

AAS Division For Planetary Sciences Announces 2016 Prize Winners

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10 May 2016

** Contact details appear below. **

Text:

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AAS DIVISION FOR PLANETARY SCIENCES ANNOUNCES 2016 PRIZE WINNERS

The Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) is pleased to announce its 2016 prize winners.

The Gerard P. Kuiper Prize for outstanding contributions to the field of planetary science is awarded posthumously to the late Dr. Stanton J. Peale (University of California, Santa Barbara) for his substantial and broad contributions, particularly in the areas of planetary dynamics, planetary interiors, and the search for extrasolar planetary systems. His application of rigorous mathematical modeling to understanding the interiors of planets and moons led to the prediction that Io, one of the moons of Jupiter discovered by Galileo, would exhibit active volcanic eruptions. Soon after his prediction, the Voyager 1 spacecraft proved him right. He also devised an ingenious procedure to determine whether Mercury's core is molten, which was confirmed by radar observations. His other significant contributions included studies of the Laplace resonance, a celestial dance linking Io to other Galilean moons, and the spin-orbit behaviors of several planets and satellites. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2009 and was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the American Geophysical Union. He held a NASA Exceptional Achievement Medal, and asteroid (3612) Peale was named after him. He received his doctoral degree from Cornell University in 1965. Peale died of leukemia in May 2015 at age 78, three days after submitting his final research paper for publication.

The Harold C. Urey Prize for outstanding achievement in planetary research by a young scientist goes to Dr. Leigh Fletcher (University of Leicester, United Kingdom) in recognition of his ground-breaking work in understanding physical and chemical processes in the atmospheres of the outer planets. His research has resulted in insights into such phenomena as the distribution of temperatures, chemicals, and clouds in Jupiter's Great Red Spot; the chemical make-up of Saturn's atmosphere, which reveals clues about its origin; the identification of the cloud levels responsible for the brightening of a planetary-scale region on Jupiter; the discovery of a major hot vortex in Saturn's stratosphere; the implications of changes of Saturn's temperatures and gaseous constituents for variability in its dynamics; and the distribution of Neptune's stratospheric temperatures and minor constituents. Dr. Fletcher is currently a Royal Society University Research Fellow. He received his PhD in planetary sciences from the University of Oxford in 2007.

Dr. Mark Sykes (Planetary Science Institute) will receive the Harold Masursky Award for outstanding service to planetary science and exploration for his significant contributions to fostering a positive research environment for planetary scientists. His advocacy for planetary sciences includes authorship of NASA's first spacecraft data rights policy; providing groundwork for the first decadal survey for solar system studies and organizing, editing, and publishing the first collection of community white papers on

all aspects of planetary science, which is now a standard practice; establishing and for nine years editing the weekly Planetary Exploration Newsletter (PEN), which now has over 3,000 subscribers; and successfully rallying astronomers around the world against an effort to build a development near Mt. Hopkins in Arizona that would have led to substantial light pollution near major telescope facilities. Dr. Sykes was a founding member and chair of the NASA Small Bodies Assessment Group and has served the DPS in many capacities, including a term as Chair, and he established the Division's Federal Relations Subcommittee. Finally, over the past 12 years he greatly expanded the Planetary Science Institute, where he is the Director, to be the largest non-government employer of planetary scientists today. Dr. Sykes received his PhD in planetary sciences from the University of Arizona in 1986; he also holds a Juris Doctor from the same institution and is a member of the Arizona Bar.

The Carl Sagan Medal for outstanding public communication by an active planetary scientist goes to Dr. Yong-Chun Zheng (National Astronomical Observatories, Chinese Academy of Sciences) for his tireless promotion of planetary sciences to the Chinese public and for his explanations of Chinese science to the western world. As an investigator on Chang'E-1 and Chang'E-2 with expertise in lunar geochemistry and geology, he has delivered scores of talks at planetariums and science museums. He is a columnist for the Xinhua News Agency, and he is a frequent contributor to print and online publications that have millions of readers, such as China Science and Technology Daily. Dr. Zheng blogs several times each day on the sites of the China Science Daily and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, with an emphasis in his writings about why the average person should care about topics in planetary science and astronomy. His blog at <http://www.sciencenet.cn> [2] has been visited more than 340,000 times, and he has written several books and book chapters for a general audience. His more than 100 popular articles have been published in The People's Daily, Space Exploration, Military Digest, Newton Science World, and other publications. He often posts about NASA's missions, including most recently about the New Horizons Pluto flyby and Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter studies of recurrent seasonal gullies on Mars. Dr. Zheng earned his doctoral degree in geochemistry and cosmochemistry from the Institute of Geochemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences, in 2005. He currently serves as an associate professor at the National Astronomical Observatories. He is also an adjunct associate professor at the Macau University of Science and Technology in Macau, China.

The Jonathan Eberhart Planetary Sciences Journalism Award recognizes and stimulates distinguished popular writing on planetary sciences. This year's recipient is Nadia Drake, a freelance science journalist and contributing writer for "No Place Like Home," a blog with National Geographic's Phenomena science salon. She has a PhD in genetics from Cornell University and is a former professional ballerina. Since studying science communication at the University of California, Santa Cruz, she has been an intern at Nature, an astronomy reporter at Science News, and a reporter for Wired Science covering life sciences. Dr. Drake has written about topics as diverse as rogue planets, human ancestors, and giant spiders. She has a particular fondness for Iapetus, exomoons, words, and champagne. In her winning entry, "Scientists in Flying Telescope Race to Intercept Pluto's Shadow" (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/07/150702-pluto-occultation-shad...> [3]), Dr. Drake gives a highly engaging personal account of how astronomers are keeping tabs on Pluto's puzzling atmosphere by chasing the planet's shadow with the SOFIA airborne observatory.

The 2016 DPS prizes will be presented at the joint 48th meeting of the Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) and 11th European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC) in Pasadena, California, 16-21 October 2016 (<https://aas.org/meetings/dps48> [4]).

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More information about DPS prizes:
<http://dps.aas.org/prizes/2016> [7]

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