

Endeavour's Orbiting Tool Bag Can Be Seen Using 10 x 50 Binoculars

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STS-126 ISS Starboard Section - Credit: NASA

(PhysOrg.com) -- Endeavor astronaut Heidi Stefanyshyn-Piper's loss has turned out to be an amateur star gazers' event of the season. The \$100,000 tool bag slipped out of her reach and floated into space while she was trying to clean up a greasy mess on the starboard section of the space station. The tool bag is now dubbed ISS Toolbag and is orbiting the Earth. According to Space.com, Edward Light spotted the orbiting tool bag using 10 x 50 binoculars from his backyard in Lakewood, New Jersey.

SpaceWeather.com has launched a [satellite tracking system](#) which allows the public to input their zip code and get a schedule of when the ISS tool bag will be doing a flyby in their neighborhood. The satellite tracking

system provides the time, date, direction to look, transit time, maximum elevation and magnitude of the ISS Toolbag.

Close behind the ISS Toolbag is the International Space Station doing its flyby. The ISS has a very bright appearance compared to the tool bag. The site gives a week ahead calendar of the flyby events. If you miss one evening, you can catch it some other night. The ISS Toolbag is expected to continue to orbit until its fiery reentry some time in June, 2009.

According to NASA scientist Nicholas Johnson, the exact date of reentry is dependent on solar activity. So, the actual fiery end of the ISS Toolbag could be sooner or later than the predicted June date. It is not expected that any components of the Toolbag will reach the Earth's surface. A reentry survivability analysis has not been conducted, but in all likelihood it will simply burn up during reentry.

The orbiting tool bag weighs approximately 30-pounds. It measures 20-inches wide and 12-inches long. The tool bag contains two grease guns, a scraper tool, a large trash bag and a small debris bag. Given the size and dim magnitude of the orbiting tool bag, star gazers will need binoculars or a small telescope to view it.

On November 22, Kevin Fetter of Brockville, Ontario Canada captured the orbiting ISS Tool Bag on video. See his Lost Tool Bag YouTube Video above. Astronaut Heidi Stefanyshyn-Piper's now infamous tool bag fumble can be viewed in another Short Version YouTube video. In the weeks to come the ISS Tool Bag will be visible to all of North America.

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