

An oceanographer surveys the Houghton impact site on Nunavut's Devon Island. Scientists believe the crater still contains traces of ancient organic matter millions of years after the fiery crash of a space rock.

ED STRUZIK / CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

DELVE REPORT

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Crater may harbour life from outer space

Site of meteorite crash
23 million years ago

BY RANDY BOSWELL

The northern Canadian meteorite crater favoured by NASA researchers for its Mars-like features is being touted as a possible litmus test for extraterrestrial life.

Scientists have discovered the Houghton impact site on Nunavut's Devon Island — similar in size and structure to hundreds of Martian craters — has retained traces of ancient organic matter that can still be detected millions of years after the fiery crash of a space rock.

These tiny "biomarkers" could be used in the search for signs life once existed on Mars, says the research team, and help put fossil hunters — in their modern guise as "astropaleontologists" — at the forefront of space exploration.

The team, including University of Aberdeen geologist John Parnell and Pascal Lee of NASA's Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute, has published its study of the Houghton crater in the May edition of the journal *Geology*.

"It is widely believed that frequent impact events on the early Earth de-

stroyed organic matter and inhibited evolution; however, the Houghton data suggest that in moderate-sized craters, biomolecules, fossilized remains, and even extant microbial life may have survived," the authors state.

"Similarly, as the great majority of craters on Mars are less than 30 kilometres in diameter, any organic matter that may have been present in the craters is unlikely to have been completely destroyed, and could have left a record."

The findings are important, the study adds, because "impact craters are viewed as possible sites for the establishment and evolution of primitive life on Earth and other planets such as Mars."

The Houghton crater, which is about 24 kilometres in diameter, was formed by a meteor strike 23 million years ago. The remoteness and "polar desert" environment of Devon Island means the crater has undergone much less change than other impact sites around the world, making it one of the best places on Earth to study a simulated Martian landscape.

Spacecraft that have probed Mars in recent years have fuelled a belief among some experts that the cold, dry planet was once warm and wet enough to support life. Others believe tiny organisms may still be living there.

Scientists seeking signs of extraterrestrial life are increasingly focused on developing techniques to detect infinitesimally small organisms, fossilized remnants of microbes or merely the faint traces of the biochemical building blocks needed as a base for life's primordial soup.

Mr. Parnell is part of a team that was awarded a \$1-million research grant by the British government in 2003 to create new ways to pinpoint evidence of the earliest inklings of life on Earth, billions of years before plants and animals first became extensively preserved in the planet's fossil record.

"If the technology proves successful," he said at the time, "it will enable us to take advantage of a new source of information about the history of life on Earth, and potentially on other planets, too."

In 1996, a team of U.S. researchers claimed to have found a Martian meteorite in Antarctica with organic molecules, bacteria-like fossils and other evidence of life having once existed on the red planet.

Critics have disputed the claim, arguing the supposed biological features found on the rock were formed by geological processes on Mars or were created after the meteor struck Earth.

But the debate has spurred the development of astropaleontology, the search for fossilized remnants of ancient extraterrestrial life. An international paleontology conference to be held next month in Halifax will include presentations on the emerging field of study.

"On many planetary bodies, life may have become extinct after a period of existence in the past," says a symposium outline. "Astropaleontology may be a chief discipline in current and future missions to other places in the solar system."

CanWest News Service

UNFRIENDLY FORESTS

Neither moose, nor bear, but 'something big' lurks in Yukon

BY NATHAN VANDERKLIPPE

TESLIN, YUKON • It was a quiet night in Teslin when the woods began to crackle and the dogs started to howl.

Melvin Harper heard it, and saw a figure flitting near a neighbour's light post, then through a forested island next to the log houses in this Yukon town of 400.

"It was something big, about eight feet tall. It's black, hairy muscular. It was huge," he said. "He was like teasing us, making noises in the bush, coming back and forth."

"It was like a sasquatch," said Tom Dickson, who also saw the creature. "Like how you see it on TV, how they advertise it — the same image. You can't see no eyes, nothing, just black. But it was moving pretty fast."

Roger Smarch heard it, too, and went to look the next morning. It's at least the third sighting of a bush creature in Teslin in a year, leading locals to surmise that perhaps a sasquatch — or a family of them — has migrated north from more typical haunts in northern California and the interior of B.C.

Looking in the woods near the place where the creature was last heard, Mr. Smarch found crushed meadow flowers and

small trees snapped in half more than two metres up their trunks. And he discovered a track more than 30 centimetres long and printed deep into the mud. When his 297-pound uncle tried to make an impression beside it, he couldn't make a dent.

"I think it's Bigfoot," he said as he pulled back the rubber mat and wooden crate that he placed over the print to protect it, more than a week after the strange night.

Some local hunters have said it looks like a print left by a moose that slipped in the mud, but Mr. Smarch won't hear of it.

"It's not a bear, not a moose. It's definitely something," he said. "Whatever it is was that made that track was big."

Mr. Smarch also found something else: a tuft of dark chocolate-coloured hair on the forest floor that he says was left behind by the creature.

Yesterday morning, Philip Merchant inspected the tuft of hair in his lab at the Yukon environment department. The hair is not hollow, ruling out moose and caribou. It's too long to be horse, and the sample also includes a downy underfur, which rules out humans — and perhaps other two-footed creatures.

"We probably can rule out primate," said Mr. Merchant, a wildlife technician. "But I don't know. Are sasquatches primates?"

That leaves a few options: grizzly bear, muskox and bison.

