

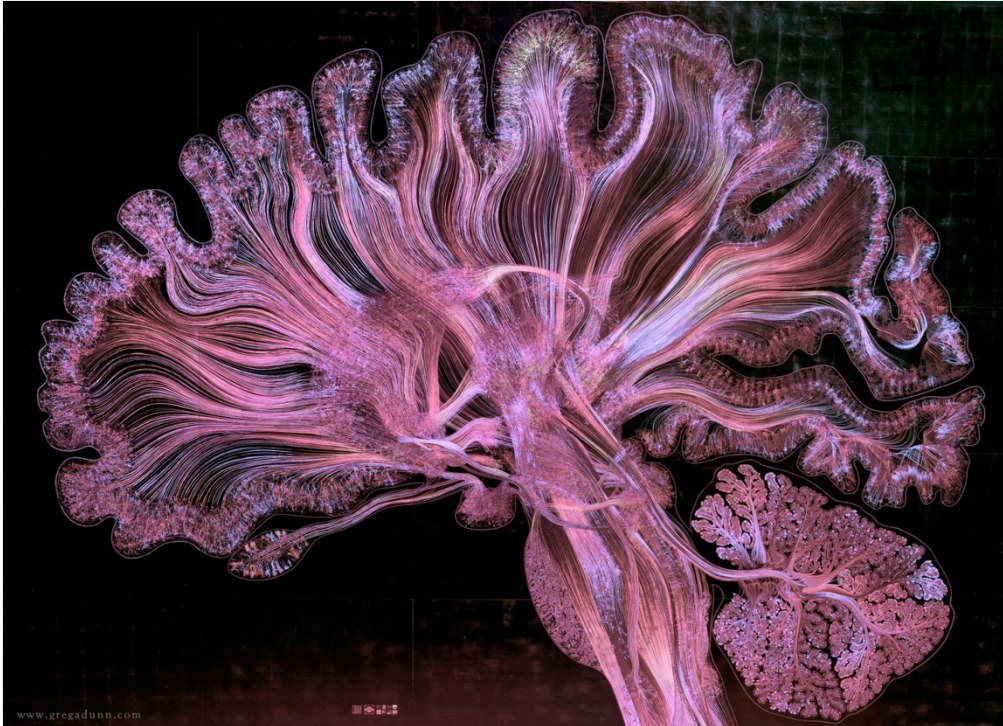
# Golden neurons, river piracy and bright nights

April's sharpest science shots, selected by *Nature's* photo team.

[Daniel Cressey](#)

