

Training Observation Skills and Stimulating interest in Science and Technology: The UAP Observations Reporting Scheme

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

Abstract

Launched under the framework of the International Year of Astronomy 2009, the Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena (UAP) Observations Reporting Scheme aims to approach the UAP from a professional, rational and scientific perspective. Its objectives are to:

- 1) Allowing observers to check their sightings against the most common nocturnal and daytime misidentifications, and learn more about the various natural or man-made phenomena that can give rise to false UAP sightings. Amateur astronomers and societies who receive questions about UFOs can redirect those queries to the website;
- 2) Serving as a forum for educating the public about atmospheric, astrophysical and human phenomena;
- 3) Collecting reports of trained observers (astronomers) of apparently inexplicable events for further study.

For a number of reasons the general public and many young people are fascinated by the idea of UFOs and extraterrestrial life. Mysteries motivate to gain knowledge and interest. Through the UFOs topic, an opportunity exists to stimulate the general public and its young people's interests to science and technology.

However, a major problem relates to the fact that the general public generally associates any strange sighting to something exotic, unknown, and to the possibility of extraterrestrial visitations. Irrational thinking surrounds the overall topic (hoaxes, pseudoscience, new age sects).

In that respect, the UAP Observations Reporting Scheme fulfils a need in relation to demystifying UFO events, dispelling the public's superstitions and misconceptions, and offers an opportunity to teach the public how to think more

critically. This is achieved through the following resources:

Firstly the project's website (*) provides an extensive resource for inquiry-based learning and for UAP witnesses to critically evaluate the potential cause of their sightings. Photos, videos, descriptions, tools, and links to websites are provided to assist the witness.

Secondly, the basic educational information provided on the web site aims also at serving as a forum for educating the public about human, atmospheric and astrophysical phenomena, that are frequently misidentified and at the origin of many alleged UFOs sightings.

Thirdly, the website provides novice observers to become familiar with locating things in the sky by using general observational parameters (elevation and azimuth or right ascension and declination)

We present the website's extensive and well-illustrated list of misidentifications and describe how people can further check details, develop their knowledge (e.g. satellite paths, stars/planets charts, characteristics of meteors, pictures of sprites, clouds classification) or enhance their observation skills. A short illustrated list of UAP cases received by the project will be featured, both explained and inexplicable.

(*) <http://www.uaproject.org/>