



ing cancer in rodents is not the same as doing have led to many new treatments. But if you rodents is on the way, you should smell a rat.

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## MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN THE U.S.

claim they have been abducted by aliens, according to a 2013 story in the *Washington Post*. That's an impressive tally for the aliens. And yet the government's response has been tepid. That should tell you something: either the Feds think it's not happening, or they're part of the problem.

Many people believe the latter. They say that the government knows the aliens are here but keeps the evidence under wraps at Area 51 or some other top-secret venue.

But hold on.

Unless extraterrestrials prefer Americans (and exceptionalism aside, why should they?), then the rate of abduction worldwide shouldn't be terribly different from what it is here. Assuming an aliens-without-borders effort, tens of millions of folks around the world have been grabbed by the grays. I think the United Nations would notice. I think you'd notice.

Abductions, of course, are only one component of the so-called UFO phenomenon. The majority of the evidence is composed of sightings—eyewitness accounts, photos and videos. Most of these can be explained as aircraft, rockets, balloons, bright planets or, occasionally, hoaxes. Some remain unexplained—but that only means they're *unexplained*, not that they're flying saucers, no matter how convinced the people who report them might be. There remains no scientifically validated evidence that extraterrestrials have been here, either recently or in the distant past. The pyramids, the Nazca lines in Peru and all the other artifacts that have been ascribed to ancient astronauts can be straightforwardly explained by human activity.

In fact, few scientists or science museum curators feel that the claim we're being visited is even plausible. Even aside from the formidable technical challenges of interstellar travel, ask yourself this: Why are they here now? *Homo sapiens* has only been broadcasting its presence to the universe since the advent of television and radar. Unless the extraterrestrials come from a very close star system, there has not been adequate time for them to learn of our existence and fly to Earth. Even if they could get here at the speed of light (which they couldn't), they'd have to live within 35 or so light-years of us—and there aren't all *that* many close stars. Besides, high-speed space travel takes an enormous amount of energy. Would you pay a gargantuan utility bill just for a little "catch and release" sport-fishing for hominins?

Nevertheless, for decades polls have shown that roughly one third of the populace believes our world is host to cosmic visitors. If despite the lack of good evidence, you insist on believing this is true, you also have to admit they are the best guests you could ever have. They don't kill us, they don't foment unrest, they don't steal the silverware. The Roswell incident was nearly 70 years ago. If aliens have been here since, they deserve good conduct medals.

## No Credible Evidence of Alien Visitations Exists

BY SETH SHOSTAK



**Seth Shostak** is senior astronomer at the SETI Institute, a nonprofit organization that studies the nature of life beyond Earth. He also co-hosts a weekly radio program, *Big Picture Science*.

### MORE TO EXPLORE

**Why Evolution Is True.** Jerry A. Coyne. Viking Adult, 2009.

**Global Weirdness.** Climate Central. Pantheon, 2012.

**The Panic Virus: The True Story behind the Vaccine-Autism Controversy.** Seth Mnookin. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

**How UFOs Conquered the World: The History of a Modern Myth.** David Clarke. Aurum Press, 2015.

### FROM OUR ARCHIVES

**America's Science Problem.** Shawn Lawrence Otto; November 2012.

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