March 17, 2014

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Images/Video:
See bottom for full list of supporting video, images and sky charts including recent images and time-lapse animations of asteroid (163) Erigone for media/press use:
Slooh Briefing Video (HD Version(21.6MB): http://tinyurl.com/pqwhgjl
Recent Slooh image of Asteroid (163) Erigone: http://tinyurl.com/n6cv9oj

Live from New York - Slooh to Cover Asteroid (163) Erigone Eclipsing Bright Star Regulus

On the night of March 19th/20th, Asteroid (163) Erigone, a space rock 45-miles wide, will briefly eclipse the bright star Regulus, blacking it out entirely in the night sky. This phenomenon, known as an occultation, will occur around 2 AM EDT and last for up to 14-seconds dependent on the exact viewing location.

Slooh will cover the event live on Wednesday, March 19th at 10:45 PM PDT / 1:45 AM EDT (3/20) / 05:45 UTC (3/20) (International Times) with live feeds from New York. Viewers can watch free on Slooh.com or by downloading the Slooh iPad app. The live image streams will be accompanied by discussions led by Slooh host and Observatory Director Paul Cox, with Slooh's astronomer Bob Berman reporting live from New York. In addition, Ted Blank from the International Occultation Timing Association (IOTA) will appear as a guest directly from his remote viewing location while also providing a live feed for broadcast. Viewers may ask questions during the show by using hashtag #Regulus.

The asteroid, (163) Erigone, orbits the Sun between Mars and Jupiter in the main asteroid belt. The star it will eclipse, Regulus, is the 22nd brightest in the sky with a magnitude of +1.3. Erigone's shadow will race at nearly two miles per second along the ground, resulting in Regulus vanishing for between a fraction of a second to 14-seconds, depending on whether the observer is centrally located beneath the shadow, or near its edge. Observing the timing of this event at various locations will enable astronomers to determine Erigone's size and shape to an unprecedented level of accuracy.
Says Berman,

"In the natural world, we generally think of the Sun as sometimes being blocked or eclipsed. But even stars can be momentarily eclipsed or blocked by a zooming planet or asteroid, and then that starlight briefly vanishes. This is called an occultation. But it's rare for a truly bright star to be eclipsed. And even when this happens, the shadow of the asteroid is usually cast over some remote piece of ocean or wilderness. In my entire 40 years as a professional astronomer, I've never witnessed a star as bright as Regulus -- Leo's "alpha" luminary -- being blocked as seen along a populated Earthly path in an easily accessible region.

"That's what will happen early Thursday morning. It's hard to describe the excitement of this event. Regulus will vanish, and the constellation Leo will temporarily look totally different for as much as 14 seconds, as seen from New York City and about a 100-mile wide path extending to that city's north and west. Of course Slooh is stationing equipment that can bring this rare event live to the public

-- who hopefully will set their alarms for a bit after 2 AM, to join us."

Says Cox,

"*Although the actual occultation of Regulus won't be visible from Slooh's primary observatory in the Canary Islands, Slooh members have already started nightly imaging of asteroid (163) Erigone as it makes its approach. But it's the actual occultation that we're really looking forward to – with me in the studio and Bob Berman giving us not only live images of the occultation, but also an eyewitness report."*

"There is more to an occultation like this than first meets the eye – it's more than just a small white dot being snuffed out for 14-seconds; with accurate timing from a number of observers spread along the path, we can actually determine the asteroid's size and shape – to a remarkable degree of accuracy."

Graphics and Video for use by media/press:

Slooh Briefing Video:

The video includes images and video of asteroid *(163) Erigone*, as well as sky charts showing people in the path how to find the bright star "*Regulus*":

HD Version (21.6MB): http://tinyurl.com/pqwhgjl
SD Version (8.5MB): http://tinyurl.com/o22qfz5

Recent Slooh image of Asteroid (163) Erigone: http://tinyurl.com/n6cv9oj

Sky Charts for those in the path of visibility:

For those lucky enough to be in the path of visibility for the occultation, Slooh have usefully provided some sky charts so that you can easily locate the bright star Regulus in the constellation of Leo. The constellation is already visible from dusk on the evening of the 19th March, and gradually increases in altitude so that it is highest around 11pm EDT. Depending on your precise location, the occultation will occur sometime between 1:53am to 2:22am EDT.

Sky Chart at 2am EDT: http://tinyurl.com/l82cboe
Sky Chart Looking West 01: http://tinyurl.com/o2hdr54
Sky Chart Looking West 02: http://tinyurl.com/nocjn6h
Sky Chart Naked Eye View: http://tinyurl.com/kkgah45
Sky Chart Binocular View: http://tinyurl.com/kupruuq
Sky Chart Telescope Finder FOV: http://tinyurl.com/lw2jwvj
Sky Chart Telescope FOV: http://tinyurl.com/n77nm64

Slooh Tracking Sky Charts:

Slooh Daily Tracking Chart animation: http://tinyurl.com/kwgeb7o (14.5MB)
Slooh Daily Tracking Sky Chart: http://tinyurl.com/kt28hks
Slooh 8hr tracking before occultation Chart: http://tinyurl.com/k8g6nxj

Broadcast Details:

Start time: March 19th at 10:45PM PDT / 1:45AM EDT (3/20) / 05:45 UTC (3/2)
Link: www.slooh.com
Hashtag: #Regulus
Embed: <iframe width="1280" height="720" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/kluHsjIMs9s" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

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About Slooh

Since 2003 Slooh has connected ground-based telescopes to the Internet for access by the broader public. Slooh members have taken over 2.4m photos of over 40,000 celestial objects, and participated in numerous discoveries with leading astronomical institutions. Slooh's automated observatories develop celestial images in real-time for broadcast to the Internet. Slooh's technology is protected by Patent No.: US 7,194,146 B2 which was awarded in 2006. Slooh's flagship observatory is situated on Mt. Teide in the Canary Islands, in partnership with the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands (IAC). Slooh has also broadcast live celestial events from partner observatories in Arizona, Japan, Hawaii, Cypress, Dubai, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Norway. Slooh's free live broadcasts of potentially hazardous asteroids (PHAs), comets, transits, eclipses, solar activity etc. feature narration by astronomy experts Bob Berman and Paul Cox and are syndicated to media outlets such as NBC, ABC, CNN, Fox News, National Geographic, the BBC, Wired, The Weather Channel and more. Slooh's live celestial events have been viewed over a billion times, the highlight of which was the 2011 lunar eclipse broadcast live on Google's home page.

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