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# The StarPhoenix



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Sunday, November 30, 2008



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## The hunt is on

Meteorites from Nov. 20's giant fireball now possibly scattered across Prairies

**Peter Wilson, The StarPhoenix**

Published: Thursday, November 27, 2008

MARSDEN -- There's gold in them thar hills, or at least potentially valuable meteor bits that might fetch anywhere between \$1 and \$10 or more a gram.

That's enough to have attracted treasure hunters along with the scientific community to this broad stretch of windswept prairie near the Alberta border, about 50 kilometres south of Lloydminster.

"I'm going to have to think about getting out and checking my land," smiles Wesley Graham, a farmer whose eight quarters of land lie just northwest of Marsden. The area is part of the possible search area for meteorites that fell to Earth after lighting up the skies of Alberta and Saskatchewan as a giant fireball on Nov. 20.



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Alan Hildebrand (left) and graduate student Ellen Milley check out video from a Lloydminster motel's security camera that shows the fireball that lit up parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta  
Peter Wilson, The StarPhoenix

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Researchers have done the math and figured out the fiery scene was caused by a meteor that probably weighed in around 10 tonnes.

Graham didn't see the fireball, but he certainly felt and heard it as it blasted above his house-trailer.

"I thought it was thunder," he said.

Meteors often burn up in the atmosphere, but if they survive the frictional heating and strike the Earth, they are called meteorites. With such a large meteor, experts believe meteorites from the Nov. 20 show are scattered across a debris field approximately eight kilometres long and three kilometres wide with the larger stones to the southeast.

The target area lies within Saskatchewan's RM of Manitou Lake north of Marsden and Neilburg, and just south of the Battle River, in an area that is mostly cleared for cultivation.

University of Calgary researcher Alan Hildebrand estimates hundreds of meteorites larger than 50 grams could have landed, since the rock was large and its entry velocity was lower than average.

"I would also expect that we might find one as large as a small television set, and several the size of a human head, weighing about five kilograms," Hildebrand says.

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A head-size one might be worth as much as \$50,000, says Hildebrand, who has been tracking down meteorites for the past 15 years.

"We've been knocking on farm doors in the suspected strewn field to tell people how potentially valuable these things can be."

Before you open an account on EBay and head out into the hills to stake your claim, it's good to keep in mind that meteorites are the property of the landowner where they fall.

"All I hope is that whoever finds them wears protective gloves and bags them in clean plastic bags to preserve them from possible contamination," says

Hildebrand.

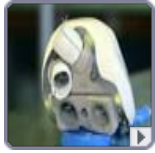
Mike Lemieux, a pipe-fitter in the oilpatch, thought he was passing through a swift and furious lightning storm as the fiery meteor passed near his truck while he drove home to Lloydminster after finishing his shift near Marsden.

"We'd been driving about 15 kilometres when we see this long intense flash of light. I told my buddy it must have been caused by sheet lightning."

Lemieux might have been wrong about the cause, but there was no mistaking the incredible intensity of the light source. Hildebrand said the fireball was like a billion-watt lightbulb in the night sky. With that kind of light show, you'd think pretty well everyone caught at least a glimpse of it.

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