

GENTLE.NEWS

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"I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead; I lift my eyes and all is born again."

— Sylvia Plath

Astronaut Retires After 30 Amazing Years in Space

A very special astronaut has finished his career at NASA. His name is Mike Fincke. He spent 30 years serving his country as a space explorer.

Mike Fincke flew into space four times during his career. He spent 549 days living and working in space. That is more than a year and a half floating among the stars!

He also walked in space nine times. Those spacewalks added up to nearly 49 hours outside the station. Imagine floating in space with Earth below you!

Mike lived and worked on the International Space Station. This is a large spacecraft that orbits Earth. He helped keep the station running safely. He also helped teach younger astronauts. His most recent mission launched in August 2025 and returned in January.

NASA's leader praised Mike warmly. He said Mike helped shape many chapters of NASA's history. Mike served as a pilot, engineer, and mentor. He helped prepare the next generation of astronauts for future missions. Everyone at NASA is grateful for his many years of hard work and dedication. What a wonderful career to be proud of!

Heroes Save Missouri's Ancient Giant Salamander

Deep in the rivers of Missouri lives a very special creature. The hellbender is a giant salamander that has existed for millions of years. Scientists sometimes call it a "living fossil." It looks unusual, with a flat head, wrinkled skin, and a paddle-shaped tail.

Hellbenders breathe through their skin. They need cool, clean, fast-flowing water to survive. When a hellbender lives in a river, it means the water is very clean and healthy. They are nature's water quality inspectors!

Sadly, hellbender numbers dropped greatly over 40 years. But dedicated teams stepped in to help. The Saint Louis Zoo, along with wildlife experts, began carefully raising hellbenders in a safe facility. In 2011, they celebrated a big milestone - over 150 baby hellbenders were born!

Since 2008, the team has released more than 12,000 hellbenders back into Missouri's rivers. That is a wonderful achievement worth celebrating! Missouri is also the only state where both types of hellbenders live in the wild. That makes it truly special.

Recently, these caring teams received a top honor for their partnership and hard work. The award recognizes years of dedication to saving this amazing creature. Thanks to these hellbender heroes, the future looks much brighter for Missouri's living fossil.

Scientists Map Tiny Water Creatures Across the World

Scientists around the world are working together on something wonderful. They are studying tiny creatures that live in lakes. These creatures are called zooplankton. They are so small you need a microscope to see them.

More than one hundred scientists joined this big project. They collected information from 311 lakes. These lakes are spread across 37 different countries. That means scientists from all over the world helped out. It truly was a team effort.

The project took more than four years to complete. Scientists gathered water samples from lakes big and small. Some lakes are in warm tropical regions. Others are in cold northern areas. Every kind of lake was included in the study.

All this information was put together in one place. Scientists call it the ZIG dataset. It helps researchers learn how lakes are changing over time. Healthy lakes are very important for people, animals, and nature. This research helps protect them for the future.

The best part is that the project keeps growing. New lakes and new information can still be added. Scientists everywhere can use this collection to learn more. It is a wonderful example of people working together to care for our beautiful planet.

Indigenous People of Taiwan Reclaim Their Ancient Identity

A group of people in Taiwan have won a very special victory. After more than 30 years of hard work, the Siraya people are now officially recognized by their government. This happened on July 30, 2026.

The Siraya are one of Taiwan's oldest groups of people. They lived on the island long before many others arrived. They had their own language, called Sinckan. They also had their own customs and spiritual beliefs.

For hundreds of years, the Siraya were forced to give up their traditions. Different rulers told them to stop speaking their language. They were told to forget their culture. Slowly, much of their way of life disappeared.

But the Siraya never gave up. For over 30 years, dedicated people worked to bring the old language back to life. They taught songs, traditions, and stories to younger generations. Elders and activists worked side by side.

Now, the Siraya are officially Taiwan's 17th recognized Indigenous group. Their language and culture are being celebrated again. It is a joyful moment for their whole community. Their story shows that love for one's heritage is very powerful indeed.

Scientists Create Biggest Ever Map of the Universe

A team of scientists has made something truly amazing. They created the largest map of the universe ever made. It shows almost four billion stars and galaxies. That is more objects than you can imagine!

The map was made using a powerful telescope. Scientists took over 263,000 photos of the sky. They joined all those photos together into one giant picture. The final image has 5.6 trillion tiny dots of color.

The best part is that anyone can look at it. The map is free and available online for everyone. Scientists around the world are already using it. Regular people can explore it too, just like a sky atlas.

This amazing map is already helping researchers learn new things. Over 1,800 science papers have used its information. Scientists are using it to study mysterious forces in space. These include dark matter and dark energy, which shape our whole universe.

One scientist called it "part of the fabric of astronomy." That means it has become a tool everyone reaches for. The map covers about 75% of the entire sky. It is helping us understand our place among the stars.

Activity Time - Word Search

Find the words below in the puzzle. Words go across or down only.

Words to Find:

UNIVERSE CULTURE SIRAYA STREAM
GALAXY STARS LAKE

V	S	I	C	F	K	A	W	W	G	Z
L	T	P	E	P	A	X	B	Y	M	I
H	R	O	G	A	L	A	X	Y	S	Q
C	E	T	J	W	O	Q	R	U	S	P
A	A	H	C	L	A	K	E	G	D	S
E	M	G	A	I	N	O	R	D	A	T
J	N	Z	K	U	S	I	R	A	Y	A
H	C	C	U	L	T	U	R	E	D	R
S	F	Z	L	O	F	S	M	W	Y	S
U	N	I	V	E	R	S	E	B	G	C
V	W	Y	O	S	R	Q	Q	H	P	X