

"Satellites and Strange Space Clouds"

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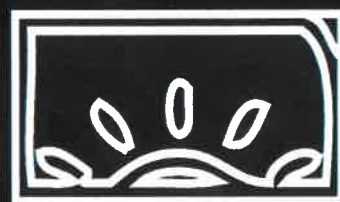
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SCIENCE CAFÉ

"A weirdly wonderful sight appeared to astronauts aboard the International Space Station this summer — thin blue clouds hovering at the boundary between Earth's atmosphere and the void. . . . Researchers speculate that the origin and spread of the clouds is linked to patterns of climate change associated with the modern era. But they are not ruling out a host of other possible factors, including methane, carbon dioxide, the number of meteors seeding the upper atmosphere, and even the 11-year sunspot cycle." The Aeronomy of Ice in the Mesosphere (AIM) satellite mission is exploring Polar Mesospheric Clouds (PMCs), also called noctilucent clouds, to find out why they form and why they are changing.

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