"If somebody brought me this chunk of hair and there was no other information at all with it, I'd say I'm virtually certain it's a bison," he said.

"But of unknown Yukon mammals the possibilities are endless. Is it sasquatch? I don't know."

Those who didn't see it are near uniform in their skepticism. The group of people who reported this sighting is almost identical to the group who said they saw a mystery creature a year ago. Some had been drinking Kokanee beer, as the joke in town now goes, and the sighting happened about 1 a.m. — not pitch black in Yukon's long summer days, but not exactly midday, either.

Whatever the creature was, those who saw it took it seriously, said Marion Gagnon, a student who moved to Teslin from Saskatchewan to work for the summer. She was biking home when she came upon men looking for it. They ordered her to stay with them for safety.

"Some of them were armed

with axes and bow and arrows," she said. "It was actually kind of comical. I remember laughing because it reminded me of Beauty and the Beast, when they go out to kill the beast."

"Do I buy it? No I don't. Not in the least," said Robert Wiseman, who grew up in Teslin. "I think maybe a bear."

Mr. Merchant plans to run a few tests on the hair over the next few days, but it may be impossible to know its origin for certain without DNA testing — and at this point, the Yukon government isn't exactly eager to spend taxpayer dollars on the search for bigfoot.

Rodney Smarch and Alex Lindsay hope they will, if only to put their fears to rest. The two teenagers cowered in a grandparent's house when they heard the creature knocking at 5:30 a.m. When they looked out, they saw it hiding behind a car.

"It was kneeling down looking at the house and you could see the knees over the car," said Mr. Lindsay.

"A bunch of guys were drinking for a couple of days. One of my friends said if you drink lots, your spirit leaves you and stuff comes to bug you," he said. "I guess it came to bug them. And after that they never drank again."

Ninety per cent of Teslin's population is native, mostly Tlingit people whose lore includes references to a mysterious character called the bushman that's usually used as a story to scare children.

But Mr. Harper is certain it's true, no matter what the hair sample or common sense might say.

CanWest News Service

THE EPOCH TIMES • JULY 14 - 20, 2005

Tom Cruise Says He Believes in Aliens

BERLIN, (Reuters) - Hollywood actor Tom Cruise not only battles creatures from outer space in his latest film "War of the Worlds", he also believes aliens really exist, he told a German newspaper.

Asked in an interview with the tabloid daily Bild if he believed in aliens, Cruise said: "Yes, of course.

Are you really so arrogant as to believe we are alone in this universe?"

"Millions of stars, and we're supposed to be the only living creatures? No, there are many things out there, we just don't know," Cruise, 42, said in the interview published in German.

NATIONAL POST, SATURDAY,
APRIL 23, 2005

OUTER SPACE

COUNTDOWN BEGINS FOR SPACE TOURISM

Burt Rutan, developer of SpaceShipOne, which won a US\$10-million prize aimed at creating a space tourism industry, predicts companies will begin taking passengers to the edge of space in four to six years.

The first vehicles, using cheaper versions of government spacecraft designs, will make flights

funded by ticket sales, with 50 to 100 astronauts going up the first year, Rutan said in remarks for a hearing of the U.S. Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics.

SpaceShipOne, built by Rutan and financed by Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen, won the X Prize contest with a flight to the edge of space on Oct. 4., 2004. Rutan's company is developing five SpaceShipOne-type vehicles for Virgin Group Ltd.'s Virgin Galactic unit.

Virgin Galactic plans to launch two-hour suborbital flights as soon as 2008 for about US\$200,000 a person. *Bloomberg*

FIVE-STOREY BALLOON

'We expect a few people to report it as a UFO'

NATIONAL POST,

TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2005

BY CHRIS WATTIE

Sometime today, scientists from five countries plan to launch a 33-storey silvery balloon the size of a small stadium from northern Sweden and send it, along with the Canadian-built telescope dangling below it, drifting slowly across the Arctic Circle.

The Balloon-borne Large Aperture Sub-millimeter Telescope — BLAST for short — will spend a week to nine days floating through the upper reaches of the atmosphere over Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, gathering data on the most distant stars and galaxies and possibly telling researchers something about the birth of the universe itself.

And giving northerners something of a show along the way, said Dave Halliday, vice-president of AMEC, the builder of the gondola that will carry BLAST's vast array of instruments.

"Oh Lord yes, they will certainly be able to see it," he said in an interview yesterday from the company's headquarters in Port Coquitlam, B.C. "It's a 37-million-cubic-foot balloon covered in silver mylar. It's the size of a stadium.

"We expect a few people to call in and report it as a UFO."

The helium-filled balloon was to be launched today — weather allowing — from the Swedish Space Corporation facility in Kiruna, rise 40 kilometres to the very edge of the Earth's atmosphere and float along the prevailing high-altitude winds toward Canada.

If all goes according to plan, sometime next week it will be deflated gradually and the gondola carrying 260 sensitive astronomical instruments will parachute to a controlled landing somewhere in the Western Arctic.

"It's a balloon, so by definition it's at the mercy of the elements," Mr. Halliday said. "We're not exactly sure where it will come down ... but we designed the [instrument] gondola to withstand nine times the force of gravity and we are determined to retrieve it. We want to show this is a re-usable system."

But with a telescope and instruments roughly the size and weight of a pair of SUVs, the project managers also have a backup plan should the balloon start drifting toward a town or city: They're prepared to pop their own balloon from a chase plane.

