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# Pieces of Texas Meteorite Found

Thursday, February 19, 2009  
Associated Press

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KDFW

Jan. 15: A fireball is captured on video raining down near Austin, Texas.

**DALLAS —** Two samples of fresh material the "size of large pecans" from a meteor that alarmed numerous residents when it streaked across the Texas sky on Sunday have been found by two University of North Texas astronomers in a pasture east of the small town of West.

"The pieces that we found have beautiful ablation crust. And it's black like charcoal. Underneath this crust the color of the rock is concrete like gray," said Ron Dilulio, director of the planetarium and astronomy lab program at the University of North Texas in Denton.

Dilulio and Preston Starr, UNT's observatory manager, said they found the pieces Wednesday about 5 p.m. after starting their search from Fort Worth at 3 a.m. using calculations from all of the calls they had received.

• [Click here to visit FOXNews.com's Space Center.](#)

Dilulio said they had just about given up looking and were driving back when a friend called and asked to meet them at a certain intersection. They said that coincided with conversations they had had earlier that day with citizens at a restaurant.

"We decided rather than try to get permission from landowners, there would be pieces in a line that would spread out a mile across. We decided to just do the county roads and we just started walking down that road and it's fairly easy to see. It jumped out at us within 15 minutes," Dilulio said.

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"We came back to where our gut instinct told us," Starr said. He said the McLennan County sheriff and deputies confirmed what citizens had told them.

"The sheriff told his deputy to take us out there," Dilulio said.

The astronomers placed the samples in ZipLoc bags to keep out the air. They plan to transfer the samples to membrane cases and take them to the university for additional study.

People on Sunday reported seeing a fireball streak across the sky and Dilulio said the reason it created such a fireball was because the meteor expanded and broke into pieces.

The pair said they were not alone in the search and ran into others including "a commercial meteorite hunter and we wanted to get there so we could have it first for science," Dilulio said.

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Starr said the pair had been gathering information since they initially learned of the meteor's appearance.

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"We did a lot of pre-planning. We looked at the angles of what they saw in the sky and we were able to map it all out. We put a plan together and we drove around small country roads. Texas has lots of small farm to market roads," Starr said.

Dilulio said he thinks there are larger pieces still to be found.

"We feel that there are probably several hundred pieces. What happens when these things fall — they may break apart. We want to find these early and study the primitive material before our atmosphere affects them," Dilulio said

He said the pair planned on returning to the areas where they had searched.

"Everytime we find one we mark where it is on the map and we can measure how much material actually hit the surface of the earth," Dilulio said.

West is about 70 miles south of Dallas.

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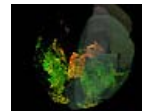
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