

Best of Last Week—Listening to gravitational waves, computer issues waste time, benefits of vitamin D in older people

July 3 2023, by Bob Yirka

In this artist's interpretation, a pair of supermassive black holes (top left) emits gravitational waves that ripple through the fabric of space-time. Those gravitational waves compress and stretch the paths of radio waves emitted by pulsars (white). By carefully measuring the radio waves, a team of scientists recently made the first detection of the universe's gravitational wave background. Credit: Aurore Simonnet for the NANOGrav Collaboration

It was a good week for space exploration, as officials with NASA reported that the Mars helicopter, Ingenuity, had [reestablished contact](#) with mission controllers after going silent for 62 days. Also a team working on the North American Nanohertz Observatory for Gravitational Waves project, announced that after 15 years of data collection, they had ["heard" the clamor of gravitational waves](#) coming from two distant merging supermassive black holes—the observation was the first of its kind and made international headlines. And a pair of astronomers, Kathryn Neugent and Philip Massey announced that they had discovered [19 new Wolf-Rayet stars](#) in the Andromeda galaxy.

In technology news, GitHub CEO Thomas Dohmke, working with colleagues Marco Lansiti and Greg Richards, announced that a study they commissioned found that [Copilot, GitHub's programming tool](#), may lead to a boost in global GDP of \$1.5 trillion—Copilot is an AI based tool that can be used to speed up software development. And a team at the University of Waterloo, announced that they had found [a method of attack](#) that can successfully bypass voice authentication security systems with up to a 99% success rate after only six tries—the machine learning approach used a deepfake approach to generate copies of a victim's voice that were real enough to fool most voice systems. Also, a combined team of computer engineers from the University of Copenhagen and Roskilde University found that most computer users endure a lot of wasted time due to malfunction issues. They found that [average users spend 11% to 20% of their computer time](#) dealing with hardware/software issues instead of getting work done. And a team of robotics engineers at the National University of Singapore, designed and built [the first-ever wooden robotic gripper](#) that is driven by moisture, temperature and lighting.

In other news, a team of psychologists from the U.K. and China found that [children who read for pleasure in early childhood](#) tend to exhibit better cognitive performance and mental well-being when they enter

adolescence. Also, a team of paleobiologists from the University of Fribourg and the University of Bristol, found evidence in a fossil study that showed [humans' ancestors survived the asteroid impact](#) that killed the dinosaurs. And finally, a team with members from institutions across Australia found evidence showing that vitamin [D supplements](#) may reduce the risk of serious cardiovascular events in older people.

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