Slooh Space Camera to track enormous asteroid 1998 QE2 as it zooms by Earth on its close approach

May 29 2013

On the last day of May, at one minute to five in the afternoon (Eastern time), an impressive asteroid named 1998 QE2 will whiz past Earth at its closest approach for the next two centuries. Slooh Space Camera will cover its closestapproach on Friday, May 31st, live on Slooh.com, free to the public, starting at 1:30 PM PDT / 4:30 PM PM EDT / 20:30 UTC International times here: goo.gl/aEWFG viewers can watch live on their PC/MAC or by downloading the free Slooh iPad app in the iTunes store and touching the broadcast icon.

Discovered in 1998 by astronomers working with MIT's Lincoln Near Earth Asteroid Research (LINEAR) program in New Mexico, QE2 is almost 1.7 miles wide (2.7 km) nearly two orders of magnitude larger than the "close call" asteroids that have been passing by lately, and will pass about 15 times the Moon's distance from our planet. As a consequence, this asteroid is large enough to reveal detail as small as 12 feet cross, via radar techniques.

At its closest approach on May 31st, 1998 QE2 will shine at 11th magnitude, 100 times fainter than the dimmest star visible to the unaided eye far from city lights. But the asteroid will be an easy catch for the Slooh observatories in the Canary Islands, off the coast of west Africa.

"It will be fun to actually watch it change position," says *Astronomy* magazine columnist Bob Berman.

"And although it will not come nearer than 14 Moon distances, that's still about ten times closer than Mars can ever get. As Slooh's Space Cameras image it directly that afternoon, we will all be reminded that asteroids of this size have changed the biosphere of our planet in the past, and even set the stage for the present dominion of humans. It also assures us that it was a good idea that NASA, in 2012, tripled its budget for detecting and mapping such Near Earth Objects."

The asteroid will be traveling across the sky with a relative velocity of 10.58 kilometers per second or 23,666 mph, which is about 15 times faster than a rifle bullet. If asteroid 1998 QE2 were to hit Earth, the damage would be catastrophic potentially an extinction level event. In comparison, the asteroid that destroyed the Dinosaurs was approximately 6 miles wide (10km).

Says Slooh President, Patrick Paolucci, "Using our patented technologies and robotic observatory, Slooh will be able to provide realtime views of this massive space rock as it flies by Earth on close approach."

Provided by Slooh

Citation: Slooh Space Camera to track enormous asteroid 1998 QE2 as it zooms by Earth on its close approach (2013, May 29) retrieved 26 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2013-05-slooh-space-camera-track-enormous.html