

ANU invites citizen scientists to search for exploding stars

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The Australian National University (ANU) invites citizen scientists to join the University's search for exploding stars called supernovae, which help astronomers to measure the Universe.

Professor Brian Cox will call on viewers of this week's ABC Stargazing Live broadcast to participate in the project led by ANU astronomers Dr. Brad Tucker and Dr. Anais Möller.

Dr. Tucker said scientists can measure the distance of a supernova from Earth by calculating how much the light from the exploding star fades.

"Supernovae are explosions as bright as 100 million billion billion billion lightning bolts, and so we can use them as markers to measure how the Universe is growing and what's causing its expansion to accelerate," said Dr. Tucker from the ANU Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics.

The ANU project will allow citizen scientists to use a web portal on Zooniverse.org to search through images taken by the 1.3-metre SkyMapper telescope at the ANU Siding Spring Observatory.

"People can help us find exploding stars by scanning the SkyMapper images online to look for differences and marking up those differences for the researchers to follow up," Dr. Tucker said.

ANU SkyMapper is the only telescope that is doing a comprehensive

survey of the southern sky looking for supernovae and other interesting transient events at these distances.

Dr. Möller said the first people to identify an object that turns out to be a supernova will be publicly recognised as co-discoverers.

"We recognise [citizen scientists](#) by listing the first three people to find a previously unknown supernova in the discovery when we report it to the International Astronomical Union," said Dr. Möller from the ANU Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Join the search for exploding stars at www.zooniverse.org/projects/skymap/supernova-sighting.

ABC's Stargazing Live will be broadcast from the ANU Siding Spring Observatory, airing at 8pm AEST, 7.30pm ACST, and 6pm AWST on ABC and ABC iview on 22, 23 and 24 May 2018.

In addition to leading the citizen science project, ANU is also partnering with the ABC to attempt to break the Guinness World Records title for the Most people stargazing at multiple venues set by the University three years ago.

ANU and the ABC are planning stargazing parties across the country on Wednesday 23 May in an effort to smash the Guinness World Records title set in 2015.

Provided by Australian National University

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