

The REALL News

The official newsletter of the Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land

"It's a very dangerous thing to believe in nonsense." — James Randi

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April 2006

Have You Been Abducted By Aliens? Hasn't Everybody?

by Martin S. Kottmeyer

In 1998 the Roper Organization conducted a poll that directly asked 5,995 people if they "had been abducted by occupants of a UFO." 20 answered "yes." This works out to roughly one-third of one percent in the sample. If one extrapolated this to the general population, roughly one million people believe they have been abducted. Speaking technically, it is actually illegitimate to do this because the margin of error is larger than the response ($0.33\% \pm 1.4\%$). What one can legitimately say is that the belief that one has been abducted is small—it cannot be larger than 1.7% of the general population. We know from ufologists that a few thousand cases are documented (published articles, books, case files) or documentable (unpublished letters). The real number is somewhere in between. Alien abduction, wherever you place it on your personal worry list, at least doesn't belong near the top. They are nowhere near being a pandemic.

Susan Clancy, in her recent Harvard University Press book *Abducted!*, observed that many people who contacted her believing they have been abducted by aliens do not remember being abducted. They suspect they would remember it though, *if* somebody hypnotically regressed them. Though that should sound paradoxical, it doesn't, not really. Most of us have known since we were

kids that aliens make an effort to erase memories of their activities from their victims' minds. Try to, anyways. In the premier abduction of Betty and Barney Hill back in the Sixties, the suspicion that they had been abducted was based on certain vivid dreams Betty had a few weeks after an evening of ufo sightings during a trip home from

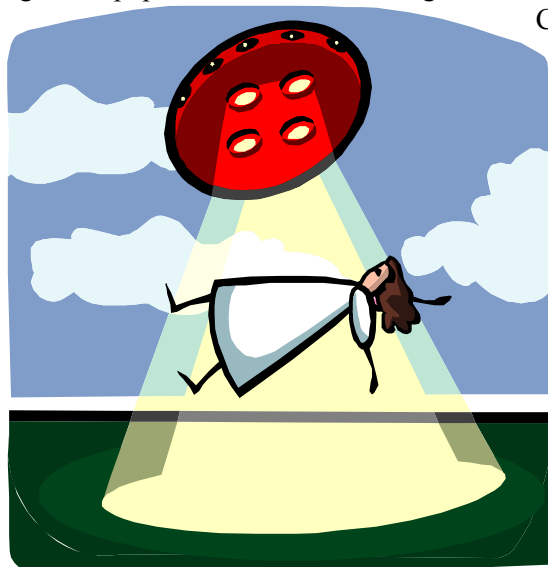
Canada that took longer than could be accounted for. Subsequently, ufo buffs took missing time in association with ufo sightings as a possible sign of an alien abduction magically covered up by the super science of highly evolved aliens.

Mind you, it couldn't be all that super a science if the memories resurfaced in dreams and hypnosis. Nor does it speak well they are unable to prevent a sense of missing time from appearing. But facts are facts. Aliens only **try** to be secretive. They don't always succeed.

Missing time in conjunction with an ufo sighting was the only significant sign looked for by ufologists in the Seventies, but the logic of alien concealment must have led to suspicions that aliens might be hiding their activities so well that many people do not even suspect they were abducted. In the Eighties, Budd Hopkins came forward with the case of Steven Kilburn who it was suspected was abducted because he was simply afraid of a stretch of road. Kilburn himself had not seen an ufo. Hypnotic regression proved that Kilburn had an abduction experience. The signs of abduction thereafter began to expand to include any odd anxiety, recurring dream, or peculiar anomaly.

In 1989, a book about alien abductions by psychologist Edith Fiore came out called *Encounters* and on the back cover there was a list of "The Ten Most Common

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Purpose

The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe-science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL does not reject paranormal claims on *a priori* grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

The REALL News is its official newsletter.

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From the Chairman

Wally Hartshorn

Spring is here! I'm so excited! Actually, I'm so excited that I'm going to skip Spring and go straight to Summer by way of Texas. By the time you receive this issue, I (and my family) will be basking in the sun and the 85 degree temperatures of Brownsville, Texas, where we'll be visiting my dad! After a few days of that, we'll venture north a bit to enjoy the 80 degree temperatures of Austin, Texas while we visit my brother, his wife, and my nine-month-old niece!

After that, it's back to Illinois, where the warm weather of Spring will probably feel a bit cool in comparison.

April Meeting

All of this traveling means that I won't be around for the video that will be shown at April's meeting, which is a pity because it looks like it will be a fun one! Bill Nye is best known for the show he did for kids, "Bill hjuhnyb

9o;3221 Nye the Science Guy". More recently, he's been doing "The Eyes of Nye", which is aimed at an older audience. (Unfortunately, the show apparently is no longer airing on WILL.) Bill Nye recently gave a talk to the Skeptic Society, including some clips from the show. I won't be there, but either David or Jim will be running the meeting, so make sure you don't miss this one!

See you in May! ☹

A Nod to Our Patrons

REALL would like to thank our patron members. Through their extra generosity, REALL is able to continue to grow as a force for critical thinking in Central Illinois. To become a patron member of REALL, please use the membership form insert. Patron members are:

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Gleanings

by Clark Olson

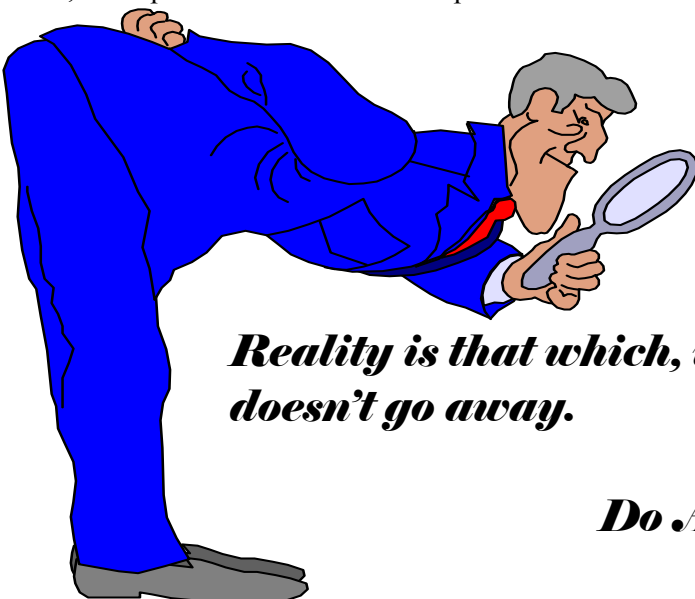
The evolution and creation scene was again pretty quiet on the local and national level during March.

