

366 DAYS:
the year in science

IMAGES OF THE YEAR

In a year of political turmoil and shock, science, too, came up with surprises. To document some of these wonders, photographers roamed the world, revealing objects from the microscopic to the cosmic in scale.

Images selected by *Nature's* art and design team
Text by Daniel Cressey

STRIKING CRANES

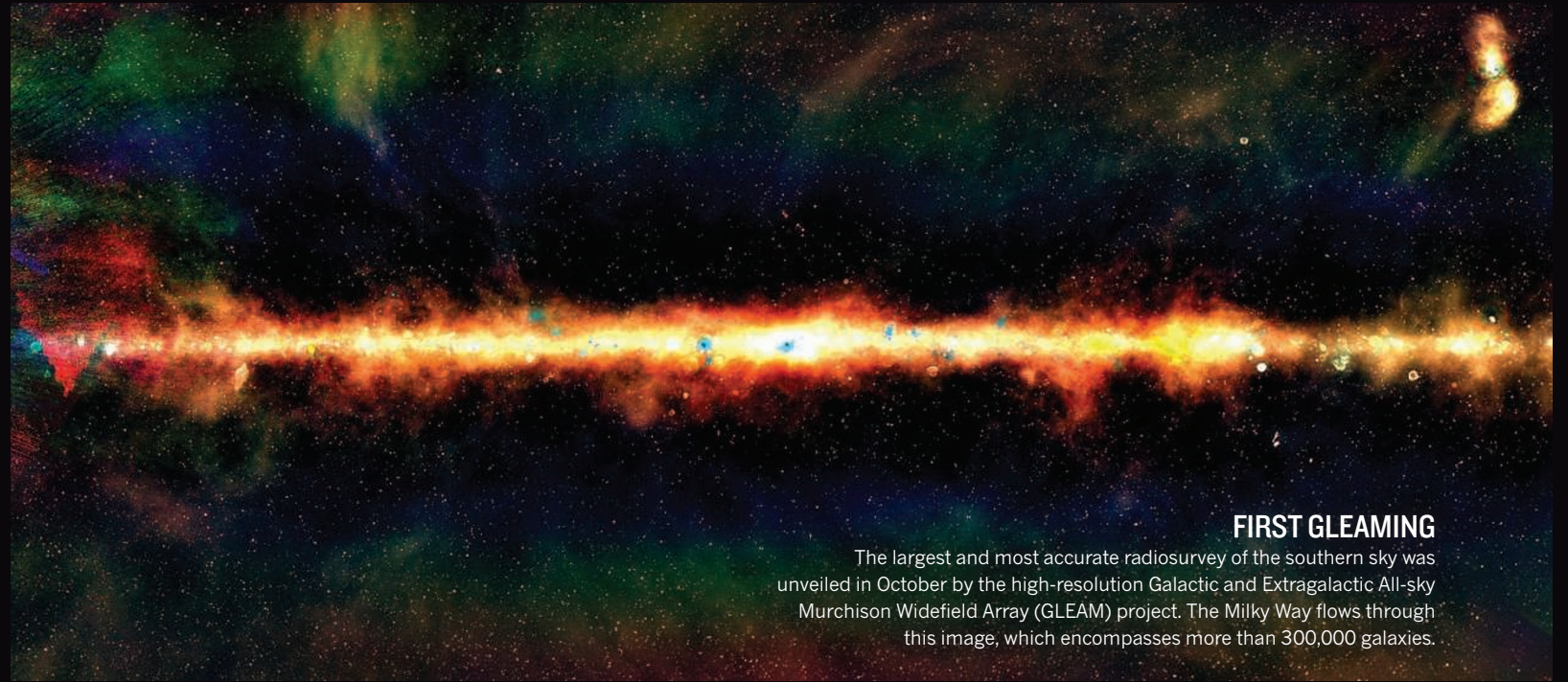
Hundreds of thousands of sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*) converge on Platte River in Nebraska as part of their annual migration. Photographer Randy Olson was taking long-exposure shots in March when lightning struck, creating these ghostly outlines.





