Hunting space rocks

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Hunting space rocks on blue ice

Nina Lanza is studying the solar system by spending six weeks on an ice sheet in Antarctica. The 36-year-old staff scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico is on a treasure hunt of sorts, scouring the windswept landscape for meteorites that have landed on the ice and remained there untouched for thousands, if not millions, of years. With no water or soil to cover them, meteorites in Antarctica remain in pristine condition for millennia.

The expedition is part of the Antarctic Search for Meteorites, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution and NASA. Since 1976, the project has found more than 16,000 meteorites, most of which are stored at the Smithsonian.

Why is NASA involved? Lanza says collecting meteorites is cheaper than sending spacecraft across the solar system to retrieve them. This year's expedition continues until late January.

Read more.

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