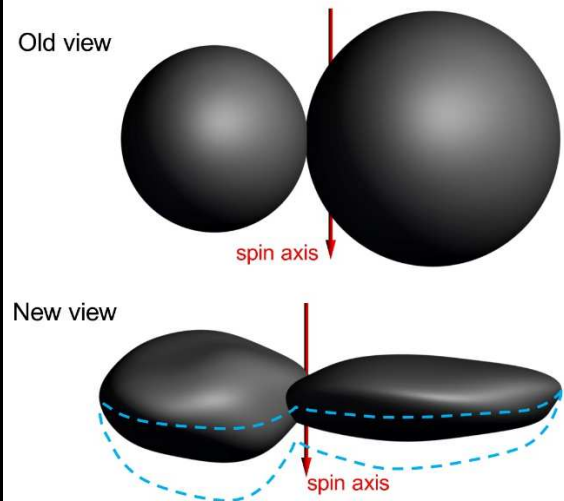


# Facts About Ultima Thule



## Basic Information About Ultima Thule

1. 2014 MU69, nicknamed Ultima Thule, is a trans-Neptunian object located in the Kuiper belt.
2. It is a contact binary 31 km (19 mi) long, composed of two joined bodies 19 km (12 mi) and 14 km (9 mi) across that are nicknamed "Ultima" and "Thule", respectively.
3. Ultima Thule is 4 billion miles from the sun and takes 298 years to complete one orbit of the Sun.
4. The image above of Ultima Thule was taken by the *New Horizons* spacecraft on its flyby on January 1, 2019. Later data indicated that the body was rather flattened rather than spherical.
5. Shows a relatively smooth face unmarred by impact craters.
6. That lack of impact scars suggests that the Kuiper Belt, a reservoir of ancient space rocks beyond the orbit of Neptune, has fewer small objects than scientists expected.
7. Ultima Thule is thought to be among the oldest and least-altered objects in the solar system.
8. So far there is no evidence for an atmosphere, dust production, or gas production.
9. Ultima Thule is not like Pluto (the inner most member of the Kuiper belt) and is not comet-like (i.e. coma present); some comets originate in the Kuiper belt.
10. The albedo of Ultima Thule is only 0.10; It reflects just 10% of the light that hits it.
11. The color of Ultima Thule may come from radiation altering exotic ice, frozen material like methane or nitrogen rather than water. There may also be a variety of organic molecules present.
12. The rotation period of Ultima Thule is about 15 hours.
13. The shape is enough to lend credence to the idea that planetary bodies grow up by the slow clumping of small rocks.
14. Ultima Thule was discovered by the Hubble Space Telescope in June, 2014.
15. The New horizons spacecraft is now on its way to another object in the Kuiper belt and will reach that target in the early 2020s.