

New app helps skywatchers count meteors, log data, aid NASA research

December 9 2011

A new NASA handheld device application for mobile devices enables skywatchers to better track, count and record data about sporadic meteors and meteor showers anywhere in the world.

The "Meteor Counter" [app](#) enables astronomers -- laypersons and experienced meteor hunters alike -- to easily capture meteor observations with the software's innovative, piano-key interface. As the user taps the keys, the app records critical data for each meteor, including time and brightness. Once each observing session ends, that data is automatically uploaded, along with observer information, to NASA researchers for analysis.

The new app was developed by Dr. Bill Cooke, the head of NASA's [Meteoroid](#) Environment Office at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. and Dr. Tony Phillips of [space weather.com](#). "We developed the iphone app to be fun, and informative, but also to encourage going outside to observe the sky," said Cooke. "Our hope is the app will be useful for amateur and professional astronomers – we want to include their observations in NASA's discoveries – and have them share in the excitement of building a knowledge base about [meteor showers](#)."

A recorded audio track is optional. Users can record commentary as they input data, to be sent to NASA along with numerical information. Researchers suggest this function will be ideal for identifying shower [meteors](#) or one-time events.

The Meteor Counter is designed for all kinds of observers, ranging from experts with experience in science-grade meteor observations to first-time sky watchers who might never have seen a meteor before.

"The beauty is that it gradually transforms novices into experts," says Cooke. "As an observer gains experience, we weight their data accordingly in our analyses."

The Meteor Counter app also provides a newsfeed and event calendar -- both updated by professional NASA and meteor scientists -- to keep users informed of the latest meteor sightings and upcoming showers.

The app is currently available for [iPhone](#), iPad and iPod Touch. To download the free app, visit: itunes.apple.com/us/app/meteor-counter/id466896415

A version for other mobile devices will be available in the near future.

Complete instructions for using the Meteor Counter app are available at: meteorcounter.com/

Provided by JPL/NASA

Citation: New app helps skywatchers count meteors, log data, aid NASA research (2011, December 9) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-12-app-skywatchers-meteors-aid-nasa.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.