

Scientists slam 'Moonman' earthquake predictor

March 3 2011

New Zealand scientists have rounded on a quasi-mystic mathematician known as the "Moonman" who claims he predicted the devastating Christchurch earthquake by studying the moon.

Ken Ring, the author of books linking the moon with [weather patterns](#), says he accurately forecast the February 22 tremor, which left about 240 people feared dead, in a Valentine's Day tweet.

"Potential earthquake time for the planet between 15th-25th, especially 18th for Christchurch, +/- about 3 days," Ring tweeted on February 14. "Short... and sharp."

Now traumatised residents are fearful after another Ring prediction: that Christchurch -- hit by two major quakes in the past six months, along with thousands of aftershocks -- will suffer another big tremor in the coming days.

"I'm hoping he's wrong, but we're going down to our holiday house for the week just in case," said schoolteacher Kirsty Carruthers. "It'll help take our minds off things, and it can't hurt to get away."

Ring maintains the risk of another quake is high because the moon is now unusually close to the Earth, exerting a strong [gravitational pull](#).

But scientists have scoffed at Ring's claims, with Canterbury University tectonics expert Mark Quigley calling them "ludicrous".

"No one has predicted the recent earthquakes in Canterbury," Quigley said.

"Vague quotes about dates of 'increased' activity plus or minus several days, without magnitudes, locations, and exact times do not constitute prediction.

"(This) is opportunistic and meaningless self-promotion during a time of national crisis."

Matt Gerstenberger, of New Zealand's Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, said: "The correlation is low enough so that a prediction based on (the [moon](#)) would be correct only a small proportion of the time, and would be wrong much more often than it is correct."

Systematics expert David Winter ran a statistical analysis of [earthquake activity](#) against Ring's total predictions, and said there was little to suggest he was credible.

"Once you see how implausible his methods are you realise you'd need incredible evidence to believe his predictions," he said.

"And once you see his run of false positives you realise that his 'prediction' of last week's [earthquake](#) doesn't meet that standard."

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Citation: Scientists slam 'Moonman' earthquake predictor (2011, March 3) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-scientists-slam-moonman-earthquake-predictor.html>

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