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► **To cite this version:**

N. Phan-Bao, M. S. Bessell, E. L. Martín, Grégory Simon, J. Guibert, et al.. Discovery of a nearby M9 dwarf. *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 2006, 366, pp.L40-L43. 10.1111/j.1745-3933.2005.00128.x . hal-00398211

HAL Id: hal-00398211

<https://hal.science/hal-00398211>

Submitted on 14 Dec 2020

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Discovery of a nearby M9 dwarf

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Accepted 2005 November 19. Received 2005 November 16; in original form 2005 October 19

ABSTRACT

We report the discovery of a new M9.0 dwarf at only 8.2 pc, which we identified in our search for nearby ultracool dwarf ($I - J \geq 3.0$, later than M8.0) in the DENIS data base. We measure a very high proper motion of $2.5 \text{ arcsec yr}^{-1}$. The PC3 index measured from its low-resolution spectrum gives a spectrophotometric distance of 8.2 pc. This makes it the third closest M9.0 dwarf.

Key words: stars: low-mass, brown dwarfs – stars: individual: DENIS 0334-49 – stars: individual: LEHPM 3396.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nearby stars are the brightest representatives of their class, and therefore provide benchmarks for stellar physics. This is particularly true for intrinsically faint objects, such as white dwarfs, stars at the bottom of the main sequence, and brown dwarfs (BDs). In the last decade a significant number of nearby ultracool dwarfs have been identified by the DENIS (Epchtein 1997) and 2MASS (Skrutskie et al. 1997) surveys. On the DENIS side, Delfosse et al. (2001) reported an M9 dwarf at 5 pc, and Martín et al. (1999) found a late-L dwarf at the same distance (DENIS-P J0255–4700, Martín et al. 1999; Cruz et al. 2003). Based on the 2MASS survey, Burgasser et al. (2000) discovered a T5 dwarf at 10 pc (2MASS 0559–14, Dahn et al. 2002), and Teegarden et al. (2003) recently reported an M6.5 at only ~ 4 pc. These very close ultracool dwarfs are much brighter than more distant objects and clearly easier to observe.

We are mining the DENIS data base for nearby ultracool dwarfs, and have reported our intermediate results in several publications (e.g. Delfosse et al. 1997; Martín et al. 1999; Phan-Bao et al. 2001, 2003). Our search has a limiting distance of ~ 30 pc, but ultracool dwarfs within 10 pc are obviously of particular interest. Here we report our detection of a M9.0 dwarf at only 8 pc, LEHPM 3396 or DENIS-P J033411.39–495333.6 (hereafter DENIS 0334–49)

Section 2 describes the observational data and their analysis, and Section 3 discusses our spectral type and distance estimates.

2 OBSERVATIONAL DATA

We selected DENIS 0334–49 in the DENIS data base because of its colours, which fall in the area of the ($I - J$, $J - K$) diagram occupied by very late-M and L dwarfs (Fig. 1). Fig. 2 shows its finding chart. We then proceeded to measure its proper motion, to discriminate against a distant giant of similar colour. DENIS 0334–49 appears on four plates in the collection of the Centre d'Analyse des Images (CAI, <http://www.cai-mama.obspm.fr/>): SERC-I, SERC-J, SERC-R and ESO-R. We digitized these survey plates with the MAMA microdensitometer (Berger et al. 1991) at CAI, and analysed the resulting images with SExtractor (Bertin & Arnouts 1996). We calibrated these measurements using the Astrographic Catalogue and Tycho (ACT) catalogue (Postman et al. 1997; Urban, Corbin & Wycoff 1998) as the astrometric reference and the Second Guide Star Photometric Catalogue (GSPC-2; Bucciarelli et al. 2001) catalogue as the photometric reference. A least-squares fit to these four positions and the DENIS and 2MASS positions determines an absolute proper motion of $2.5 \text{ arcsec yr}^{-1}$, over a baseline of 22 yr. At this point we realized that DENIS 0334–49 had been previously identified as a high proper motion star by Pokorný et al. (2004), under the name LEHPM 3396. Table 1 summarizes the photometry and astrometry of DENIS 0334–49. With $I = 14.90$ and its very high proper motion, DENIS 0334–49 has a reduced proper motion well above the maximum reduced proper motion for an M giant of the same colour (Phan-Bao et al. 2003). This makes it a certain dwarf, and a nearby one. From an M_J versus $I - J$ relation, calibrated by 48 single M ($\geq M8.0$), L and T dwarfs with known trigonometric parallaxes and good photometry (Phan-Bao et al., in preparation), we estimated a preliminary distance of 5.5 ± 0.8 pc.

