Giovanni Battista Donati Encyclopedia Article

Giovanni Battista Donati

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Giovanni Battista Donati

1826-1873

Italian astronomer who investigated stellar spectra and discovered Donati's comet in 1858. Donati was the first to observe the spectrum of a comet and used stellar spectroscopy to identify the chemical elements that make up the comet's body and tail. Since comets are thought to represent the primordial composition of the solar system, this technique is used today to gain better understanding of how the solar system formed.