The *State Journal-Register* carried an article (3-5-06) on the “Biblically Correct Tours” in Colorado, which takes visitors to museums and other sites to point out biblically incorrect exhibits. Although the article uses somewhat different description of the group, this is the same group that was in the news last fall.

The paper also carried an A/P article on a recently discovered “rat-squirrel” from a family believed to be extinct. Another A/P article was on the newly opened (or major remodeling of) evolution exhibit at the Field Museum in Chicago. None of the articles elicited a response in the letters section. The paper also carried nationally syndicated cartoons that had some creation content. The pro-evolution ones were Non Sequitor, Doonesberry and Beetle Bailey and one from BC was ambiguous. There was also a pro-evolution letter in the *Illinois Times*.

Creationist Henry M Morris died Feb 25th at age 87. He was a PhD hydraulic engineer and wrote a standard text book in hydraulics. He taught at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg and other mainline colleges before devoting himself to creationism, helping to found the Institute of Creation Science in San Diego and San Diego Christian College. According to the obituary in *NYT* (3-4-06) he wrote more than 60 books on science and theology, including “The Genesis Flood” in 1961, which is in its 44th printing and has 250,000 copies in print in English.

Short book review. “Just a Theory” by Moti Ben-Ari, 2005, 216 p. The author is a computer scientist in a



Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.

— Philip K. Dick,
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

department of science education in Israel but is inspired to present this overview of the nature of science by declarations about evolution being “just a theory” in the US. The core of the book is discussion of the scientific method and what a science theory is. This includes, evidence, prediction, falsification and paradigms in science and definition of pseudoscience. He also covers a number of other allied topics, including sociology of science, postmodern critiques of science, reductionism, mathematics, logic, statistics and the “end of science”. In a book of 216 small format pages the book is necessarily brief on some subjects such as the relation of science and religion. Also I wish he had listed more examples of scientific theories and given his opinion on the relative robustness of each. Such an effort naturally brings up the question of authority, a subject which seems to be difficult for scientists to talk about. Certainly any scientific theory can eventually be overthrown, but broad authority such as NAS and AAAS should at least be enough to distinguish science from non- or pseudo-science in the public realm, ie evolution in education. Instead we seem to rely on occasional forays in law courts.

A Puzzle!

Olny srmatt poelpe can.

Cdnuolt blveiee that I cluod aulacity uesdnatnrd what I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdnrig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttair in what oredr the ltteers in a word are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is that the first and last ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotle mses and you can still raed it wouthit a porbelm. This is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the word as a wlohe. Amzanig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghu-hot slpeling was ipmorantt! If you cna raed this psas it on!! ♡

Signs of Abductions by Extraterrestrials.” She expands on these signs in a chapter inside and includes a bizarre little test thought up by Leo Sprinkle that uses a pendulum to probe one’s subconscious. Fiore preferred crystal quartz pendulums of the sort commonly purchased in New Age bookstores and generally accompanying ouija boards.

There were unacknowledged precedents for this procedure. One of the first saucer era contactees, George Hunt Williamson, contacted aliens using a glass tumbler sliding on a ouija board. Leo Sprinkle had been using the pendulum as an aid to ufo investigation as far back as his brief association with the Condon Commission in the middle of the Sixties. (Craig 1995)

Fiore’s test had 50 questions mostly designed to draw out specific details of the encounter like what the aliens looked like, what they did, whether the aliens were good or evil, whether there was sex, whether there were apocalyptic predictions. One test question for the pendulum asks the subconscious, “Am I a human-alien hybrid? An ET?” The next asks, “Have I been incorporated by an ET? In the past? Now?” I wonder if more mainstream psychologists didn’t shudder at such stuff. Is it ethical to create an impression one can validate possibly psychotic thoughts with a New Age ritual?

military is up to its neck in the alien abduction tragedy. Leslie’s list is linked or copied repeatedly on websites devoted to ufos, the paranormal, and the subject of ufo abductions. It has also crossed over into books. A version appeared in Gregory van Dyk’s *The Alien Files: Secrets of Extraterrestrial Encounters and Abductions* (Element, 1998). It had 52 enumerated signs. A shortened and unnumbered version of 36 signs appeared that notorious book *UFO Magazine Ufo Encyclopedia* (Pocket, 2004, pp. 5-7).

This version appeared at anw.com/aliens/52questions.htm

Are you an alien abductee?

58 common indicators of UFO encounters or abductions by alien beings

Indicators compiled by Melinda Leslie,
edited by Mark Williams

Many millions of people, it seems, have had encounters with alien beings. Many of those people do not realize that they are having these experiences because of suppressed memories. Their awareness is limited to an occasional paranormal incident that seems to confuse them more than anything else. Some people are not ready to know for sure, others feel a deep need to know if they are involved with the beings. If you are in the later group, read on.

This is a list of 58 common indicators shared by most UFO abductees. It is based on known research on the subject and on personal findings. It has been compiled to help you determine if you are an abductee. Of course there may be other explanations for these occurrences and this is in no way an absolute means of knowing if you are an abductee. If you or someone you know does fit many of these traits listed here, PLEASE seek the help of a qualified researcher or therapist. This list is not in any particular order.

Ask yourself if you . . .

