

Best of Last Week—Black holes erasing the past, turning smart phones into microscopes and the 'loudness' of our thoughts

February 26 2018, by Bob Yirka

Credit: NASA/JPL/USGS

It was a good week for space news, as a team led by Nobel Laureate Adam Riess found that [an improved Hubble yardstick gave fresh evidence for new physics in the universe](#)—they took the most precise

measurement of the expansion rate of the universe and found something unexpected. Also, a team with members from across the U.S. found evidence suggesting that [the moon's water may be widespread and immobile](#)—not concentrated in some areas, as some studies have suggested. And Peter Hintz, a postdoctoral fellow at UC Berkeley used math to show that [some black holes could erase your past](#) if you were to venture into them.

In biology news, a team of researchers from across the U.K. found evidence that suggested [plants colonized the Earth 100 million years earlier than previously thought](#), a finding that could change perceptions of the evolution of the Earth's biosphere. And an international team of researchers conducted the largest study of its kind and [found that alcohol use is the biggest risk factor for dementia](#) and among the most important preventable risk factors for the onset of all types of dementia, especially early-onset dementia. Also, another international team conducted a study on a tooth found in a cave on the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas and [identified traces of indigenous Taino in present-day Caribbean populations](#).

In technology news, a team at Google announced the development of [an AI that can predict heart disease by looking at pictures of the retina](#) and claimed it is as accurate as blood tests. And a team of mathematicians at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory announced that they had developed [minimalist machine learning algorithms that can analyze images from very little data](#). Also, a team at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Nanoscale BioPhotonics in Australia announced that they had developed [an add-on clip that turns a smartphone into a fully operational microscope](#).

And finally, if you feel like everyone around you is always talking too loudly or softly, it might be all in your head, literally. A combined team from NYU Shanghai and NYU found [that the 'loudness' of our thoughts](#)

[affects how we judge external sounds.](#)

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