

Key in any survey of UFO data is the wise discrimination between what it is right and wrong, i.e., which reports stand for true unidentified phenomena and which ones are solved. An additional theoretical problem is that even so-called UFO events could be identifiable, if proper resources would have been applied to their investigation. The error bar in dealing with UFO occurrences is high. This is a major difference with respect to real scientific studies. Here we cannot trust our own data. But we must live with this fact.

This research is preliminary. In this precise context, "preliminary" means a significant inaccuracy in the analysis because the isolation of UFO events from IFO events is far from complete. We expect that a future review of the subject of UFO pictures in France can decrease the current degree of ambiguity.

Table 3
Catalogue split by UFO and IFO events

CATEGORY	FULL CATALOGUE ENTRIES	ADJUSTED CASES
UFO	257	254
IFO	243	195
TOTAL	500	449

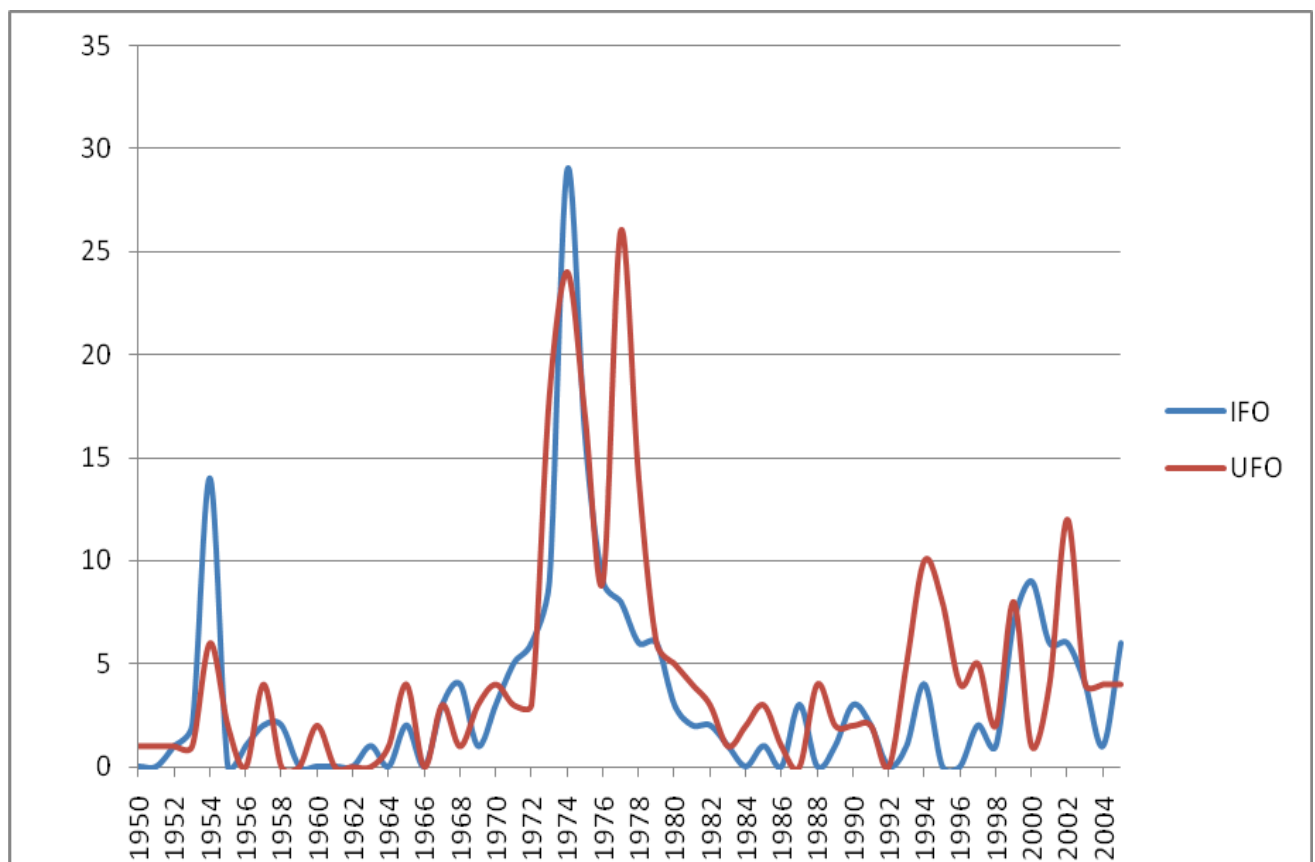
To begin with, what is the meaning of these figures? In other papers we have used the UFO-to-IFO ratio as a numerical scale of the level of filtering of catalogues. Ballester Olmos and Brænne reported that "a rate from 0.10 to 0.30 would appear to be a standard metric for signal-to-noise ratio" (4), i.e., this range being the measurement of an acceptable level of case-solving in any given collection of reports under analysis.

In the case of France, we have a proportion of 51/49 (on a base of 100; actually 257/243), or 1.04. Compared to the above scale, it indicates a sample with much room for improvement, as far as case resolution is concerned.

For the forthcoming survey, we retain for analysis 449 cases under the criterion 1 entry = 1 event. UFOs represent 56.6% and IFOs 43.4%. The following figure is a chart displaying both UFO and IFO reports distributed by year. Generally, it is observed how both sets behave in a similar way, ups and downs running basically parallel over the years. In fact, the calculated correlation coefficient provides a high value, 0.73 (statistically significant at 1%).

However, a major anomaly is detected in the curve for a pair of years, 1977 and 1978, when the UFO/IFO ratio was 3.25 and 2.33, respectively! Why the amount of explained cases dropped so drastically in these two years remains to be investigated.

Figure 6
Plot of UFO and IFO events in France, 1950-2005 (Total = 449)



There are researchers who do not agree on the importance of keeping records of cases once they are solved. They see them as trash to be disposed of. They seem to miss that no one knows for sure if UFOs exist as a pure anomaly or they are just a matrix of solvable events (today appearing as unable to be solved because of poor investigation). In the hypothesis that UFOs exist as a phenomenon which is not a summation of optical misinterpretations like IFOs are, then we should find contrasting differences between the universes of UFO and IFO data.

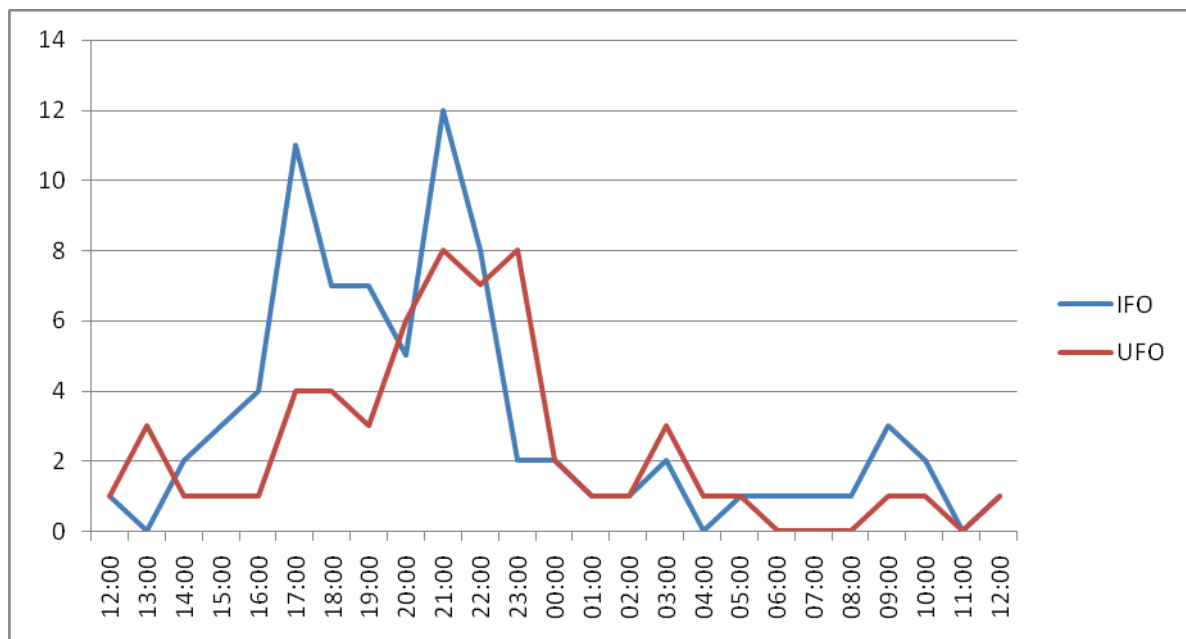
In the present analysis, there is a good match in the annual distribution of a sample of UFO phenomena and a similar-size collection of observational errors, ones that were labeled UFOs at one point in time. Except for the 1977-78 discrepancy, sinusoidal ups and downs (an effect of case magnitude variance) move rhythmically. This suggests that UFO reports are not different in nature from IFOs.

