

**CONFESSIONS OF AN ALIEN HUNTER: A
SCIENTIST'S SEARCH FOR
EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE BY
SETH SHOSTAK**

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AN ALIEN HUNTER



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SETH SHOSTAK
SENIOR ASTRONOMER, SETI INSTITUTE
FOREWORD BY FRANK DRAKE

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From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Shostak, senior astronomer for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute, chronicles the ongoing search for extraterrestrial life in a venture that covers history, politics and funding, interviews with believers and non-believers (in both the religious and scientific sense), equipment and science, as well as typical sci-fi scenarios, all salted liberally with humor: "In most stories, space is just the Wild West without the dust... where the bad guys are just like us, except for their obvious need of remedial plastic surgery." Shostak also discusses the beginnings of life on earth, how this knowledge impacts what astronomers search for in other galaxies, and the growing consortium of scientific voices who believe "it would be offensively self-centered to imagine that what has happened on Earth has only happened on Earth." Written in clear, logical prose, with many analogies to everyday life that simplify the discussion (reverse-engineering technology "from a society several centuries in advance of us is like giving your laptop to Ben Franklin"). From crop circles to abductions, he discusses and debunks common alien encounter myths ("wheat fields are poor memory storage devices"), while remaining hopeful that continued exploration will yield discoveries. Covering topics from signal processing to feature films, should entertain a broad audience. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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presence of some weighty, scientific material. --Jerry Eberle

About the Author

Seth Shostak is a scientist, author, and frequent commentator on TV and radio. He writes a monthly column on SPACE.com, and often lectures on his work at SETI. He lives in Palo Alto, California.

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Aliens are big in America. Whether they've arrived via rocket, flying saucer, or plain old teleportation, they've been invading, infiltrating, or inspiring us for decades, and they've fascinated moviegoers and television watchers for more than fifty years. About half of us believe that aliens really exist, and millions are convinced they've visited Earth.

For twenty-five years, SETI has been looking for the proof, and as the program's senior astronomer, Seth Shostak explains in this engrossing book, it's entirely possible that before long conclusive evidence will be found.

His informative, entertaining report offers an insider's view of what we might realistically expect to discover light-years away among the stars. Neither humanoids nor monsters, says Shostak; in fact, biological intelligence is probably just a precursor to machine beings, enormously advanced artificial sentients whose capabilities and accomplishments may have developed over billions of years and far exceed our own.

As he explores what, if anything, they would tell us and what their existence would portend for humankind and the cosmos, he introduces a colorful cast of characters and provides a vivid, state-of-the-art account of the past, present, and future of our search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

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Most helpful customer reviews

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Dispels the Hollywood Myths

By Peter Cawdron

This is not everyone's cup of tea, but if your idea of a Sunday afternoon is sitting around with a scientist shooting the breeze, talking about the possibility of alien intelligence existing out there somewhere, then you'll love this book. It's everything you wanted to ask after watching the movie Contact (written by Carl Sagan, starring Jode Foster), but never knew who to ask.

Hollywood gets it all spectacularly wrong, which makes for great movies but also means our collective public awareness of this area of science is lousy.

And there's some great insights. At one point Seth points out that if our galaxy were a haystack and we were searching for a needle (representing intelligent aliens), then SETI estimate that there could be thousands of needles but, so far, all we've been able to do is to examine a tablespoon's worth of hay. It's no wonder we've come up empty handed, but if we keep proding around, we will get pricked by a needle sooner or later.

For a science buff, this book is a must.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

So so.

By Avenger

In buying this book, I thought I was getting a work devoted to SETI. Of course, I expected it to cover other things, but I never thought the SETI topic itself would be taking a back seat. Mostly, Shostak talks about the history of astronomy, UFOs, and other forms of pseudoscience. I could see why he included those things, but not why they dominated so much of the book. Another annoyance was his use of monotonous, unhumorous, and endless metaphors, which plagued the book throughout. Also, the chapters were exceedingly long, and he rambled on and on about different things so much that I forgot what the subject was to begin with.

I did learn some cool things, though. I never knew, for example, that radio waves transmit better through hydrogen clouds, or that the Drake equation assumes all civilizations stay on their home planet. Now don't get me wrong, Confessions was a thought-provoking and informative work, I did enjoy it. But the excess baggage brought it down significantly.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

I do believe, I do, I do... (Serious cred for a fascinating subject!)

By Thomas

Love Seth's podcast "Big Picture Science" and his take on "Things ET." This book is an informative, thought provoking look at the history, challenges and potential of human's striving for that "first contact" moment that has SCIENCE written all over it. Just to mention for those who enjoy this stuff, Joel Achenbach's "Captured By Aliens" is also a great book, written with wry wit and fun prose (which Seth haseth also) such that these two should be side by side on your bookshelf or sharing ram in your reading device.

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