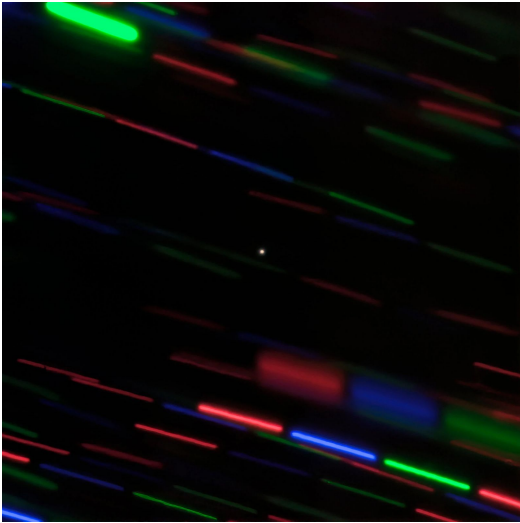


## The Earth's New Moon

By: Marin Smyth



Everyone knows that Earth has one moon, but recently, we have discovered a temporary second moon. Most planets have at least one moon, some planets, like Jupiter, have multiple. Although the number of moons is typically a pretty permanent thing, on February 25, two astronomers registered a dot moving in space. This dot was later confirmed to be an asteroid that is roughly the size of a car. At first glance, the object could be mistaken for an asteroid that is just near the earth; however, the object is orbiting the earth instead of the sun. Due to this, the asteroid is considered a mini-moon. This mini-moon is unfortunately too small to see but astronomers are able

to get a look at it with advanced technology. The mini-moon called 2020 CD3, is actually so small that the only way that astronomers were able to differentiate the mini-moon from a star, is that 2020 CD3 was moving.

The earth actually could have a new mini-moon as frequently as every month. The New York Times says, "The solar system is full of primordial crumbs. Sometimes, Jupiter's gravitational influence sends those space rocks careening toward the inner solar system, where some could threaten Earth." Fortunately, the asteroid was caught in the orbit of Earth, unlike most of these asteroids that just orbit near Earth. This means that 2020 CD3 poses no dangers to Earth. It is not in a path to collide with Earth and after a few rotations, the mini-moon will leave Earth's orbit.

Although scientists are only seeing 2020 CD3 as it's leaving, it's thought to return to Earth's orbit in about twenty-five to fifty years. Earth actually had a totally separate asteroid enter its orbit and that moonlet was in orbit in 2006 and 2007. This mini-moon was originally thought to be some rocket booster from the Apollo 12 mission. This asteroid was named 2006 RH120 and is expected to come back in August of 2028

These asteroids that get caught in Earth's orbit are relatively unexplored, but astronomers are continuing to learn more about them. Earth could potentially get a temporary new moon up to every month. Although these moons don't stay for long, some will come back to orbit the earth once again.