The time they snapped the pictures

Probably it is the compiler's fault. All documents in our files should have been read in detail to extract data to feed the spreadsheet columns, and this has not been done for many cases yet. Therefore, the time of the event has not been properly recorded in the catalogue (in this sense, several columns are still "under construction"). We have been concentrating on the entering of cases in the databank and less time has been devoted to the examination of the full documents at hand. It explains why out of 500 entries, the time is included for only 149. Having adjusted the catalogue, the information is available for barely 135 cases, as follows: 58 UFO cases and 77 IFO cases.

In spite of the above limitations, the following graph is quite obvious. It shows (in blue) the normal trend along the 24 hours of the day to seeing and photographing a variety of events in the sky, like aircraft, meteors, luminous effects produced by reentries or missile launches, astronomical bodies, balloons, birds, or producing hoaxes as well. When the sample is larger it will become more representative of the sociology of looking at the sky and misinterpreting ordinary phenomena.

Figure 7
UFO and IFO events arranged by time (Total = 135)



How about UFO sightings? If they form a distinct class of phenomenon with standards of its own, should we expect a dissimilar hourly distribution? The plot

of UFO cases (in red) shows a course parallel to the IFOs, with a correlation coefficient of 0.68 (again, statistically significant at 1%).

On the other hand, UFO cases are much more nocturnally-oriented than IFOs:

Table 4
Diurnal and nocturnal rates

	UFO		IFO	
Time	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
From 18:00 to 05:59 hours	45	78%	48	62%
From 06:00 to 17:59 hours	13	22%	29	38%
TOTAL	58	100%	77	100%

Can we conclude that the UFO time curve is consistent with the expected hourly observation of optical, luminous phenomena developing in the sky? Future statistics, based on more complete records, will provide a better background to assess this statement.

Cases and population

Administratively, France is divided into Departments, coded from 01 to 95 plus the overseas territories (971 to 975).

Out of 500 photograph records in France FOTOCAT, the exact department is known for 447 entries, the rest are broadly named, either for regions or just for "France."

Table 5
UFO and IFO entries by French Department

CATEGORY	FULL CATALOGUE	DEPARTMENT
UFO	257	236
IFO	243	211
TOTAL	500	447

We have tabulated the catalogue's UFO and IFO entries by Department and population density (number of inhabitants per km²), based on the 2007 census (*) for analysis purposes. We pretend to dissect the effect of population in the case reporting, separately for unidentified and identified.

(*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_French_departments_by_population

Table 6
UFO and IFO entries split by Department and population density

DEPT. CODE	UFO #	IFO #	POPULATION DENSITY	DEPT. CODE	UFO #	IFO #	POPULATION DENSITY
01	2	2	100	49	1	1	105
02	2	1	73	50	3	1	83
03	0	1	47	51	2	1	69

04	8	4	23	52	5	1	31
05	1	3	24	53	0	0	58
06	30	17	252	54	5	2	138
07	0	0	56	55	3	3	31
08	6	3	55	56	9	2	103
09	0	2	30	57	2	6	166
10	0	0	49	58	1	0	34
11	6	0	56	59	12	4	449
12	1	1	31	60	2	0	139
13	6	11	385	61	0	0	48
14	2	0	121	62	4	3	218
15	0	0	26	63	0	8	79
16	0	1	59	64	0	2	84
17	2	1	88	65	2	3	51
18	0	0	43	66	1	5	106
19	0	0	41	67	0	1	224
2B	2	3	32	68	4	2	211
2A	3	1	31	69	5	3	516
21	7	3	61	70	0	0	44
22	2	0	84	71	0	0	67
23	0	1	22	72	1	0	90
24	2	3	45	73	0	0	67
25	2	2	97	74	2	4	161
26	1	3	73	75	8	6	20605
27	0	1	92	76	3	2	198
28	2	0	72	77	3	5	218
29	2	2	130	78	3	2	611
30	2	5	114	79	0	0	61
31	0	7	191	80	1	3	91
32	0	2	29	81	3	0	64
33	0	5	141	82	1	1	59
34	4	5	159	83	12	9	167
35	1	0	141	84	0	2	151
36	1	1	34	85	3	1	90
37	0	1	95	86	3	0	60
38	4	7	159	87	1	0	67
39	3	3	51	88	1	1	65
40	3	0	40	89	6	2	47
41	1	3	51	90	1	1	237
42	2	3	155	91	4	2	666
43	0	0	43	92	2	1	8619
44	2	3	186	93	0	1	6366
45	1	1	96	94	1	4	5220
46	3	1	33	95	0	0	914
47	0	1	60	974	0	1	309
48	0	1	15				

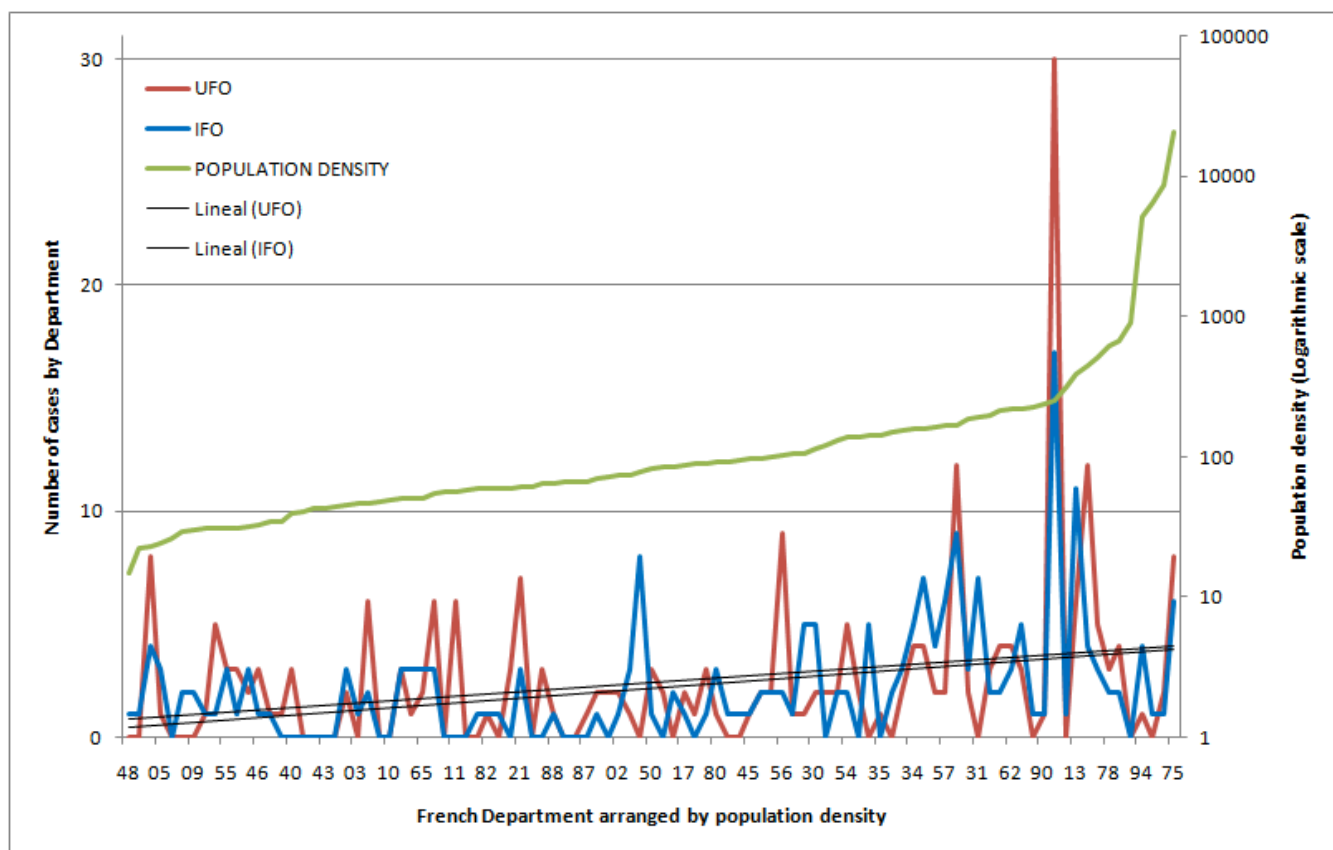
The initial problem observed is the large number of geographical divisions compared to the low number of units to tally: a mere average of 2 UFO or IFO entries per Department. No meaningful statistics can be profiled at this level. It is suggested that future studies analyze the interface between population and case reporting based on the 22 existing regions instead of the 96 Departments.

