

NIGHTTIME ASTRONOMICAL SKY SURVEYS AND UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

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There are several instances of extended observations of large fields of view of the night sky by trained astronomical observers. These observations are usually performed in the context of meteor studies. One early is the Harvard Meteor Project, in which visual and photographic observations were performed (the latter with Super-Schmidt cameras, and a 60 degree field of view) in New Mexico during the period 1954-1958. Note that this is a locale and period characterized by extensive reports of unidentified flying objects. In all, a surface area of $7 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^2$ was observed to 80 km altitude for a total period of 1×10^5 minutes. Observations were good down to magnitude +4. No unexplained objects were detected.

A second example of such an observation program is the photographic and visual Pyraque Network of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. The total area covered is about 10^5 km^2 , but only bright objects -- brighter than magnitude +3 -- can be photographed. The cameras cover essentially the entire sky, and the network encompasses parts of the states of

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