

Best of Last Week—new clues about moon's history, AI hardware improvements, COVID death toll reanalyzed

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Fresh Crater on Oceanus Procellarum. Credit: NASA/GSFC/Arizona State University

It was a good week for space science as a multi-institutional team of astronomers and astrophysicists found [telescopic evidence](#) that the black hole at the center of the Milky Way is spinning itself (and warping spacetime) into the shape of an American football. Also, a small international team of astronomers reports that one of Saturn's smallest moons, Mimas, has [a young ocean beneath its icy shell](#). And a team of geographers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences report that analyses of minerals in lunar samples returned by China's Chang'e-5 lunar mission provide clues about the [moon's history](#).

In technology news, a team of chemical engineers at the Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology developed a [scalable photoelectrochemical system](#) for the production of green hydrogen. And an international team of computer scientists built an [on-chip phonon-magnon reservoir](#) for neuromorphic computing, a development that could lead to more compact and efficient AI hardware. Also, a multi-institutional engineering collaboration showed that [inexpensive, carbon-neutral biofuels](#) are truly possible. And a team of roboticists at Qingdao University of Technology found that [a deep reinforcement learning approach](#) could be used to enhance autonomous robotic grasping and assembly.

In other news, a team of bioengineers and mental health specialists affiliated with multiple institutions in the U.S. found [a link](#) between body temperature and depression—people with higher body temperatures were found to be more prone to depression. Also, a trio of ecologists reports the first observation of [an act of altruism](#) by a bull elephant seal. A male bull elephant seal helped to save a drowning pup, an action requiring a high expenditure of energy. And finally, a study analyzing reports of deaths in the U.S. during the pandemic found that many of them were [likely attributable to COVID-19](#).

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