However, an attempt to rationalize the above data is provided in the following graph, where we have arranged the French Departments by (increasing) population density. Because their actual values range from a low of 15 to a high of 20,605, we have used a logarithmic scale to present the resulting curve.

Then, a secondary scale has been created for UFO and IFO data. Given the scarce number of entries per Department, we have worked out their corresponding linear regression or trend lines that can be compared to the population density.

Figure 8

UFO and IFO entries split by Department and population density (Total = 447)
(The size of the graph does not allow viewing all the Departments for which information has been computed.)



The two trend lines do not fit well with the population density distribution. As a matter of fact, the correlation coefficient calculated is 0.11 for UFO and 0.13 for IFO. We guess that the extremely small size of the sample contributes much to this result.

The important finding here is that the two series are almost parallel, with a correlation index of 0.66 (statistically significant at 1%). If population does not modulate case reporting, there is another common factor to UFO and IFO sightings that does it. We had expected to find a direct correspondence between the number of explained cases (IFOs) and population: the more people, the greater the number of misidentifications. In fact the correlation of IFOs is slightly higher than that of UFOs. But the close result provided by the group of unexplained cases (UFOs) was not expected under the assumption that UFOs are a space-time anomaly, as it does not seem to depart from random. More research and better samples are needed, applied on more suitable geographical divisions.

In a study of 1,045 UFO sightings by Claude Poher (6), it was concluded that the 220 French cases reviewed were directly related to population density, and it was estimated that other meteorological and sociological factors had strong influence on case reporting.

How images were achieved

As we would expect, throughout the period covered by the catalogue (1894 to 2005) most images were obtained as pictures. Movie (cine) cameras were used only in several instances, between 1954 and 1977. Video recordings started to be available in 1978, up to the present.

Table 7
Mode of photography

Type	Number
Photograph	466
Film	11
Video	23
Total	500

Close encounters

FOTOCAT has a code to signal cases where an alleged UFO landing is reported. Close encounters may have high strangeness and, if coupled with physical evidence, are worth studying. In France, 15 entries for 14 distinct cases are listed. We will provide some detail for the only 5 supposed UFO reports in the total.

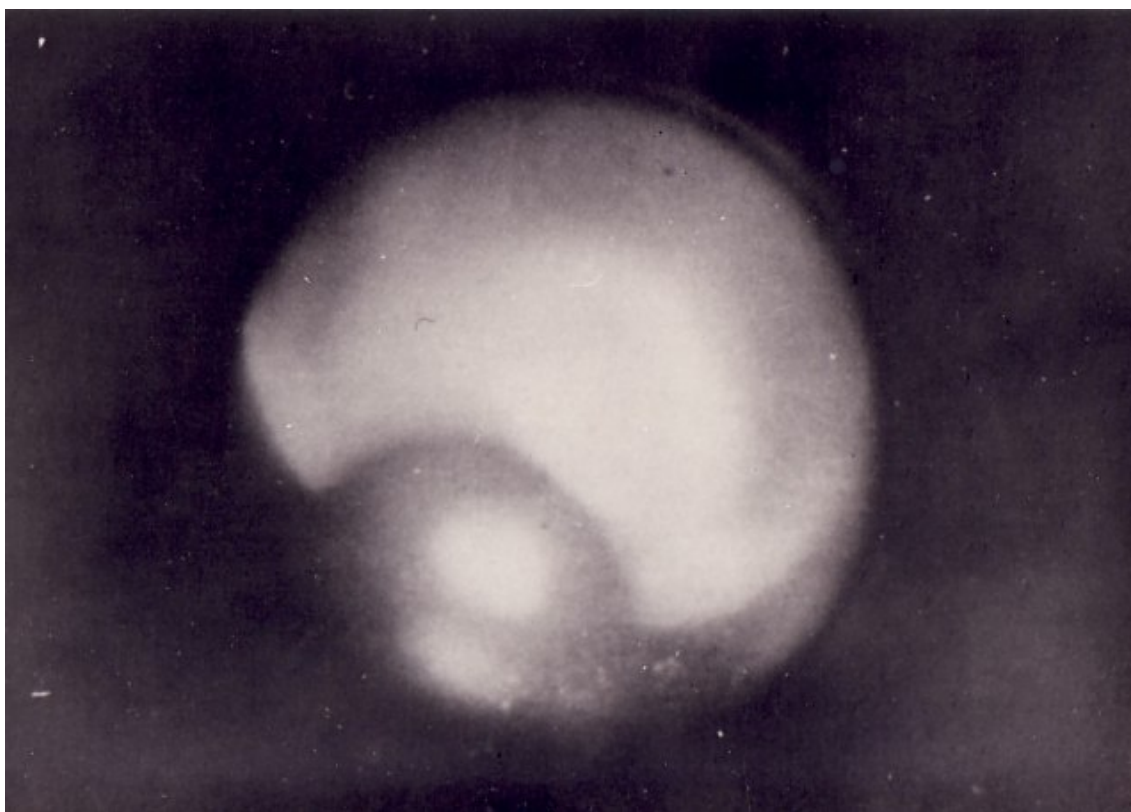
Case #1 is for year 1954, Colmar (68), undefined date, unavailable picture, it belongs to the rumor category. Edmond Campagnac, in charge of Air France in Madagascar, said in a TV debate in 2001 that he knew the story of a “flying saucer” landing on a road with several dozens of eye-witnesses, some of which took photographs. According to his testimony, when the Gendarmerie arrived, witnesses were interrogated and their pictures were confiscated. This brief information was published in August 2004 in the magazine *VSD*, and Editor Bernard Thouanel confirmed to this author that “the case is highly classified, many witnesses, photographs and a pile of documents.” Unfortunately, no one else in the French UFO front seems to know of the event, even the most knowledgeable researchers. Explosive tales narrated by individuals who cannot

contribute any proof for their stories abound. Without any evidence, witness corroboration or paper trail, this becomes only a rumor.

Case # 2 is dated November 19, 1974, Uzès (30), a series of pictures taken by a young lad of 16 years named Christophe Fernandez. According to his testimony, at around 18 hours, he was leaving his parents' house when he saw a luminous ball 35 meters from him, hovering stationary over the ground, in spite of a strong *mistral* wind. He had the impression he could see through the ball of 180 to 250 centimeters in diameter, whose general appearance rejects that of a metallic surface. He was the only eyewitness. He took a camera and approached the object. He could see spheres slowly moving inside it. He took 5 photographs. The object rose from ground level to 4-5 meters, at which point a very brilliant cylinder (1 x 0.40 meter) came out from its base. At great speed, the object flew to the sky. The sighting lasted 30 minutes. As for the negatives, they are no longer available: left unattended, they were stolen from the premises of the House of Youth of Uzès. Quite conveniently, we might add.

Doubts about witness credibility have been cast. In 2008, UFO investigator Franck Boitte telephoned the witness to know his thoughts 30 years after the facts, but Fernandez answered bluntly that he was fed up with the whole thing and did not want to elaborate about it anymore (which in our opinion is not consistent with the observed attitude of sincere witnesses elsewhere). In sum, we are just left with a teenager's story and a few paper prints.

Figure 9
November 19, 1974, Uzès. Credit: Thierry Gaulin.

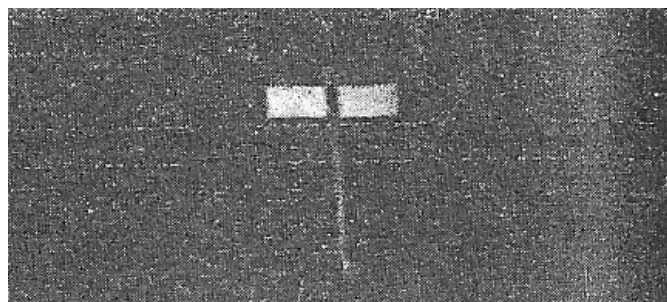


Case #3 was said to take place on August 15, 1975, between the villages of Andelot and Blancheville (52). Initially it had two 18-year-old observers, Dominique Samie and Patrick Pinguat. At around 23.30 hours, they were driving towards Bologne when they saw a large luminous object, suspended motionless above the ground. A second, similar object was sighted farther away, over an isolated grove. They took two pictures with a small flash-bulb camera. Then the main object approached straight at the car at an impressive speed. The two boys panicked and started to drive backwards some 500 meters to the village of Andelot. The object was some 30 meters in diameter and had the "classic shape of a flying saucer." Its base was lighted with a red-orange color. Its upper part, dark, had a flattened dome. They arrived home very excited and asked Dominique's father to go along with them back to the place. They took another road and after 3 kilometers they saw another object, still, 300-400 meters after a crossroads; they changed the road and ceased to see the object, which progressively reduced to a point. Then they observed long, white luminous beams and the object appeared again. Panicked, the witnesses arrived at Chantraines at around 00.30 hours, where they found no one and decided to go back to Andelot, when they sighted the object again almost about to enter the hamlet of Blancheville, where they arrived at around 01.00 hours, again not finding a soul in the deserted streets. From there they drove to Andelot, and the object reappeared until they came into the village.

