

'Mysterious Flying Whirlpool' in the Sky Was Not a UFO

The Subaru Telescope team is having fun with a wild bit of footage captured by a livecam in Hawaii.



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A livecam at Hawaii's Subaru Telescope caught sight of a SpaceX second stage on April 17, 2022. It looks like a whirlpool near the left of the frame.

Video screenshot by [Amanda Kooser/CNET](#)

The team at the [Subaru Telescope](#) on Maunakea in Hawaii is usually focused on discoveries beyond Earth, but footage captured by a livecam from the site on April 17 is turning heads. The video shows a "mysterious flying whirlpool" over Maunakea, but it has nothing to do with UFOs or aliens.

The footage comes from the [Subaru-Asahi Star Camera](#), an outreach project done in collaboration with the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun. It delivers a live feed of the sky so anyone can enjoy the stars at night or view the blue skies and clouds during the day. The telescope facility appears in the camera's line of sight.

The whirlpool shows up in the video as a swirl flying in from the left and slowly disappearing toward the horizon. The telescope team joked about keeping the origin of the UFO a mystery, but then said it seemed to actually be the falling second stage of a [SpaceX](#) Falcon 9 rocket.

SpaceX launched the [NROL-85 mission](#) on April 17 from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. The first stage of Falcon 9 is safely brought back down for reuse while the second stage takes the payload to orbit. The second stage -- a disposable part of the rocket system -- usually comes back to reenter Earth's atmosphere over the ocean.