

Offered Title: Listening for a Message from Space

OK, one more reminder about the upcoming partial solar eclipse in Texas. It can be viewed safely with ISO certified safety film and numerous companies make solar viewing glasses with it. The glasses are available through retail outlets as well. Go to NASA's website and look up solar eclipse viewing options. Approved manufacturers will be listed.

Failing that, you can use a cheap pair of binoculars to project the solar image onto a piece of paper, make a pinhole projector, use a salvaged objective lens from an old telescope, even reflect the Sun's image onto a piece of paper with a small mirror. **JUST BE CAREFUL AND DO NOT ALLOW ANONE TO LOOK INTO THE SUN'S IMAGE, JUST AT THE PROJECTED IMAGE!**

Well, school is starting up and that means fall is approaching. Cool days of fall, football, and autumn colors. Oh, wait, this isn't the Midwest, this is central Texas and cool days aren't coming anytime soon. At least the kids will be back in school getting their brains stretched.

Speaking of intelligence, is there intelligence anywhere out there? We've been trying to eavesdrop since the early 1960s and haven't yet picked up solid evidence of communication, not even gossip.

SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence has been an ongoing and multifaceted program. This desire to listen to or contact ET goes back to 1896 with Nikola Tesla trying to contact Martians. SETI was essentially launched in 1960 when Frank Drake at the Green Bank Observatory in West Virginia aimed an 85 foot dish hooked up to a radio receiver at a couple of stars. He heard static. Exciting!

The search has expanded since then, making use of all sorts of receivers such as the "Big Ear", a 20 acre flat form Kraus-type radio telescope at Ohio State university, and the monster, 305 meter Arecibo Observatory dish in Puerto Rico. Today various teams also use arrays of smaller dishes such as the Allen Telescope Array at Hat Creek Radio Observatory in northern California, and the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array in Socorro New Mexico. Arrays of smaller receivers spread over a large area have their signals integrated, giving them the sensitivity of very large receivers.

Other search programs include:

SERENDIP - a piggyback approach, analyzing deep space radio signals collected during other research.

BREAKTHROUGH LISTEN - this recent project will use thousands of hours of data yearly from Green Bank Observatory, and Parkes Observatory, Australia.

Of course, the biggest single ear now is FAST (Five hundred meter Aperture Spherical Telescope) in China.

So, with all this listening going on, is there anyone out there talking? So far, the only really exciting signal occurred on August 15th, 1977 at Ohio State. It has not been repeated nor identified. Keep listening.

Want to participate? Go to SETI@home.

What's in the Sky?

Don't forget the partial solar eclipse on August 21, it peaks at 1:10 pm CDT.