

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 organizing collaboration in astronomy . . . It is supported by eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. 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. The 3.5-m New Technology Telescope (NTT) has recently become operational and a giant telescope (VLT=Very Large Telescope), consisting of four 8-m telescopes (equivalent aperture = 16 m) is under construction. Eight hundred scientists make proposals each year for the use of the telescopes at La Silla. The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, FRG. It is the scientific-technical and administrative centre of ESO, where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the La Silla observatory with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive facilities which enable the scientists to analyze their data. In Europe ESO employs about 150 international Staff members, Fellows and Associates; at La Silla about 40 and, in addition, 150 local Staff members.

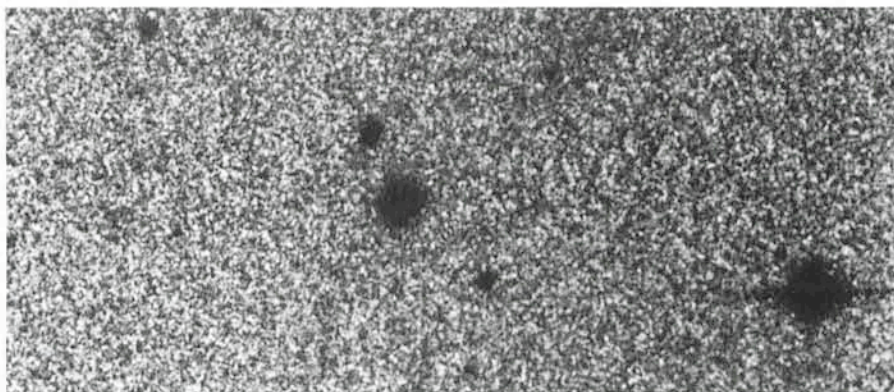
The ESO MESSENGER is published four times a year: normally in March, June, September and December. ESO also publishes Conference Proceedings, Preprints, Technical Notes and other material connected to its activities. Press Releases inform the media about particular events. For further information, contact the ESO Information Service at the following address:

EUROPEAN
SOUTHERN OBSERVATORY
Karl-Schwarzschild-Str. 2
D-8046 Garching bei München
Germany
Tel. (089) 32006-0
Telex 5-28282-0 eo d
Telefax: (089) 3202362
Bitnet address: IPS@DGAESO51

The ESO Messenger:
Editor: Richard M. West
Technical editor: Kurt Kjær

Printed by Universitäts-Druckerei
Dr. C. Wolf & Sohn
Heidemannstraße 166
8000 München 45
Germany

ISSN 0722-6691



Brightest QSO in the South!

Right at the beginning of the "Bright Quasar" Key Programme, the Hamburg Quasar group discovered the brightest QSO in the southern sky. Already in the first 12 fields covered with the ESO Schmidt objective prism plates for this purpose, Lutz Wisotzki by computer search identified the $B = 13.8$ mag object at the centre of the photo as a highly probable QSO. Observations at the end of November 1990 with the 1.52-m telescope at La Silla confirmed the discovery. The redshift is $z = 0.09$. It is also the brightest QSO ever found by optical means.

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