Mr. Halliday said the balloon has already been test-flown over the deserts of the southwestern United States and is confident today's launch will go off without a hitch. "And eventually it will come down in a controlled fashion."

BLAST is designed to get astronomers' instruments above the clouds and pollution in the lower atmosphere without breaking the bank with the enormous

expense of space-based telescopes such as the Hubble orbiting telescope, Mr. Halliday said.

"This is sort of the poor man's space telescope," he said. "It's sort of on the threshold of space — right up there in the clean clear air ... without the huge budget of a space launch."

Once up there, the telescope — which includes a two-metre-wide reflector mirror on loan from NASA — will collect images of the most distant and dimmest objects in the galaxy, as well as the faint background radiation that will tell astronomers more about the formation of stars and even whole galaxies.

"BLAST seeks to answer some of our biggest cosmological questions regarding how stars and galaxies got to be the way they are," said Dr. Mark Devlin, principal investigator for the project and astronomer at the University of Pennsylvania.

The telescope will survey swatches of the sky looking for faint stellar objects and measuring cosmic rays, radiation left over from galaxies formed five to 12 billion years ago, when the universe was a tenth of its current age.

Mr. Halliday said astronomers are racing to gather information from "cosmic microwaves" to answer questions regarding the formation and evolution of stars and galaxies.

"It allows us to go back to within seconds of the beginning of the universe," he said, calling cosmic radiation the project will study "... the soup that was left over after the Big Bang."

"If you can understand that,

then you can understand light and mass and a whole host of things that we don't yet know about the formation of the universe."

BLAST will also survey distant molecular clouds associated with the earliest stages of star formation and observe the farthest reaches of our own solar system including asteroid and comet belts.

"Of course, once we have our data, the real hard part comes in figuring out what all this information means," Dr. Devlin said.

Dozens of universities in the United States, Europe and Canada have their hopes pinned on the BLAST project, including researchers at the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia.

The Canadian Space Agency is one of the agencies helping to fund the plan to get a telescope into space "on the cheap," along with NASA and the famed Jet Propulsion Laboratories in Pasadena, Calif.

Scientists from around the world will be monitoring the flight of the telescope, which can be tracked by GPS by logging on to: <http://tower.nsf.nasa.gov/sweden/sweden05.htm>

National Post

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Toronto Sun • Monday,
May 2 • 2005

Chinless merman

TEHRAN — Fishermen claim they've spotted an amphibious creature resembling a human in the Caspian sea. It's said to be about 5-foot-6, with a muscular build, webbed hands and black-green hair. His lower lip is said to join smoothly to his neck above the gills.

SATURN'S MOON, TITAN, might have a large ice volcano on its surface, according to observations of NASA's Cassini spacecraft, the BBC reports. The 30-kilometre-wide cryovolcano is believed to be made up of frozen nitrogen created by methane thrusting up from under the surface. Because Titan resembles an early Earth, scientists hope studying it will help them understand how life began.

The Cassini mission was launched in October 1997 and arrived at the Saturn system last year. — DOSE

Toronto Sun • Tuesday,
May 3 • 2005

Bigfoot on TV

WINNIPEG — *A Current Affair* says they've bought the supposed bigfoot video from Norway House, Man., ferry operator Bobby Clarke and will show it tomorrow night on their syndicated show. They aren't revealing the purchase price or how they learned about the blurry video, but say it is backed by bigfoot experts Matthew Moneymaker of the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization and animalist Franklin Ruehl.

Toronto Sun
Wednesday, July 6 • 2005

NASA gets sued

MOSCOW (AP) — NASA's mission that sent a space probe smashing into a comet raised more than cosmic dust — it also brought a \$300-million US lawsuit from a Russian astrologer. Marina Bai has sued the U.S. space agency, claiming the Deep Impact probe that punched a crater into the comet Tempel 1 Sunday "ruins the natural balance of forces in the universe."

The Epoch Times

MAY 5 - 11, 2005

Aussie scientists create unbreakable diamond code

SYDNEY (Reuters) - Australian scientists believe they have developed an unbreakable information code to stop hackers, using a diamond, a kitchen microwave oven and an optical fibre. Researchers at Melbourne University used the microwave to 'fuse' a tiny diamond, just 1/1000th of a millimeter, onto an optical fibre, which could be used to create a single photon beam of light which they say cannot be hacked.

For true believers, UFOs aren't about flying saucers and rectal probes. They're about improving ourselves

UFOs from space

PHILIP MARCHAND
TORONTO STAR

In a wooded area north of Toronto, in the quiet of the night, Melinda was ready. After months of preparation — psychic exercises, meditation, a bit of yoga, listening to lectures on UFOs; everything designed to tune her mind to the telepathic messages of extraterrestrials — the time was right.

"Oh, something is so going to happen," she thought.

It did. "All of a sudden, as clear as day, we saw this very, very tall — nine or ten feet — being come out of the woods," she says. "I didn't see his face, but he was a massive figure. We were just so, like, staring at him. Omigod. There's an E.T. in front of me. This is so wicked. He kind of turned in our direction, and I thought, I'm not ready for a physical experience."

Fortunately, or unfortunately, there was no such experience. The being retreated into the darkness.

As Melinda recalled the experience, we sat, four of us, in the living room of a three-storey house in Rosedale, the home of Vera and Terrence Van Horne. This particular afternoon, Terrence was away but his wife Vera, 39, a Russian woman who has been living in Canada for the past 10 years, was present. So were Carlos Paz Wells, 51, a Peruvian who has been in Canada for five years and is an employee of the Bell Mobility customer service department, and Melinda, 27, who is in financial services.