1. Have had **unexplainable missing or lost time** of one hour or more.
2. Have been **paralyzed** in bed with a being in your room.
3. Have unusual **scars or marks** with no possible explanation on how you received them (small **scoop** indentation, straight line scar, triangular marks, scars in roof of mouth, in nose, behind or in ears, etc.)
4. Have seen **balls of light** or flashes of light in your home or other locations
5. Have a memory of **flying through the air** which could not be a dream, or many dreams involving flying.

THE TEN MOST COMMON SIGNS OF ABDUCTIONS BY EXTRATERRESTRIALS

- ◆ Inability to account for periods of time
- ◆ Persistent nightmares and/or dreams of UFOs and/or ETs
- ◆ Sleep disorders
- ◆ Waking up with unusual bodily sensations
- ◆ Appearance of mysterious marks on the body
- ◆ Feeling monitored, watched, and/or communicated with
- ◆ Repeated sightings of UFOs
- ◆ Vague recollections of a close encounter
- ◆ Unexplained healing of ailments or afflictions
- ◆ Reacting with fear of and/or anxiety about UFOs and/or ETs

If you’ve experienced one or more of these phenomena, chances are good that deep within your subconscious mind lie the buried memories of a close encounter of the fourth kind—an abduction by alien beings. ENCOUNTERS will show you that you are not alone.

Other lists of alien abduction signs exist. The most significant one was compiled by Melinda Leslie, herself an self-proclaimed abductee, who lectures on abductions and famously has promoted the belief that the American

6. Have a strong "**marker memory**" that will not go away (i.e.: an alien face, an examination, a needle, a table, a strange skinny baby, etc.)
7. Have seen **beams of light** outside your home, or come into your room through a window.
8. Have had many **dreams** of UFOs, beams of light, or alien beings.
9. Have had a shocking **UFO sighting** or multiple sightings in your life.
10. Have a **cosmic awareness**, an interest in ecology, environment, vegetarianism, or are very socially conscious.
11. Have a strong sense of having a **mission or important task** to perform, sometime, without knowing where this compulsion is coming from.
12. Have a secret feeling that you are "**special**" or "**chosen**," somehow.
13. Have had **unexplainable events** occur in your life, and felt strangely anxious afterwards.
14. Have had several strange **psychic experiences** - such as knowing that something is going to happen before it happens.
15. For women only: Have had **false pregnancy** or missing fetus. (pregnant, and then not)
16. Have **awoken in another place** than where you went to sleep, or don't remember ever going to sleep. (i.e. waking up with your head at the foot of your bed, or in your car)
17. Have had a **dream of eyes** such as animal eyes (like an owl or deer), or remember seeing an animal looking in at you. Also if you have a fear of eyes.
18. Have awoken in the middle of the night **startled**.
19. Have strong reaction to cover of Communion or **pictures of aliens**. Either an aversion to or being drawn to.
20. Have inexplicably **strong fears** or phobias. (i.e. heights, snakes, spiders, large insects, certain sounds, bright lights, your personal security or being alone).
21. Have experienced **self-esteem problem** much of your life.
22. Have **seen someone** with you become paralyzed, motionless, or frozen in time, especially someone you sleep with.
23. Have a memory of having a **special place with spiritual significance**, when you were a youngster.
24. Have had someone in your life who claims to have **witnessed a ship or alien near you** or has witnessed you having been missing.
25. Have had, at any time, **blood or strange stain on sheet** or pillow, with no explanation of how it got there.
26. Have an interest in the **subject of UFO sightings or aliens**, perhaps compelled to read about it a lot.
27. Have an **extreme aversion** towards the subject of UFO's or aliens - don't want to talk about it.
28. Have been suddenly **compelled to drive or walk** to an out of the way or unknown area.
29. Have the feeling of **being watched** much of the time, especially at night.
30. Have had dreams of **passing through a closed window** or solid wall.
31. Have seen a **strange fog** or haze that should not be there.
32. Have heard **strange humming or pulsing** sounds, and you could not identify the source.
33. Have had **unusual nose bleeds** at any time in your life. Or have awoken with a nose bleed.
34. Have **awoken with soreness** in your genitals which can not be explained.
35. Have had **back or neck problems**, T-3 vertebrae out often, or awoken with an unusual stiffness in any part of the body.
36. Have had **chronic sinusitis** or nasal problems.
37. Have had **electronics around you go haywire** or oddly malfunction with no explanation (such as street lights going out as you walk under them, TV's and radios affected as you move close, etc.).
38. Have seen a **hooded figure** in or near your home, especially next to your bed.
39. Have had frequent or sporadic **ringing in your ears**, especially in one ear.
40. Have an **unusual fear of doctors** or tend to avoid medical treatment.
41. Have **insomnia** or sleep disorders which are puzzling to you.
42. Have had dreams of doctors or **medical procedures**.
43. Have frequent or sporadic headaches, especially in the sinus, **behind one eye**, or in one ear.
44. Have the feeling that you are **going crazy** for even thinking about these sorts of things.
45. Have had **paranormal or psychic experiences**, including intuition.
46. Have been prone to **compulsive or addictive** behavior.
47. Have **channeled telepathic messages** from extraterrestrials.
48. Have simply heard an external **voice in your head**, speaking to you, perhaps instructing or guiding you.
49. Have been **afraid of your closet**, now or as a child.
50. Have had **sexual or relationship problems** (such as an odd "feeling" that you must not become involved in a relationship because it would interfere with "something.")
51. Have to **sleep against the wall** or must sleep with your bed against a wall.
52. Have a fear that you must **be very vigilant** or you will be taken away by "someone."
53. Have a **difficult time trusting** other people, espe-

- cially **authority** figures.
54. Have had **dreams of destruction** or catastrophe.
 55. Have the feeling that you are **not supposed to talk about these things**, or that you should not talk about them.
 56. Have experienced many things in this list, and recall **your children or parents speaking of similar experiences** on occasion.
 57. Have tried to resolve these types of problems with **little or no success**.
 58. Have many of these traits but **can't remember anything about an abduction** or alien encounter.