As far as the physical evidence, the photographs proved disappointing, as they showed no objects at all, except the road and a road sign next to it. This is a case where an unbiased inquiry would have been needed at the time. Only a fresh examination of the event could throw light on this interesting adventure.

Figure 10

August 15, 1975, Andelot-Blanceville. Credit: Joël Mesnard, *Phénomènes Spatiaux*, September 1975, pp-29-34.



Case # 4 is a more than doubtful episode and is dated September 1977. On July 1979, ufologist Jean Yves Le Floch received a telephone call from a person living in Saint-Florentin (Yonne) asking if he wished to be in contact with "the extraterrestrials." This man told him that he had been driving between Joigny and Looze (89) when his attention was caught by a light, at 100 meters from the Vauretors crossing. He stopped the car and saw the landing of a craft shaped "like two saucers side by side," with two lights. He was 15 meters away from the flying saucer and he observed it during 35-40 minutes. He took the 2 black & white pictures remaining in his camera, plus 20 exposures with color film and 20

exposures with slide film. Then he had a “black hole” and at the end of this absence he saw two 1.20-meter-tall entities with oversized heads leaving the flying saucer. One of them talked to the informant in French and verbally gave him a list of 50 people to be contacted (they all were UFO witnesses, going back to 1954 and others as recent as September 1977). At the end of the conversation the being said *au revoir* and shook hands with the witness! After 1 hour 20 minutes, the flying saucer rose vertically. The story-teller supposedly had to contact Le Floch in order to fix a place, date and hour for an encounter with the extraterrestrials. Of course, the caller did not identify himself. The value of this report approaches zero.

Case #5 is dated August 2002 at Col de Vence (06), a terrain where many UFO fakes have been made from a very active group of hoaxers. The only existing information is a photograph taken by an Yvan Odedino that shows an amorphous globe of reddish light hovering over a hill. Difficult to judge without other background, the anomaly level of this phenomenon is extremely low.

Figure 11
August 2002, Col de Vence. Credit: Stéphane Bernard.



We have explored the 5 cases in France FOTOCAT within the close encounter category that were not listed as clearly identified. One is unverified information, another is a possible fake, one is a good-looking case with useless photographs, another is a probable tall tale, and the last is a picture of little value. We can conclude that there is no evidence of UFO landings in France as far as photography is concerned.

Repeaters

Seeing a phenomenon in the skies that—apparently—cannot be explained is not very common. Being lucky enough to see and photograph it is less probable. But doing this several times is a challenge to the laws of chance. Our France catalogue has 318 entries (64% of all) where the names (or initials at least) of the photographers or camerapersons are recognized. It is evident that there is a large gap to fill and partly it is a forthcoming job of the present compiler.

We have examined how many persons claimed to have photographed UFOs more than once.

Table 8
Repeaters: names and frequencies

Name	Times	Dates (D/M/Y)	Location	Explanation
Bernard	2	05/01/1976 09/01/1976	Grenoble (38) Grenoble (38)	
Christian Borda	2	21/07/1975 19/12/1975	Auxerre (89) Auxerre (89)	
Pierre-Louis Dominique	2	1974 01/08/1979	Dole (39) Luzac (17)	Bird?
Claude Fritz	2	28/08/1975 05/04/1976	Rozérieulles (57) Rozérieulles (57)	Aircraft Aircraft
Jean-Michel Ligeron	2	18/11/1975 01/06/1977	Charleville (08) Sury (08)	
Christian Mace	2	29/09/2005 30/09/2005	Cogolin (83) Cogolin (83)	Lens flare?
Didier Thiesse	2	06/01/1974 26/01/1974	Vénissieux (69) Vénissieux (69)	
L. Alyon & J. Ates	4	26/05/1954 07/06/1954 09/08/1954 22/08/1954	Marseilles (13) Marseilles (13) Marseilles (13) Marseilles (13)	Fake Fake Fake Fake
Mourand	4	19/01/1977 27/01/1977 30/01/1977 14/02/1977	Roche-Bernard (56) Roche-Bernard (56) Roche-Bernard (56) Roche-Bernard (56)	Ship lights
Raymond Spinossi	10	April 1999 to November 2000	Mostly at Var (83)	All fakes
Pierre Beake	14	June 1999 to June 2005	All at Col de Vence (06)	Most fakes. Rest, pending further study

Generally, the repeated luck concentrates on short periods of time and mostly around the claimants' own hometown. Probably they were through a passing phase of acute interest—or obsession—towards the UFO subject, which made them believe that any strange light in the sky was a UFO. In other cases, like the 4 photos in Marseilles 1954, they seem to follow the actions of some fraudulent person. Others are purely multiple hoaxers motivated by

psychological problems or money-seeking, as in the cases of Var and Col de Vence.

Lifetime of sightings

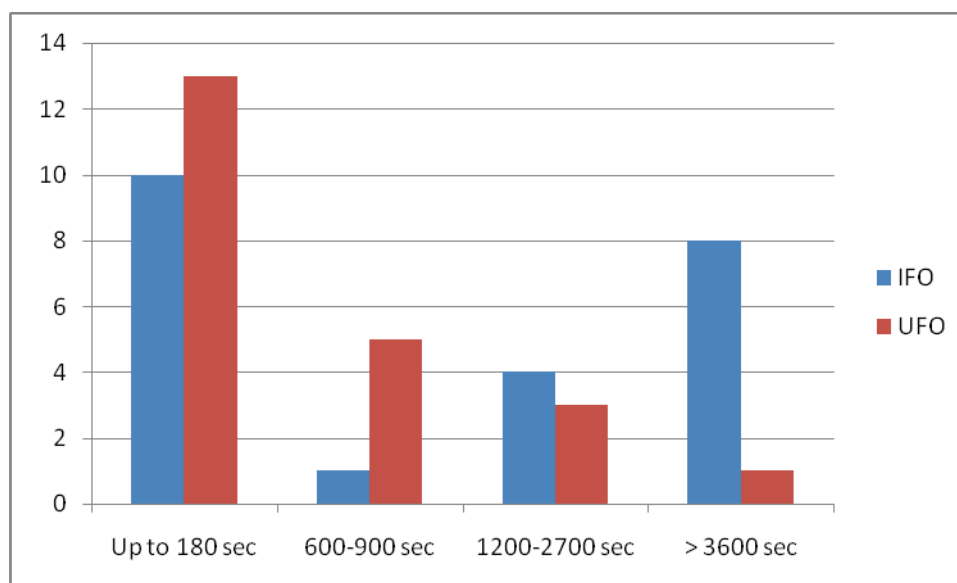
This area of analysis requires a better sample than the one available. For an adjusted catalogue of 449 events (i.e. actual individual cases considered, not entries), only 45 have their lifetime recorded in the France FOTOCAT spreadsheet. With this limited range of data the analysis is restricted to group the cases by duration and find out what appears.

Table 9
Duration (in seconds) of UFO and IFO occurrences

Category	Up to 180	600 to 900	1200 to 2700	≥ 3600	Total
UFO	13	5	3	1	22
IFO	10	1	4	8	23
Total	23	6	7	9	45

We see that sighting's duration group into 4 sets, short durations up to 3 minutes, medium durations from 10 to 15 minutes and from 20 to 45 minutes, and longer durations, of 1 hour or more.

Figure 12
Duration plot



Data are tabulated as a histogram. IFO reports have 43% of very short-lived cases (covering meteors, ball lightning, reentries, etc.), 22% of medium-lived cases (aircraft, etc.) and 35% of long-lived cases (space tests, balloons, etc.) On the other hand, most of the alleged true UFO reports last very short times as well, yet in a higher proportion (59%), some 36% have long observation times (10 to 45 minutes) and there are hardly any hour-long visual experiences (5%).

If we measure average duration values by group, we find that both UFOs and IFOs last the same for the first three intervals: 1 minute, 12 minutes and ~ 30 minutes, respectively. This agreement is suspicious concerning a hypothetical difference in the nature of the raw cases.

