

**Submission to present at the  
SETI Institute Workshop: Decoding Alien Intelligence**

**Session Title:** Bio-Friendly Exoplanets: Are They Irrelevant to SETI? – Seth Shostak

**Session Abstract:**

Since its inception more than a half-century ago, radio SETI searches have preferred to examine stellar systems that might have planets in the habitable zone. The conservative assumption being made here is that extraterrestrial intelligence is somehow analogous to terrestrial intelligence, having been “bottom up” evolved from simpler biology. Such alien sentience would, of course, be born on worlds conducive to the complex chemistry we call life, thereby justifying the traditional SETI approach. However, rapid developments in artificial, generalized intelligence suggest that – shortly after entering a highly technical and communicative era – biological intelligence will be outstripped by self-improving machine intelligence. If this is so, then SETI searches looking for human analogs on worlds that are terrestrial analogs would be like searching for trilobites in the Jurassic – they’d have been supplanted by dinosaurs. In this presentation, some of the implications and confounding puzzles for SETI that are the sequelae of this argument will be discussed.