I'm not certain if Leslie built on Fiore's list or Fiore's list derived from an earlier version of Leslie's or if they derive from some other person's list. The stand-out puzzle is that Fiore includes strange healings of ailments on her list, while Leslie does not. Thus, if Leslie added to Fiore, she also took care to subtract. Like David Jacobs, Leslie must have doubts about those abductees labeled Positives, e.g. John Salter.

Leslie's list also includes items clearly derived from Brad Steiger's work building a profile of a class of believers he variously terms, Star-People, Star-Seed, or Cosmic People. In a 33 point checklist, he includes things like sinusitis, headaches, severe neck-pain, paranormal abilities, and expectations of apocalypse. (Steiger 1981)

The precise pedigree is less interesting to me than the simple fact that the list keeps growing over time. Earlier this year (2006) a version appeared that now had 58 indicators on it, 6 up from the well-disseminated prior version. The new ones are #12, #14, #27, #48, #52, #56. Actually #27 was originally combined with #26 in the prior list, so that isn't new information. Some of the signs have been rewritten, probably for sake of clarity. #6 adds the adjective "skinny" to the babies. #8 originally included seeing strange objects. Where #21 originally read 'low' self-esteem, it now reads self-esteem problems, a slightly broadened term that potentially encompasses grandiosity. Where #47 originally involving channeling 'extraterrestrial sources,' now it is more simply extraterrestrials. #49 was originally about fearing wardrobes instead of closets and probably reworded to prevent confusion of being afraid of one's clothes. #51 was originally stronger; it was "absolutely essential" the bed must be against wall.

It is perhaps unfair to say this but the way the list ex-

pands reminds me of a comment I heard by a physician writer that diseases where the list of symptoms increase are inherently suspect. Diseases are usually diagnosed by a relatively fixed series of symptoms, differentiated by specific features, and usually confirmed definitively by some test like a swab, blood sample, or MRI. A long list of symptoms with no method of differential diagnosis raises suspicions of psychogenic origins or multiple disorders poorly understood being lumped together. Those knowing the histories of hysteria and the ongoing 'growth' of Attention Deficit Disorder will have some sense of the doubts I'm having.

The comment's unfairness lies in the fact that alien abduction is not a disease entity. Yet the point isn't entirely irrelevant. There is nothing like a urine sample test or toxin screen you can apply to a case to decide absolutely that this person had an abduction but that one had sleep paralysis or the one over there is a New Age hypochondriac. In practice, ufo believers regard hypnotic regression as the definitive test that finally decides the issue of if you were abducted by aliens, but that is hardly acceptable. No less a veteran of ufo controversies than Jacques Vallee has charged that when he took abduction cases to psychiatrists trained in clinical hypnosis, "These specialists were uniformly horrified when I showed them what some ufologists were doing and claiming on the basis of the regressions they were performing. In case after case, it becomes obvious that hypnosis is **NOT** a good way to bring back true memories." He adds,



Hypnosis can turn a possible fantasy into an experience that becomes irreversible. I have received pathetic letters from famous UFO abductees asking me to help them find a new form of treatment, because they continue to experience traumatic experiences that do not fit into the rigid abduction model. Unfortunately these people cannot be re-hypnotized in a professional manner after they have been subjected to the ludicrous process routinely followed in ufology today in the name of 'research.' Thousands of abductees have now been regressed hypnotically, and we know nothing more about the nature of the phenomenon, the alleged craft, or the entities associated with them.

(Raynes, 2006)

Frankly, when I first saw one of these lists on the Web, I laughed it off as the sort of test you saw in magazines like *Cosmopolitan* to see if your boyfriend is a jerk, you need assertiveness training, or if you are in danger of becoming a slut. One can also draw comparison to those lists of signs of possible drug abuse in teens that basically are just lists of problems had by most teens. Catherine Gould's symptom list of Satanic Ritual Abuse also presents an interesting analogue. While the individual items are quite different, the length and myth-reinforcing tone echoes the abduction myth's list of indicators. Nobody really thinks this is serious psychological testing like the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. The Leslie list has never been described as going through multiple trials, being refined via factor analysis and theta reliability scores. There is no hint that correlates between factors have been studied and ways generated to differentiate relevant DSM-III-R categories from the 'real' ufo symptom complex.

The list spreads like a piece of urban folklore akin to Murphy's Law lists. Perhaps inevitably, a few ufo believers accept it at face value. Susan Clancy's book reports that, yes, there are people who have decided they may be abductees from comparing themselves to one of these lists. Frankly, it seems appalling to me people are taking it seriously. Skeptics don't need to have this spelled out, but there are plenty of reasons why nobody should take it as more than a lark.

To begin with: There are 58 signs on it. **FIFTY-EIGHT!** The aliens are doing a rather slipshod job of keeping their activities secret to have so many potential indicators. You would think that a superscience so advanced that aliens can squeeze between the molecules of walls would have über-computers that rigorously over-see and double-check everything to prevent leaving things that could raise questions. If aliens hide their activities out of some peculiar sense of moral obligation to keep humanity culturally uncontaminated or keep abductees untraumatized, wouldn't some sort of hyper-Hippocratic Oath make it immoral to allow any sort of evidence?

Point Two. It is impossible for anybody to get a score of zero on it. Some points are inevitable simply because in a couple of issues both having a sign or having its opposite will force a Yes. Are you interested in ufos? That's a sign. Are you averse to ufos? That's also a sign. Do you feel it's crazy to even consider the idea of abductions? That, too, is a sign. Do you have dreams of abductions or aliens? Obvious sign. How about, "you can't remember anything about an abduction or alien encounter." Sign.

Do you have low self-esteem? That's a sign. Do you feel special, chosen, have a sense of mission? Those are signs, too. I accept there may well be something called average esteem but how many people I wonder think of

themselves that way?

A fair number of items are fairly regarded as commonplace in the general population. We can put some numbers on some of the items on the list.