Carlos was the most striking of the individuals present, as well as the most experienced, by far, in contact with extraterrestrials. She is now known as Veronica Wells, since a sex-change operation.

"I'm the only trans-gendered contactee in the world, at this

moment," she stated with serene pride.

Her late father was a UFO researcher in Peru named Carlos Paz Garcia, and her brother, Sixto Paz Wells, is another noted UFO contactee. Sixto has been active in organizing expeditions of spectators, including journalists, to Peru to witness UFO sightings. The first such sighting took place in 1974, in the desert of Chilca, about 60 kilometres from Lima.

In 1989, he organized a similar expedition to Peru. Among the journalists present was Beatriz Parga, who subsequently wrote an article about her experience for the *Miami Herald*. When I called Parga in Miami, she confirmed that she had seen strange phenomena in the sky on that trip — orange lights and what looked like two moons, one white, the other red.

"I really saw something that was very unusual," she told me. "It was not normal, what happened."

So what if a lot of people would regard the mission of Veronica Wells and Melinda and Vera and Terrence as nutty?

"Sooner or later, nobody will be able to deny their existence," Veronica says of extraterrestrials. "The evidence will just keep piling up."

In the meantime, Veronica and her friends are preparing themselves.

"The contact with extraterrestrials is part of the objective of the group, but the main goal is to improve ourselves," Veronica says. "We are looking for the possibility of being able to have an intelligent relationship with other civilizations and other peoples. We're trying in some way to be intermediaries between them and us."

Their involvement with UFOs

fulfils many of the classic functions of religion — fellowship, self-improvement, contact with superior beings. The last point is crucial and reflects the simple truth that the human race cannot bear to be alone in this frightening universe. Who wouldn't want a helping hand from friendly beings with infinitely more sophisticated understandings of the universe than our own? (Exactly what benefit these extraterrestrials will get from contact with us. I have no idea.)

"UFOs are, from one standpoint, an effort to develop a synthesis of science and religion," comments Dan Merkur, a professor at the University of Toronto's Centre for the Study of Religion.

Merkur thinks the effort is largely benign. "Rather than a reactionary religion, it's a step-forward kind of religion," he says. "Frankly I'd rather have people meditating on space ships than turning into terrorists."

I asked Veronica Wells about the religion of the aliens themselves. "They don't have a reli-

'We are looking for the possibility of being able to have an intelligent relationship with other civilizations and other peoples'

VERONICA WELLS
Contactee

gion like us," she said. "They don't have priests, they don't have temples, they don't have things like that. They have a common belief — how we can translate this? — in the power of existence. They consider life as the most beautiful manifestation of this power. Life in balance, life in harmony is their goal."

Do they believe in God? "They consider God is a source of power, of creation — the power to control everything," Veronica replied.

What about life after death? "They consider what we call 'soul' is an element connected to the source."

I was a bit disappointed. It is easy to imagine the fantastic

technological powers extraterrestrials possess — slipping into parallel universes through wormholes, surfing the electromagnetic waves of the cosmos. But their metaphysics doesn't sound advanced much beyond Deepak Chopra.

Of course, we humans don't keep getting new and improved versions of philosophy and theology, the way we keep getting new and improved products of mechanical engineering. Perhaps the extraterrestrials are not much smarter than we are, in this regard.

Nonetheless, there is no gainsaying the seriousness of this group and their quest for self-improvement through extraterrestrial sources of knowledge. Terrence, whom I met previously, was a very sober, 57-year-old, businessman. At one point, he asked me what the "slant" of my article was.

"The focus I would hope of your article would not be so much in the details of how extraterrestrials live, or their technology or the changes they are going to inflict upon the Earth, but more that there is an opportunity presented to us to raise our social standards, our intellectual standards, our relationship between ourselves," he said. "In a healthy, informative way, our focus is totally on trying to elevate ourselves. In changing myself, I change the world around me, and in changing the world around me, I grow a bigger universe."

In other words, he wanted me to write an article with all the fun bits left out. But I took his point. We've had too much of people claiming to be abducted by extraterrestrials who wanted to conduct rectal examinations on them. We've had too much space paranoia, the latest being Steven Spielberg's adaptation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, in which alien invaders in clanky tri-pedal crafts use humans as food, and their blood as fertilizer.

"My hope is to move away from the clownish aspects of UFO involvement," Melinda said. "We're starting a new era of change. For that reason we need to face those who do not want change. I don't have any problem facing them, because I have nothing to hide. I am not a liar. I am not delusional."

Rumors of Loch Ness Monster Sightings Persist

By HEIDE B. MALHOTRA
The Epoch Times

The earliest sighting of the Loch Ness Monster, or "Nessie," as locals call it, goes back to 565 A.D. as mentioned in the biography of Saint Columba, who allegedly introduced Christianity to Scotland. His sighting entailed seeing a large beast in Loch Ness Lake attacking a human swimmer.

A carving by the Picts (or painted people, for the tattoos that covered their bodies) dating back about 1,500 years shows an aquatic animal with a long beak similar to a crocodile, and feet that are useless on land.

Most eye-witnesses, and there are hundreds from the kitchen maid to well-renowned scientists and researchers, tell of a large animal with two to three humps, a tail, long neck and a small snake-like head. Some claim the animal is 10 feet long, while others estimate it is 20 feet long. Some have seen more than one Nessie in one sighting.

