



Pro-Am Cooperation for the Reporting of Unusual Observations in the Atmosphere

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(*): Disclaimer: Work undertaken as personal work; not endorsed as research activity by ESA.

Abstract

Gazing up at the night sky has been a source of wonder since the beginning of time, a subtle mix of fear and an unstoppable need to question our origin and destiny. We question what might lie in the star-lit sky beyond the range of humankind's limited view, and if we are indeed alone in the universe. The idea of extraterrestrial life has captivated the imagination of people across the world since time immemorial and has energized the unmanned exploration of our solar system.

Over the last 60 years, alleged observations of unidentified aerospace phenomena (popularly known as UFOs) have regularly renewed the public's fascination regarding the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. In parallel with the space exploration, the last century has seen the emergence of a phenomenon that has generated intense interest and invaded the modern consciousness on a worldwide scale. Many thousands of people, from all walks of life and including numerous civilian, governmental and military credible witnesses, have reported UAP sightings.

Despite that the majority of sightings can be explained in conventional terms and the lack of any incontrovertible scientific evidence, the existence of a small residue of cases remaining unexplained after analysis gives the subject a strong aura of mystery and fascination. Certainly there is a need to keep an attitude of humility and scientific open-mindedness since some UAP reports might still represent events worthy of research. Rare atmospheric events, near-earth space phenomena, unexpected consequences of human activity (space debris, electromagnetic signals, and pollution) or interactions among these may be revealed by further study. In fact, the continuing analysis of unexplained atmospheric events or unusual aerial perceptions could lead to a deeper understanding of our planet and possibly other benefits, for example safer air travel.

Launched under the framework of the International Year of Astronomy 2009, the Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena (UAP) Observations Reporting Scheme aims at approaching the UAP topic from a rational and scientific perspective. It focuses on collecting rigorous UAP testimonies from amateur and professional astronomers, as these ones represent a community of trained observers and therefore much less prone to misidentifications of natural or man-made phenomena.

During this presentation, we will provide an overview of the project, highlighting the latest results, infrastructure and outreach activities. We will stress the current status of the Pro-Am cooperation; explore possible future plans for strengthening the visibility and relevance of the project, while requesting feedback from the community of planetary scientists.