

Asteroid named after Portuguese astrophysicist

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Image of asteroid 243 Ida, taken by the Galileo spacecraft. Despite being about ten times larger than asteroid 32599 Pedromachado, 243 Ida is also found in the Asteroid Belt. Credit: NASA/JPLV

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has named an asteroid after Pedro Machado, astrophysicist at Institute of Astrophysics and Space Sciences (IA), at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon (Portugal). Along with the nomination of Pedro Machado, there were

over a hundred other nominations of asteroids and other small bodies.

It is almost three kilometers in diameter and takes four and a half years to complete its orbit around the sun. We're talking about [2001 QL160](#), or rather the [asteroid](#) 32599 Pedromachado. Pedro Machado has been honored by the Work group for the Nomenclature of Small Bodies (WGSBN 2) of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) with the attribution of his name to an asteroid.

The announcement was made at the Asteroids, Comets, Meteors ([ACM](#)) Conference, which took place in Flagstaff, Arizona, U.S., and was published in the [WGSBN Bulletin](#).

Pedro Machado is a specialist in planetary atmospheres, but this is a recognition for his contribution to another field of study of the solar system: the detection and characterization of asteroids and other objects that lie beyond Neptune's orbit, called trans-Neptunians. In some cases, this work crosses the study of [planetary atmospheres](#), as it involves the study of regions of transition between the atmosphere and [outer space](#), the so-called exospheres, in which particles are lost out into space.

"It is an unexpected honor and a great satisfaction to see my name on the list of new asteroids," says Pedro Machado. "I am very grateful for this recognition of my work by the [scientific community](#)," adds the researcher.

32599 Pedromachado orbits the sun between the planets Mars and Jupiter, in the region known as the Asteroid Belt. It was discovered in 2001 through the Lowell Observatory program Near-Earth-Object Search (LONEOS) by NASA and Lowell Observatory, for the detection of spatial objects in near-Earth orbits.

According to the [process of naming astronomical objects](#), this asteroid

was initially assigned a provisional name, 2001 QL160, which includes the year of discovery, as well as letters and numbers denoting the day of the year and order of the discovery. After determining its orbit reliably, it received the definitive designation of 32599 by the IAU [Minor Planet Center](#). Only from that moment on could be proposed a name for this asteroid for evaluation by the Working Group for Small Bodies Nomenclatures.

With this attribution, Pedro Machado joins other IA researchers, Nuno Peixinho (IA and University of Coimbra, Portugal) and Pedro Lacerda (Instituto Pedro Nunes and IA, Portugal), who also saw their work recognized with the attribution of their names to asteroids 40210 Peixinho and 10694 Lacerda.

Provided by Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon

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