No need to visit Scotland to have a sighting of your own. Through a camera connected to a satellite phone that displays a live feed over the Internet, you can look over a large portion of Loch Ness Lake. Take a peek at: [http://](http://www.lochness.co.uk/livecam/)

www.lochness.co.uk/livecam/.

It has been suggested that our Nessie is of the pliosaurs family, which includes crocodiles, turtles and dolphins. This idea has not been given much merit, as the food chain needed for such an animal is not available. However, it could plausibly be an eel *anguilla*, which reached the Loch after being spawned in the Sargasso Sea. Others have suggested that Nessie is a catfish or sturgeon. A sturgeon is a genuine prehistoric fish that has not evolved for millions of years and is still not extinct.

To prove Nessie's existence, the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau was established in 1962. In 1964, the Bureau set up camera stations and underwater listening devices. The search included submarines, sonar scanners, and other underwater search devices. No live Nessie was found, but large objects that could not be explained were seen on the sonar.

In October 1986, Operation Deepscan, with a budget of US\$1.8 million recorded three large sonar contacts at 256 feet, 590 feet and 570 feet. The objects responsible for these contacts were not found.

In 1992, Project Urquhart, the Natural History Museum of London, The Freshwater Biological Association,

Simrad (a marine electronics company) and the British Discovery Channel sponsored a study of the Loch. In 1993, the 65-foot research ship *Calanus*, carrying the most sophisticated sampling devices and sonar equipment was brought in. It found some large targets, which according to Birnie Les (senior Simrad engineer) were "far too large for any known Loch fish."

Loch Ness, about 10,000 years old, is the largest fresh-water body in all of Great Britain and is close to 800 feet deep, 22½ miles long and about 1½ miles wide. The Loch may still be deeper than known at this time. Six rivers, including the Oich, Tarff and Enrich feed the Loch. It is also in line with the Great Glen Fault, which splits the Scotland Highlands from Fort William to Inverness.

MONDAY, MAY 9, 2005 metro

■ **THE ROCK** anorthosite, which covers most of the moon's landscape, is rare on Earth, except in Canada, where it can be found in both Ontario and Labrador.

SOURCE: Reuters

NATIONAL POST, TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2005

Canadian astronomers probing far off worlds say they have observed a bizarre planet that has its parent star in tow. "It's like a tiny chihuahua dragging its master around by the leash," said Jaymie Matthews, of the University of British Columbia, who announced the find yesterday at the Canadian Astronomical Society annual meeting in Montreal. Mr. Matthews, who is in charge of the Canadian space telescope known as MOST (Microvariability and Oscillation of Stars), said he and his colleagues have been working overtime to observe the extraordinary planetary system called tau Bootis. The interactions between the star and the planet zipping around it every 3.3 days "are unlike anything astronomers have seen before," he said. *Margaret Munro, CanWest News Service*



Fewer UFOs in Canada?

WINNIPEG (CP) — It's possible that Canadians are keeping their eyes on the ground rather than the skies, or maybe fewer extra-terrestrials are visiting the planet.

Whatever the reason, the number of UFO reports filed in Canada so far in 2005 is down significantly from last

year, according to a mid-year analysis by a national research group.

"We're likely looking at report levels only around those of 2000 or 2001," said Chris Rutkowski, writer for *Ufology Research of Manitoba*. "Why the drop is so significant this year, I don't know."

The centre's yearly analysis has found that UFO report numbers have been increasing steadily over the past five years, Rutkowski said.

But halfway through 2005, the number of reports is 36% fewer than what was recorded by this time in 2004.

During the first half of

2005, only 274 UFO reports were filed through public, private or official agencies in Canada, compared with 431 in 2004. Rutkowski said 2005 started off strong, with a flurry of UFO reports in Atlantic Canada, followed by a series of bright fireballs over the prairies in the early spring.



Science squashes sasquatch

BY BILL MAH

EDMONTON • A DNA test has proven a tuft of hair plucked from the woods near Teslin in the Yukon, is bison, not Bigfoot.

"The DNA profile of the hair sample we received from the Yukon earlier this week clearly matches reference DNA profiles from the North American bison," said David Coltman, an associate professor of biology at the University of Alberta.

"We therefore conclude that this hair sample could not have come from a hairy bipedal animal that was reportedly sighted near Teslin last week."

But the result announced yesterday at a news conference beamed around the world has not squelched the debate among townspeople about whether the legendary sasquatch is stalking the remote community of 400.

"It doesn't surprise me," said Bruce Wiseman, a former prison chaplain and 25-year town resident. Despite the fact a couple of herds of bison wander near town, about 60% of the townspeople believe in the sightings, he said.

"Maybe somebody did see something and they really believe that it was a sasquatch, but as far as there being a sasquatch, no, I doubt there is."

Roger Smarch still believes, however. He was there when his cousin, Trent Smarch, found the clump of coarse, chocolate-coloured hair near where several people swear they heard or saw the creature.

"I still think there's something there," he said. "I mean, I still found a footprint."

Looking in the woods near the place where the creature was last heard, Mr. Smarch found crushed meadow flowers, small trees snapped in half and a track more than 30 centimetres long and pressed deep into the mud.

After the hair was tentatively identified by a Yukon government wildlife technician as bison fur, Mr. Coltman offered this week to perform a DNA test on the sample, "partly on a whim, partly because I thought it would make for good material for a lecture."

