

Amateur astronomer spots another Jupiter strike (w/ Video)

June 4 2010



Image credit: Anthony Wesley

Jupiter has gotten whacked again.

An amateur astronomer in Australia peering at the giant [gas planet](#) Thursday reported witnessing a bright flash from an object hitting Jupiter and apparently burning up in the atmosphere.

"When I saw the flash, I couldn't believe it," said amateur astronomer Anthony Wesley. "The fireball lasted about 2 seconds and was very bright."

Wesley, a computer programmer with a good reputation among professional astronomers, alerted the cosmic collision to professional and amateur sky-gazers. The discovery was later confirmed by another amateur astronomer in the Philippines.

Wesley gained fame last year when [he spotted a scar](#) the size of the Pacific Ocean near Jupiter's south pole believed to have been caused by an asteroid smacking into the planet. Using an infrared telescope on Hawaii, [NASA](#) scientists found evidence that Jupiter was apparently struck near its south pole, and credited Wesley.

The latest hit near the equator has not left any visible mark so far, but astronomers are on the lookout.

The absence of a detectable gash and the short impact time have led scientists to believe Jupiter was likely struck by a meteor.

"We've never seen a meteor slam into Jupiter," said Glenn Orton of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The latest collision should give astronomers a better idea of the size of debris floating in the [outer solar system](#).

In 1994, Jupiter was bombarded by pieces of the comet [Shoemaker-Levy 9](#).

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