Back Pain	80%	(Deyo, 1998)
Pro-Environmentalism	74%	(NY Times poll)
Voices – once or more	70%	(large college sample)
Had paranormal experience	26.6-44%	(Zusne 1982, 2 studies)
Addiction – smoking	22.3 %	60.7 million (USA)
Addiction – alcoholism	5.5%	15.1 million
Inferiority (low self-esteem)	25%	(Eysenck, 1975)
Woke paralyzed	18% (1991)	11.6% (1998)
Sleep disorders	14.71%	40 million
Insomnia	11.76%	32 million
Chronic Headaches	16.5%	45 million
Migraines (pain behind 1 eye)	5.15%	14 million
Chronic sinusitis	12.6%-13.6%	37 million
Missing Time	13% (1991)	6.4% (1998)
Had feeling of flying	10% (1991)	5.25% (1998)
Specific phobias	8.3%	6.3 million
Found puzzling scars	8% (1991)	4.44% (1998)
Saw Balls of Light indoors	8% (1991)	5.25%(1998)
Saw ufo	7% (1991/8)	
Dreamed of ufo	6% (1991)	
Vegetarianism	6-7%	
Ringing in ears	4.5%	12.2 million
Obsessive-compulsive	1.2%-2.4%	3.3 million
Pseudocyesis (false pregnancy)	1-6 per 22,000 births	

Most of these numbers are taken from the website Wrong Diagnosis using government figures. A few are taken from an astute critical discussion of Roper polls by Peter Brookesmith (2000). I wouldn't take all the numbers here too literally. Many people worry about obsessions and compulsions who would not be regarded as having obsessive-compulsive disorder by doctors. The figure for phobias are for people who have sought treatment. Many never do. There are figures for arachnophobia that say half of women and 10% of men have some degree of fear about spiders. The flying dreams figure is from a phone poll that probably includes many who wake up without remembering any type of dream. A website devoted to Flying Dreams states, "More than a third of the dreaming population reports having had at least one flying dream. And, if you have one, you're very likely to have more. Your chance of having a flying dream doubles if you are a lucid dreamer (you are able to become awake and aware as you dream). The pro-Environmentalism number is in response to a question worded "Protecting the environment is so important that the requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental requirements must be made regardless of costs." (Bailey, 1993) The vegetarian figures are ones found on websites by societies devoted to vegetarianism but they confess large uncertainties.

It is amusing to note the paradoxical phrasing of Leslie's indicator #48 (It was one of the new ones): "Have

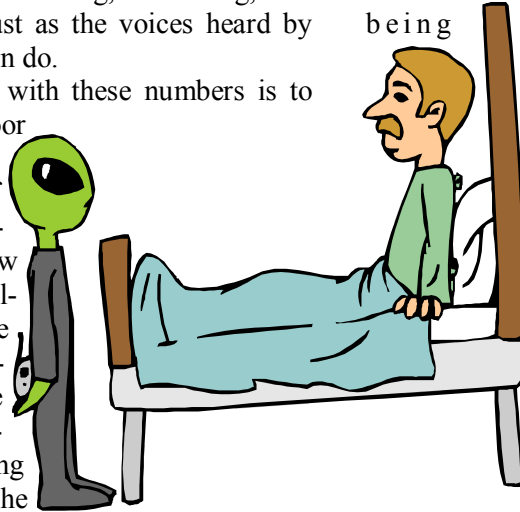
simply heard an external voice in your head, speaking to you, perhaps instructing or guiding you.” An *external voice inside* your head? If you read G. Lynn Stephens & George Graham’s *When Self-Consciousness Breaks: Alien Voices and Inserted Thoughts* (Bradford, 2000) you’ll find though, how exasperating it is to speak of these experiences. Finding a precise philosophical vocabulary to discuss these experiences is only half the battle. Explaining them in their full diversity is even harder. I got the 70% figure from that book. I confess it sounded doubtful to me since I grew up thinking it a classic symptom of schizophrenia and that’s way too big. Stephens & Graham shows a wide literature has grown up around the topic debunking a series of misimpressions. The idea that ‘voices’ are usually persecutory is another fallacy. When ‘voices’ do that, it is still smart to see a shrink, but in fact they are much more often innocuous, consoling, reassuring, and give advice and instruction. Just as the voices heard by Leslie’s candidates for abduction do.

The point I want to make with these numbers is to give some sense of how poor many of these must be as signs of abduction. Ask yourself, if you think humans are really being abducted by aliens, how many? A few thousand? A million? Well, do the math. There cannot be a one-to-one correspondence with any of these signs. On any one given indicator, over 90% of those answering ‘Yes’ cannot be manifesting the symptom due to furtive alien abduction even if it they ‘really’ happen. In legitimate psychological testing, a given indicator should give a false point a third of the time or less.

Point Three. What score is acceptable? Rather bizarrely, most postings of the list lack a way to interpret the score you get. At what score should you start worrying? Five? Ten? Twenty? Forty? The answer is 20. But you only know this if you have the version that appears in George van Dyk’s book. If you saw it on the Web, tough luck. But, while you might be inclined to applaud the van Dyk version since at least it potentially allows some percentage of test takers to conclude they have nothing to worry about, there are obvious ambiguities. As I read it, and I am absolutely simplifying here, the main conclusion was that the higher you scored above 20 the likelier it was you had been abducted and the higher, the more often. Below 20, you could just forget it. The 20 cut-off appears, however, to be entirely subjective on the listmaker’s part. Worse, as you ponder it, it is somewhat odd. While it is legitimate to say that there is not always one-to-one correspondence between a symptom and a particular disorder,

they are admitting you could be missing over half the items and still be an abductee. It’s not unknown for real-world disorders to be asymptomatic in some fraction of cases. Yet, shouldn’t there be a better correlation than this? Admittedly, I am setting up a ‘heads I win, tails you lose’ situation here. There are conflicting philosophical pressures—aliens that conceal perfectly should ideally force a zero correlation, but a testing procedure should ideally force a one-to-one correlation. 20 out of 58, however, still just sounds peculiar.