In the above graph, however, UFO data draw an imaginary negatively-skewed oblique line, while IFO data draw a concave curve.

The work by Poher **(6)** analyzed duration for 135 French cases. He chose other time intervals. In spite of our own limited sample, we have compared both, and found a good fit.

Table 10
Duration: comparing two samples for France

	Poher	Ballester Olmos
Up to 1 minute	32%	41%
1 to 19 minutes	41%	41%
20 to 59 minutes	18%	13%
≥ 1 hour	11%	5%

In his study, Poher observed a tendency by subjects to exaggerate the durations of their UFO sightings.

In addition, the mere selection of time intervals also plays a role in the final shape of curves. In a study by Ballester Olmos and Brænne on Norway, for example, UFO cases had a maximum for medium-lived occurrences (1 to 5 minutes), while IFO cases topped for long-lived occurrences (over 5 minutes) **(4)**. It is more than evident that exhaustive case compilations from different countries must be produced and compared to see what is going on.

In an important article, Breyse **(7)** tested the distinguishability between UFO and IFO data by using duration as a variable. He concluded that the development of catalogues was a major issue here, because of personal bias entering in the selection of cases. We fully agree. Samples must be as complete as possible. The main problem we forecast is the required neutrality in determining which cases have mundane origin and which do not.

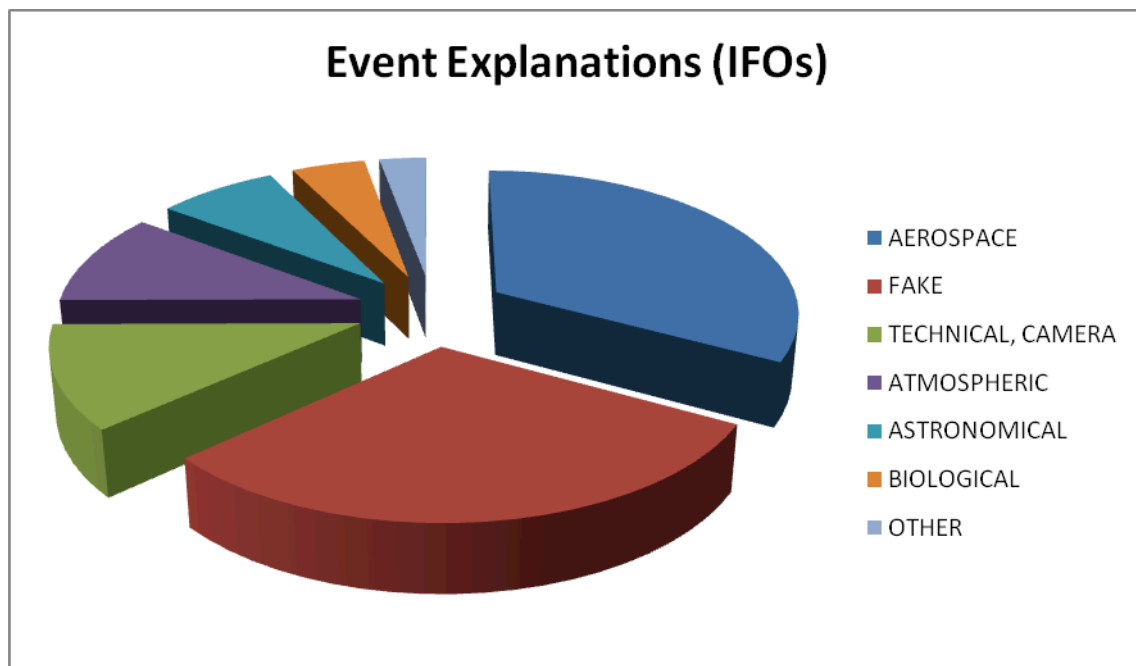
Perception errors and false photographs

Do UFOs exist? In reality, this key question can be rephrased as follows: are we sure all the phenomena reported as UFOs cannot be identified as conventional –but badly perceived– phenomena? UFO catalogues should be error-free in order to provide qualified data to study. In the meantime, we maintain that researchers should keep records of both UFO and IFO (explained) reports for contrast.

What is it that causes observers to be mistaken? In a prior section we noted that 243 (or 49%) of the France catalogue entries are solved occurrences or misidentifications. Let us review the types of actual stimuli provoking these misperceptions.

Quantitatively, in France, the top single reason to produce phony UFO pictures is a hoax (30% of bogus UFO photographs are pure fakes). Then, we can define clusters of explanations for IFO photography, as follows: Aerospace (launch or reentry of missiles and rockets, balloons, aircraft) with 33%; Technical, camera-related (spurious images like film or development flaw, lens flares and reflections) with 12%; Atmospheric and meteorological (clouds, ball and bead lightning, parhelia) with 10%; Astronomical (Venus, Moon, planets and stars, fireballs) with 7%; Biological (birds) with 5%; and Other (man-made objects and lights) with 3%.

Figure 13
Photograph errors arranged by cause



Special features

This broad definition contains a number of facets of interest (see above section on catalogue structure). 83 entries are recorded in this category. By far, the most frequent peculiarity is that of shots showing strange images that were not seen optically by the photographer! These examples are obvious candidates for all classes of mundane objects and phenomena, 32 of them are identified and 30 still unknown. It suggests a lot of research work on photographic cases is clearly pending.

AFTERWORD

An unprecedented, yet preliminary catalogue of 500 reports of UFO photographs in France has been compiled. Based on the information collected to date, the present paper stands as an initial review of some of their properties.

We urge French ufologists to check the case listing at <http://tinyurl.com/frafotocat> and contribute improvements and additional information to this compiler. The final aims are to (1) secure a complete list of

camera-recorded UFO events, and (2) subject this catalogue to a thorough study. In the meantime, we would like to encourage French researchers to re-investigate events of UFO photographs in France, revisit major cases, and collect new information on old cases, in summary, help to set up an unbeatable compilation of reports for study.

Shortage of data (limited samples) may distort statistical results. When a final survey can be accomplished, findings should be compared with other statistical studies centered on French cases, to place the data on photographic cases in proper perspective, for example Poher (6) or Besse (8). Also, results are to be collated with major statistical work performed on UFO data worldwide, for example López and Ares (9) or Gindilis *et al* (10).

A lot of work is still ahead of us, especially in the collecting, processing and both field and in-house investigation. When finished, it will enable the analyst to look for patterns in the mass of data and attempt to reply to the basic question: are UFO cases indistinguishable from resolved cases?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Laura Ballester Miquel
Stéphane Bernard
Franck Boitte
Manuel Borraz Aymerich
Rémy Fauchereau
Patrick Ferryn
Didier Gomez
Richard W. Heiden
Bruno Mancusi
Claude Maugé
Jacques Scornaux
Dominique Weinstein

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APPENDICES

A CURIOUS PHOTOGRAPH

This is a peculiar photograph I culled from a French newspaper (unfortunately I do not have a reference), and it was published with the following caption:

This strange ball, which seems to land on top of the mountains of Auvergne, was seen on July 17, 1958, by a farmer who had time too to fix it on film.



Frankly, it seems strange to me not to have seen such a picture printed in more UFO journals and books in France, as it looks quite extraordinary. I smell a rat, as they say in English. On top of that, the outline of the UFO was familiar to me, and after searching my memory I remembered the case in Picacho Peak, New Mexico, on March 12, 1967. Here we see the actual photograph taken:



We can realize that the resemblance is total: the French photo is just a close-up of the area where the UFO is on the American picture! The profile of the hill matches perfectly. Mystery solved, then. By the way, the original photograph was published by APRO, which withheld the photographer's name on request, and strangely it received no analysis in the following years. US engineer Larry Robinson believes it is simply a suction cup stuck to a car window.

UFOs AT CLOSE-RANGE PICTURED IN MOTION?

This very interesting-looking photograph will certainly capture the reader's attention. It was allegedly taken (by someone named Solange) near Perpignan in September 1972. (1). At first, it looks like a UFO taking off from the ground. But it does have a recurrent feature we also find in other sensational UFO pictures: the image seems impressive but there is hardly any documentation for a proper investigation.



In order to decide about the nature of this nice UFO picture, we will resort to the methodology of comparative ufology. A review of UFO literature produces several photographs remarkably similar to this one, as the examples that follow.

July 1975, a picture was taken by a Dutch tourist identified as R.D.M. in Pas de la Casa (Andorra) from a moving car. Nothing abnormal was seen at the time of taking the photo **(2)**.



August 8, 1983, St. Peter, Black Forest (Germany). Picture by Manfred Saier. Again, the photograph was taken through the window of a car in motion **(3)**.