28 April 2017

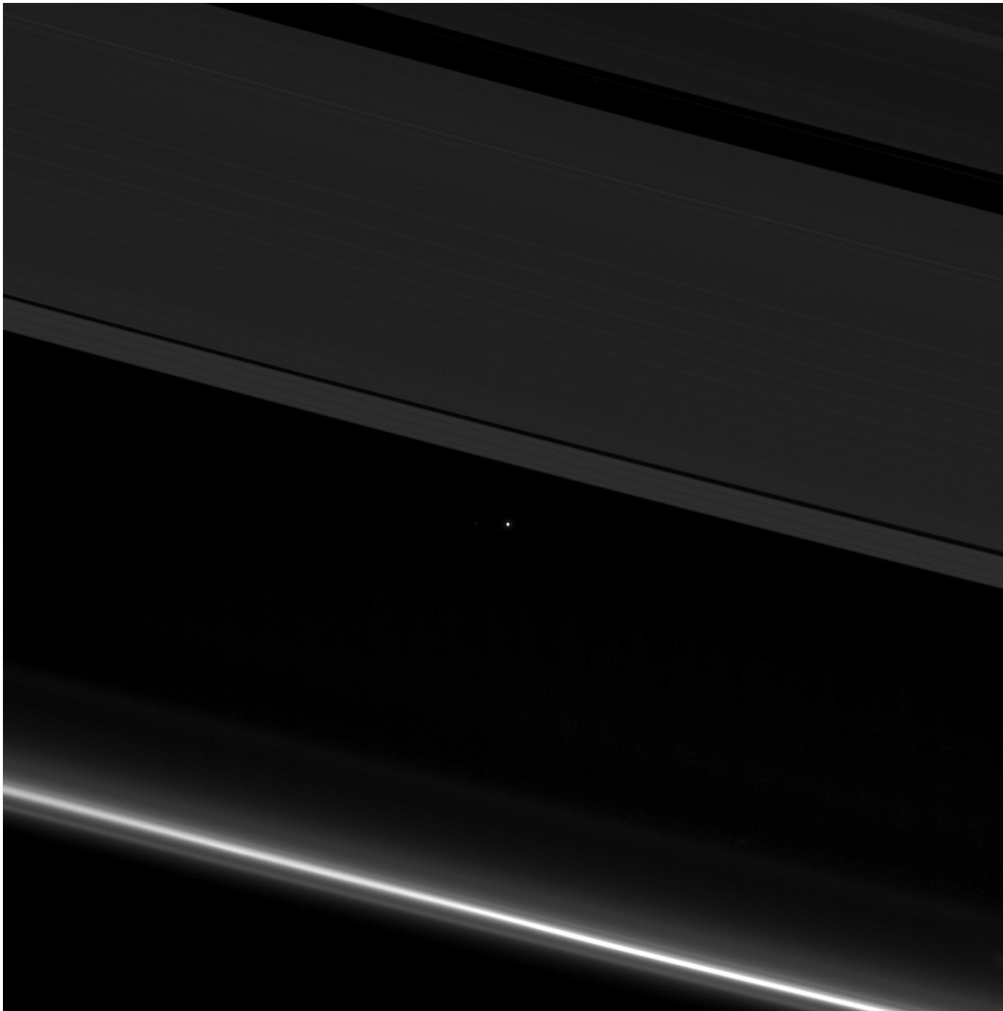
## A golden reflection



*Greg Dunn, Brian Edwards, Will Drinker*

Described as “the world’s most elaborate artistic depiction of the human brain”, this work is the winner of the experts’ choice in illustration category of this year’s [Vizzies](#) awards for visualizing research data. To make the piece, entitled ‘Self Reflected Under White, Red, and Violet Light’, artists etched images of half a million neurons onto sheets of gold.

## Cassini looks back



NASA/JPL-Caltech/Space Science Institute

NASA's Cassini probe has begun a spiralling descent towards Saturn that will culminate in a mission-ending plunge into the planet's atmosphere. On 12 April, Cassini pictured [Earth — the small dot in the centre of this image — for the last time](#). After spending 13 years exploring Saturn and its moons, Cassini began the final of its final manoeuvres this month, which send it [circling into the region between the planet and the surrounding rings before its death dive](#).

### Drawing in the deep

US naturalist William Beebe (1877–1962) led many expeditions in his career, from jungle treks to pioneering dives in a bathysphere, a spherical, deep-sea submersible craft. The Drawing Center in New York City [is hosting an exhibition](#) of illustrations — including this drawing of the stomach contents of deep-sea fish — created by Beebe's [staff artists at the Department of Tropical Research](#) at the New York Zoological Society, where he was an executive.

Wildlife Conservation Society

Among the venerable Beebe's exploits was setting [a new depth record of 923 metres](#) during a bathysphere dive in 1934 off the coast of Bermuda, along with Otis Barton, who designed the submersible.

Wildlife Conservation Society

### Science, j'écris ton nom





*Pleiades © CNES 2017/Airbus DS*

As part of the [science marches that took place around the globe on 22 April](#), more than 500 researchers gathered around huge letters spelling out their support for SCIENCE, as a French satellite took their picture from space. The word was 84 metres long and 13 metres high.

### Operation IceBridge



*Mario Tama/Getty Images*

Since 2009, NASA has been flying planes over polar ice to assess how ice coverage is changing as the planet warms. The exploration is part of a mission called [Operation IceBridge](#). These ice fields near Canada's Ellesmere Island — photographed on 29 March — are among those thinning in the Arctic.

### Damsels not in distress





Roberto Aldrovandi/Solent News/REX/Shutterstock

In northern Italy, photographer Roberto Aldrovandi found two damselflies apparently looking through a hole in a leaf. "They look like they are holding hands," he says. "But they are not actually. They are just clinging to the leaf waiting for the first rays of the sun."

### Night lights



NASA Earth Observatory/Joshua Stevens/Miguel Román/Goddard Space Flight Center

Areas on Earth where humans have effectively turned night into day are of interest to many researchers, who use 'night light' images to track patterns of human settlement. But data are sparse: often from months or years in the past. NASA scientists are now [working towards creating daily, high-definition pictures of Earth at night](#), and these shots are some of the first products of the project, with artistic clouds and sun glint added from real-world data.

### River piracy



### Cuban crabs



*Alexandre Meneghini/REUTERS*

As millions of land crabs in Cuba head to the sea to spawn in an annual migration, they inevitably come into conflict with other road users. Although this driver risks his tyres being punctured, the crabs pay a higher price. The photo was taken in Playa Girón, in the island's west.

*Nature* | doi:10.1038/nature.2017.21912

## References

1. Shugar, D. H. *et al. Nature Geosci.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/ngeo2932> (2017).