Even Dr. Coltman acknowledged the results do not end the debate. "Maybe it's possible that the sasquatch stepped on the bison hair sample on his way out of Teslin," he said.

"On the basis of what we found, we cannot rule out that there could be a bipedal primate species that is as yet undescribed."

After three days of testing, Dr. Coltman and molecular biological technician Corey Davis concluded that the mitochondrial DNA sequences were a 100% match with known bison samples.

CanWest News Service

The Universe

TERENCE DICKINSON

Ten years ago, astronomers announced that they had found a planet about the size of Jupiter orbiting a star similar to the sun.

The discovery caused a sensation.

The 40-year quest for planets around sunlike stars had finally born fruit.

It was just the beginning.

Now, depending on who is counting, at least 140 new planets have been uncovered — all the size of our solar system's giant planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune) or larger, all orbiting sunlike stars within a few hundred light-years of sun.

However, none of the planets found so far has been seen directly. They are overwhelmed by the brightness of the stars they orbit and remain invisible even to the Hubble Space Telescope.

Their existence is inferred by a slight wobbling motion of the parent star, the wobble being induced by the planet's gravity.

Alien astronomers on a nearby star could detect similar oscillations in our sun's position caused by the gravitational tugs from Jupiter and Saturn.

But now, for the first time, a planet of another star has been seen directly.

Observed last year by a team of astronomers using an eight-metre telescope at the European Southern Observatory in northern Chile, the planet's existence was confirmed last week.

It is about the same size as Ju-

piter but five times as massive. It orbits a small, low-temperature star designated 2M1207 about 200 light-years distant, of a type known to astronomers as a brown dwarf.

The dimness of the brown dwarf allowed the researchers to peer close-in and spot the feeble glow of the planet and record the image with a high-performance digital camera.

The newfound planet, known as 2M1207b, orbits the brown dwarf star at 1.8 times the distance that Neptune orbits the sun. It would require about 1,000 years to complete a single orbit.

This is another step along the road to discovering an Earth-like planet around a sunlike star — regarded as the holy grail of astronomy — which could be reached by 2030.

The discovery of a single rocky planet at the right distance from a stable star like the sun would imply that conditions similar to those experienced here on Earth must be at least moderately common in the universe.

And that leads to the big question. Even if other "Earths" exist, does life arise on all of them, most of them, just a few of them?

And if primitive life arises, does advanced intelligent life inevitably follow given favourable conditions?

Pondered by scientists and philosophers for centuries, the answers to these questions may actually be within our grasp later this century as more powerful planet-hunting telescopes now in the planning stages become available both on Earth and in space.

NATIONAL POST, SATURDAY, JULY 23, 2005

SCIENCE FICTION

Parallel worlds, new worlds and future worlds are now available on DVD. The third season of *Sliders* includes 25 episodes about a band of travellers encountering alternate universes in which the Egyptian dynasties never ended, druids rule the world or Tyrannosaurus Rex is alive and well. *Earth 2* ran for just 22 episodes in 1994, and follows the fortunes of a spaceship sent 22 light years away to populate another planet. When it crash lands a few thousand kilometres from where it was meant to land, the crew must trek to the other side of the planet to set up shop.

■ **NASA SCIENTISTS** need anorthosite to build models of the moon's surface as missions to the moon didn't bring back enough samples to help prepare for a possible mission.

SOURCE: Reuters

Scientists have developed a computer program that explains how the man in the moon got his pocked face. According to simulations, the famed craters, as well as the orbits of Jupiter and Saturn, result from a chaotic disruption that scattered asteroids — or "planetesimals" debris left over from the formation of planets — into the sun and moon, and hurled Uranus and Neptune into their current orbits. A Colorado scientists' report, published in the journal *Nature*, christens the event the Late Heavy Bombardment and dates the happening back approximately 650 million years after the formation of the solar system. — JOEL MCCONVEY/DOSE

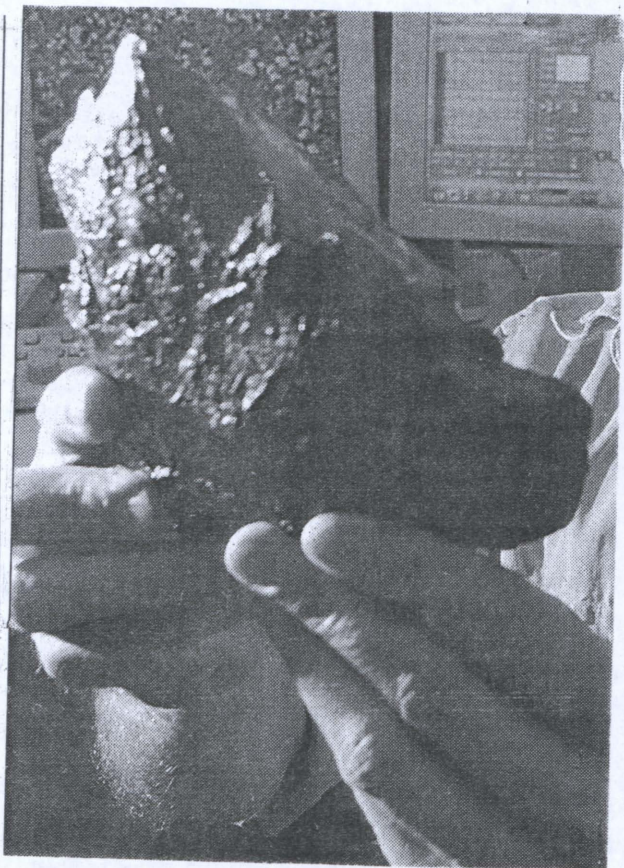
DOSE 039 FRIDAY 27 MAY 2005

NATIONAL POST, SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2005

1. Roswell, New Mexico There's more to Roswell than the mystery of the supposed crash-landing of misguided aliens on July 4, 1947. There's all manner of outdoor fare on offer here, from bird-watching and fishing at the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge to water sports at Bottomless Lakes State Park.

