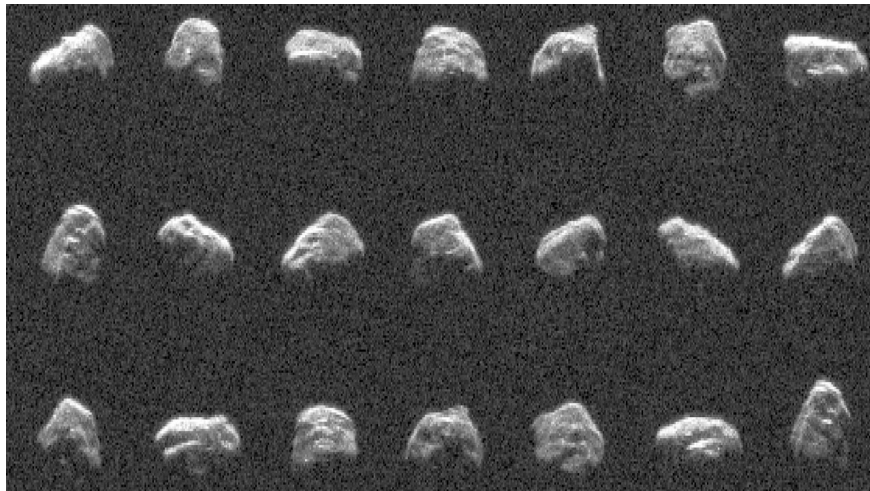


Scientists have released detailed images of an asteroid that just passed Earth at close range

Not one, but two asteroids alone passed Earth at close range - not so close, of course, that they could threaten the planet's survival, but enough for scientists to can clearly observe them.

'Asteroid hunters' around the world have closely followed this pair since before they passed Earth, and were even assisted by NASA's state-of-the-art equipment to take photos to find out more. more about asteroids, including those that could potentially threaten Earth in the future.

These two asteroids are named 2024 MK and 2011 UL21, named after their respective years of discovery. Both 'quietly' approached Earth at a dangerous distance on June 27 and 29. Of these, 2011 UL21 has a diameter of nearly a mile wide and approached Earth at its closest point of 4.1 million miles and – large and close enough to classify this as a potentially dangerous situation. However, by analyzing data on the asteroid's orbit, astronomers have put the numbers into perspective and determined that it is unlikely that 2011 UL21 could impact Earth, at least is in the near future.



In the moment the asteroid passed by at its closest distance, it was closely observed by global astronomy researchers. A group of scientists at NASA used one of the radars of the Deep Space Network system (being used by NASA to communicate with spacecraft in deep space) to track the asteroid using radio waves and study it. save it. They discovered that the asteroid is actually part of a pair called a binary system, with a small satellite orbiting it at a distance of about 2 miles.

According to scientists' estimates, about two-thirds of asteroids of this size are binary, and their discovery is especially important in applying measurements of the relative position of the asteroid. planets to estimate their orbits, masses and general densities, thereby providing important information about how they form and function.

The second asteroid, 2024 MK, passed by Earth even closer: Just 284,000 miles, which is even shorter than the distance between Earth and the Moon. 2024 MK is quite small in size, with a width of only about 152m, elongated and angular shape. Researchers used the same radio wave method to observe the planet's complex, jagged surface. This is a unique opportunity to study the physical properties and obtain detailed images of a near-Earth asteroid.

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