



Space Center Roundup

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OUT OF THIS WORLD

NASA Web site attracts millions

By Eric Raub

Flying through space is one continuous photo opportunity, and NASA astronauts have taken advantage of their unique perspective since the Mercury missions. Yet, for years, the rolls and rolls of film sat hidden from eyes that could have been admiring them.

That is until Internet technology exploded into popular culture and Dr. Kamlesh Lulla got involved.

Dr. Lulla, Chief of the Office of Earth Sciences, is just one of the driving forces behind the Earth from Space Web site, located at <http://earth.jsc.nasa.gov/>. The Web site is a collection of the "greatest hits" of the hundreds of thousands of images taken by astronauts.

More than 400,000 pictures have been taken from space with hand-held cameras aimed by the men and women of the Astronaut Corps, creating an enormous database of high-quality images. Unfortunately, for decades this database has been beyond the reach of the general public due to the limitations of technology.

"In the past we used to use slide sets and videodiscs," Lulla said. "These were old technologies. I thought of using the wonderful technology of the Internet to display these images."

The site is actually the result of the efforts of three offices: The Earth Science and Solar System Exploration Division, the Flight Crew Operations Directorate (FCOD) and the Information Systems Directorate (ISD).

Lulla said they all work together for the benefit of scientists, the public and even kids who just want to see if they can find their town in a view from space. "We believe that our job is to make smart astronauts earth-smart, and make our country's kids earth-smart," Lulla said. "It is a team effort. We are the scientists and we pick the photos and write the captions. But ISD makes them Internet friendly. FCOD gives us advice on how to use them. It really is a good example of teamwork between departments at NASA."

The Web site's collection is vast – there are pictures of landforms, natural phenomena, cities and practically everything else that can be seen from space.

Continued on page 2



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The photo above is one of numerous images featured on the Earth from Space Web site.

The elongated, volcanic island of Guadalupe (latitude 29 degrees north) is located in the Pacific Ocean approximately 180 miles (290 kilometers) off the coast of west-central Baja California, Mexico. The island is an extinct volcano with a maximum elevation of approximately 4,500 feet (1,370 meters) above sea level. The photograph illustrates the blocking impact that the elevated terrain can have on low stratus clouds as the clouds move southeastward. The island creates a 'cloud wake' downstream (leeward side) of the island, a rather common phenomenon when low stratus clouds pass islands that have adequate elevations to form an impediment to the clouds' normal flow. The Mexican government has established the island as a wildlife preserve, especially for the protection of elephant seals.

2

Astronaut Brian Duffy retires.



3

ISC changes hours.



4

Open House memories shared.