November 22, 1966, Willamette Pass, Oregon (USA). An un-named Ph.D. scientist claimed he had seen this UFO while motoring with his automobile **(4)**.



1966, Black Forest (Germany). A tourist said to be named Siana Collado reported to have found this weird image after a print was developed. She did not witness anything at the time **(5)**.



March 8, 1964, Oberwesel (Germany). The photographer (a Harry Hauxler) claimed to have seen and photographed this peculiar-shaped object...while riding a train (6).



All of the above cases have something in common: a road sign or lamp-post crossed rapidly in front of the camera from the interior of a moving car or train. The typical blurred image, identical in all examples, is merely produced by the brief and quick exposure of an object, nearer to the camera than the background because of the velocity of the running vehicle the photographer was on.

It explains why in most cases the honest photographer affirmed they had not observed anything unusual. Others, however, invent a story out of the picture—one that collapses after investigation, of course.

A variant of this image is the classical photograph taken on August 8, 1965, in Beaver County, Pennsylvania (USA). On this occasion it was the quick manual movement of a hand-held plate in front of a camera that produced this “illuminated flying saucer” effect (7).



Back to the French photograph of the beginning, it is our frank opinion that it falls into the same category, it is either a road post photographed from a moving car or (most probably) a disk rapidly moved by a hand (the appendage has hand-like features), quite conveniently pictured against a rural background for the purpose of obtaining a spectacular UFO portrait!

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A LIGHT PHENOMENON

UFOmania number 59, published June 2009, contained information on a UFO photograph taken at 08.10 hours on January 19, 2009, at Mazamet (Tarn). It was apparently so amazing that it was printed on the magazine's cover. I advise interested readers to go back to that issue for additional details.

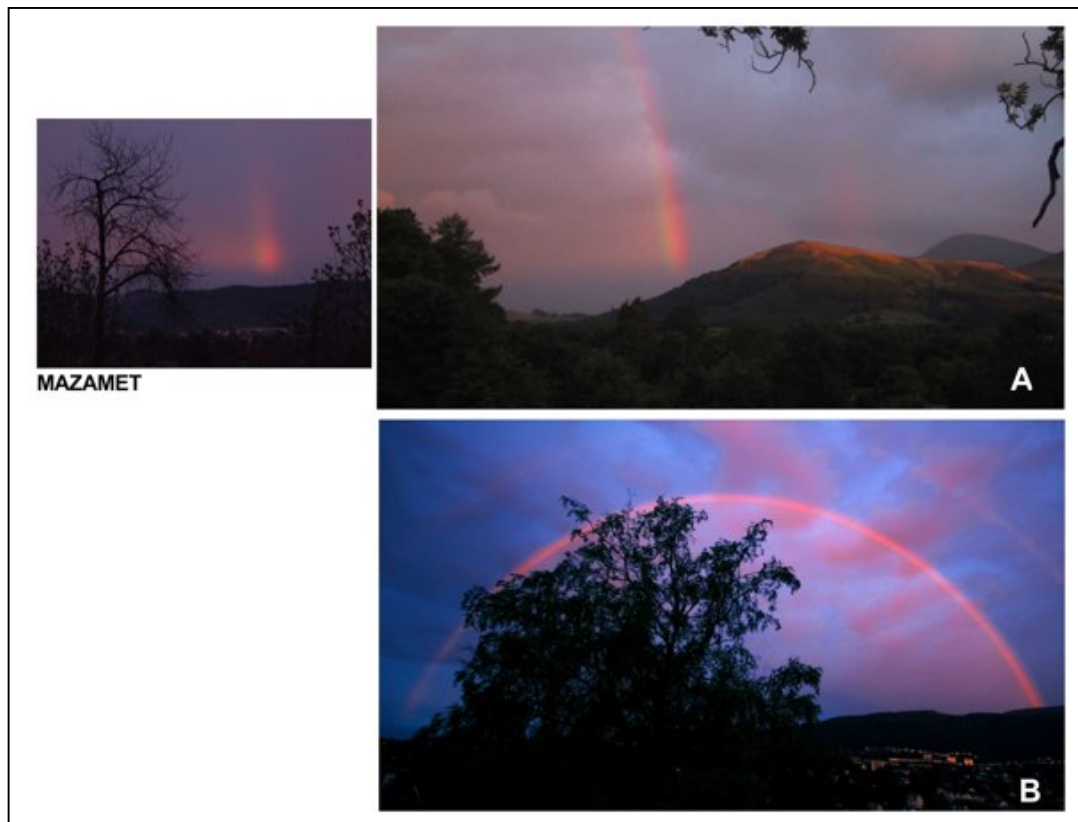


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Although the FOTOCAT database ends case entries by December 31, 2005, this observation and picture attracted my attention. If the object was in motion, could it be a form of ball lightning? If not, was it another atmospheric natural phenomenon? Thanks to the kindness of Didier Gomez, the magazine's editor, I received a copy of the photograph and I decided to share the sighting with the members of EuroUFO, an internet forum list formed by 100 European, scientifically-oriented UFO researchers from 18 countries.

As a result, several messages were exchanged by Martin Shough (UK), Clas Svahn (Sweden), Wim van Utrecht (Belgium), Manuel Borraz (Spain) and Roger Paquay (Belgium) in an effort to analyze the photo and the environmental conditions. Sun pillars, sun dogs, mock suns, and parhelia were considered and rejected as potential explanations. Local technical data were acquired and studied, the image was compared to other optical phenomena in the atmosphere, and soon a general consensus was reached: this phenomenon was produced by a *sunrise red rainbow*, the arc of which was captured in the photograph.

Manuel Borraz produced a composite photograph with the Mazanet image and two other cases of sunset rainbows, for comparison purposes.



Mazanet picture compared with red rainbows:

- (A) <http://www.atoptics.co.uk/rainbows/redbow.htm>
- (B) <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/13322079> (inverted)

AN INTRIGUING OCCURRENCE

The following photograph did receive the honor of being printed in full color in the cover of the *Lumières Dans La Nuit* journal (issue # 229-230, July-August 1983, pages 32-39). It was taken on February 6, 1982, at around 21.00 hours at the Etangs de Sandun, in Guerande, Loire Atlantique.



It was categorized as “exceptional” by the main field investigator of this event, Gérard Beneteau, and these are the basic elements of the event: a 20-year-old witness, who prefers to remain anonymous, was driving a car from the village of La Madeleine to La Baule, when he saw on his right, at the height of the trees, a bright red-orange luminosity he thought it was 10 meters in diameter which disappeared behind the trees. He went out of the car, took his camera and proceeded to advance towards where the lights had descended, in a marshy area. He arrived to a few tens of meters from them and started to take photographs. He took 10 pictures until a powerful white light flash appeared on the spot. He was panic-driven and fled.

Initially he saw a 50-centimeter ball, moving at ground level in a chaotic fashion, and he took the first photo, then a second ball appeared and joined the first one, moving without any order, and three more photos were made. Now a third ball appeared near the others and the youngster took three more photos. The witness realized the balls did not descend from the sky. They were manifesting on site spontaneously as if coming from nowhere. A fourth small sphere was seen and three more pictures were snapped. Seconds later, a flash developed and the very nervous observer decided to leave the scene. The sighting lasted one minute.

The event is particularly bizarre and—if the set of pictures are authentic, as they seem to be—I wonder if they are really pictures of a class of natural phenomenon akin to the will-o’-the-wisp (*ignis fatuus*). Sometimes, the oxidation of phosphane and methane produced by organic decay can cause glowing light. Remember that it was a swampy area. Alternatively, this could be a form of ball lightning. The case is open for a complementary study.

TWO STRANGE DAYS OF MARCH

1974 was a “wave” year in France (also in other countries, Spain for example). The formation of waves seems to be related to sociological, cultural or media causes and a final analysis is pending. In the absence of this analysis, I will just present a quick overview of two days that generated many UFO reports, including 9 alleged UFO photographs! I refer to March 23 and 24, 1974.

In this precise instance, except for some individual episodes, the motivation for such a high number of incidents placed along these two days may have a clue: the massive UFO night watch organized by UFO enthusiasts the night of March 23 to 24.

