ASTRONOMY PICTURE OF THE DAY

DATE

Discover the cosmos!

Each day a different image or photograph of our fascinating universe is featured, along with a brief explanation written by a professional astronomer.

2022 September 27

DART: Impact on Asteroid Dimorphos
Video Credit: NASA, JHUAPL, DART

Could humanity deflect an asteroid headed for Earth? Yes. Deadly impacts from large asteroids have happened before in Earth's past, sometimes causing mass extinctions of life. To help protect our Earth from some potential future impacts, NASA tested a new planetary defense mechanism yesterday by crashing the robotic Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) spacecraft into Dimorphos, a small asteroid spanning about 170-meters across. As shown in the featured video, the impact was a success. Ideally, if impacted early enough, even the kick from a small spacecraft can deflect a large asteroid enough to miss the Earth. In the video, DART is seen in a time-lapse video first passing larger Didymos, on the left, and then approaching the smaller Dimorphos. Although the video ends abruptly with DART's crash, observations monitoring the changed orbit of Dimorphos -- from spacecraft and telescopes around the world -- have just begun.

< YESTERDAY TOMORROW>

Tomorrow's picture: furious sky

Authors & editors: Robert Nemiroff (MTU) & Jerry Bonnell (UMCP)
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FAVORITES

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