

My Recent Encounters with Rocks

By Avi Loeb on August 12, 2020

A few days ago, I finished going over the proofs of my new book, *Extraterrestrial*.

The book summarizes two years of research during which my attention focused on the first interstellar object, 'Oumuamua, which was classified as a rock but looked nothing like the asteroids or comets seen before in the Solar system. The most peculiar fact about 'Oumuamua was that it deviated from an orbit shaped purely by the Sun's gravity.

Today, during my routine morning jog in the woods next to my home, I tripped on a terrestrial rock and gravity brought me down and injured my face and hand. The first thought that floated in my head was "oh, well ... at last gravity focuses your attention now on real rocks".

I spent the rest of the day at Mass General Hospital with two stitches woven into my forehead and a cast placed around my left hand. It could have been worse.

But it could have been better: I wish I bumped my head on a light sail or a fluffy object as conjectured to explain 'Oumuamua's excess force by the push of sunlight.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Avi Loeb is the former chair of the astronomy department at Harvard University (2011-2020), founding director of Harvard's Black Hole Initiative and director of the Institute for Theory and Computation at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. He also chairs the Board on Physics and Astronomy of the National Academies and the advisory board for the Breakthrough Starshot project, and is a member of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. He is the author of "[Extraterrestrial: The First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth](#)", forthcoming from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in January 2021.