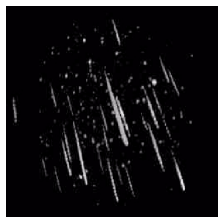


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By: Dan Talpalariu, Science Editor

Perseids showers  
NASA

## [This Year's September Perseids Came as a Surprise](#)

*This led to enhancing the surveillance system*

Normally, the celestial phenomenon of the September Perseids is not worth staying up and watching. It's a meteor shower of reduced dimensions and intensity, as seen from the Earth. Or, at least, it was until this year. Most meteor enthusiasts and researchers, NASA's Bill Cooke included, were taken by surprise (although not directly, since they missed it) by the shining event which sported over 25 fireballs said to have been brighter than Venus.

Luckily, Cooke's Sentinel camera system caught the phenomenon and sent him a mail about it (yes, it can do that). "Our Sentinel system consists of a computer-controlled camera, fish-eye lens and digital video recorder," shared Cooke, quoted by [Space](#). "It was developed by researchers at the University of Western Ontario for studies of meteors over Canada, and now we've adapted it for our purposes. Every night, Sentinel patrols the sky, looking for the unexpected, and it never gets sleepy."&nbsp;Cooke and other specialists have learned their lesson and will definitely pay attention to the next occurrences of the annual event. "Now we know better," he admitted. "The September Perseids of 2008 were fantastic." Perhaps our planet passed through a denser part of the meteor field, he suggests. Generally (as in every time until now), August Perseids are far more interesting, as the November [Taurid showers](#) (which you should be watching today, if you can).&nbsp;The unlucky event that occurred two months ago also determined Cooke to upgrade his system by adding another camera 100 miles (160 kilometers) away from the first in order to trace the direction meteors come from and calculate their orbits, aided by a software designed by Rob Weryk from the University of Western Ontario. Thus, "We can discover new meteoroid streams that could pose a threat to spacecraft and satellites - or just put on a pretty show from time to time," explained Cooke.