ANCIENT IVORY

The vast tusk of a long-dead mammoth is carried out of a forest in Yakutia, Siberia. Ancient ivory from mammoths has become so valuable that some prospectors now illegally 'mine' them from permafrost. A large tusk can be worth tens of thousands of dollars.



FIRST GLEAMING

The largest and most accurate radiosurvey of the southern sky was unveiled in October by the high-resolution Galactic and Extragalactic All-sky Murchison Widefield Array (GLEAM) project. The Milky Way flows through this image, which encompasses more than 300,000 galaxies.

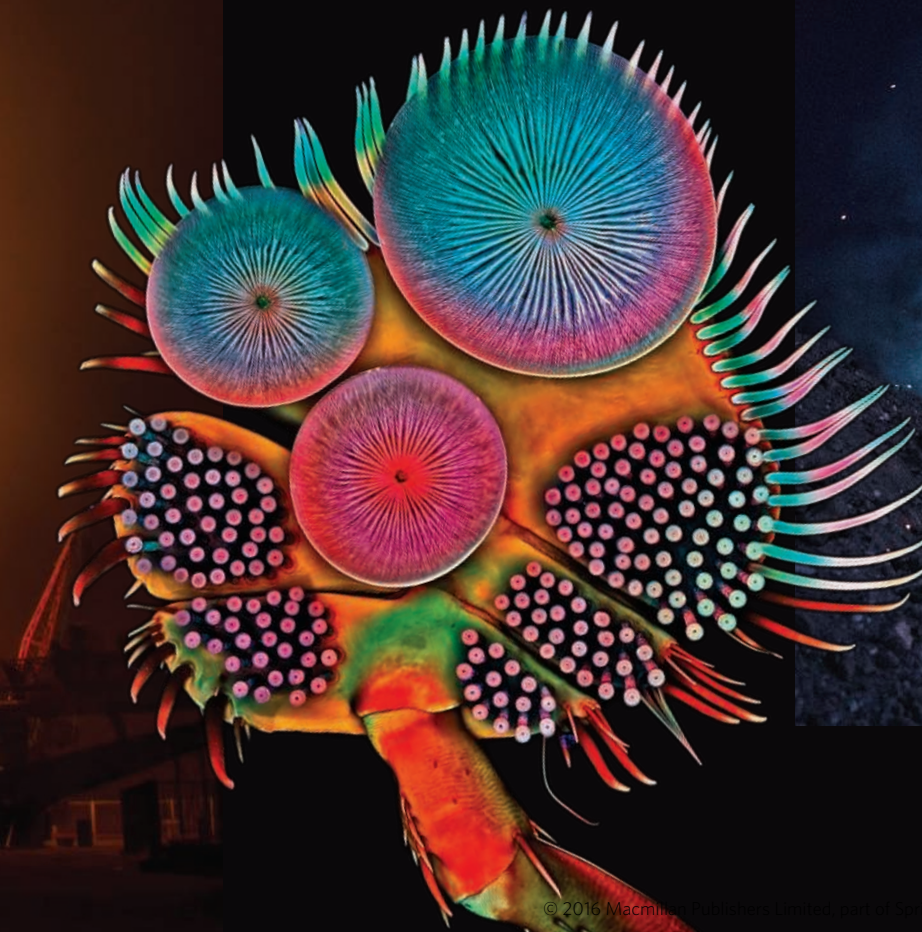


EN ROUTE

This long-exposure shot shows the November launch of a Soyuz spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. It ferried Peggy Whitson, Oleg Novitskiy and Thomas Pesquet to the International Space Station.

FANTASTIC FOOT

This spectacular tarsus — the lowermost segment of an insect leg — is roughly 2 millimetres in diameter and belongs to a male diving beetle, which uses it to attach to a female's back during mating.



CHINA CHANGES

China this year revealed ambitious plans to cut coal use and pollution and to embrace renewable energy. But this steel plant in Inner Mongolia is just one example of the many industries that stand in the way of that reform.

SPACE STORMS

Far below the International Space Station, lightning flashes illuminate the clouds, as human activity is revealed by clusters of lights. Two Russian spacecraft visiting the station can be seen in the foreground.



