# Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission 

Dimitri Mawet, Marie Ygouf, Jarron Michael Leisenring, K Thomas, Michael<br>E Ressler, Gene Serabyn, Anthony Boccaletti, Renyu Hu, Jorge Llop-Sayson, Laurent Pueyo, et al.

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## 1618 - Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

Cycle: 1, Proposal Category: GO

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## OBSERVATIONS

| Folder | Observation |
| :---: | :---: |

Label
Observing Template
Science Target

## Alpha Cen A

JWST Proposal 1618 (Created: Friday, August 27, 2021 at 4:00:15 PM Eastern Standard Time) - Overview

| Folder | Observation | Label | Observing Template | Science Target |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 1 | eps Mus Position A. us <br> e offset star | MIRI Coronagraphic Imaging | (3) EPS-MUS-OFFSET |  |
|  | 5 | eps Mus position B use <br> offset star | MIRI Coronagraphic Imaging | (3) EPS-MUS-OFFSET |
|  | 2 | Alpha Cen A F1550 | MIRI Coronagraphic Imaging | (4) ALPHACENOFFSET |
|  | 4 | Alpha Cen A F1550 | MIRI Coronagraphic Imaging | (4) ALPHACENOFFSET |
|  | offset star for eps Mus. <br> Position A. Obs 2 | MIRI Coronagraphic Imaging | (3) EPS-MUS-OFFSET |  |

## ABSTRACT

Alpha Centauri A is the closest solar-type star to the Sun and offers an unique opportunity to detect both a mature gas giant planet (consistent with existing radial velocity constraints) and a zodiacal dust cloud. A carefully planned observational sequence using the MIRI Coronagraph (F1550C) and innovative post-processing would be sensitive down to a radius limit of $0.5 \sim 0.7$ R-Jupiter for planets within $\sim 3$ AU ( $\sim 2.5 \prime$ ) around alpha Cen A where models predict a region of stablity against disruption by alpha Cen B. These same observations would be sensitive to a level of zodiacal emission only a few times brighter than that of the Sun's, an unprecedented level not even achieved by ground based interferometers. The proposed observations would probe the limit of JWST high contrast imaging on a star that offers the best chance for the ultimate detection of Earth analogs by future ground and/or space based facilities. The experiment is admittedly high risk, but the prospect of directly imaging a planet around our closest stellar neighbor is an exciting one.

## OBSERVING DESCRIPTION

The proposed scenario brackets the observations of alpha Cen with observations of a PSF reference star, eps Muscae, of comparable brightness to alpha Cen A. The date of the observation has been selected to minimize the change in pitch angle (solar offset) between the target and reference star so as to minimize changes in telescope's thermal environment.

Eps Mus will be observed with a 5 point dither pattern at the position of alpha Cen A behind the coronagraphic mask to increase the image diversity for improved PSF reconstruction. Eps Mus will also be observed at the position alpha Cen B without a dither pattern. We recognize that neither eps Mus (in this position) nor alpha Cen B will be behind the coronagraph which will result in saturating the cores of the PSF, but analysis of the postprocessing shows that it is important to measure the speckle pattern from alpha Cen B near the position of alpha Cen A. The observation of alpha Cen is split to avoid the limit of 10,000 seconds for an individual observation.

Target acquisition (TA) for both alpha Cen and the PSF reference star eps Mus will be challenging due to two factors: 1) both stars are extremely bright and would saturate during the TA process; 2) the position of alpha Cen A is changing by up to 10 mas per day due to its combined proper motion, parallax and orbital motion. We address the first point for both stars by using nearby Gaia stars as the initial targets to be followed by an offset to the desired science or reference target. Offsets are given in the sense (alpha CenRA/DEC-OffsetStarRA/DEC) after rotation into the camera coordinate system. The Gaia stars and eps Mus have highly precise Gaia positions and proper motions. We will address the evolving position of alpha Cen A using the ALMA astrometry obtained by Akeson et al (2020) and update the offsets once the exact date of the observation is known. It may eventually prove necessary to treat alpha Cen as a moving target so as to mitigate its motion during the 5 hours of its observation ( $\sim 0.4$ mas/hr).

