

Astronomers seeking meteorites that may have crashed near St. Thomas, Ontario

March 24 2014, by Jeff Renaud

(Phys.org) —Researchers from Western University have released footage of a basketball-sized meteor that was almost as bright as the full moon. The meteor lit up the skies of southwestern Ontario earlier this week and Western astronomers are now hoping to enlist the help of local residents in recovering one or more possible meteorites that may have crashed in the area just north of St. Thomas, Ontario.

The Physics and Astronomy Department at Western's Faculty of Science has a network of all-sky cameras in southern Ontario that scan the atmosphere monitoring for meteors.

Peter Brown, Director of Centre for Planetary Science and Exploration (CPSX), who specializes in the study of meteors and meteorites, says that on the evening of Tuesday, March 18 a long-lasting fireball which occurred near 10:24 p.m. was detected by seven all-sky cameras of Western's Southern Ontario Meteor Network (SOMN) and two camera systems in Ohio and Pennsylvania jointly operated with NASA's Meteoroid Environment Office.

The brilliant fireball started near Port Dover at a height of 75 km and moved almost due westward before ending at 32 km altitude between Aylmer and St. Thomas, Ontario. One or more meteorites were produced by the slow fireball based on the video records from the cameras.

Brown along with Phil McCausland, an Assistant Professor and

Meteorite Curator at Western's Department of Earth Sciences, are now working to get the word out amongst interested people who may be willing to see if they can spot any fallen meteorites.

The two researchers will be joined by Bill Cooke, lead of NASA's Meteoroid Environment Office, tomorrow (Friday, March 21) at St. Thomas Municipal Airport at 11 a.m. EST to provide a complete update to media.

Researchers at Western are interested in hearing from anyone approximately 5 km north or northwest of St. Thomas, who may have witnessed or recorded this event, seen or heard unusual events at the time, or who may have found possible fragments of the freshly fallen [meteorite](#).

According to McCausland, meteorites are of great scientific value. He also points out that in Canada meteorites belong to the owner of the land upon which they are discovered. If individuals intend to search they should, in all cases, obtain the permission of the land owner before searching on private land.

Meteorites may best be recognized by their dark and scalloped exterior, and are usually denser than normal rock and will often attract a fridge magnet due to their metal content. In this fall, meteorites may be found in a small hole produced by their dropping into soil. Meteorites are not dangerous, but any recovered meteorites should be placed in a clean plastic bag or container and be handled as little as possible to preserve their scientific information.

More information: For video footage, still images and site maps, please visit: meteor.uwo.ca/research/fireball...thomas/overview.html

Provided by University of Western Ontario

Citation: Astronomers seeking meteorites that may have crashed near St. Thomas, Ontario (2014, March 24) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-03-astronomers-meteorites-st-thomas-ontario.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.