Point Four. A number of the items can be interpreted as traits of paranoia: the feeling of being watched, overreacting to the eyes of animals or strangers, relationship fears, inability to trust others especially people in authority. Dreams of disaster or fear of imminent catastrophe has been said to be in the fantasies of every paranoid. There is no explicit criterion to differentiate these things



being caused by aliens rather than paranoia. Feelings of being special or chosen could indicate delusions of grandeur. A sense of mission can also correlate with paranoia. People slipping into psychosis and schizophrenia are often gripped with a peculiarly compelling sense of mission and paranoia tends to also emerge in such manic states. As paranoids are preferentially drawn into ufo obsessions, they are just the sort of person to take a test of this sort and conclude furtive powers are messing around with them. Where is the criteria for differential diagnosis? Don’t kid yourself with that pop motto that “just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean people are not out to get you.” In fact, that is precisely what paranoia means. People do get trapped into false ideas about how the world around them is behaving towards them. There are paranoids out there who will get wrong ideas from tests like these. If this was intended as a serious test, there ought to be a clear warning that paranoids will get a false positive.

Point Five. It is implicit in point 2, but let’s make it explicit here. All the signs involve phenomena that permit multiple interpretations. Let’s take a few, more or less at whim. Migraines can be traced to things entirely unrelated to aliens like hormone imbalances, allergies, and muscle tension. Nosebleeds, too, are more fruitfully treated with working assumptions of high blood pressure, hormonal imbalances, dry air, and clotting factors. Be sure to sneeze the clot out to let the vessel close elastically. Helpful advice from my medical guide.

Dreams of solid wall almost certainly are ‘just’ dreams. Lucid dreamers have reported the ability to learn how to move through solids by willing to do so. This is possible because in dreams you are not restricted by physical laws. Images and mental constructs are not made

of atoms. Objects in the real world are and it is impossible for atoms to pass through one another. (Kottmeyer 2004)

Flying dreams have been around forever and are mentioned in divination texts back through Egyptian and Babylonian times. Their meanings have differed from culture to culture and probably can differ from person-to-person depending on psychological contexts and personal histories. Often, though, it seems to reflect a mood of happiness and self-direction. As already mentioned, there are websites that discuss their history and psychology at length.

Reactions to the *Communion* cover alien with its immense black eyes taps into a phenomenon known as supernormal sign stimulation, a well-known finding in ethology. It happens in not just humans, but animals as well. As eyes become larger, the emotional reaction increases. If felt as parent or sexual possibility, you feel greater love. If felt as predator, you feel greater fear. (Campbell 1985; Kottmeyer 1991)

Consider odd beams of light. I've seen airplane landing lights that could make a heart skip a beat in their brilliance, but is that odd or merely lovely? Feeling anxious about unexplained events? Fear of the unknown is supposed to be a universal, at least on the authority of some movies I've seen.

It is irresistible to include a remark by comedian Dennis Miller. The symptoms of abductees—unaccounted time, strange bruises, suspicion of sexual violation (i.e. 1, 3, 13, 16, 25, 28, 34, 55)—seemed to him amazingly like spring break. (Miller 1998) The obverse of this cheery cynicism must face fears on whether date rapes involving illegal drugs might be masked for something less than cosmic in a couple of these items.

Point Six. Note how often words like strange, unusual, unexplained or similar expressions modify indicators. This injects a lot of subjectivity and obviously biases up the scores of people who put dramatic spins on things that more mundane people shrug off as trivial or uninteresting. We all know people who overthink things and focus on details in a way that makes big mysteries out of molehills. Paranoid people are also less likely to discuss things that puzzle them with other people who might correct or modify their reactions. What, pray tell, is involved in deciding whether a given fog or haze “shouldn't be there.” Do I whip out my trusty thermometer and relative humidity instruments for every fog I see?

And, not to be nasty, but, stupid people have a disadvantage at avoiding the abductee label. Some people just don't have knack or knowledge for explanation or ‘resolving these things’—item 57. The item about electronic malfunctions (#37) may reflect simple ignorance about how certain things work. You don't need aliens to explain how radios and televisions change reception as **any** body; human, animal, even mechanical; draws

near it. Made me snicker.

As my final point, let's revisit the philosophical paradox of the very existence of a list of signs that break through the secret veil of aliens gifted with miraculous technologies. I can take this test and jiggle my responses to be either over 20 or under depending on how I spin certain items and allow my personal skepticism to withhold or grant ‘mystery’ status on a variety of experiences and observations. If **I** am an unaware abductee, then any ol' fool can be one. But, let's linger a moment—Why Not? If you grant that not merely hundreds but *millions* of people are being abducted by aliens, why not go the whole length of the field? Maybe everybody, all 6 plus billion human beings on the planet, has been abducted by aliens and only 0.33% of them realize it consciously. Maybe aliens are almost perfectly competent and fool almost everybody.

Why? Well, why not? Do you think aliens couldn't? They've traveled light years, expended huge energy reserves, to get here. According to some believers, They constantly watch us. They visit repeatedly. They move through walls to get to us. They must have big ideas about our fate to go to such trouble. Ultimately we don't ‘really’ know it is impossible for aliens to be secretly screwing around with absolutely everybody.

But what's the use of thinking that way? I'm not saying anything new, but it must be said over and over till it sinks in: Beings capable of interstellar travel have to have some ability to reason logically and efficiently. If they want to study us at the level of vivisectional experimentation, they could do it with a small selection—hundreds, maybe a few thousand. They would take their specimens away and put them in controlled environments, safely and constantly monitored, to minimize variables. Their procedures would not look like scenes crafted for horror movies, but be transparently purposeful and with minimal damage. They would not return specimens to the wild until they were completely done with them. If they want to exploit our bodies they would take enough for breeding, leave, and farm the product. If they don't want to contaminate human culture or alter human history, they would not return them—period. If they did want to put them back, they would erase all trace of what they've done with all the resources that a science many generations ahead of our own would have at its command. Their specimens would be asymptomatic and incurious. They would not be asking themselves questions. They'd never take any sort of abduction test.

