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Illinois Wesleyan Source on Asteroids

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — New estimates using U.S. Defense Department satellites are suggesting that the threat to Earth from so-called “killer asteroids” is not as great as previously thought, according to a report published in the November 21 issue of *Nature* magazine.

Scientists have theorized that asteroids at least 0.6 miles (1 km) wide, which could cause planetwide catastrophes, hit the Earth every million years or so. An asteroid estimated at 6 miles in diameter is thought to have brought an end to dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

Linda French, associate professor of physics at Illinois Wesleyan University, conducts research in this area and would be available to discuss the new report.

French’s own research focuses on a group of what she considers to be “underconsidered” damacloids or “dead” comets, which come at the Earth from either straight above or straight below. She says that studies indicate these may be more populous than previously thought.

To arrange an interview with French, contact Jeffery G. Hanna or Ann Aubry at 309/556-3181.