SPACE NEWS

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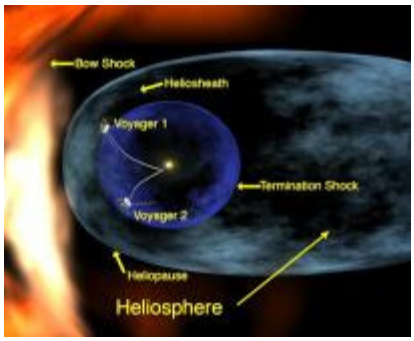
Last week in space

Like a ball struck by a bat, there's a neutron star out there that's going, going, gone. Discovered using the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, the neutron star appears to be the result of a lopsided supernova explosion. It's now hurtling away from the Milky Way faster than 4.8 million km/h. And it's never coming back. Astronomers think that the Puppis A supernova remnant was created about 3,700 years ago when a massive star detonated in a supernova explosion. Instead of exploding evenly, it was one-sided. A blast of material went in one direction, and the resulting neutron star was given a powerful kick in the opposite direction.

With a fleet of spacecraft orbiting Mars, and rovers exploring across its surface, there's a flood of images of the Red Planet. Thes two images of the Martian moons were captured by the Compact Reconnaissance Imaging Spectrometer for Mars on board NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. Both images were captured while spacecraft was over Mars' night side, and the ground below was dark. The image of Phobos (on the top) was captured on October 23, and shows features as small as 400 metres (1320 feet) across. The image of Deimos was captured on June 7, and shows features as small as 1.3 km (0.8 miles) across.



NASA's Voyager 2 spacecraft is about to cross another milestone on its long journey leaving the Solar System. According to researchers at the University of California, Riverside, the plucky spacecraft is about to pass through the "termination shock"; the point at which the Sun's solar wind slows down to subsonic speed. At a certain region of space, between 11 and 13.5 billion km from the Sun, this solar wind is decelerated to less than the speed of sound because of interactions with the interstellar wind that permeates the Milky Way.

Not to be missed next week

The Cassini spacecraft will be carrying out a number of flyby's of Saturn's moons this week. To take a look at the latest images click here: http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/home/index.cfm

Wednesday 5th December: If you are up before dawn take a look at the moon, very close to Spica the brightest star in the constellation of Virgo.

Friday 7th December: Today sees the start of the Geminid meteor shower.