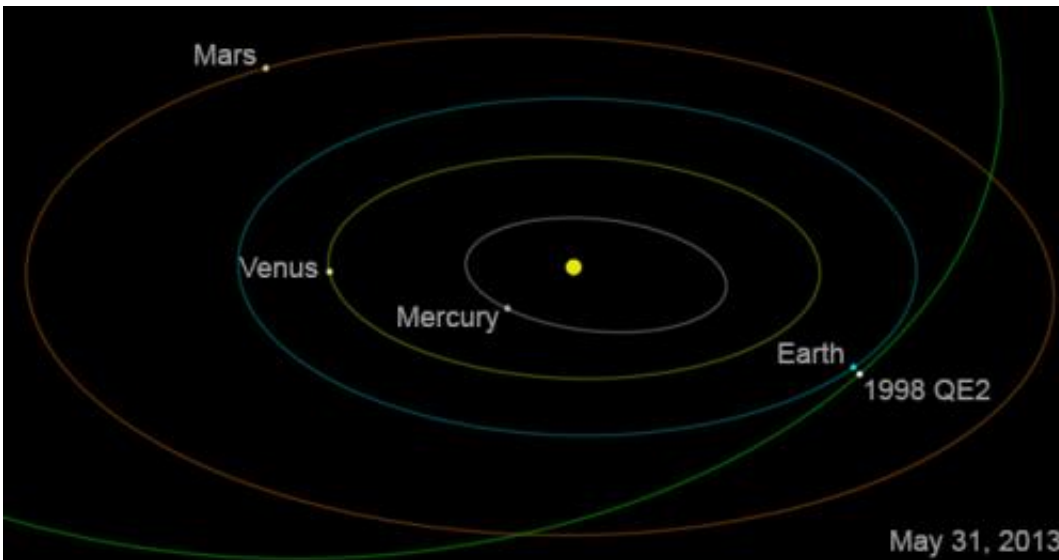


Big asteroid swinging by Earth has its own moon

May 30 2013, by Seth Borenstein



Asteroid 1998 QE2 will get no closer than about 3.6 million miles at time of closest approach on May 31 at 1:59 p.m. Pacific (4:59 p.m. Eastern). Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

Astronomers getting their first close-up glimpse of a giant asteroid about to whiz by Earth found a surprise bonus rock. A smaller moon asteroid is circling the larger space rock, an unusual but not unheard of space phenomenon.

The larger 1.7 mile-wide rock named [Asteroid](#) 1998 QE2 will be the closest to Earth on Friday at 4:59 p.m. EDT. Don't worry, though. It will

still be 3.6 million miles away. [NASA](#) scientist Paul Chodas (Ch'OH'duhs) said it's one of the larger asteroids to swing by Earth and is the size of the [space rock](#) that wiped out the dinosaurs.

The smaller rock was discovered Wednesday night by astronomers using radar to look at QE2. The moon asteroid is about 2,000 feet wide. That's about average for such near-Earth objects.

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