

For the February meeting, we welcomed back James Fradgley, who must be one of our most regular speakers . His talk this time was entitled "*Life in the Universe – are the Aliens out there?*". This was, effectively, a run through all the elements of the famous Drake equation (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drake_equation) which tries to estimate the probability of communicating life "out there".

Recent observations James showed have demonstrated that planetary systems are probably more prevalent than thought in 1961 when Frank Drake put together the equation. Similarly, James went through the probability of life forming spontaneously on a suitable planet including the Alkaline Hydrothermal Vent model which does provide that stepping stone from simple chemical processes to simple cellular life. Still, though the probability of simple life somewhere in the galaxy may be significant, the chances of intelligent life anywhere else may be very low, and in the words of Monty Python's Galaxy Song, may indeed be zero everywhere.

Following the break, Bob Mizon gave a good look around M42 – the Orion Nebula – which must be one of the winter standout objects. This was followed by Stuart Davis's look at the month to come and some images from Terry Evans and Gordon MacKenzie. We finished with a light hearted piece by Bud Budzynski prompted by rather sensational headlines in the Sun that the Man in the Moon would be destroyed by one of the Musk Rat's wayward rockets. Bud dispelled any lingering concerns we may have had so I can now sleep soundly knowing that the annoying bright thing isn't going to get even more annoying.