

Best of Last Week: Universal expansion mystery solved, iron rain on exoplanet, and asymptomatic COVID-19 infection

March 16 2020, by Bob Yirka

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It was another good week for physics as a team of engineers at the University of New South Wales [cracked a 58-year-old puzzle on their way to a quantum breakthrough](#)—by controlling the nucleus of a single

atom using only electric fields, they found a way to manipulate atoms with much more precision. And a team at the University of Geneva claimed to have [solved the mystery of the expansion of the universe](#) without making use of any "new physics."

In technology news, a team of engineers at the University of California, Riverside claimed that [fast-charging damages electric car batteries](#). The report that charging stations with fast-charging capability expose the batteries to damaging high heat and resistance. Also, a team at RIKEN, in Japan, and international partners developed [an ultrathin organic solar cell that is both highly efficient and durable](#). And financial think tank, Carbon Tracker issued a report suggesting that the world had [frittered away a half-trillion dollars propping up the coal industry](#) instead of investing in more environmentally friendly resources. Also, a team at cyberthreat research group SafetyDetectives.com reported that the Brazilian security firm Antheus Tecnologia, [exposed more than 2 million bits of data, including 76,000 fingerprints](#), by leaving them unsecured on their servers.

It was also a big week for health news, of course, with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the health of millions and economies around the world. One group in particular at the University of Texas announced that [SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind the pandemic, spreads quickly and that people infected with it can pass it on before they even have symptoms](#).

In other news, a combined team from George Washington University and the Rockefeller University reported findings on [soldier ants that revealed evolution can go in reverse](#)—the ants were found to revert to previously evolved head shapes. And an international team working with data from the ESO's Very Large Telescope made observed [an exoplanet where it rains iron](#).

And finally, if you are one of the billions around the world trying to keep yourself and your loved ones from being infected with COVID-19, you may want to check out the results of a study done by a team working at the National Institutes of Health's Rocky Mountain Lab—they found that [the SARS-CoV-2 virus can live on some surfaces for up to three days](#).

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