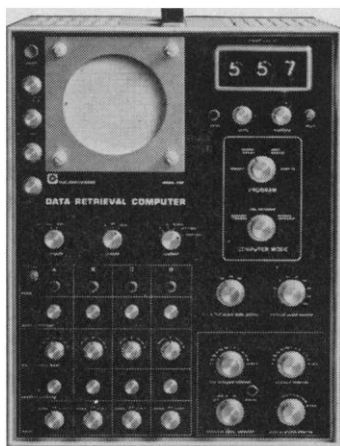


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gests that black skin may be of value in the tropics for reasons wholly unrelated to solar radiation. It should be remembered in addition that severe sunburn is essentially a disease of this century when 2-week vacations and jet air travel to Florida render it common among the unwary, whereas it is almost unknown among the peasants of Europe today who tan gradually as the summer-time approaches.

Although positive evidence for hypervitaminosis D among light-skinned peoples near the equator is lacking today, this is probably because (i) up to now there has been no reason to look for it; (ii) the well-known difficulties of assaying this vitamin; and (iii) of the habit of white men in the tropics of carefully avoiding direct sunlight by wearing clothes and pith helmets, and staying indoors when the sun is high to such an extent that they often are not even sunburned. These cultural substitutes for a black stratum corneum were not available, of course, when the races were evolving. Future confirmation of the hypervitaminosis D theory may come from reports of elevated serum levels of calcium and phosphate, kidney stones, and other symptoms of hypervitaminosis D in white persons living out-of-doors in Java, Kenya, and Peru.

W. FARNSWORTH LOOMIS
Graduate Department of Biochemistry,
Brandeis University,
Waltham, Massachusetts 02154

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1. F. Daniels, Jr., in *Handbook of Physiology*, D. B. Dill, E. F. Adolph, C. G. Wilbur, Eds. (American Physiological Society, Washington, D.C., 1964), p. 969.
2. H. F. Blum, *Quart. Rev. Biol.* 36, 50 (1961).

UFO's: Ideal Space Inhabitants

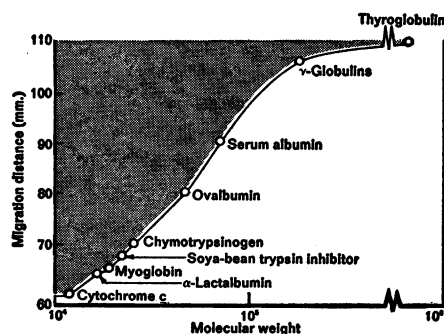
Markowitz' article, "Physics and metaphysics of unidentified flying objects" (15 Sept., p. 1274), was very helpful and prompts the following thought. Aside from infrequent sightings prior to 1945, UFO's became a source of public concern at a time when exploration of space moved closer to reality. I suggest that man, confronted with stepping into space, finds it intolerable to perceive space as uninhabited. The "sophisticated anxiety" of modern man might be, in part, responsible for populating space with products of intelligent beings.

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