

Best of Last Week: Curiosity Rover selfie, improvements in batteries, and first test of COVID-19 vaccine

March 23 2020, by Bob Yirka

This selfie was taken by NASA's Curiosity Mars rover on Feb. 26, 2020 (the 2,687th Martian day, or sol, of the mission). The crumbling rock layer at the top of the image is "the Greenheugh Pediment," which Curiosity climbed soon after taking the image. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS

It was a good week for space science as a team at NASA's Jet Propulsion

Laboratory report that the [Mars rover Curiosity took a selfie before setting off on a record climb](#). The rover then crested Greenheugh Pediment, a broad sheet of rock atop a hill, setting a record for the steepest terrain the rover has ever climbed. Also, a team with members affiliated with institutions across the U.S. [discovered a path to razor-sharp black hole images](#)—performing calculations on nested rings in images from the Event Horizon Telescope.

In technology news, a team at the University of York [exposed vulnerabilities of password managers](#)—they found some may be vulnerable to cyber-attacks by fake apps. Also, [a startup 3-D printing firm was instrumental in saving the lives of COVID-19 victims](#)—workers at Issanova printed Venturi valves needed for breathing devices at a hospital in Italy. And a combined team from the University of California Berkeley and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory devised [a strategy to achieve ultrahigh power and energy density in lithium-ion batteries](#)—it involved the use of two bulk oxyfluorides with a partial spinel-like order. Also, a team at the University of Tokyo developed [a cyclic phosphate-based electrolyte for safe and high voltage lithium-ion batteries](#)—one that is nonflammable.

In other news, a team in China asked [whether blood type matters when it comes to coronavirus](#). They found that it does—those with type A blood, they discovered, were more likely to contract and die from the disease. Also, a team at the University of Washington found that ['sushi parasites' have increased 283-fold in the past 40 years](#)—most of which are worms. And a team at Rutgers University announced that they had [discovered the origins of the building blocks of life](#)—early protein structures that are responsible for metabolism.

And finally, a team at Kaiser Permanente Washington Research Institute in Seattle gave the world a bit of hope when they announced [the first shot to the first person in a test of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine](#).

These initial tests are to ensure the vaccine does not have harmful side effects.

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