

UFOs Learn a New Trick: Ice Circles

Written by Jeff Wagg

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We're all familiar and bored with crop circles now that they've been explained as being easily created by a couple of pieces of rope and a board. However, those who cling to the UFO theory of their generation have latched on to something new... water or ice circles. This phenomenon has been observed in cold waterways in the United States and elsewhere, but one was recently spotted in the UK, home to the most famous crop circles.

The UFO crowd assumes the term "unexplained" to be synonymous with "unexplainable," so of course [aliens must have made them](#) . From the *Times Online* article:

The cause of the rare phenomenon is unclear, with very little scientific evidence available to explain the formation of the discs. UFO-enthusiasts claim that, like crop circles, the perfect discs are created by visiting aliens, but scientists believe the extreme cold weather combined with an unusual current is the more likely reason.

"Very little scientific evidence." I'm not sure what "scientific" evidence is versus the plain old kind of evidence, but I suspect the reason that the "cause of the rare phenomenon is unclear" is that no scientists have actually studied it in depth. I give the *Times* credit for posting one scientist's findings at the end of the article, but it contradicts the claim quoted above. It's almost as if someone wrote the article, and then an editor put in the part about the UFOs in order to garner more interest from the public.

And consider the title of the article, "Met(eorological) Office mystery over rare ice circle formed in Devon." Well sure, if you ask people who've never seen this phenomenon before, they're going to be a bit "stumped" even if it is loosely related to their field. Where's the interview with a Scandanavian meteorologist? And strangely, the *Times* [reported the event again today](#) , but as a normal if unusual weather occurrence.

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Well maybe not all that unusual. Here's [another one, this time from Ontario](#) , again attributed to aliens; [one in Michigan](#) n, linked to a UFO report; a [different one from Ontario](#) , again the work of ET; and yet [another Canadian circle](#) in Toronto. But what's this? From that *National Post* article:

But don't call in the ufologists just yet.

These close encounters can be explained by quick shifts in temperature, said Joe Desloges, a river specialist and geography professor at the University of Toronto. Mr. Desloges explained that the frozen circles are actually ice pans, or surface slabs of ice that form in the center of a lake or creek, instead of along the water's edge. As water cools, it releases heat that turns into frazil ice - a collection of loose, needle shaped ice particles that can cluster together in an ice pan. If it accumulates enough frazil ice and the current is slow, over time, the pan can become a hanging dam - a dense, heavy piece of ice with high ridges and a low centre. But he admits that the near-perfect circular shape of the Mississauga ice pan is very strange.

"Normally, you do not get edges of the ice pan so clean and even. It may occur when a pan forms quickly, then melts a bit before starting to refreeze," he said. "There is the chance that these can form so perfectly, but not common at all."

I give the *National Post* credit for posting this, and actually talking to someone who knew something, but I have to admit, I think he's wrong. His explanation doesn't take into account the spinning, which is a great way to make circles. I think the explanations at the end of the *Times* article are much more likely. Until someone reproduces the conditions that produce these things, we won't know for sure.

At any rate, it's an interesting phenomenon... one I believe to be completely natural, and another example of why we don't need to invent things to find wonder. Aliens are NOT NEEDED in order for us to be fascinated by the natural world.