

Study finds rogue waves are fact, not myth

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A German scientist says deadly "rogue waves" of 100 feet or higher are more common than thought.

Such enormous waves -- some taller than a 10-story building -- have, in the past, been considered sea tales, together with sightings of mermaids and sea monsters, The New York Times reported. Scientists say such waves might have been responsible for the mysterious sinking of dozens of large ships and the loss of many lives.

Wolfgang Rosenthal, a German scientist who helped the Paris-based European Space Agency pioneer the study of rogue waves by radar satellite, told the Times he estimates that, at any given moment, 10 of the giant waves are churning through the world's oceans -- especially in regions having powerful currents: the Agulhas off South Africa, the Kuroshio off Japan, and the Gulf Stream off the eastern United States.

Rosenthal says the proliferation of radar satellites should make it possible to better understand rogue waves and, perhaps, predict their occurrence.

"There will be warnings, maybe in 10 years," he told the Times. "It should be possible."

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