There are also museums and galleries that feature the of-this-world work of such artists as Peter Hurd and Georgia O'Keefe. That said, don't leave without touching down at the International UFO Museum and Research Center, where you can view the infamous alien autopsy film and decide for yourself about the little green men.

www.roswell-usa.com



CANADIAN FINDS TWO DIFFERENT METEORITES IN MANITOBA

DISCOVERY A HISTORIC FIRST

BY DEBORAH TETLEY

CALGARY • Digging through a dusty junk box has earned a rock collector recognition as the first Canadian to discover two separate meteorites, compelling a University of Calgary scientist to deduce that eastern Manitoba might house a space rock dumping ground.

Planetary scientist Alan Hildebrand confirmed for Winnipeg's Derek Erstelle three days ago that the 2.5 kilogram rock he found about seven years ago was a meteorite, possibly dating back to the end of the last Ice Age.

"It's certainly a significant accolade as a piece of Canadiana," Mr. Hildebrand said. "There's nobody else in the country that's ever done it, so it's a nice title for him to have."

Mr. Erstelle, who's already shared a cut of \$50,000 for another meteorite he found in 2002 and sold to the Royal Ontario Museum last year, called the find a stroke of luck.

"It looks like I'm going to leave my mark," he said. "After I go, there will be something to remember me by. For now, I guess I'll just ride my 15 minutes of fame."

From Mr. Hildebrand's perspective, the notion that a second space rock was found in a forested area 40 kilometres away from the first specimen — yet hailing from a different asteroid — is surprising.

"Not only do we have another meteorite to study but the possibility that we have this meteorite dumping ground in that part of Manitoba is really exciting," he said. "Now we can go there and find lots more."

Mr. Hildebrand said Mr. Erstelle has found a real puzzle between Bernic Lake and Pinawa.

The scientist said the areas are where the two lobes of the Laurentide ice sheet met about 11,500 years ago, and Mr. Erstelle's rocks may be among hundreds or thousands of meteorites dumped when the ice melted.

After Mr. Erstelle rediscovered the Pinawa rock while sifting through a seven-year-old junk box in his garage, he contacted Mr. Hildebrand through a mutual friend.

CanWest News Service

TV ALIENS

Rob Salem
In Los Angeles

On CBS's mid-season *The Unit*, Dennis Haysbert picks up where his 24 protector, Kiefer Sutherland, left off, playing the stoic patriarchal leader of a team of top-gun commandos, answerable only to his own, highly aggressive sense of justice and duty.

But in times of war, particularly the Cold War, American entertainment has tended to interpret an unknown and alien threat as just that — alien. Extra-Terrestrial. Other-Worldly. As in, *It Came from Outer Space*.

In the 1950s and '60s, the fears of Communist incursion and the looming nuclear threat were manifested by alien invasion scenarios: soulless covert body-snatchers, death-ray toting bug-eyed monsters, city-stomping radioactive giants. . .

In today's paranoid America, the alien threat is more subtle, but somehow even more prolific.

This fall we'll see parallel invasions take place on three U.S. networks: ABC has *Invasion*,

about mysterious doings in the aftermath of a horrific Florida hurricane; NBC has *Surface* (formerly *Fathom*), an *Abyss*-like alien invasion at sea; and CBS has *Threshold*, which pits a government think-tank against an alien incursion that combines elements of both.

"I think, for my money, it's a reaction," allows David Goyer, an executive producer of *Threshold*, about the sudden alien glut.

Shaun Cassidy, the former Hardy Boy-turned-producer of ABC's *Invasion*, has a different take. "Frankly, I'm not a huge science-fiction fan," he says. "For me, this show is more about family. It's a mystery. I like exploring the unknown."

And he reminds us that there are pragmatic reasons for aliens to be invading the airwaves, namely, the success of *Lost*.

"All I know is, when you're going out to sell a new show, (the network's response) is going to be based on what worked last year.

"*Lost* will be our lead-in show on ABC. And my opportunity, and my responsibility now, is to make our show as entertaining and original as that."

TORONTO STAR ★ THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2005

Andromeda bigger than astronomers first thought

The Andromeda galaxy just got bigger — three times bigger, astronomers said yesterday.

The galaxy is not actually expanding. But new measurements suggest that the nearest galaxy to our own Milky Way is three times broader than astronomers had thought.

They now believe a thin sprinkling of stars once thought to be a halo is in fact part of Andromeda's main disk.

That makes the spiral galaxy, so close to Earth that it appeared as a fuzzy blob

to the ancients, more than 220,000 light-years across — triple the previous estimate of 70,000 to 80,000 light-years.

It appears that the outer fringes of the disk were made when smaller galaxies slammed together, they told a meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Minneapolis.

The structure is too bumpy to have been formed otherwise, said Rodrigo Ibaeta of the Observatoire Astronomique de Strasbourg in France.

metro
TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2005

REUTERS

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Giant Figures in Peru Desert Pre-date Nazca Lines

AN EPOCH TIMES REPORT

A group of about 50 drawings of giant figures recently discovered in the hills of Peru's southern coastal desert near the city of Palpa has been said to predate the famous Nazca lines nearby.

