

Best of Last Week—Converting CO₂ to fuel, rocky planet found orbiting nearest star and possible remedy for a fatty diet

August 29 2016, by Bob Yirka

A method created at Rice University closes the gap between light and matter and may help advance technologies like quantum computers and communications. The lab designed and built a high-quality cavity to contain an ultrathin layer of gallium arsenide. By tuning the material with a magnetic field to resonate with a certain state of light in the cavity, they prompted the formation of polaritons that act in a collective manner. Credit: Qi Zhang/Rice University

(ScienceX)—It was a good week for physics and technology development as a team with Rice University found that [light and matter merge in quantum coupling](#)—they described research into a way to create a new condensed matter state in which all of the electrons in a material could be made to act as one.

Also, another team at the University of Toronto described a technique they had developed that showed they may have [solved the puzzle of converting gaseous carbon dioxide to fuel](#) using silicon. And another team at the Cockrell School of Engineering announced that they had developed [a new flexible material that can make any window 'smart'](#)—allowing for virtually any type of glass to control light and heat from the sun. Also, a team of researchers in the U.S. found evidence that suggested that [chemicals banned decades ago may be linked to an increased autism risk today](#). And a team at MIT [unveiled a sponge that creates steam using ambient sunlight](#)—they call it a solar vapor generator.

In news from space, a team with members from the U.S. and Canada announced that they had discovered [a 'dark' Milky Way](#)—a massive galaxy called Dragonfly 44 that is made almost entirely of dark matter. And another international team of researchers announced that they had found [a rocky planet orbiting the habitable zone of our nearest star](#), Proxima Centauri, setting off conjecture in the press about whether it may harbor life.

And in news about our planet, a team of researchers working in Japan reported detecting [a rare, deep-Earth tremor](#) caused by a storm in the North Atlantic known as a weather bomb. And another international team of researchers conducted a study of natural records of climate variations across the world's oceans and continents and found that [humans have been causing changes to the climate for 180 years](#), indicating that it is not just a 20th century phenomenon.

And finally, if you are one of the millions of people the world over who have trouble avoiding foods high in fat, help may be on the way as a team of researchers at the University of São Paulo found that [fish oil pills can undo the effects of a fatty diet](#)—they were actually found to prevent or reverse the effects of a high-fat diet in mice.

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