On November 8, Fox affiliate KDVR reported an alleged “UFO” sighting in the Denver skies. They broadcast an edited clip from a home video showing several blurry, fast-moving objects.

An unidentified man had captured the footage of the unidentified object in a dirt field in the Federal Heights area. According to the witness, who suspiciously wishes to remain anonymous, the UFOs appear multiple times each week, normally between noon and 1pm. The man believes that there is a fleet of UFOs launching and landing in the suburbs. Strangely, no one else in the entire Denver metro area had seen these UFOs. Investigative Reporter Heidi Hemmat didn’t perform a very thorough investigation for her story as she declared, “nobody can explain what this is”.

Hemmat marveled, “The strangest part is that they are flying too fast to see with the naked eye.”. So she sought the expertise of Steve Cowell, “a former commercial pilot, instructor and FAA accident prevention counselor”. This “aviation expert” denied it was an airplane, a helicopter, or a bird. To his credit, he surmised, “Perhaps there is some sort of debris that is being raised by atmospheric winds.” Unfortunately, this comment was overshadowed by his more sensational sound bite, “I can’t identify it”. There have been many additional theories to explain the UFOs, including military drones and remote-controlled aircraft.

More inexplicable than the object was the overwhelming public response to the video. Viewers from around the world watched the film and many became convinced that it is proof positive of alien spacecraft. Unsurprisingly, it has attracted the UFO conspiracy theorists and the location itself has become a popular site for people to try to spot UFOs. Other news sites picked up the story and perpetuated the credulity, including CNN, *The Huffington Post* and the *New York Daily News* who stated that “experts” are “mystified” and “baffled” by the evidence. The intrepid Hemmat reported that the FAA and NORAD couldn’t confirm unusual activity in the skies during the sightings, and nor should they have, unless they now also track bugs…

For skeptics, the most likely culprits were insects. Not only did the objects have the shape and speed of insects, but also the film was shot at the time of day when they are out in abundance. Doubtful News swooped onto the story, as did skeptical UFO researcher Robert Sheaffer, who both injected some critical thinking into the claims. Numerous skeptics contacted Hemmat and suggested that the “UFOs” were insects of some kind. Here is her reply to one such email from a reddit reader:

WE SAW NO BUGS, IT REALLY ISN T A VERY BUGGY AREA. IF WE HAD, WE WOULD HAVE QUESTIONED IT OURSELVES. I VE DONE THIS FOR 20 YEARS, I DON T SHOOT FLIES AND TURN THEM INTO UFOS.

Determined to make something of nothing, Hemmat denied the simplest explanation, stating, “It’s not a bug. People keep saying it’s a bug”. To further corroborate her stubborn position, she found Mary Ann Hamilton, an entomologist from a local butterfly enclosure. Hamilton watched the video and gushed, “I’ve never seen anything like this” and concluded, “I do not believe it’s an insect”. Clearly, Hamilton isn’t familiar with video analysis.

Local skeptics Bryan & Baxter and Stu Hayes visited the site. They found that many different kinds of insects are native to the area, including species of grasshoppers, bees, wasps and flies. These insects are prolific during the warmest time of the day, which is the time frame specified by the mystery cameraman. They recreated the video on-site, and their findings supported the premise that the “UFOs” were likely insects. The “amazing” size of the UFOs was due to the proximity of the object to the lens.

KDVR continue to milk the story for more than it’s worth with multiple follow-ups about the non-event. They have yet to consult a relevant specialist in video photography or still photography, or a more critically minded entomologist. Instead they claim the images “remain a mystery”.

In the meantime, the cold Colorado weather has already set in, so the UFOs won’t be back until spring.

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