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It seems scarcely credible that life is a phenomenon unique to the planet Earth. Unmanned probes to Mars and Venus suggest that the rest of the solar system is indeed barren, but planetary systems are ~~known~~^{thought} to be a fairly common phenomenon throughout the universe.

In the Milky Way galaxy itself, of which the solar system is a part, there are at least 100,000 million stars. Optical telescopes, probing to the farthest visual limits of the universe, can resolve about 1,000 million galaxies, the most remote being some 5,000 million light-years away, receding ever further from us at 90,000 miles a second.

So to compute the total number of stars in the visible universe, you would have to multiply the number of stars in a single galaxy (100,000 million) by the number of galaxies (1,000 million) - and that is a lot of stars. Even if planetary systems are far less common than is believed, there must be literally millions of them out there, and in a high proportion ~~of them~~ at least one planet is likely to be capable of supporting life.

Does this mean that UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) are now being taken seriously by scientists and the aviation world? In other words, have flying saucers become legit?

UFO reports are always examined by Ministry of Defence scientists. In 1976 they checked about 200 sightings, but the screening of Close Encounters of the Third Kind has apparently resulted in an upsurge of invading flying saucers, with 300 occurrences reaching the boffins' desks in 1978.

No one will deny the occurrence of unidentified flying objects, but this designation is not simply a euphemism for flying saucers. An object may ^{well} be unidentified initially, but that doesn't mean it will stay unidentified.