

MUFON Report 70084 (Submitted September 2015), by Charles H. Smith

I make this report, going on fifty years after the event occurred, simply because it seems interesting. We were never able to come up with an explanation for what happened, and though this is probably not as dramatic as some of your reports, you might find it unusual.

My friend Bill and I were taking a short camping vacation in the White Mountains, New Hampshire, just before we started college in the fall of 1968 (he had just turned 18, and I was just about to; this would have been late August or early September – I have slides from the trip that were processed in September 1968). High on our agenda was climbing Mt. Washington on the Jewell Trail, which may be accessed from the base station of the famous cog railroad there. It was a hot sunny day, some 90 degrees at the bottom of the mountain, but as we got to and above the tree line a thick fog enveloped us. By around noon we reached the top of Mt. Washington, and stuck around the general vicinity for a couple of hours or so. In mid-afternoon we started back down.

We were about halfway down (or more) the 3.7 mile long Jewell Trail portion (the whole hike up is nearly 6 miles), well below the tree line, when I thought I heard something from down further along the trail. I stopped and told Bill to listen, but there didn't seem to be anything to hear after a few seconds, so we continued walking. I recall conditions as being sunny but somewhat misty/showery; the trees around us were dwarfed (maybe 15 or 20 feet tall) and one could see perhaps 175 to 200 feet into the woods. I don't recall there being much if any wind. Less than thirty seconds later I again motioned to Bill to stop and listen. Over the next minute or two we heard a *sound* on the right side of the trail describe what appeared to be a trajectory parallel to the trail, and moving up it. We saw nothing, but estimated that whatever caused the sound, were it 200 feet from us, would have been moving at about 15 miles per hour.

At its closest and loudest, the sound was quite loud – as loud as a medium-sized helicopter would have been at 200 feet's distance. But, and most interesting, the sound itself varied not the slightest bit in pitch or intensity, while otherwise sounding somewhat like what a billion mosquitoes might sound – a kind of highish-pitched whine. Whatever it was, if it was something solid, it must have been on or near the ground as we most likely would have been able to see it above the trees had it been much above ground level. It seemed rather close, rather than further away/louder/faster-moving. Again, there was no wavering of pitch and intensity such as one might expect from a huge swarm of moving insects. It proceeded upslope, parallel to the trail, until we couldn't hear it anymore. The whole event only lasted at most a couple of minutes.

Having no idea of what it was we stood silently as it passed, not being eager to run after it into the woods. When it was gone we just continued down the trail, reaching the base station sometime after 4 pm, I think. When we got there we asked the ticket person for the cog railway whether anything like this had ever been reported, and I distinctly remember him laughing and saying "Oh, you must have heard a bear!" Well, I think not.

Topo maps seem to show that there is nothing but sloping downhill forest to that side of the trail for about a mile, at which point it reaches the rather minor and unpeopled Jefferson Notch Road at several hundred feet lower elevation. I wrote to the Forest Service (or National Park Service—I forget which) to inquire about the event, but they were of no help.

Both of us now have our PhDs, Bill in applied psychology and myself in physical geography. I still remember the event pretty clearly, I think, and I leave it to you folks to ponder further.