

Potentially hazardous asteroid 2000 EM26 zipping by Earth on close approach on February 17

February 14 2014

On February 17th a near-Earth asteroid (NEA), 2000 EM26, with an estimated diameter of three football fields (270 meters) and traveling at approximately 27,000 mph (12.37 km/s), will come racing by Earth on its close approach. This is a subtle reminder of the dangers of asteroid impacts just one year after two historic events took place on February 15, 2013 (see details below).

Slooh will cover NEA 2000 EM26, a potentially hazardous asteroid (PHA), as it makes its closest approach on Monday, February 17th, starting at 6 pm PST / 9 pm EST / 02:00 UTC (2/18) live from the Canary Islands. Viewers can watch free on Slooh.com or by downloading the Slooh iPad app. The live image stream will be accompanied by discussions led by Slooh host and astronomer Bob Berman, Slooh technical director Paul Cox, and special guest Dr. Mark Boslough, an expert on planetary impacts and global catastrophes and frequent participant on many science TV documentaries. Viewers can ask questions during the show by using hashtag #asteroid.

Slooh routinely tracks potentially hazardous objects (both asteroids and comets) whose sizes are large enough, and whose orbits take them near enough to our planet, that they have the potential to cause significant damage in the event of an impact. Slooh's live broadcasts have attracted millions of viewers, and Slooh has become a leading voice to help ensure that public awareness does not wane. Since 2008, Slooh has covered

numerous asteroids as they've made their close approaches to Earth, including asteroids 2012 LZ1, Toutatis, and Apophis. Slooh's work in this area was recognized in 2013 when NASA invited Slooh to participate in the NASA Asteroid Grand Challenge. Slooh members continue to track and monitor NEAs every night, helping to determine their accurate orbits and impact risk.

Says Berman, "On a practical level, a previously-unknown, undiscovered asteroid seems to hit our planet and cause damage or injury once a century or so, as we witnessed on June 20, 1908, and February 15, 2013. Every few centuries, an even more massive asteroid strikes us—fortunately usually impacting in an ocean or wasteland such as Antarctica. But the ongoing threat, and the fact that biosphere-altering events remain a real if small annual possibility, suggests that discovering and tracking all NEOs, as well as setting up contingency plans for deflecting them on short notice should the need arise, would be a wise use of resources."

Slooh's technical and research director, Paul Cox says: "We continue to discover these potentially hazardous asteroids—sometimes only days before they make their close approaches to Earth. Slooh's asteroid research campaign is gathering momentum with Slooh members using the Slooh robotic telescopes to monitor this huge population of potentially hazardous space rocks. We need to find them before they find us!"

More Detail on February 15, 2013, Events

One year ago, on February 15, 2013, the world witnessed two amazing events—one expected and the other not. Astronomers anticipated the arrival of super-close asteroid 2012 DA14—a 40,000 ton space rock, 98 ft (30 m) in diameter, due to miss Earth by a measly 17,200 miles (27,680 km)—closer even than our geosynchronous satellites. In fact,

NEA 2012 DA14 was the closest object of that size to whiz past Earth in our lifetimes. Slooh successfully tracked DA14 live from its Canary Island observatory using special imaging techniques (see highlight under video section below).

On that same day, however, something else unexpectedly tore through the skies over Chelyabinsk, Russia, damaging thousands of houses, breaking innumerable windows, and causing injuries from broken glass. This object, later discovered to be an [asteroid](#) as well, was 65 ft (20 m) in diameter and exploded 18 miles above Siberia releasing the equivalent energy of more than 20 plus atomic bombs (approximately 460 kilotons of TNT). While analysts continue to debate the significance of the event, many believe the residents of Chelyabinsk were extremely lucky to escape this celestial encounter with no loss of life. To commemorate the February 15th event, the Russian government announced that ten gold medals for winners on February 15th at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics will be embedded with Chelyabinsk meteor fragments.

Provided by Slooh

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