

The Virtual Telescope Newsletter



Enjoy The Universe from your desktop

February 2014

THE MONTH OF SUPERNOVAE!

A BRIGHT EXPLOSION

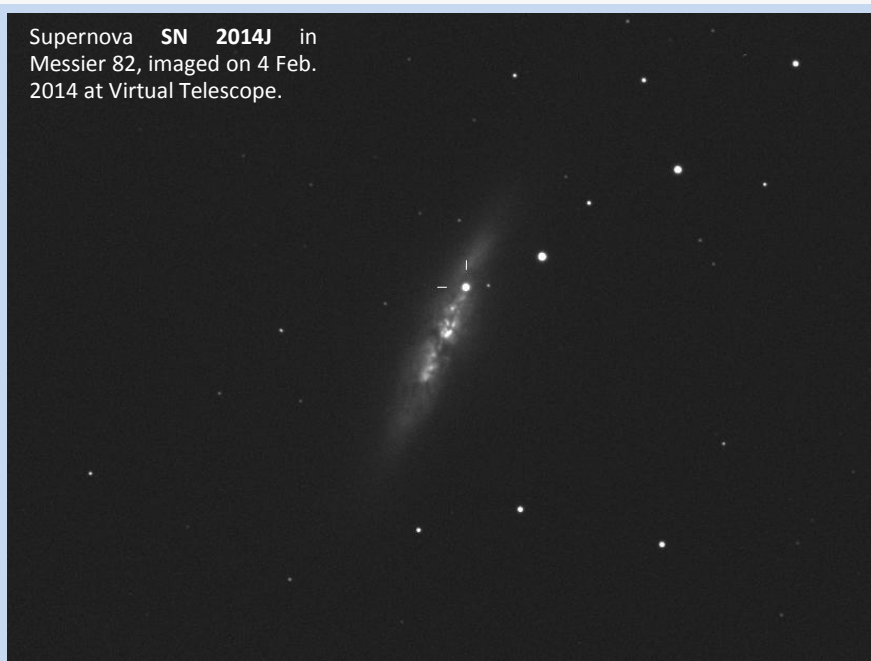
The Sky is always ready to amaze us. Every time you look up there, by naked eyes or with your favorite telescope, you never know what you will find.

Last 21 Jan. 2014 students at the University College London were attending their local observatory, under the guide of dr. Steve Fossey and, as soon as the clouds opened for a while, they captured images of Messier 82, a famous irregular galaxy in Ursa Major, and found a star they could not remember at that position. It turned out to be a supernova, now named SN 2014J!

[At Virtual Telescope we did very important follow-up of the new star](#), detecting it was indeed supernova: our spectra showed obvious signature of a type Ia supernova, a double system including at least one white dwarf.

The star is now at its maximum brightness, visible with small scopes.

Supernova **SN 2014J** in Messier 82, imaged on 4 Feb. 2014 at Virtual Telescope.



SN 2014J is visible now with 100 mm (4") large scopes. At Virtual Telescope we hosted a live, online event, showing the star in real time. [The podcast of the event is available.](#)

The Virtual Telescope makes possible to look at the supernova yourself, from the your home. For this, [reserve your very personal observing session and have fun!](#)

What's new. With this first issue, we start the newsletter of the Virtual Telescope Project. Many of you asked for it, We hope you will enjoy reading it. We would love to hear your feedback and suggestions for contents and improvement to make it even more useful and enjoyable. Happy reading and don't forget looking up!

Questions? Suggestestions? If yes, you can reach us at: info@virtualtelescope.eu

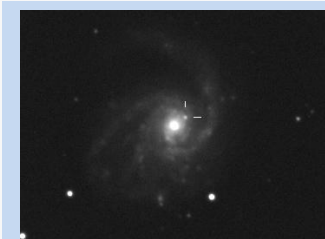
We are also on [facebook](#) and [twitter](#)

DISCOVER THE VIRTUAL TELESCOPE

Have you ever wanted to access the sky from you desktop, via the Internet, in real time? The Virtual Telescope makes it possible. Discover what it can do for you and your love for the stars.



SUPERNOVA 2014L IN MESSIER 99



February is a great month for supernova fans. Well, actually January, but some of the best placed and bright supernovae are giving their best in the sky right now. After SN 2014J, reported on the previous page, we welcome SN 2014L

in Messier 99, a wonderful spiral galaxy in Coma Berenices.

Once again, at [the Virtual Telescope Project](#) we played an important role confirming the existence of this transient, before it was announced to the world as a true supernova. It is placed, with its galaxy at 60 millions of light years from us, so the explosion happened 60 millions of years ago, around the time our planet was hit by a huge asteroid.

BRUSHING ASTEROIDS: HERE IT COMES 2013 YL2

Asteroids are one of the most popular objects for the followers of the Virtual Telescope Project. We shared live many of them, the last of which was **2013 YL2**, a 90-meters rock approaching the Earth very early in 2014, at 1.4 millions of km.

Thousands of viewers tracked it live with us, the first night of the new year.

[If you missed it, you are welcome to enjoy the available podcast.](#)

A record close encounter

Among the many asteroids we spied these years at Virtual Telescope, the record one was **2012 DA14**. It reached a min. distance from us of 27500km!

Virtual Telescope was among the very few facilities in the world able to track it around the closest approach.

[We are still amazed by those observations!](#)

WHAT IS UP IN THE SKY THIS MONTH

In **February**, at the beginning of the night the winter sky is just magnificent. **Orion** sits on the south, with its famous stars welcoming our curious eyes. On its bottom left **Canis Major** with **Sirius**, the brightest star, is shining at its best, while west of Orion the red **Aldebaran** and **Taurus** enrich this great sight.

Jupiter is shining just overhead, a rewarding target for small telescopes, framed by the easy stars of Gemini. **Auriga** and the bright **Capella** are almost there, too.

The **Moon** will be full on 15 Feb. will a new Moon will be formally missed, happening on 1 Mar., after the one of 30 Jan.

Later in the night, the Spring stars will remind us that the winter will not last forever.



ONCE UPON A TIME, IN SPACE

With no doubts, one of the most intriguing elements enriching the experience of stargazing is the idea that what we are looking is amazingly far, in space and time.

Early in Feb. [at Virtual Telescope we detected the optical afterglow of a Gamma Ray Burst](#), GRB140206A, happened in a very distant corner of the Universe: at the time of that explosion, the Universe was “only” 2.4 billions of years old.

VIRTUAL TELESCOPE NEEDS YOU

We need you. The Virtual Telescope helps millions of individuals from more than 200 Countries each year to discover the Cosmos, for free.

But there are bills to pay and maintenance to be done and we have no funds. We survive thanks to donations from those trusting our mission.

[If you love what we are doing, you are welcome to support us.](#)

STAR WORDS

“It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened.”

Mark Twain

STAR GEM OF THE MONTH

Messier 1. In 1054 Chinese and Native Americas recorded a very bright star in Taurus. It was a supernova. In 1731 J. Bavis located a faint nebula at that position, later found also by C. Messier, now named the “Crab” nebula. This very important supernova remnant shows amazingly well to our robotic telescopes.

[What are you waiting for to look at it?](#)