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CENTRAL COAST ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Sharing the Night Sky for over 25 Years

<http://www.ccastronomy.org>

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Greetings everyone.

A number of important and amazing things have been happening or announced or released this week that I felt you might be interested in knowing about.

Photo Op: First Stunning Close-Up Views of Planet Mercury in over 30 Years

Traveling at 16,000 mph, NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft made a spectacular flyby of planet Mercury the past two days, flying only 124 miles above Mercury's sun-blasted surface, taking stunning close-up images of areas of the planet never seen by humans, the first close-up images since those taken by the Mariner 10 spacecraft 33 years ago. This time the camera equipment is much higher quality, resulting in incredible new views of the closest planet to the Sun. MESSENGER will enter permanent orbit around Mercury in 2011. I am looking forward to what should be a breathtaking new flyby video, once the MESSENGER team assembles the photos. Take a look at the first of over 1,000 exciting new images.

<http://messenger.jhuapl.edu/gallery/sciencePhotos/>

Fire and Ice: Pluto-bound Hew Horizons Mission Team Congratulates MESSENGER's Progress and Success

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.nl.html?pid=24526>

This is THE Year of BIG Politics, therefore Where Do the Candidates Stand on Science?

For information on how the presidential candidates view STEM and energy and its importance to America and our federal government, take a look at Physics Today's "Campaign 2008" website. Physics Today asked each candidate a set of questions. Answers are posted here.

<http://blogs.physicstoday.org/politics08/>

Results are in from the National Science Board's "Science & Engineering Indicators 2008" Analysis

Talk about a rough road ahead. STEM is not recognized as being very important by a great deal of the world, including the U.S.

Full Report

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.nl.html?pid=26695>

Science & Technology: Public Attitudes and Understanding: Highlights

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.nl.html?pid=26694>

NASA's Budget Challenges: Deputy Director Shana Dale – More on the Budget

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.nl.html?pid=26688>

Earth's Climate: 2007 Tied as 2nd Warmest Year in a Century

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.nl.html?pid=24519>

Photo Op: Views from NASA's Earth Observatory in Orbit

La Nina Still Going Strong in January

http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/NewImages/images.php3?img_id=17894

California's Mono Lake

http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/NewImages/images.php3?img_id=17890

Universe Today Podcast: Gravitational Waves

When he put together his theories of relativity, Einstein made a series of predictions. Some were confirmed just a few years later, but scientists are still working to confirm others. And one of the most fascinating is the concept of gravitational waves. As massive objects move in space, they send out ripples across the Universe that actually distort the shape of matter. Experiments are in place and in the works to detect these gravitational waves as they sweep past the Earth.

<http://www.universetoday.com/2008/01/15/podcast-gravitational-waves/> MP3 streaming audio or download

Supermassive Black Holes Spin Near the Speed of Light

<http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/080115-st-massive-black-hole.html>

New Information about Antimatter

http://www.esa.int/esaMI/Integral/SEMKT_X2MDAF_0.html

Scientific American: Science 2.0 – Great New Tool, or Great Risk?

"Science 2.0" describes how researchers are beginning to harness wikis, blogs and other Web 2.0 technologies as a potentially transformative way of doing science. The draft article appears here, several months in advance of its print publication, and you are invited to comment on it. Your inputs will influence the article's content, reporting, perhaps even its point of view.

http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=science-2-point-0-great-new-tool-or-great-risk&sc=WR_20080115

Photo Op: Cassini at Saturn: New image of moon Epimetheus

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewsr.nl.html?pid=26671>

Sun's new Solar Cycle 24 begins with a Blast (actually two)

<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.nl.html?pid=24509>

Universe Today's 2008 Launch Calendar and Preview

<http://www.universetoday.com/2008/01/14/2008-launch-calendar-and-preview/>

Hope to see you at the special **free** public CCAS / SLO Discovery Institute STEM community science lecture by Dr. Ray Weymann and Dr. Jodi Christiansen "**The Big Bang: What It Is and Why Astronomers and Physicists Believe it Happened**", at Cuesta College this **Saturday, Jan. 19th, 7-9 PM, in Science Forum Bldg 2400, room 2401**. For details see CCAS Events <http://www.ccastronomy.org/events.htm> .

Wishing you a good rest of the week.

Walt

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