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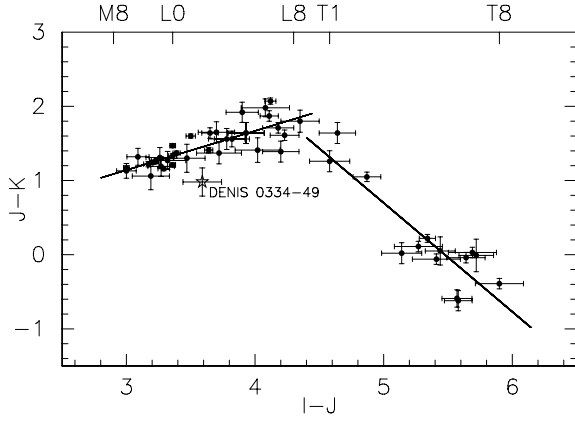


Figure 1. $I_C - J$, $J - K_S$ diagram for 48 ultracool dwarfs ($I_C - J \geq 3.0$); most photometric data from Phan-Bao et al. (2003), Dahn et al. (2002), Reid et al. (2001), Burgasser et al. (2003) and references therein. The distinct M/L and T sequences are clearly visible.

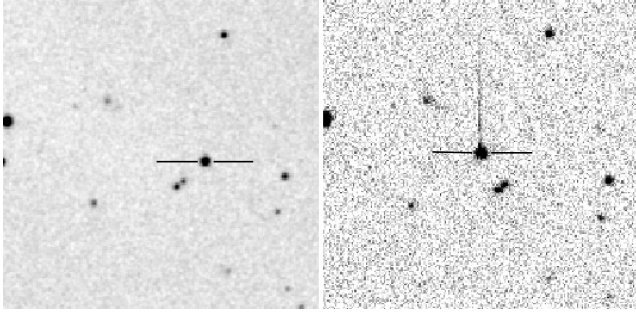


Figure 2. Archival images of DENIS 0334–49: SERC-I (left; epoch: 1984.915) and DENIS-I (right; epoch: 1996.937). The size of each image is 3.2×3.2 arcmin², and north is up and east to the left.

We observed DENIS 0334–49 in 2005 September with the Double Beam Spectrograph on the 2.3-m telescope at Siding Spring Observatory. The 158 g mm^{-1} grating provided a wavelength coverage of 580–1030 nm at 0.5-nm resolution. The data were reduced using FIGARO. Smooth spectrum stars were observed at a range of airmass to remove the telluric lines using the technique of Bessell (1999). The EG131 (Bessell 1999) spectrophotometric standard was used for relative flux calibration, and a NeAr arc provided the wavelength calibration. All spectra were normalized over the 754–758 nm interval, the denominator of the PC3 index (Martín et al. 1999) and a region with a good flat pseudo-continuum. Fig. 3 shows the resulting spectrum of DENIS 0334–49, together with two comparison stars. The M8.0 standard (VB 10) was observed in the same configuration, and the M9.0 dwarf (DENIS-P J1431–1953) was observed by Martín et al. (1999) with a similar resolution. It is clear from the figure that the spectrum of DENIS 0334–49 is steeper than that of VB10.

Table 1. Coordinates at the DENIS epoch, photometry and astrometry of DENIS 0334–49.

$\alpha(2000.0)$ (h m s)	$\delta(2000.0)$ ($^{\circ}$ ' ")	Epoch	B	R	I	J	K	μ_{α} (arcsec yr ⁻¹)	μ_{δ} (arcsec yr ⁻¹)	μ_{total} (arcsec yr ⁻¹)
03 34 11.39	−49 53 33.6	1996.937	20.5 ±0.3	17.5 ±0.2	14.90 ±0.05	11.31 ±0.10	10.33 ±0.09	2.35 ±0.03	0.47 ±0.03	2.50 ^a ±0.03

^aPreviously known as a high proper motion star, as LEHPM 3396 in Pokorný et al. (2004).

At the resolution of the spectrum, M dwarfs are immediately distinguished from M giants by the presence of the NaI and K I doublets, the presence of FeH bands, the appearance of strong CaH bands cutting into the continuum shortward of 700 nm and by the absence of the Ca II triplet (e.g. Bessell 1991).

3 DISCUSSION

Table 2 lists our spectral type estimates for DENIS 0334–49, based on the Martín et al. (1999) calibration of the PC3 index and the Cruz & Reid (2002) calibration of the TiO5 index. Because the TiO5 index wraps around at spectral type \sim M7, we used the spectral type derived from the PC3 index to choose between the two branches of the Cruz & Reid (2002) calibration. The VOa index saturates before the spectral type of DENIS 0334–49 and we therefore did not use it. We average the spectral types computed from the two useful indices to adopt a classification of $M9.0 \pm 0.5$, consistent as well with visual comparison with the classification standards. H_{α} is not detected, and we used the SPLIT IRAF task to measure an upper limit of 2.5 \AA to its equivalent width. Given the weak continuum at 656 nm, this represents a strong limit on H_{α} emission.

