

Best of Last Week – The speed of sound on Mars, microplastics found in blood, artificial sweeteners not safe

March 28 2022, by Bob Yirka

Artificial sweeteners may not be safe sugar alternatives. Credit: Mathilde Touvier (CC-BY 4.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

It was a good week for space science as an international team of astronomers revealed [the best image yet of a mysterious radio circle in](#)

[space](#). Theories about the nature of these objects range from the throats of wormholes to galactic shockwaves. And analysis by another international team of researchers of sounds captured by Perseverance rover revealed [the speed of sound on the red planet](#), which is approximately 240 m/s. And researchers at the Max-Planck Institute for Astronomy analyzing data from the Gaia mission found [parts of the Milky Way are much older than expected](#). Some were formed approximately 13 billion years ago, which was 2 billion years earlier than expected and just 0.8 billion years after the Big Bang.

In technology news, a team of engineers at Rice University found evidence that [wind and solar power could replace coal power in Texas](#). Also, a team with members from Peking University and Puzhou Laboratory and Southeast University developed [a diffractive neural network that can be flexibly programmed](#)—such networks are deep neural networks that are based on diffractive optical technology. And a combined team from the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China and Pohang University of Science and Technology developed [a highly performing transistor based on an inorganic metal halide perovskite](#). Also, a team at Tianjin University developed [new ferrocenium-based anion-exchange membranes for fuel cells](#), allowing for partitioning substances that can chemically react with one another.

In other news, a team of researchers at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam working with a colleague from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam made headlines worldwide when they announced that they had found [microplastics in human blood for the first time](#), setting off warnings that the tiny particles could be entering organs. Also, an international team of researchers found that [some oral drugs prevent death from COVID-19 in older mice by reversing immune aging](#).

And finally, the results of work by a pair of researchers at the French National Institute for Health and Medical Research and Sorbonne Paris

Nord University—Charlotte Debras and Mathilde Touvier—found that [artificial sweeteners may not be a safe sugar alternative](#).

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