There would not be **FIFTY-EIGHT** signs of their activities.

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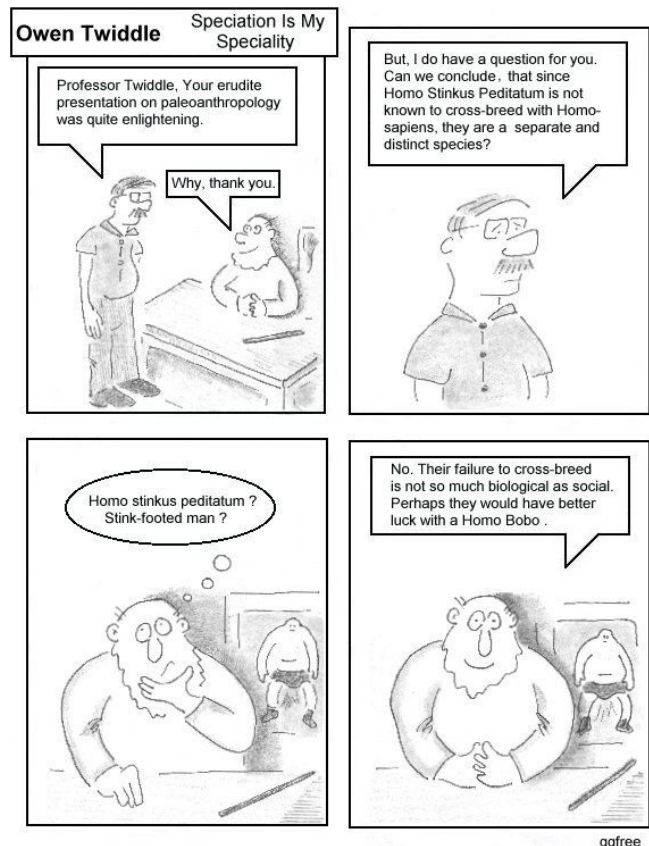
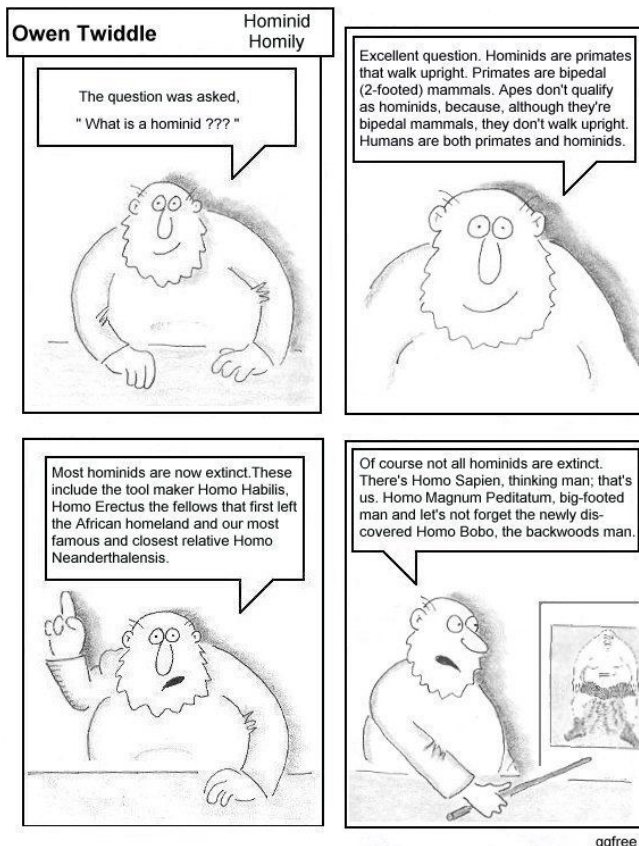
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Postscript

Even as I was writing this, an even longer list giving 60 symptoms appeared at www.oregonuforeview.com/indicators.html. The newest ones are #59) "Have many of these traits and can remember portions about the abduction or alien encounter." and 60) "Have had illnesses of a life long nature suddenly disappear." The last symptom marks a reversal of attitude to Positives and restores the indicator dropped from Fiore years earlier in slightly altered form. A skeptical discussion of abduction indicators with doubts nearly identical to mine appears on the Museum of Hoaxes website at www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/forums/viewthread/966/



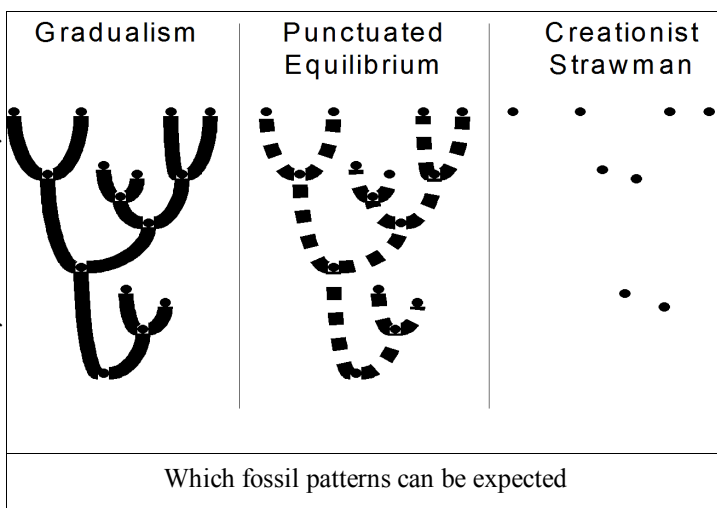
Punctuated equilibria

From EvoWiki.org

Punctuated equilibrium (Punctuated equilibria, PE or Punk-eek) is a theory popularized by Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge. The theory postulates that evolutionary change is not constant but that speciation may occur rapidly and the species then change little for long periods of time. The theory explains the patterns shown in the fossil record. While many of the basic ideas in the theory are widely accepted, it has been criticised for putting emphasis on species selection.

