

ESO, the European Southern Observatory, was created in 1962 to "... establish and operate an astronomical observatory in the southern hemisphere, equipped with powerful instruments, with the aim of furthering and organising collaboration in astronomy ..." It is supported by eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. ESO operates at two sites. It operates the La Silla observatory in the Atacama desert, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile, at 2,400 m altitude, where fourteen optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m and a 15-m submillimetre radio telescope (SEST) are now in operation. In addition, ESO is in the process of building the Very Large Telescope (VLT) on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain approximately 130 km south of Antofagasta, in the driest part of the Atacama desert. The VLT consists of four 8.2-metre and several 1.8-metre telescopes. These telescopes can also be used in combination as a giant interferometer (VLTI). "First Light" of the first 8.2-metre telescope (UT1) occurred in May 1998. UT1 will be available on a regular basis for astronomical observations from April 1999 on. Over 1000 proposals are made each year for the use of the ESO telescopes. The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, Germany. This is the scientific, technical and administrative centre of ESO where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the La Silla and Paranal observatories with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive astronomical data facilities. In Europe ESO employs about 200 international staff members, Fellows and Associates; in Chile about 70 and, in addition, about 130 local staff members.

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## Minor Planet Mariotti

"Named in memory of Jean-Marie Mariotti (1955–1998), French astronomer, most recently in Garching at the European Southern Observatory. He led the pioneering project to establish optical interferometry with the new Very Large Telescope as a breakthrough new astronomical instrument for the next century. His interest was in the area of high angular resolution, and he was involved in interferometric projects both on the ground (e.g., FLUOR and VLTI) and in space (DARWIN). He hoped with these techniques to find low-mass companions, and ultimately planets outside our solar system. He had an extraordinarily effective mix of technical expertise and scientific eagerness."

The 'official' publication of this name giving is to be found in the MPC (Minor Planet Circular) nr 33151 of December 8th, 1998. These MPC's are published, on behalf of Commission 29 of the IAU, by: Minor Planet Center, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Cambridge, MA 012138, USA.

More info on the publication, or on their web page: <http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iau/mpc.html>.

The planet was originally discovered on March 25, 1971 by C.J. van Houghton and I. van Houten-Groeneveld, on Schmidt plates taken by T. Gehrels.

The planet is designated nr (7972) = 1171 T-1.

## Contents

### TELESCOPES AND INSTRUMENTATION

A. Moorwood, J.-G. Cuby, P. Ballester, P. Biereichel, J. Brynnel, R. Conzelmann, B. Delabre, N. Devillard, A. Van Dijsseldonk, G. Finger, H. Gemperlein, C. Lidman, T. Herlin, G. Huster, J. Knudstrup, J.-L. Lizon, H. Mehrgan, M. Meyer, G. Nicolini, A. Silber, J. Spyromilio, J. Stegmeier: ISAAC at the VLT	1
N. Devillard, Y. Jung, J.-G. Cuby: ISAAC Pipeline Data Reduction	5
A. Kaufer, O. Stahl, S. Tubbesing, P. Nørregaard, G. Avila, P. Francois, L. Pasquini, A. Pizzella: Commissioning FEROS, the New High-resolution Spectrograph at La Silla	8
N. Ageorges and N. Hubin: Monitoring of the Atmospheric Sodium above La Silla	12
D. Baade, K. Meisenheimer, O. Iwert, J. Alonso, Th. Augusteijn, J. Beletic, H. Bellemann, W. Benesch, A. Böhm, H. Böhnhardt, J. Brewer, S. Deiries, B. Delabre, R. Donaldson, Ch. Dupuy, P. Franke, R. Gerdes, A. Gilliotte, B. Grimm, N. Haddad, G. Hess, G. Ihle, R. Klein, R. Lenzen, J.-L. Lizon, D. Mancini, N. Münch, A. Pizarro, P. Prado, G. Rahmer, J. Reyes, F. Richardson, E. Robledo, F. Sanchez, A. Silber, P. Sinclair, R. Wacker-mann, S. Zaggia: The Wide Field Imager at the 2.2-m MPG/ESO Telescope: First Views with a 67-Million-Facette Eye	15

### THE LA SILLA NEWSPAGE

O.R. Hainaut: News from the NTT	17
C. Lidman: New SOFI Grisms – NTT and IR Teams	17
M. Sterzik: A New Control Room for the 3.6-m Telescope	18

### VLT DATA FLOW OPERATIONS NEWS

P.A. Woudt and D. Silva: The NTT Service Observing Programme: On the Efficiency of Service Observing	18
D. Baade: NGC 4945 in 3 colours	19
"First Light" of UT2!	24

### REPORTS FROM OBSERVERS

B. Stecklum, H.-U. Käuffel, A. Richichi: The Lunar Occultation of CW Leo – a Great Finale for TIMMI	25
L. Guzzo, H. Böhringer, P. Schuecker, C.A. Collins, S. Schindler, D.M. Neumann, S. De Grandi, R. Cruddace, G. Chincarini, A.C. Edge, P.A. Shaver, W. Voges: The Reflex Cluster Survey: Observing Strategy and First Results on Large-Scale Structure	27
J.U. Fynbo, B. Thomsen, P. Møller: NTT Service Mode Observations of the Lyman-Limit Absorber towards Q1205-30	32

### OTHER ASTRONOMICAL NEWS

H.W. Duerbeck, D.E. Osterbrock, L.H. Barrera S., R. Leiva G.: Halfway from La Silla to Paranal – in 1909	34
B. Nordström: The Questionnaire Survey for "La Silla 2000+"	38

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Catherine Cesarsky – ESO's Next Director General	38
ESO Studentship Programme	39
Personnel Movements	39
List of Scientific Preprints	39
Minor Planet Mariotti	40