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News

- [Space Shuttles](#)
- [Space Stations](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Space History](#)
- [Space Agencies](#)
- [Weather](#)

Missions/Launches

Science/Astronomy

SETI: Search for Life

Photos/Videos

SpaceTV

Business/Technology

Science Fiction

Entertainment

Games

SpaceKids

People

Message Boards

TeachSpace

Reference

Spaceshop



## Next: Space-Based Telescopes for Asteroids?

By Michael Paine  
Special to SPACE.com  
posted: 07:17 pm ET  
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Several scientists have pointed out limitations to the observation of asteroids and comets using only Earth-based telescopes, but Japanese and European scientists are offering a solution.

Without the atmosphere's glare, a telescope based on the moon or elsewhere in space could search the region between Earth and the Sun, says the Japan Spaceguard Association.

[Infrared detectors on space-based telescopes](#) would be better at determining the physical properties of asteroids and comets than ground-based equipment.

A consortium of European scientists also has proposed a space-based telescope called Spaceguard.

1. The project recently missed out on being selected by the European Space Agency (ESA) for a low-budget "flexi-mission."

"It is encouraging that the ESA Working Group that selected the missions recognized the wide intrinsic interest of our mission [the risk to the planet]," said Alberto Cellino, a consortium member. "We will continue to explore all the possibilities to develop this space-based observatory."

Don Yeomans of NASA's NEO (Near-Earth Object) office said he is unaware of any U.S. plans to launch a space telescope to look for asteroids and comets. But he said space-based telescopes already up could contribute.

"Space-based surveys in the optical and infrared will observe countless asteroids," he said, "whether they wish to or not. And perhaps this is the most cost-effective method for space-based near-Earth asteroid research -- to ride on the coattails of programs designed for observing objects other than NEOs."

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