

UFO Expert 3404 Says Fewer Being Seen

Tuscaloosa, Ala.

An expert on unidentified flying objects says the number of sightings has declined in recent years but he adds that does not mean UFOs do not exist.

"We have to be careful when we talk about our galaxy and our solar system, said Edward J. Planz, director of the Mutual UFO Network. "Maybe there are other planets in our galaxy that are inhabited."

Planz, who is also an associate professor of engineering at the University of Alabama, said the universe is so constructed that it is possible intelligent life exists elsewhere.

"I've never seen a UFO. At times I wish I had," he said. "I do believe we are rather reluctant even to admit such things are possible, but it's very possible with the sun the way it is and the conditions that exist."

UFOs were first reported 37 years ago when Kenneth Arnold of Boise, Idaho, told the Air Force that nine "flying saucers" followed his airplane over Mount Rainer, Wash. Hundreds of sightings have been reported since.

But the Air Force dropped its "Project Blue Book" investigations in 1969, concluding there was no threat to national security and no evidence the sightings were extraterrestrial vehicles.

Planz, who chases UFO reports in his spare time, said since 1977 the number of reported sightings has dropped dramatically.

"UFO sightings have died down considerably," he said. "The sightings now are minute. There hasn't been anything major since the Pascagoula incident."

On Oct. 11, 1973, two men fishing from a pier in Pascagoula, Miss., said they saw a spaceship from outer space.

Calvin Parker, 19, fainted, but Charles Hickson, 45, claimed he was examined by five-foot-tall creatures that came from an eight-foot diameter blue-gray craft. Sightings in Pascagoula continued for years after that.

Planz said hoaxes have also been a problem to UFO investigations.

"When you look at this thing, there are two ways you can turn," said Planz. You can negate the whole field entirely, or you can say that there is a possibility."

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