

Asteroid-circling spacecraft grabs cool snapshot of home

January 8 2019, by Marcia Dunn



This image captured on Dec. 19, 2018, by a camera on the Osiris-Rex spacecraft shows the asteroid Bennu, top right, about 27 miles (43 kilometers) from the spacecraft, and the Earth and moon, bottom left, more than 70 million miles (110 million kilometers) away. Bennu, just 1,600 feet (500 meters) across, is the smallest celestial body ever to be orbited by a spacecraft.

(NASA/Goddard/University of Arizona/Lockheed Martin Space via AP)

An asteroid-circling spacecraft has captured a cool snapshot of home.

NASA's Osiris-Rex spacecraft took the picture days before going into [orbit](#) around asteroid Bennu on New Year's Eve.

The tiny asteroid—barely one-third of a mile (500 meters) across—appears as a big bright blob in the long-exposure photo released last week. Seventy million miles (110 million kilometers) away, Earth appears as a white dot, with the moon an even smaller dot but still clearly visible.

Osiris-Rex is the first [spacecraft](#) to orbit such a small celestial body, and from such a close distance—about a mile (1,600 meters) out.

Next year, Osiris-Rex will attempt to gather some samples from the carbon-rich asteroid, for return to Earth in 2023.

Osiris-Rex launched from Florida in 2016.

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