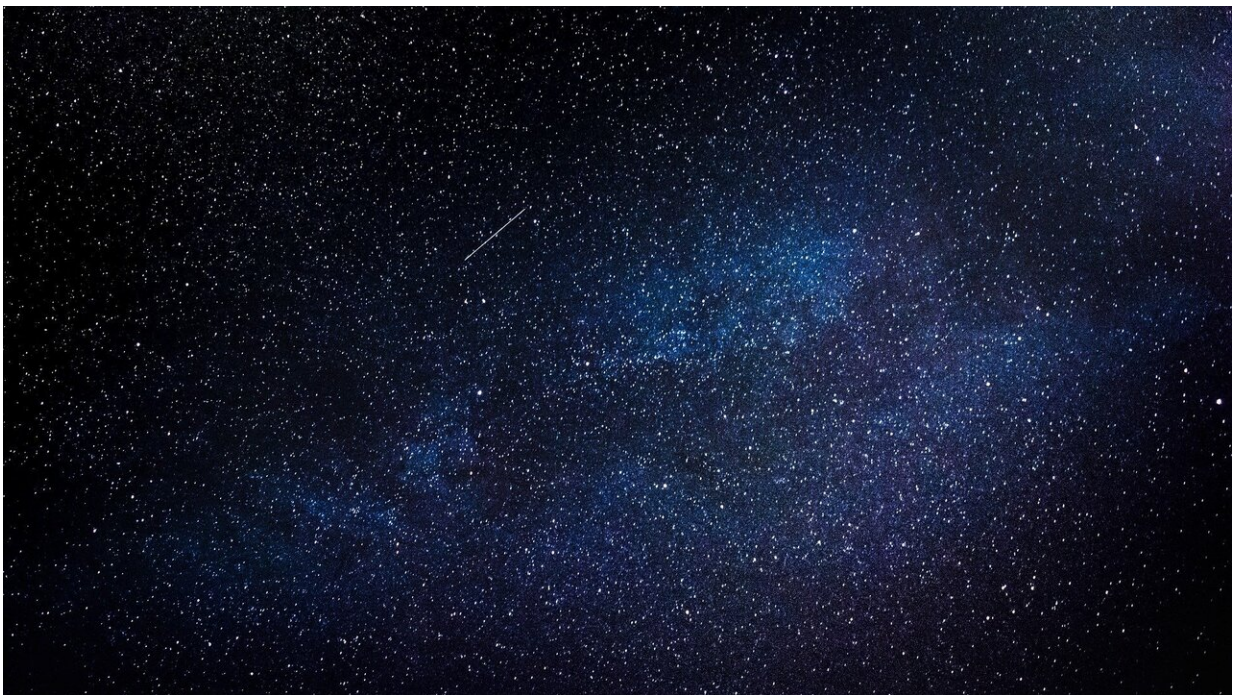


Best of Last Week: Extraterrestrial life, Surface Duo specs, and a low-energy neural network training system

May 25 2020, by Bob Yirka



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

It was a good week for space science as an international team of researchers studying data sent back by the [Curiosity Rover found clues of a chilly ancient Mars buried in rocks](#)—some minerals in rocks suggested evidence of an ice-covered lake. In somewhat related news, a

European team claimed to have [solved the mystery of lava-like flows on Mars](#)—they found the flows were instead the result of mudslides. Also, an international team of researchers used Bayesian inference to [estimate the odds of life and intelligence emerging beyond our planet](#)—they calculated the odds to be 9:1 or higher for life existing elsewhere and 3:2 that it is intelligent.

In technology news, a team at [Nvidia Research reinvented the video game Pac-Man to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its release](#)—and they did it using a neural network instead of coding. Also, a team at Rice University [modified its Early Bird neural network training system to use 10 times less energy](#). And a combined team from Seoul National University and Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology developed [a type of deep-learning-enhanced e-skin that can decode complex human motions](#) such as rapid finger movements from a distance. Also, [Microsoft posted some details of its soon-to-be-released Surface Duo smartphone](#) on the Windows Central website—the foldable, dual-screen phone will have 1800 x 1350 resolution and will run on a Qualcomm Snapdragon 855 system on a chip.

In other news, a team of researchers from multiple institutions in China announced that their [first human trial of a COVID-19 vaccine showed it to be safe and that it induced a rapid immune response](#). And a team at the IBS Center for Climate Physics ran supercomputer model simulations that they claim [reveal the cause of the Neanderthal extinction](#).

And finally, if you are like billions of others venturing outside of your home in a way that will keep you safe from COVID-19, you might want to check out a study by pair of researchers at the University of Nicosia—they found that [six feet of separation is not far enough to stop virus transmission in light winds](#).

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