Mr. Johnny Isla, director of the Andean Institute of Archaeological Studies, said the "geoglyph" figures appear to have been created by the Paracas communities between 500 and 400 BC, whereas the Nazca culture developed after 50 BC. Mr. Isla and his partner Dr. Markus Reindel from the Dutch Institute of Archaeology discovered the Paracas figures using aerial photography and land-based surveys. The figures of humans, birds, monkeys and cats vary in size from 10 m to 50 m across, and are also grouped together in areas up to 60 m to 90 m across.

The Paracas figures were created by removing dark stones in order to expose the lighter surface underneath. Some areas were cleared and others built up with rock, creating figures in high and low relief. With the Nazca lines though, the geoglyphs were only made by clearing low-relief areas. Until recently scientists believed that the figures in the Palpa and Nazca regions were only from the Nazca culture. Mr. Isla says cultural dating and style of the newly found Paracas figures sets them apart.

Mr. Isla told The Epoch Times, "Most of these geoglyphs belong to the Nazca culture but our recent studies demonstrated that there are at least 50 geoglyphs pertaining to the Paracas culture. These new figures are definitely different and older than those of the Nazca cul-

ture."

"First, the Paracas figures were drawn on the slopes of the hills, while the Nazca images were drawn in level areas. Second, the Paracas figures are smaller and were made in a naturalistic style, while the Nazca figures are bigger and stylised. Third, the Paracas figures are mostly arranged in groups, while the Nazca figures are arranged individually. Finally, it is important to note that not one of the Paracas figures were repeated in the Nazca iconography," Mr. Isla said.

Although the existence of some of the Paracas figures was previously known, most were undiscovered due to their remote location, and their visibility is highly affected by the position of the sun. One set of figures is known as the "Temple of Fertility" as one image represents a man, another a woman and the center image seems to represent a divine figure with a head from which emanates a series of rays that end in human heads.

Mr. Isla said, "The principal idea is that together the three figures represent the reproduction of the human species, the continuity of life." "According to results obtained from our studies of the Nazca geoglyphs, we can suggest that the Paracas geoglyphs were made also in the context of a religious culture related to water. The Palpa and Nazca valleys are in the middle of one of the most arid deserts of the world, where the surface water is a vital resource to develop life," said Mr. Isla.

Further studies may tell more about the Paracas people, their ways of life and early history of the area.

Self-spawning cyborgs now a reality

Cornell University scientists have created the world's first self-replicating robot, eliciting futurists' fears and fantasies about a world where robots build armies of themselves. The prototype could result in robots that repair themselves on space missions or in hazardous environments. Discuss at dose.ca/techtalk

DOSE 029 THURSDAY 12 MAY 2005

Close encounters of the kooky kind

FILM REVIEW

Save the Green Planet

BY CHRIS KNIGHT

If you were to kidnap the head of a major chemical company on the basis that he was an alien from the Andromeda galaxy, he'd deny it and say you were off your rocker. But (and this is crucial) he'd say that even if he was an alien.

This is the kind of no-holds-barred paranoia that fuels *Save the Green Planet*, a mix of horror, comedy and police procedural, with a few shots lifted from *2001: A Space Odyssey* and a clever trick or two pilfered from *The Usual Suspects*. Is Lee Byeong-Gu, the kidnapper with a drawer full of UFO magazines, crazy? Is Kang Man-Shik, CEO of Yuje Chemicals, loony? Is Korean writer/director Jang Jun-Hwan demented? Somebody's clearly half-baked; it might even be the audience.

The plot involves the kidnapping of the aforementioned CEO by Lee, who is lucky to even get close to him wearing a miner's hat festooned with lights and little swirly antennae, and a trenchcoat that's meant to evoke *The Matrix* but actually says "garbage bags." Lee takes him to his mountain lair and proceeds to torture him. Kang survives electrical shocks that Lee says would kill a human, but then Lee looks like he might be a few pages short of a medical degree, so who knows?

Anyway, just before the anal probing, Kang escapes from his restraints, and a battle of half-wits begins. All the while, moderately inept police are at work. They're convinced only an idiot or a genius could have pulled off this caper, but unfortunately they're looking for the wrong type of man.

Goofy graphics enliven the show, and one is always wondering whether maybe Lee knows more than everyone else thinks. The CEO's name is Kang, after all. It's a bit of a letdown in the end, but you'd have to be crazy not to enjoy the trip.★★

■ Opens today at the Royal Theatre.

National Post

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metro

MONDAY, MAY 9, 2005

New push in search for life

Ten years after finding the first planet outside our solar system, scientists say they may soon move into a phase of exploration that examines Earth-like worlds for life.

Astronomers have only been able to find some 145 so-called extrasolar planets orbiting stars besides our sun. All gas giants like Jupiter, they are thought to be inhospitable to Earth-like life. But scientists say new technology could soon help them find smaller Earth-like worlds.

REUTERS

metro

TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 2005

Man on moon again in 2015?

The next mission to land a man on the moon will take place in 2015 at the earliest, the new chief of the U.S. space program said yesterday, adding the mission could be followed by the construction of a multinational space station there.

But NASA has not yet decided what vehicles will be used to reach the moon, or what will succeed the aging space shuttle fleet, which is due to be retired in 2010.

The last manned mission to the moon was NASA's Apollo 17 in 1972.

REUTERS