

UFO? No, it's just the International Space Station

May 5 2009, By John Keilman



As a public service, Art Maurer would like you to know that the bright light you might see skimming across the early morning sky later this week is not a UFO.

Maurer runs the planetarium at Joliet Junior College in Joliet, Ill., and in that job he hears quite a bit of chatter about extraterrestrials. He's not much of a believer in little green men from Mars, so when he noticed that the International [Space Station](#) -- recently outfitted with a new set of reflective solar panels -- would be particularly visible later this week, he thought it best to toss out a preemptory bucket of cold water.

"If somebody starts giving you these calls (about UFOs), it's the [International Space Station](#)," he said. "This is going to be bright enough

that people will say, 'Oh, this must be a flying saucer.' It's just our own flying saucer."

The space station in March added its final two [solar panels](#). NASA says the extra energy they generate will allow the station to double its crew to six, and to fully power its science experiments.

The panels also added to the brightness of the station as observed from Earth, though [NASA](#) spokesman Kyle Herring didn't think the difference was dramatic.

Herring said it will look like "a fast-moving star" but isn't likely to be mistaken for an alien craft. Maurer, who said he has seen the planet Venus and the star Sirius labeled as UFOs, wasn't so certain.

"There are nearly 30 or 40 flying saucers reported every night in this country," he said.

(c) 2009, Chicago Tribune.

Visit the Chicago Tribune on the Internet at www.chicagotribune.com/

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Citation: UFO? No, it's just the International Space Station (2009, May 5) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-05-ufo-international-space-station.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--