



Unexpected Visitor in the Night Sky Caught on Camera!



Scientists have launched many spacecraft to study the objects in our Solar System. So far, though, only one has travelled to the edge of the Solar System and it is called Voyager 1. It has taken Voyager 1 more than 30 years to make this incredible road trip, so you can imagine why astronomers get excited when objects from the outer Solar System visit Earth instead!

This photo shows an object called Comet Lovejoy, which was visible in the night sky last December. Comets are made of ice, dust and rock, so they are sometimes called dirty snowballs. They originally come from the outer regions of the Solar System, but they travel around the Sun in the same way that planets do. This means that sometimes they come close to Earth and we can see them in the night sky.

As comets get close to the Sun, some of the ice starts to evaporate, which creates a beautiful 'tail' for the comet. Astronomers had thought that the Sun's heat would destroy Comet Lovejoy during this visit. However, to everyone's surprise, the comet survived.

Astronomer Gabriel Brammer captured a fantastic video of the comet, which is shown below. Gabriel was finishing his night shift at a remote astronomical observatory in the desert in Chile in South America when the comet appeared just before dawn. What a great sight after a hard night's work!

Astronauts on the International Space Station also filmed Comet Lovejoy. You can see their view of the comet from space here.

COOL FACT



Even if Comet Lovejoy survives another trip around the Sun, it won't be visible in the night sky for another 314 years!

