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Mystery trail of green, pulsating visitor

By MARTIN FEINSTEIN
ASTRONOMERS are on the trail of a mysterious, pulsating green fireball that streaked across the Southern African night sky two weeks ago.

The fireball, sighted by several people in Swaziland and the Transvaal, was so bright it cast shadows on the ground near Mbabane.

And the director of the Johannesburg planetarium, Mr Tom Geary — whose son

spotted the fireball while testing astronomical equipment north of Johannesburg — has asked anyone else who saw it to contact him.

According to experts, the fireball could have been a large meteor. These occur fairly frequently, appearing as white or yellow streaks of light.

But the fireball's strange green colour, and the fact that it appeared to "pulsate" from dim to bright at one-

second intervals, has them baffled.

The pulsating may have been due to an unevenly-shaped meteor twisting at speed.

One sighting was made by two Swaziland educationists, Miss Anne Rogers and Mr Ric McKee, at Pine Valley, 10km north of Mbabane.

They saw the fireball, with a long orange tail, for about six seconds before it disappeared over a range of hills.

Another sighting was

made by Mr Peter Horaley, a Swaziland businessman, who said: "It was so bright that it lit up a whole line of gum trees growing beside the road as it disappeared behind them."

All the sightings were at about 8.30pm on April 28.

Anyone who saw the fireball is asked to contact the planetarium (phone 716-3199) or Miss Rogers (phone 8194-22446) or write to PO Box 1138 Mbabane Swaziland.

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