Newsletter 17-22

Issue 17-22, June 2, 2017

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AAS DIVISION FOR PLANETARY SCIENCES 2017 PRIZES

Margaret G. Kivelson — Gerard P. Kuiper Prize

The DPS awards the 2017 Gerard P. Kuiper Prize for outstanding contributions to planetary science to Margaret G. Kivelson (University of California, Los Angeles, and University of Michigan) for her work studying Jupiter’s magnetospheric plasmas to understand the interiors of planets and their moons. Dr. Kivelson’s pioneering discoveries of an ocean inside Europa and a magnetic field generated by Ganymede showed us that these icy bodies are not inert but dynamic worlds. Her insights have spurred us to recognize that habitability need not depend on proximity to the Sun in the traditional habitable zone. As a direct result of Dr. Kivelson’s advancements, we now recognize that the ocean worlds of the outer solar system may represent our best chances for discovering life beyond Earth.

Bethany L. Ehlmann — Harold C. Urey Prize

The DPS awards the 2017 Harold C. Urey Prize for outstanding achievements in planetary research by an early-career scientist to Bethany L. Ehlmann
(California Institute of Technology) for her work using spectroscopy to determine
the mineralogy of Mars’s surface and the extent of the red planet’s previous
habitability. Dr. Ehlmann’s discovery of carbonates, serpentines, and clay
minerals in Mars’s most ancient rocks shows that multiple types of clement
and hospitable environments existed early in Martian history, especially the
most ancient groundwater-fed environments as yet unvisited by rovers. Her
inspiring work has motivated the development of Mars exploration strategies
and methods, has been applied to other solar system bodies, and will continue
to drive planetary science forward.

Louise M. Prockter — Harold Masursky Award

The DPS awards the 2017 Harold Masursky Award for meritorious service to
planetary science to Louise M. Prockter (Lunar and Planetary Institute). Dr.
Prockter’s tireless participation and leadership serving on National Research
Council boards and NASA committees has ensured that our voice as a community
is heard and that science priorities are established and followed. Her work with
engineers has extended the scientific return of multiple NASA missions beyond
their original goals. By setting up support groups and mentoring female scientists,
Dr. Prockter ensured faster development of early-career researchers who have
made strong contributions to the field. By choosing to serve, Dr. Prockter and
the committees on which she has participated have advanced the field of planetary
science and engaged more scientists successfully in discovery.

Megan E. Schwamb — Carl Sagan Medal

The DPS awards the Carl Sagan Medal for excellence in public communication
by an active planetary scientist to Megan E. Schwamb (Gemini Observatory) for
the creation and development of new tools and venues to facilitate planetary
science communication. Dr. Schwamb created the Astrotweeps project in which
a different astronomer drives the same Twitter account (@astrotweeps) each week. She started Astronomy on Tap to promote direct dissemination of planetary science in bars and restaurants. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Dr. Schwamb’s outreach work, though, revolves around creating a channel for communication in the other direction by enabling amateurs to contribute to ongoing research. The citizen science of Planet Hunters and Planet Four, facilitated by Dr. Schwamb, form the basis of this new mode of interaction.

Henry B. Throop — Carl Sagan Medal
The DPS awards the Carl Sagan Medal for excellence in public communication by an active planetary scientist to Henry B. Throop (Planetary Science Institute) for his efforts to kindle interest in worlds beyond Earth throughout the developing world. Dr. Throop’s presentations in South Africa, India, Namibia, Botswana, Nepal, and Mexico reach audiences who might otherwise not be exposed to planetary science. He closely collaborates with teachers and works with a diverse group of students and the public to stimulate their curiosity and show them how they can explore the world around them. With his engaging personality and genuine interest in interacting with students and teachers in far-flung places, Dr. Throop presents a positive face for science using planetary exploration as a driver.

Joshua Sokol — Jonathan Eberhart Planetary Sciences Journalism Award
The DPS awards the 2017 Jonathan Eberhart Planetary Sciences Journalism Award for distinguished popular writing to Joshua Sokol for his article “Hidden Depths” in the 13 August 2016 issue of New Scientist. In his thoroughly researched and beautifully written story, Sokol explains how icy worlds far from the Sun’s warmth, such as Jupiter’s moon Europa and Saturn’s moon Enceladus, can maintain subsurface oceans. After describing the otherworldly environment of our own
planet’s deep seafloor and the creatures that dwell there, he explores how hydrothermal and chemical processes within extraterrestrial oceans might support microbes or other forms of life. Sokol’s article ends with the compelling and provocative suggestion that ice worlds with concealed oceans may be the norm, making Earth — with its exposed oceans — an outlier.

Send submissions to:
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