

Our Night Sky for February 17 th, 2025

There has been a lot of interest recently in the discovery of a large object plunging across the solar system toward earth.

I hope I just illustrated what news people do, to try and get you to read their article, they write an attention-grabbing headline that might include the mundane facts near the end of the story.

Now the facts. Astronomers at the James Webb space telescope and the Planetary society report they are tracking an earth crossing object of approximately one hundred metres that has about a 2% chance of striking earth in 2032. It usually takes several days of precision measurements to define exactly what path an object will take. It is being watched very closely and at this point there is no reason to be alarmed.

Yes, an object this size would make it a city killer. Since the surface of earth has a very low percentage of cities, we should be concerned but for now that is all that is necessary.

A similar event occurred in 2018. It was announced that an object was discovered that would fly uncomfortably close to the earth. The orbit was refined quickly which tells me it was moving quickly and covering a lot of sky. The Minor planet centre at the Harvard Smithsonian Centre for astrophysics is the global clearing house and ultimate authority on near earth objects. So, if they announced a potential threat everybody took notice and the global concern was sky high.

Thankfully 17 hours later further analysis revealed the object was Elon Musk's Tesla Roadster. A false alarm in Our Night Sky.