

TRANSCRIPT

Meteor wows London after blazing through night sky

By Joshua Mwamba

Londoners have been left awestruck by a bright meteor that illuminated the night sky in the capital's east end.

Footage shows powerful flashes of light over the east end of London around the area of Mile End and Stratford. This was followed by what witnesses have described as loud bangs on Wednesday night.

Metropolitan police say they received a flurry of emergency calls, but there were no reports of injuries or damage.

A team of experts are hunting for the meteorite, which they believe landed in a wooded area of Victoria Park, but thankfully no fires have been reported.

A meteor is a space rock that burns brightly upon entering the Earth's atmosphere at high speed. It becomes a meteorite if it survives its passage to the ground.

The Royal Astronomical Society says Wednesday's fireball was at least visible for 5 seconds after it appeared 9.32pm BST. Travelling at around 17km/s (nearly 37,000mph), the meteor could not be seen clearly until it was close to landing, as the evening was overcast with low visibility over Southern England.

Dr Susan Jenkins, an astronomer at University College London who was studying the meteor's path at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, told the BBC that her wife was asleep at the time, but she was woken up by the "shaking in the air" before an explosion she assumed with something heavy falling near the house.

Dr Jenkins rushed home after receiving a panicked call from her wife, but their house sustained no damage. Many users of social media, such as Twitter, posted messages about the meteorite, but only a few images or videos were captured because the conditions were not ideal and the light was only clear for a short amount of time.

A team of experts have been sent to the area where the meteor is suspected to have landed, she said. Initial research suggests that the rock may have hit the ground in Victoria Park. If so, then the residents surrounding the park are incredibly lucky not to have received damage to their properties.

One group of runners training in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford reported a large explosion just above their heads, Dr Jenkins said.

A female camper told of her seeing the fireball from a short distance but thinking it was her friends playing a trick on her.

Early analysis of the meteor suggests it could have weighed 10kg (22lb). While not astonishing large, the meteor was special because it was easily tracked, especially over such a large, highly populated area. It was so lucky it landed safely in an area without people, as the park is locked at night.

Dr Jenkins told Reuters news agency the meteor had probably hit out solar system's asteroid belt as it was travelling between Mars and Jupiter.

She described it as a "spooky event", rather than a dangerous one – this time. Such meteor strikes are rare, but one did cause widespread damage and injure 1,600 people when it crashed down in Russia' Ural Mountains in 2013.