

Best of Last Week – Kilonova afterglow, mapping "The Witcher," moderate alcohol consumption damages brain

March 7 2022, by Bob Yirka

An artist's conception illustrates the aftermath of a 'kilonova,' a powerful event that happens when two neutron stars merge. Credit: NASA/CXC/M. Weiss

It was a good week for space science as a team of astronomers at Northwestern University may have detected [the afterglow from a](#)

[kilonova](#), a merger of two neutron stars, setting off a blast 1,000 times brighter than a classical nova. Also, a team with members from several institutions in the U.S. found evidence suggesting that [coronal loops may not be what they seem](#). The ropey strands in the sun's atmosphere could, in fact, be nothing more than optical illusions. And an international team of researchers found evidence showing that [a black hole system spotted in 2020 that would have been the closest to the Earth, does not have a black hole](#) and is instead a "vampire" two-star system.

In technology news, a team at Dartmouth College built an [artificial intelligence model for detecting mental disorders](#) using text from conversations on Reddit as a dataset. Also, Milán Janosov, a data scientist at Datopolis built [a detailed network map of "The Witcher"](#)—the map outlines storylines, patterns and character relationships in the fantasy series. And a team at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology designed and built [solar panels that pull in water vapor to grow crops in the desert](#). Also, a combined team from Microsoft Mixed Reality and AI Lab and ETH Zurich, developed a way to [enhance human-robot interactions by merging mixed reality and robotics](#), which could have applications in immersive teleoperation systems.

In other news, a team with members affiliated with several institutions in the U.K. and one in Austria found [a causal link between blood groups and severe COVID-19](#). And a team at the University of Georgia found evidence suggesting that [the Joro spider, which first arrived in the U.S. in 2013, could spread beyond Georgia and possibly colonize the entire East Coast](#).

And finally, a team at the University of Pennsylvania found [an association between light-to-moderate alcohol consumption and reductions in overall brain volume](#).

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