To estimate the distance of DENIS 0334–49 we have extended the Crifo et al. (2005) PC3 versus absolute magnitude calibration to higher PC3 index values, adding LP 944-20 and BRI 0021-0214 (respectively M9.0 and M9.5, and both with data from Dahn et al. 2002 and Geballe et al. 2002) to their 12 stars later than M7.0. Fig. 4 shows the resulting PC3 to absolute magnitude relations for the I , J , and K bands. The following cubic least-square fits to those data are valid for $1.63 \leq \text{PC } 3 \leq 2.50$, or spectral types between M7.0 and M9.5:

$$M_I = -61.747 + 105.214(\text{PC3}) - 48.773(\text{PC3})^2 + 7.622(\text{PC3})^3 \quad (1)$$

$$M_J = -16.549 + 37.791(\text{PC3}) - 17.404(\text{PC3})^2 + 2.749(\text{PC3})^3 \quad (2)$$

$$M_K = -7.543 + 24.336(\text{PC3}) - 11.479(\text{PC3})^2 + 1.877(\text{PC3})^3. \quad (3)$$

Over this range the rms dispersion of the data around these fits is approximately 0.2 mag, corresponding to a 10 per cent standard error on distances to single stars.

Table 2 lists the absolute magnitudes for the three DENIS bands computed from the PC3 index, as well as the corresponding spectrophotometric distance estimates and their average (8.2 ± 0.8 pc). The values for the three colours I , J and K are very similar, indicating correlated uncertainties for the three estimators. As usual, these distances would be underestimated by up to $\sqrt{2}$ if DENIS 0334–49 is in fact an unresolved binary.

DENIS 0334–49 has a redder $I - J$ colour, $I - J = 3.59$, than the $I - J \sim 3.3$ of a typical M9.0 dwarf, (Leggett 1992). Comparison with the DENIS colour of well known M9 dwarfs (table 1 of

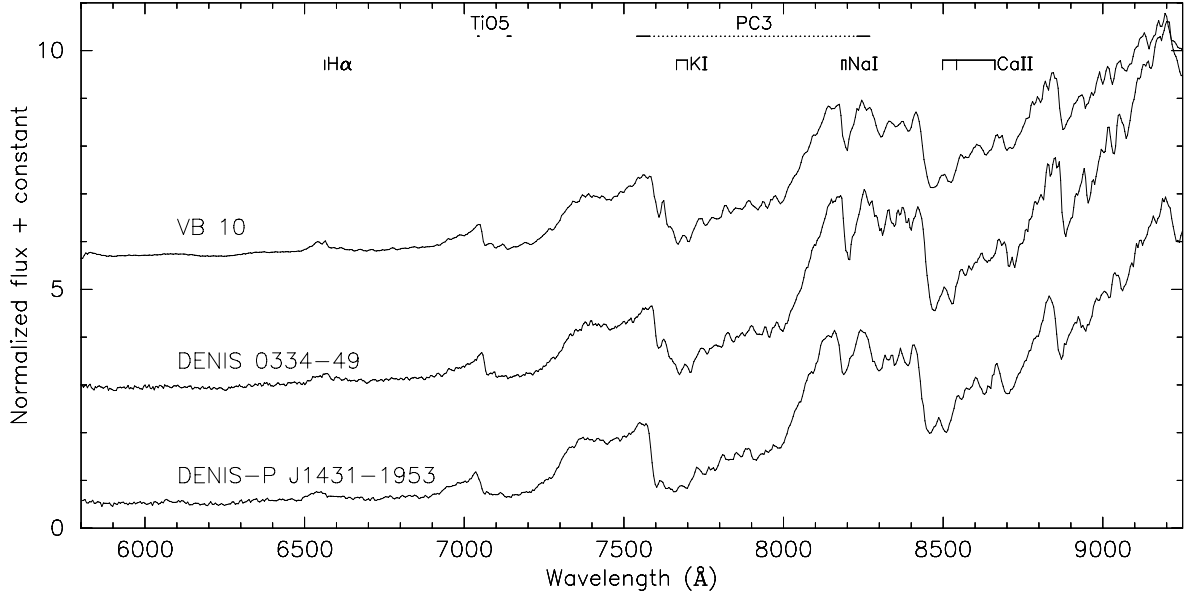


Figure 3. Spectrum of DENIS 0334–49 (M9, this paper), VB10 (M8, Kirkpatrick, Henry & McCarthy 1991) and DENIS-P J1431–1953 (M9, Martín et al. 1999). The positions of the $H\alpha$, Na I, K I and Ca II lines are indicated, as well as the spectral intervals used to compute the TiO5, and PC3 indices.

