

## 6.8: The Discovery of Extrasolar Planets

**Dr. Geoff Marcy**, UCSF-UCB (University of California San Francisco – University of California Berkeley) led the research efforts in the late 1980s to develop extrasolar planet search techniques. The main question was: What do you look for when trying to see a planet around another star?

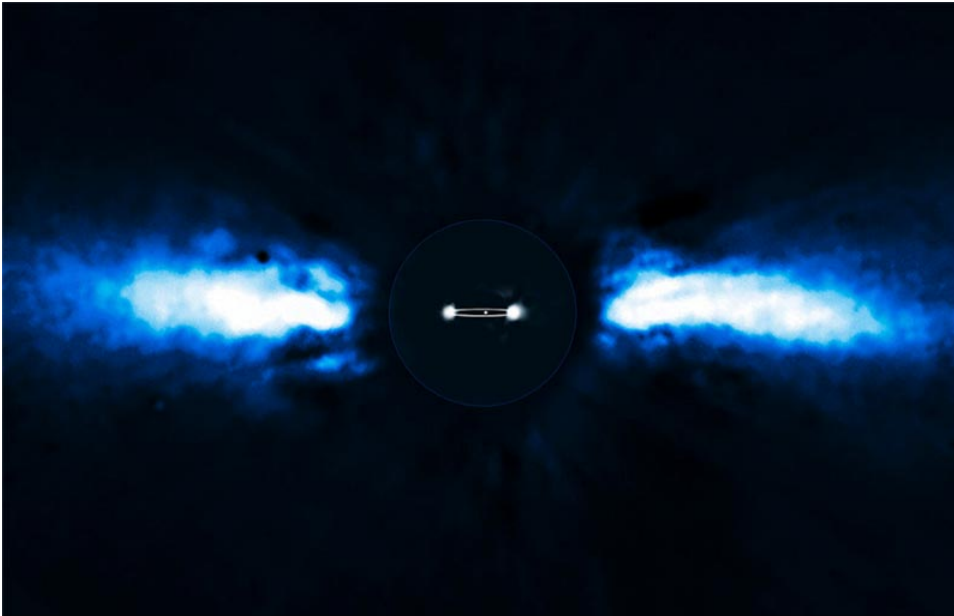


Image courtesy of ESO/A. -M. Lagrange.

The image above shows an exoplanet caught on the move. Beta Pictoris is blocked from view because it is too bright to see it *and* the planet *Beta Pictoris b* at the same time.

**Several techniques have been developed:**

1. Technology has allowed both amateur and professional astronomers the ability to make such observations from here on Earth. And eventually technology should allow astronomers to directly view exoplanets.

### The Discovery of Extrasolar Planets

As of fall 2014, astronomers have found **1,822** planets in 1,137 planetary systems and 467 multiple planet systems. Seven planets have been discovered around the star HD10180, the largest known system outside our solar system. And currently there are thousands of candidate exoplanets.

So what are these exoplanets like?

Most are *much* bigger than Earth, more like Jupiter and even much larger than Jupiter. Many are extremely hot; they orbit quite close to their star or stars. And many of these will “lose” to their parent stars and crash into their star as the star’s gravity pulls them in.

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