The offset star for alpha Cen A is a Gaia star located $16^{\prime \prime}$ (13") away in 2022 (2023) away with an inferred K magnitude (from Gaia colors) of $\mathrm{K}=13.6$. It is observed in TA for FQPM/F1550 mode with F560W and achieves SNR~140 in 15 sec . The offset star for eps Mus is a Gaia star located $25^{\prime \prime}$ away with an inferred K magnitude (from Gaia colors) of K=11.4. It is observed in TA for FQPM/F1550 mode with F560W and achieves SNR~32 in 8 sec.

A number of interloper stars will appraoch alpha Cen A during the next few years due to alpha Cen's large proper motion. One is quite faint (S2) and is a minor issue in 2022-23. A second (S5) is significantly brighter and becomes a more serious issue in 2026 and beyond. For this reason we want to schedule the observations as early as possible to ensure the maximum areal coverage for exoplanet discovery and the potential for future followup observations.

We have elected to NOT use two roll angles since we are expecting to find planets within only the central 1-2" where the 2 nd roll offers no advantage and would require a considerable overhead in total clock time.

Proposal 1618 - Targets - Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

|  | \# | Name | Target Coordinates | Targ. Coord. Corrections | Miscellaneous |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | (3) | EPS-MUS-OFFSET <br> libration <br> [Target acquisition test] | RA: 121734.6051 (184.3941879d) <br> Dec: -67 5713.07 (-67.95363d) <br> Equinox: J2000 | Proper Motion RA: -7.09 mas/yr <br> Proper Motion Dec: $0.496 \mathrm{mas} / \mathrm{yr}$ <br> Parallax: 0.00013" <br> Epoch of Position: 2015.5 |  |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { D } \\ & \text { 찬 } \end{aligned}$ | (4) <br>  <br> Cor <br> Cat <br> Cat <br> Des <br> Ext | ALPHACENOFFSET <br> libration <br> Target acquisition test] | RA: 143922.3404 (219.8430850d) Dec: -60 500.78 (-60.83355d) Equinox: J2000 | Proper Motion RA: -8.2 mas/yr <br> Proper Motion Dec: $-1.88 \mathrm{mas} / \mathrm{yr}$ <br> Parallax: 0.0001" <br> Epoch of Position: 2015.5 |  |

Proposal 1618-Observation 1-Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission


Proposal 1618-Observation 1-Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

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Proposal 1618-Observation 5 - Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

| $\mathscr{O}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |

Proposal 1618-Observation 2-Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission


Proposal 1618-Observation 2-Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

|  | eps Mus Position A. use offset star (Obs 1) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) eps Mus position B use offset star (Obs 5) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) offset star for eps Mus. Position A. Obs 2 (Obs 4) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) offset star for eps Mus. Position B. Obs 2 (Obs 6) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) Additional Justification: false |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Aperture PA Range 98 to 100.5 Degrees (V3 93.16574676 to 95.66574676 ) Offset 5.5662 arcsec, -11.81901 arcsec No Parallel <br> Sequence Observations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, Non-interruptible |

Proposal 1618-Observation 3-Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission


Proposal 1618-Observation 3-Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

|  | eps Mus Position A. use offset star (Obs 1) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) eps Mus position B use offset star (Obs 5) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) offset star for eps Mus. Position A. Obs 2 (Obs 4) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) offset star for eps Mus. Position B. Obs 2 (Obs 6) (PSF Reference; Filters [F1550C]) Additional Justification: false |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Aperture PA Range 98 to 100.5 Degrees (V3 93.16574676 to 95.66574676 ) Offset 5.5662 arcsec, -11.819 arcsec No Parallel <br> Sequence Observations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, Non-interruptible |



Proposal 1618-Observation 4 - Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

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Proposal 1618-Observation 6 - Searching Our Closest Stellar Neighbor for Planets and Zodiacal Emission

|  | PSF Reference: true |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Offset 33.1634 arcsec, -5.6352 arcsec <br> No Parallel <br> Sequence Observations $1,2,3,4,5,6$, Non-interruptible |

