Definition: **Kuiper Belt** from *The Chambers Dictionary*
a large ring of icy bodies orbiting the Sun just beyond Neptune. [G *Kuiper* (1905–73), Dutch-born US astronomer who predicted its existence]

Summary Article: **Kuiper belt**
from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Ring of small, icy bodies orbiting the Sun beyond the outermost planet. The Kuiper belt, named after Dutch-born US astronomer Gerard Kuiper, who proposed its existence in 1951, is thought to be the source of comets that orbit the Sun with periods of less than 200 years. The first member of the Kuiper belt was seen in 1992. In 1995 the first comet-sized objects were discovered; previously the only objects found had diameters of at least 100 km/62 mi (comets generally have diameters of less than 10 km/6.2 mi). An object originally named Xena, but now called Eris, discovered in 2003, is larger than Pluto; debate following its discovery led to the new category of dwarf planet being defined, to which both Eris and Pluto were assigned. Over a thousand members of the Kuiper belt are now known, and there are probably hundreds of thousands of bodies over 100 km/60 mi in diameter, and many millions of smaller objects.

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Comets and the Kuiper Belt

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