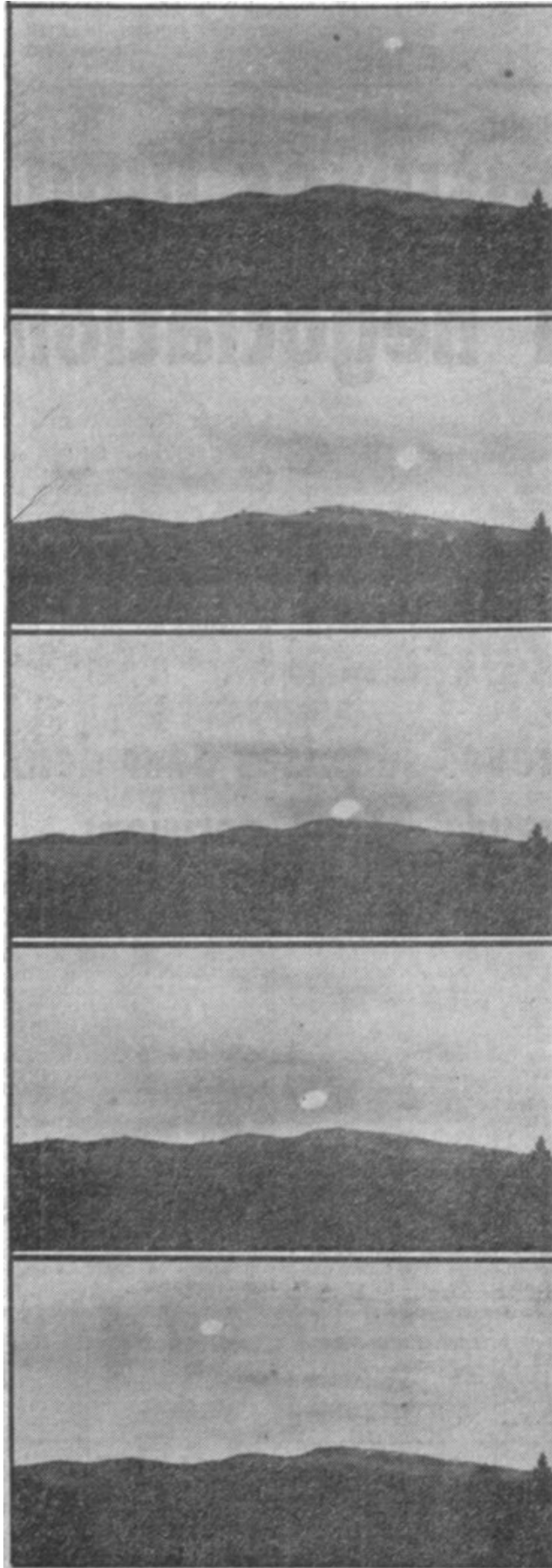
In summary, these are the events and our comments:

March 23, 1974, Afternoon.

Le Thillot, Vosges (88).

Cameraman: Michel Bonne (ORTF).

Apparently, the images of a disc overflying the hills that appeared in the colored film were not observed visually by the TV cameraperson. This is a well-acknowledged bogus film mounted in anticipation of the nearby April 1st.



March 23, 1974, 22:00.

Carignan, Ardennes (08).

Photographers: Serge Spingler and Daniel Gérard.

It was reported by Jean-Michael Ligeron in his book *O.V.N.I. en Ardennes*, pages 66-68. This is an observation occurred during a national surveillance night organized by LDLN. Pictures were taken of two discs that made a sort of "circular ballet". Nevertheless no image appeared after print development.

March 23, 1974, 23:00.

Albiosc, Alpes de Haute-Provence (04).

Photographer: it is believed to have been Jean Bedet.

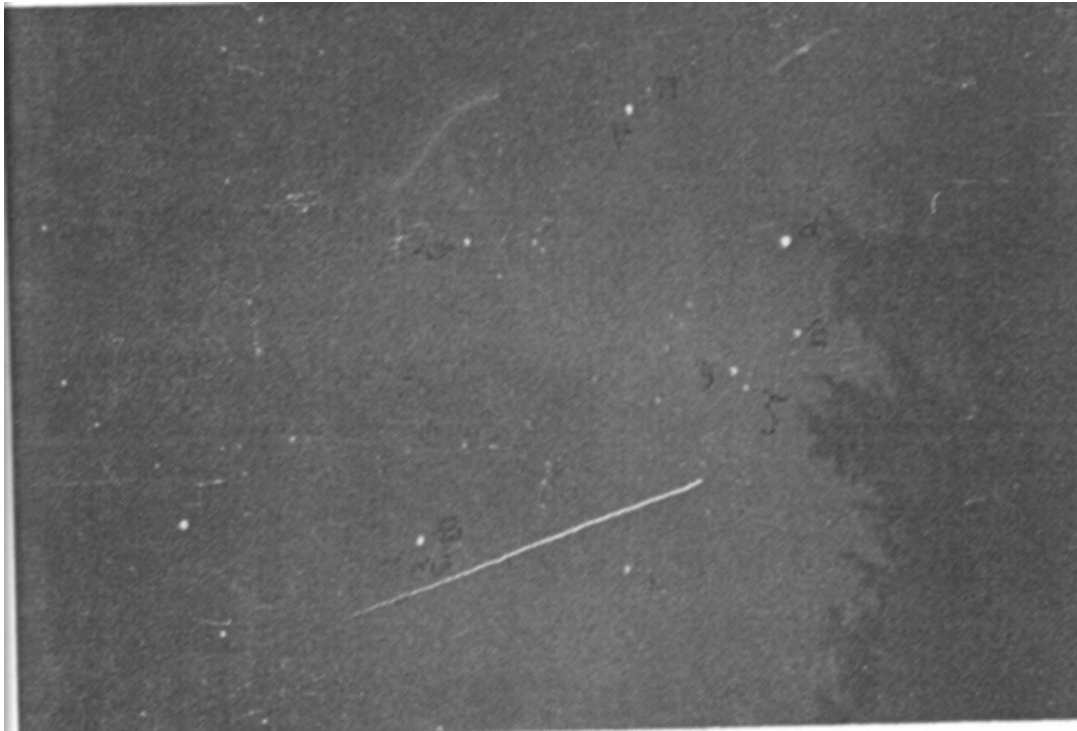
As reported by Jean Bedet himself in *Lumières Dans La Nuit* of October 1974, he and a team of ufologists participated in the night watch in the region of Barjols, when they sighted a UFO described as a red object with green lines facing up (others saw these lines facing down!). On April 14, Bedet had to return to this village to see his parents and spend the day in the countryside. He wrote: "I left my car in the Barjols village square to meet a friend and drink a coffee. Upon return to my car I found, under the windshield wipers, an envelope, inside which there was a piece of paper with a few lines written and a slide showing a red mass with tubes or green rays headed down...in the region of our night watch!"



This well-known picture has been published numerous times in magazines and books. The consensus among the top expert UFO researchers in France consulted is that it is a hoax made by Bedet himself, obviously designed to confirm their visual sighting of days before.

March 23, 1974, 23:05.
Isère (38).
Photographer: Mr. Huget.

I found this photograph in the archives of Michel Monnerie, the outstanding French photo analyst (unfortunately retired from ufology too early). The print had an attached manuscript note saying "aircraft or S.A., insufficient information." Yes, the picture is perfectly compatible with the luminous track left in the night sky by an aircraft or an artificial satellite.



March 23, 1974 (approximate date), Night.
Bois-d'Arcy, Yvelines (78).
Photographer: Sébastien Colard.

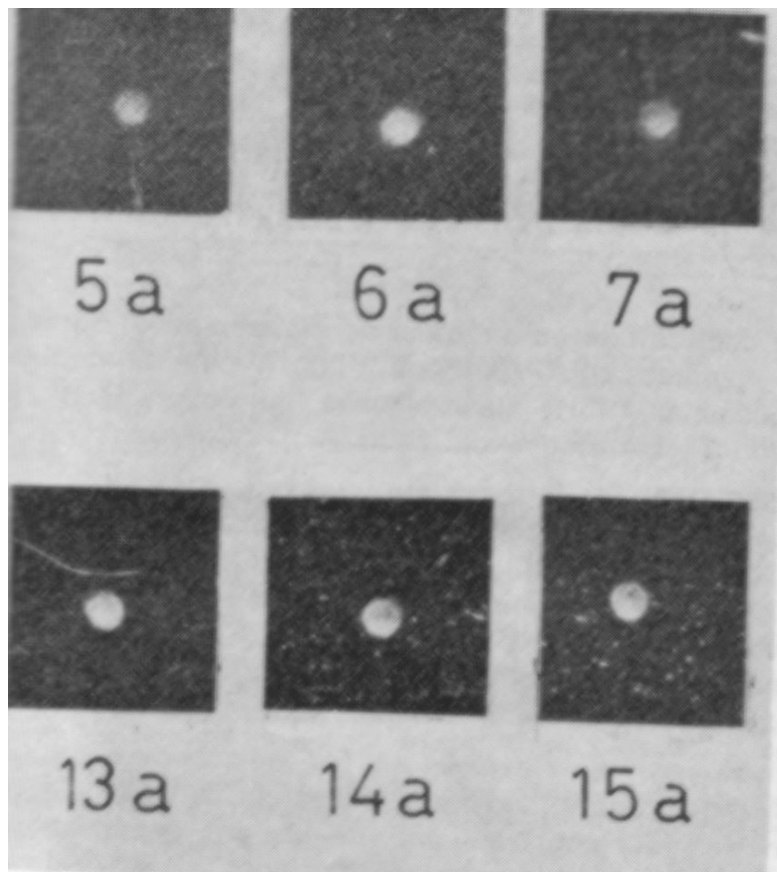
According to the daily *Le Méridional - La France* of March 31, 1974 (see *Phénomène Spatiaux*, #40-42, June-December 1974, page 39), the photographer "was surprised to discover in the film, exposed during half an hour, the trace of an unknown vehicle."

