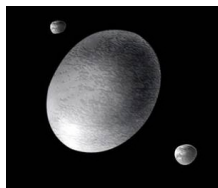


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By: Dan Talpalariu, Science Editor



Haumea and the two satellites: Hi'iaka and Namaka. Artist impression
Ann Feild / STScI / ESA / NASA

[New Body Parts from Kuiper Belt's Haumea](#)

Two more fragments of the dwarf planet were found

The dwarf planet of Haumea, the third largest in the Kuiper Belt after Pluto and Eris, was discovered a few days after the Christmas of 2004, on December 28th, by Mike Brown, a Caltech scientist. Its observed characteristics indicate that it has a violent past, marked by a massive collision with a similar object billions of years ago. Recently, its family of five small orbiting fragments has reported to be comprised of two more, as Caltech experts point out.

Since the [plutoid Haumea](#) was discovered so soon after Christmas, it was first named Santa, until it received the more scientific name of 2003 EL61, which was also changed to Haumea in September 2007. On its longest axis, the fast-spinning ovoid world is approximately the size of Pluto, and it's surrounded by two larger moons, as a result of a violent collision with a similar Kuiper Belt resident billions of years back. The largest one, Hi'iaka, is approximately 0.5% of Haumea's mass, while the other, Namaka, measures only 0.05% of it. Besides these, astronomers found five more [small Kuiper Belt objects](#) (KBO) that were once a part of Haumea and still bear similar features to their source planet. Around 10% of the KBOs are known to have such small satellites.

Recently, Caltech's Emily Schaller and Mike Brown found two more of those dispersed within the ice ring which forms the Kuiper Belt. Besides presenting some orbital similarities, they are totally coated with pure ice, of which Haumea's surface shows some amount as well. According to Schaller, "Future surveys may find dozens more". By using the Japanese Subaru telescope, Pedro Lacerda from the University of Hawaii has uncovered another proof of Haumea's struggling life in a dark red spot which exposes the plutoid's rocky internal composition. Researchers put their hopes in the next five years which will align the Earth and the small cosmic worlds more properly, providing much accurate data on the size and surfaces of the latter.