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Denver News

Museum Releases Fireball Video

Grainy Video Shows Bright Flash In Night Sky

POSTED: 4:46 pm MST December 5, 2002
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DENVER -- A brilliant fireball lit up the night sky Thanksgiving evening, giving people in Colorado and surrounding states an unexpected holiday light show.

Researchers at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science say the stony and metal meteoroid may have originally weighed up to a ton as it entered Earth's atmosphere, based on comparisons with similar events.

Video



Thanksgiving Meteor

Witnesses said the fireball

appeared at 6:20 p.m. Thursday and illuminated entire mountain ranges.

A security camera at XILINX Corporation in Longmont, Colo., captured the flash of the meteor as it broke into pieces over Colorado and the

Denver Museum of Nature and Science released the video Thursday.

The video from XILINX is one of the best ever recorded of a fireball of this magnitude, according to scientists at the museum. It showed the rapid, fiery atmospheric entry and a large bright flare as the meteoroid broke apart midway through its descent.

After the flare, the video showed the meteor continuing toward the southwest horizon.

It lingered for seven or eight seconds and was followed by a series of sonic booms, physicist Chris L. Peterson, a member of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science's meteorite investigation team said.

Peterson, owner and operator of the Cloudbait Observatory in Guffey, Colo., is analyzing more than 260 witness reports posted [on his Web site](#).

Those accounts suggest that the fireball exploded 10 to 20 miles above the ground in Gunnison County between Gunnison and Crested Butte.

Some debris may have pelted the earth, he said.

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