In other words, it is a long-exposure photo where nothing was seen by the human eye. The trace might be—as in the previous entry—a satellite or simply an aircraft.

March 23, 1974, Night.
Mont Saint-Jean, Territoire de Belfort (90).
Photographer: Mr. Schirch.

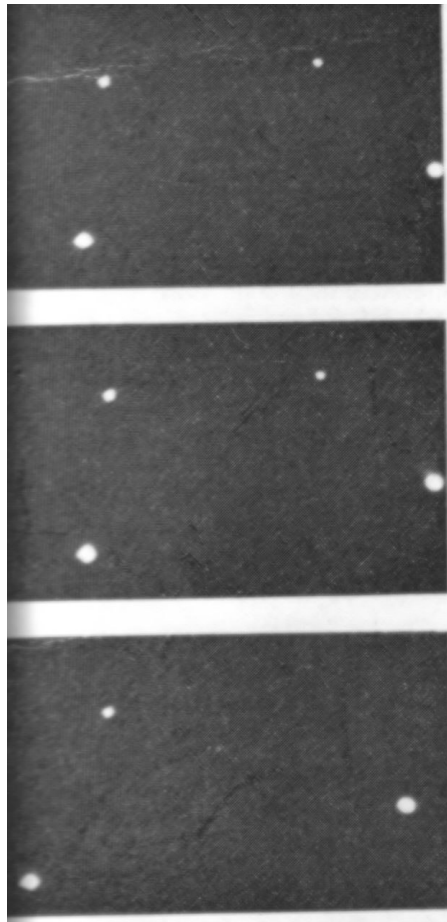
Again, it was witnessed and snapped during the national night watch, this time by a LDLN regional delegate. Michel Monnerie (RESUFO) received the negatives to study and he wrote in LDLN of June-July 1975 that “we are in the presence of truly strange pictures. The object, on each of the 18 photos, is always similar to itself (around 2/5 of the diameter of the Moon) and yet it evolves from a fuzzy aspect on top to a very neat and even a little swelling.”

A complete absence of data on this series of pictures makes the sequence impossible to analyze.



March 24, 1974, 00:30.
Senac, Hautes-Pyrénées (65).
Photographer: unknown.

In an article by Michel Monnerie in LDLN of October 1974 on the balance of the night watch of March 23-24, 1974, he mentions that a youngster from Tarbais saw and photographed *something*: it was claimed to be a punctiform object in a very brief report. “Total confusion reigns about the pictures,” Monnerie states. One photograph was taken south-east, another south, and another south-west. The witness thought he was taking photos of stars. Monnerie says that by examining the negatives, he “quickly discovered that all stars are moving and that none of them is exactly at the same distance of the other...A beam of light is observed over the object. In negative #3 an object disappears.”



It seems to me, however, that if the witness thought to be taking pictures of stars and the photos show star-like points, the odds are that they are probably stars, probably distorted somehow. This episode needs to be assessed first-hand, including an expert analysis of the original negatives.

March 24, 1974, 21:00.

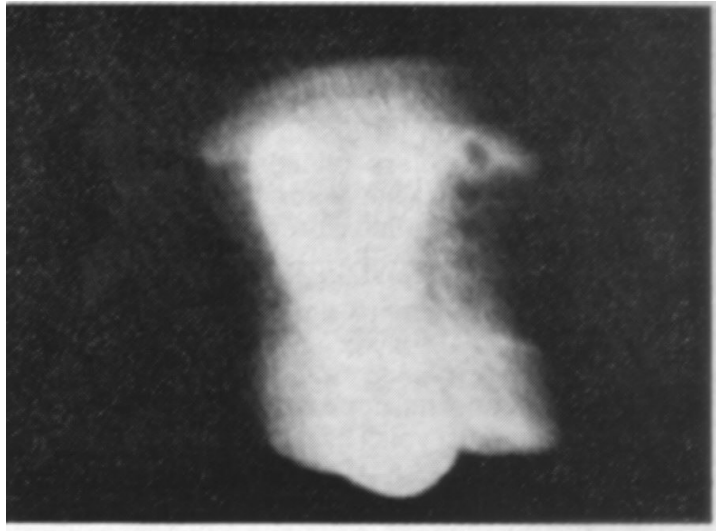
Gien, Loiret (45).

Photographer: anonymity requested.

Pierre Berthault reports in LDLN of January 1975 about this sighting by a Portuguese gentleman: "he left a building in the company of a friend, and he saw quickly rising over a small hill a set of four flashing lights, colored green yellow and dull orange, clearly aligned horizontally. He sprang to his car, parked a few meters away, and grabbed his camera. It was hard to frame the object as it was moving rapidly to a position overhead, but he took two pictures. The object disappeared from sight behind the building." The event lasted 10-15 seconds.

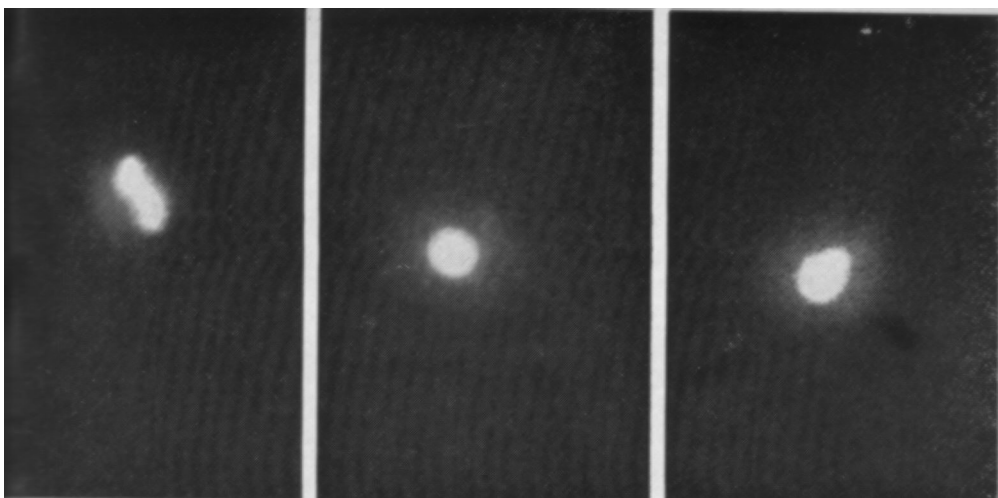
Apparently, the Gendarmerie investigated the case (it should be confirmed with the Gendarmerie UFO files). The main witness and photographer had already had another UFO observation in Portugal in 1961 or 1962, and it seems he had the camera in his car because of recent UFO sightings in the area since December 1973. Regarding the pictures, only the second photo had an image

on it (a very small trace); finally it was developed and enlarged by the investigator. Berthault presented it to the witness, who was very surprised by the image. It did not show any line of lights but a saucer-looking object ascending from what seems to be the terrain, although the witness estimated the altitude of the UFO at 150 or 200 meters above the ground. This is a curious story that requires, in my view, being revisited.



March 24, 1974, 21:50.
Valenciennes, Nord (59).
Photographer: Mr. Clipet.

It was Mr. Clipet himself who wrote an article in LDLN of May 1976, where he described having seen "a very large purplish red light in the sky at 45°... the observation lasted some 20 seconds." Four color photographs were taken. The streetlamps are visible in the pictures; therefore the position of the light can be determined exactly.



This UFO night watch, organized by France-Inter and the UFO magazine *Lumières Dans La Nuit*, was very profitable in terms of sightings and

photographs, yet most probably the frequency of IFOs in the mass of observations is very high. In this precise case, the film negatives have not been scrutinized and the weight of the proof resides in the witness (and informant) testimony. This event is worthy of being researched by independent investigators.