

Monday, January 6

“Crater of largest known meteorite to ever hit Earth 790,000 years ago found”

The crater left behind by the largest meteorite ever to hit Earth has been discovered, after going undiscovered for a century. Traces of the enormous impact of the meteorite, which struck the planet approximately 790,000 years ago, have been observed across one tenth of the entire surface of Earth. The evidence takes the form of a "field of black glassy blobs" also known as tektites. Researchers now believe the crater, which is about 9 miles in diameter, is located in Southern Laos. There's a good reason why the enormous crater went undetected for so long - it's buried beneath a 565 mile-wide volcanic field. It was only by studying the tektites - gravel-sized bits of natural glass ejected in the instance of a meteorite impact - that scientists were able to plot out exactly where the meteorite hit our planet.

Tuesday, Jan. 7

“World’s oldest fossil trees discovered in New York”

Fossilized trees dating back 386 million years have been discovered at an abandoned quarry in New York. Scientists believe they've found a forest so gigantic that it once stretched beyond Pennsylvania from the quarry in Cairo, New York. The finding could increase our understanding of the evolution of trees and how they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Experts from several British and American universities have spent more than 10 years mapping over 3,000 square meters of the forest, coming to the conclusion that it was home to at least two types of trees: Cladoxylopsids and Archaeopteris. The point in time that the fossil trees date back to marks a transition between a planet with no forests and a planet that is largely covered in trees.

Wednesday, Jan. 8

“Wearable harness for dogs can show your dog's emotions”

A Japanese company called Inupathy demonstrated a harness which shows dog owners color-coded signals that represent the specific emotional state of their beloved best friends. The device is a padded clip-on harness that measures a dog’s heart rate and variations in the heart rate and is sensitive enough to take readings through thick fur. Based on the heart rate variation analysis, an LED display built into the harness will change colors to show one of five emotional states that will make it easier for dog owners to understand their pets. The harness syncs with a smartphone app that will let users track their dog’s emotional state throughout the day. The app will also feature a ‘play mode’ that will suggest different games users can play with their dogs depending on their dog’s emotional state.

Friday, Jan. 10

“100-million-year-old slime mold preserved in amber”

Researchers have discovered a 100-million-year-old slime mold and a lizard leg perfectly preserved in amber from a tree in Myanmar, a find described as "unique." Also known as myxomycetes, these tiny slime molds are single-celled organisms that largely live in soil or rotting wood, feasting on bacteria. Occasionally, they can join together "to form complex, beautiful and delicate fruiting bodies, which serve to make and spread spores". Finding fossilized versions of these slime molds is extremely rare, with only two confirmed reports of fruiting bodies found prior, both of which are between 35 million and 40 million years old. It's possible that the lizard detached the fruiting bodies from the myxomycetes at an early stage, unlocking information for the researchers to study.