

Pluto's children — a goddess and a monster

Pluto's two recently discovered moons now have names — Nix and Hydra. Last week, the International Astronomical Union formally approved the names for the moons, which were discovered last year (H. A. Weaver *et al.* *Nature* 439, 943–945; 2006).

Nyx was the Greek goddess of the night and the mother of Charon, for whom Pluto's biggest moon is named. But the Egyptian spelling, Nix, has been chosen for the moon, to avoid confusion with an asteroid already dubbed Nyx. Hydra was the nine-headed monster slain by Hercules; that moon's name refers to Pluto's status as the ninth planet.

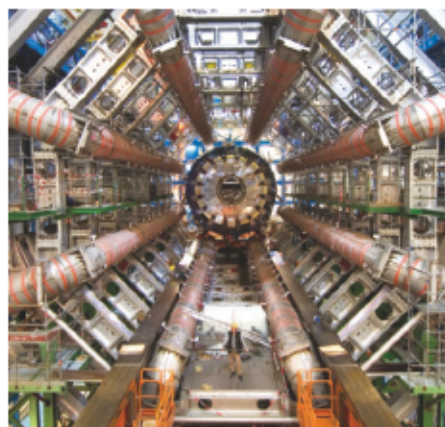
The initial letters N and H were also chosen as a nod to the New Horizons spacecraft, currently on its way to the planet. Pluto itself was named in part after the astronomer Percival Lowell, who began the search for the ninth planet.

Gentle start planned for European collider

Homeowners are often advised to allow builders twice the time they say they'll need. But the building of the world's most powerful particle-physics machine is coming in on schedule — almost.

The Large Hadron Collider at CERN, the European particle-physics laboratory near Geneva, had been scheduled to crash its first protons together in July 2007. That start date has been pushed back to November 2007.

The collider team has also decided to warm the machine up gently. Ultimately, particle beams will collide at an energy of 14 teraelectronvolts (TeV), but an initial two-month run will use beams colliding at just 0.9 TeV. Physicists will have to wait until April 2008, when the machine will start running at full energy, for any chance of glimpsing the new particles that they hope the collider will reveal.



Collisions on course: CERN's latest project is running just a few months behind schedule.

Raiders of the lost biodiversity

Renowned ecologist Edward O. Wilson (pictured left) now has his own foundation, formed by scientists, businessmen and an actor.

The E. O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation launched on 23 June, with around 200 supporters engaging in a two-day 'BioBlitz' to identify species in New York City's Central Park. The foundation seeks to preserve biodiversity in part by creating BioTrust — a multi-corporation project that would financially reward nations that used their biodiversity to create marketable products.

Now retired from Harvard University, where he became



known for seminal work on ants, Wilson has long fought for environmental awareness. The board of his foundation, which is based in San Diego, California, includes Nobel-winning biologist James

Watson and Harrison Ford. The foundation's president and board chairman is Jay Short, former founder and chief executive of the bioprospecting firm Diversa of San Diego.

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Academies exhorted to address gender bias

The world's science academies should be among the first to correct the underrepresentation of women in science, says a report from the Amsterdam-based InterAcademy Council (IAC).

Women typically make up less than 5% of the membership in the world's leading academies, including the IAC itself and the Royal Society in London. Less than 7% of the members of the US National Academy of Sciences are women. The Philippines' academy, the National Academy of Science and Technology, does slightly better: it has gender parity on its council board and has had a female president.

The 20 June report urges academies to acquire "good management practices" by creating balanced committees to study gender issues. It also recommends enlarging membership and leadership nomination pools to include more women.

Pal promises billions to Gates health charity

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, funded by the world's richest person, is getting a donation from the second richest.

Warren Buffett, an investment expert from Omaha, Nebraska, announced on 26 June that he would give the bulk of his shares in his company, Berkshire Hathaway, to the Gates foundation, among other charitable organizations. The gift would currently see roughly \$30 billion of his \$44 billion fortune going to the charity.

The foundation, which already has a \$30-billion endowment, puts about half of

its money into global health programmes, including research into malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

In a letter to the foundation, the 75-year-old Buffett, who is a friend of the Gates couple, said that he was impressed with how the founder of Microsoft and his wife had worked on "improving the lives of millions of fellow humans who have not been as lucky as the three of us".

Heavy water and a lighter fluid

Here's one to ask your colleagues in the bar: why is it so much easier to prise a whiskey-soaked glass from a tabletop than a water-drenched one? The answer, according to chemists working in Sweden, lies in the vacuum that is briefly created when the glass leaves the table.

David van der Spoel of the University of Uppsala and colleagues found that the glass's resistance to an upward movement is partly due to the surface tension created where the liquid on the table meets the vacuum that forms under the glass. Alcohol molecules present in the liquid lower its surface tension. The energy needed to lift a glass resting on hard liquor is about half that needed if it's water (D. van der Spoel, E. J. W. Wensink and A. C. Hoffmann *Langmuir* 22, 5666–5672; 2006).

Correction

In our News Feature 'Magical mantle tour' (*Nature* 440, 1108–1110; 2006), Shigeaki Ono was quoted as saying that the Spring-8 synchrotron facility requires researchers to post data on a communal computer and official beamline notebook. Ono now says this is not a Spring-8 requirement, but rather a voluntary act.