The biogeographical aspect

Punctuated equilibrium is often misunderstood, even by scientists, in diverse ways. Fundamentally and originally, all punctuated equilibrium is an application of Mayr's theory of allopatric speciation -- which argued that speciation occurs in small peripheral populations cut off from the rest of the species - - to the fossil record. Gould and Eldredge pointed out that if Mayr's theory was true, then the pattern observed in the fossil record would tend to be a jerky succession of species, rather than an absolutely smooth progression. That's it, really. It does not apply to processes other than speciation, although for some reason the term gets dragged out when any kind of relatively rapid change is being discussed.



Misunderstandings of Punk Eek

Creationists commonly advance punctuated equilibrium as concession on the part of the paleontological community that evolution is not borne out by the fossil record, largely due to the way in which S. J. Gould presented it. More specifically, they say that PE tries to explain away an alleged lack of transitional fossils. Gould recognized his error in presentation and later lamented the misrepresentation of punctuated equilibrium on the part of the creationists. In 1981, he said,

"Since we proposed punctuated equilibria to explain trends, it is infuriating to be quoted again and again by creationists -whether through design or stupidity, I do not know - as admitting that the fossil record contains no transitional forms. Transitional forms are generally lacking at the species level, but are abundant between larger groups. The evolution from reptiles to mammals...is well documented."

Punctuated equilibrium solely attempts to explain the rate and pattern of evolutionary change as inferred from the fossil record. Attempts to attribute to this postulate more than it explains are without substantiation.

Controversy and Critique

Punctuated equilibrium as advanced by Stanley (1975, 1981, 1982), Gould & Eldredge (1972, 1977), Eldredge (1984, 1985), Eldredge & Stanley (1984) and Gould (1980, 1982) and most vociferously espoused by Gould throughout the latter portion of his career, has come under significant criticism by a number of evolutionary biologists. While almost all agree that evolutionary rate is not constant at any one level and can be either bradytelyic, horotelyic, or tachytelyic (Simpson 1944), the specific presentation of punctuated equilibrium by Gould et al as a process of evolution fundamentally at odds with the neo-

darwinian paradigm, is seriously flawed. Indeed the very argument that evolution progresses continuously in a punctuational manner, has not been borne out by explicit review of the fossil record by which Gould and his colleagues made their argument in the first place. Most damaging are the studies of Phillip Gingerich on morphologic change in Cenozoic mammals demonstrating a more or less continual pattern of gradualism (1976, 1980, 1982), although further research into the pattern of morphologic change in mammals also fails to

underwrite Gouldian punctuated equilibrium in the fossil record: see Hurzeler (1962), Chaline & Laurin (1986), Fahlbusch (1983), Harris & White (1979), MacFadden (1985), Krishtalka & Stucky (1985) and Maglio (1973). Carroll (1987; 1997) has emphasized that the defense of punctuated equilibrium using operational taxonomic units, per the method of Stanley (1981), is inherently flawed due to the limitations of the Linnean terminological infrastructure employed by taxonomic science, and emphasized that attention to anatomical detail and not taxonomic convention, precludes creating punctuated equilibria where none exist. Levington (2001) concluded that fossil evidence for punctuation is slight, while that of gradualism is much more impressive. He referred to Ernst Mayr (1904-2005) as the founder of the punctuated equilibrium hypothesis.

See also: phyletic gradualism and peripatric speciation.

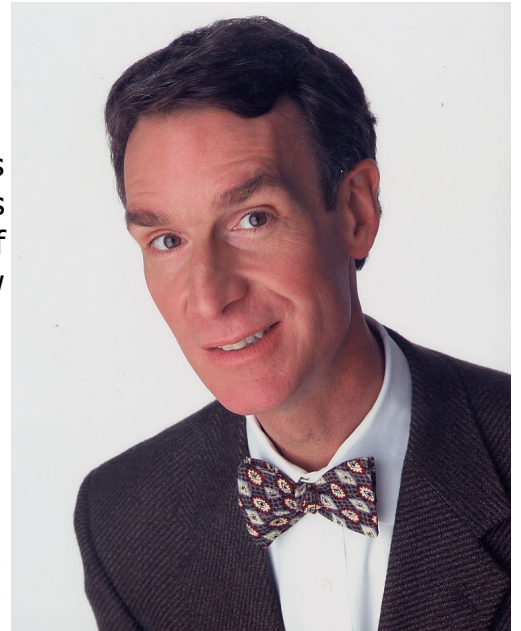
[This article originally appeared on the EvoWiki web site and is reproduced as permitted by the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 License. The original article can be viewed at http://www.evowiki.org/index.php/Punctuated_equilibria. The Creative Commons License can be viewed at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>]



Our Next Meeting

Video: Bill Nye—The Science Guy

Bill Nye recently spoke as part of the Skeptics Society’s Distinguished Lecture Series. The presentation includes video clips from his current TV series, “The Eyes of Nye” (shown recently on PBS). Please join us to view and discuss this video presentation.

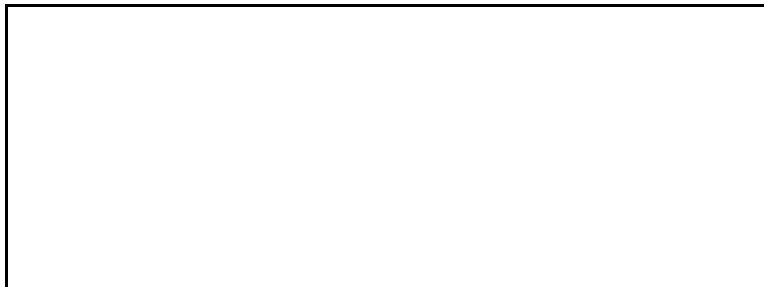


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