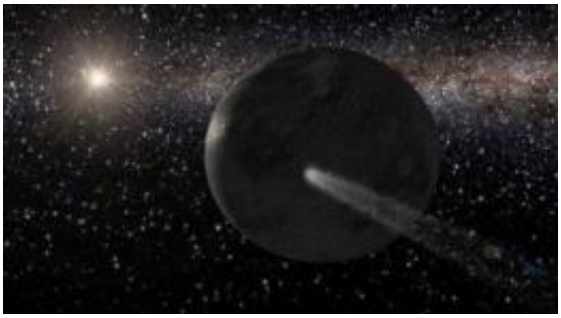
Water discovered on second asteroid, may be even more common

October 7 2010



Two teams of researchers who made national headlines in April for showing the first evidence of water ice and organic molecules on an asteroid have now discovered that asteroid 65 Cybele contains the same material. Credit: Gabriel Pérez, Instituto de Astrofisica de Canarias, Spain

Water ice on asteroids may be more common than expected, according to a new study that will be presented today at the world's largest gathering of planetary scientists.

Two teams of researchers who made national headlines in April for showing the first evidence of water ice and organic molecules on an asteroid have now discovered that asteroid 65 Cybele contains the same material.

"This discovery suggests that this region of our solar system contains more water ice than anticipated," said University of Central Florida

Professor Humberto Campins. "And it supports the theory that asteroids may have hit Earth and brought our planet its water and the building blocks for life to form and evolve here."

Campins will present the teams' findings during the 42nd-annual Division of Planetary Sciences Conference in Pasadena, Calif., which concludes Oct. 8.

Asteroid 65 Cybele is somewhat larger than asteroid 24 Themis – the subject of the teams' first paper. Cybele has a diameter of 290 km (180 miles). Themis has a diameter of 200 km (124 miles). Both are in the same region of the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

The academic article reporting this new finding has been accepted for publication in the European Journal "Astronomy and Astrophysics."

Campins is an expert on asteroids and comets. He received national attention for an article published in Nature showing the first evidence of water ice and organic molecules on asteroid 24 Themis. He's also worked on several science missions with NASA and the European Space Agency.

Campins holds degrees from the University of Kansas and the University of Arizona. He joined UCF in 2002 as the Provost Research Professor of Physics and Astronomy and head of the Planetary and Space Science Group.

Provided by University of Central Florida

Citation: Water discovered on second asteroid, may be even more common (2010, October 7) retrieved 26 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2010-10-asteroid-common.html

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