Table 2. Estimated absolute magnitude, spectrophotometric distance for DENIS 0334–49 and VB 10.

Stars	PC3	TiO5	Sp.T (PC3)	Sp.T (TiO5)	Sp.T (adopted)	M_I	M_J	M_K	d_I (pc)	d_J (pc)	d_K (pc)	d_{sp} (pc)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
DENIS 0334–49	2.41	0.416	M9.8	M8.6	M9.0	15.23	11.92	10.71	8.6	7.5	8.4	8.2
VB 10	1.87	0.307	M8.1	M8.0	M8.0	14.29 ^b	11.24 ^b	10.10 ^b	5.1	5.5	5.5	5.4 ^a

^a $d_\pi = 5.87$ pc, derived from $\pi = 170.3$ mas for its proper motion companion HIP 94761. ^bOptical and infrared photometry from Bessell (1991).

Column 1: star name. Columns 2 and 3: spectroscopic indices. PC3 defined in Martín et al. (1999) and TiO5 in Reid, Hawley & Gizis (1995). Columns 4, 5 and 6: spectral types derived from the PC3 and TiO5 index using the formula given in Martín et al. (1999) and Cruz & Reid (2002). Columns 7, 8 and 9: absolute magnitudes for the I , J , K bands based on the PC3-absolute magnitudes relation. Columns 10, 11 and 12: distance (pc) estimated from the DENIS photometry and the M_I , M_J , M_K derived from the PC3 index. Column 13: adopted distance.

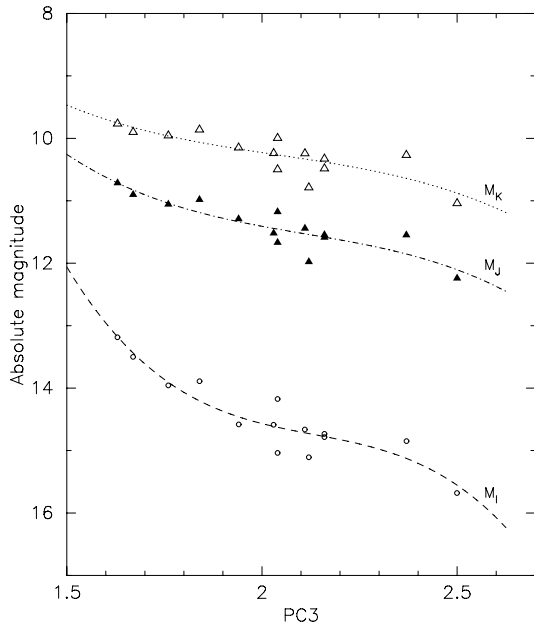


Figure 4. The PC3 index versus absolute magnitudes in the Cousins I and CIT JK passbands for 14 M dwarfs with spectral types ranging from M7 to M9.5; see Section 3.

Phan-Bao et al. 2003) shows that DENIS 0334–49 is much redder at $I - J$ than DENIS 1048–39 but more similar to LP 944-20 (M9, $I - J = 3.27$) or BRI 0021-02 (M9.5, $I - J = 3.26$); both of these are young. Additionally, with a high PC3 index the DENIS 0334–49 absolute magnitudes estimated from the calibration as given above are ~ 0.4 mag fainter than that of a typical M9 dwarf, but consistent with that of a young M9 field brown dwarf; this raises the possibility that DENIS 0334–49 might be a brown dwarf and suggesting that a lithium test (Martín, Rebolo & Magazzù 1994) will be of interest. If this is the case, its distance of 8.2 pc makes DENIS 0334–49 the third nearest M9.0 dwarf in the immediate solar neighbourhood, after LP 944-20 (5 pc) and DENIS 1048–39 (5.2 pc), and formally before LHS 2065 (8.5 pc). One should note that in the case of an old M9 field dwarf ($M_J = 11.45$, Dahn et al. 2002) a derived distance of 9.4 pc would place DENIS 0334–49 the fifth closest M9.0, after LHS 1070C ($d = 8.8$ pc, Leinert et al. 2000). It is an obvious target for a trigonometric parallax measurement, and a good benchmark ultracool dwarf.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is carried out based on the DENIS photometry kindly provided by the DENIS consortium. We thank the referee for useful comments that improved the paper. This research has made use of

the SIMBAD and VIZIER data bases, operated at CDS, Strasbourg, France.

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