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OUTER SPACE AT ARM'S REACH

“Morasko Meteorite Craters Day,” an outdoor educational event, was held on the outskirts of the city of Poznań.

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The Morasko Meteorite Reserve is the only site in Poland, and among only 200 worldwide, that preserve direct evidence of a cosmic catastrophe: an asteroid impact. Around 4,500 years ago, an iron asteroid several meters in diameter entered Earth's atmosphere over what is now Poland. It broke apart due to its interaction with the air and crashed onto Moraska Góra, forming a cluster of impact craters. The largest crater in the Morasko Meteorite Reserve is 100 meters in diameter and about 20 meters deep. The Morasko strewn field is an exceptionally rare example of visible impact craters located within the administrative boundaries of a major European city (the city of Poznań).

Sadly, relatively few people are aware of this fascinating site. To raise awareness of this unique site among the residents of Poznań and the wider Wielkopolskie region, the “Morasko Meteorite Craters Day” was held on 5 October 2024 at the Cultural Center and Public Library in the Poznań suburb of Suchy Las. Visitors attended engaging lectures covering the astronomical, geological, archaeological, and technological aspects of impact craters. Children and adults enjoyed interactive workshops where they learned to identify meteorites and even built simple space rover models. An exhibition showcasing collections from members of the Polish Meteorite Society allowed participants to touch real meteorites. Meanwhile, geological and nature walks offered the opportunity to explore the Morasko impact craters firsthand. The Museum of the Earth at Adam Mickiewicz University also displayed fragments of the asteroid that caused the event. Adding to the excitement, a space-themed quiz gave participants the chance to win genuine pieces of space rock!





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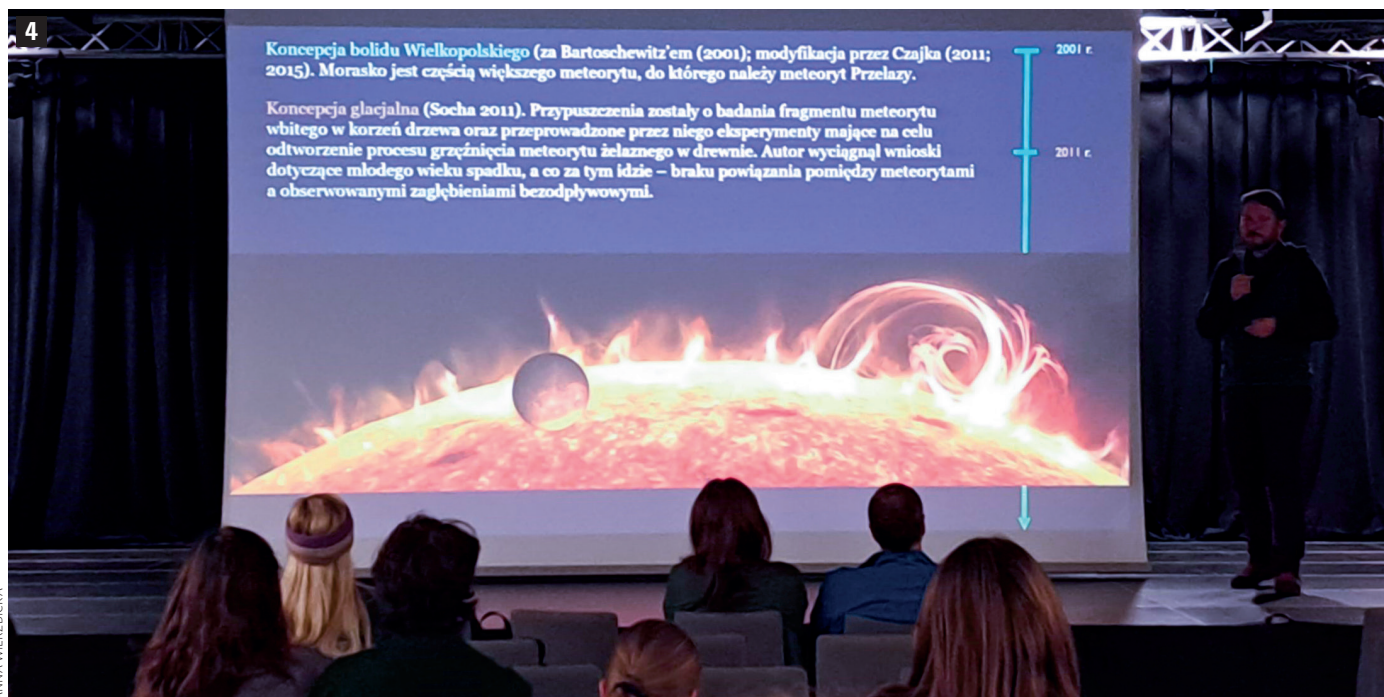


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Photo 1:
The booth of the Polish Astronomical Society, showcasing their educational initiatives, including the journal *Urania – Postępy Astronomii* and the *Astronarium TV* and YouTube channel

Photo 2:
A future space engineer working on their first pneumatic rocket under the guidance of the team from the Astronomical Observatory at Adam Mickiewicz University

Photo 3:
Most of the educational exhibits for Morasko Meteorite Craters Day were located in the lobby of the Suchy Las Cultural Center and Public Library



ANNA WIERZBIČKA

Photo 4: The series of popular science lectures covered various aspects of impact crater formation, including astronomical insights into near-Earth asteroids, geological discussions on meteorites and craters, archaeological perspectives on how any people who witnessed the Morasko meteorite impact must have lived, forest ecology explanations of how the local forest functions today, and conversations about technological and scientific plans for lunar exploration

Photo 5: One of the guided tours of the Morasko meteorite craters, led by scientists from the Faculty of Geographical and Geological Sciences at Adam Mickiewicz University, the Łopuchówko Forestry Inspectorate, and the Polish Society for Nature Protection "Salamandra"

We hope that Morasko Meteorite Craters Day will become a regular event and inspire the creation of an interactive "Impact" Science Center in Suchy Las. This project would be a remarkable resource, not just for the local community but for the entire country, promoting understanding of the universe and phenomena related to asteroids, impact craters, meteorites, and the surrounding natural environment. The universe, with its endless mysteries, has always captivated humanity. Studying the processes that shape our planet, including the effects of celestial impacts, helps us better comprehend Earth's history and the evolution of the Solar System. Looking ahead, we hope the "Impact" Science Center will become a place where this knowledge is made accessible and engaging for a broad audience – from young students to scientists and astronomy enthusiasts. A facility like this could inspire the next generation, igniting their passion for the natural sciences and the cosmos.

The event was organized by the Suchy Las Municipal Office and the Suchy Las Cultural Center & Public Library, in collaboration with the Geopark Wielkopolski Association, and supported by numerous partners, including the Łopuchówko Forestry Inspectorate, the Polish Meteorite Society, the Polish Society for Nature Protection "Salamandra", and the Polish Society of Astronomy Enthusiasts. The event also benefited from contributions by academic institutions in Poznań, including units from the Adam Mickiewicz University (the Institute of Astronomy, Institute of Geology, Institute of Geoecology and Geoinformation, and Faculty of Archaeology), the University of Life Sciences in Poznań (the Department of Hunting

and Forest Conservation), and the Poznań University of Technology (the Institute of Robotics and Machine Intelligence). Additional support came from institutions across Poland, including the PAS Institute of Geological Sciences, the PAS Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, the European Space Foundation, and Piotr Kosek, host of the popular science program *Astrofaza*. ■



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