

Variation of Sightings with Time

It appears that the UFO phenomenology has been with us from the earliest times. In the last twenty-five years, however, there seems to be a drastic increase in the number of sightings. It is practically impossible to estimate the number of world-wide sightings because of the lack of suitable data collection means. In the U.S., the principal depositories are currently the Air Force, NICAP, and APRO. It is estimated that currently these sources together receive about 2000 reports per year. Since only about one sighting in 10 is reported, the number of sightings is about 20,000. But of these, 80 to 95% are not interesting, leaving us with "only" 1000 to 4000 worthwhile sightings per year for North America.

In addition to the background of reports more or less constantly flowing in, occasional periods of intense activity are also noted. One such period was October 1954 over most of France. NICAP lists a number of these "flaps". Sometimes they are very localized, covering only a small portion of a state for a period of a few weeks.

APRO concludes, on the basis of the reports available to them, that the patterns of appearance follow phases - atomic test areas and installations in the late 1940s and early 50s, rivers, reservoirs and bodies of water in the late 50s and early 60s and now electrical distribution systems. Convincing evidence to support this hypothesis has not been published; however, if the hypothesis were true it would certainly raise a lot of question.

McDonald and others suggest that reports of the last few years show more sightings of objects at low altitude (or landed) and more sightings made from urban areas (in the 40s and 50s sightings were generally inversely correlated with population densities).

Interactions with the Environment

Interactions of UFOs with the environment produce a kind of believability that pure visual observations will never do. Some examples of interaction are cases showing electromagnetic disturbances in practically every kind of device -- radio, TV, auto ignition, aircraft electronics, compass, magnetometer, magnetic automobile speedometer, etc. NICAP lists 106 examples. NICAP also lists 81 cases of radar