CRANES: RANDY OLSON/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC; TUSK: AMOS CHAPPEL/RADIO FREE EUROPE; SOYUZ: ZUMA PRESS/EVINE; BEETLE: IGOR SIWANOWICZ/NIKON SMALL WORLD 2016; GLEAM: NATASHA HURLEY-WALKER (CURTIN/CORBIS); GLEAM: TEAM; CHINA: KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY; ISS: NASA; CRYSTAL: CHRISTINE KIMPTON/RPS INTERNATIONAL; IMAGES FOR SCIENCE 2016; MUMMY: ANNE AUSTIN; DISCO: C. PAN ET AL./NATURE METHODS; STEM CELL: S. A. FERREIRA, C. LOPO & E. GENTILEMAN, KCL/WELLCOME

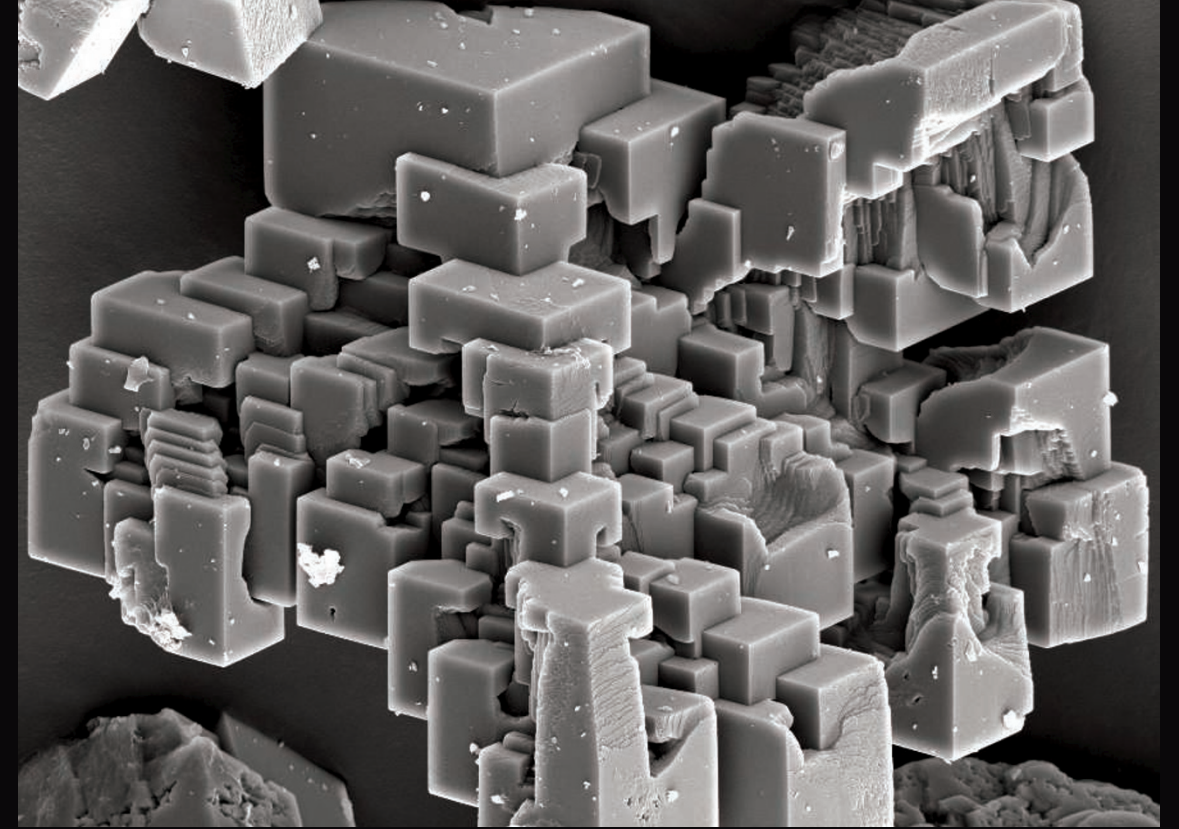
SEE-THROUGH AND SMALL

In August, a team in Germany unveiled 'ultimate DISCO' — a technique that both renders tissues transparent and shrinks specimens, so that a whole animal can be imaged in one go. The technique can reveal the nervous system and organ systems within a body in unprecedented detail.



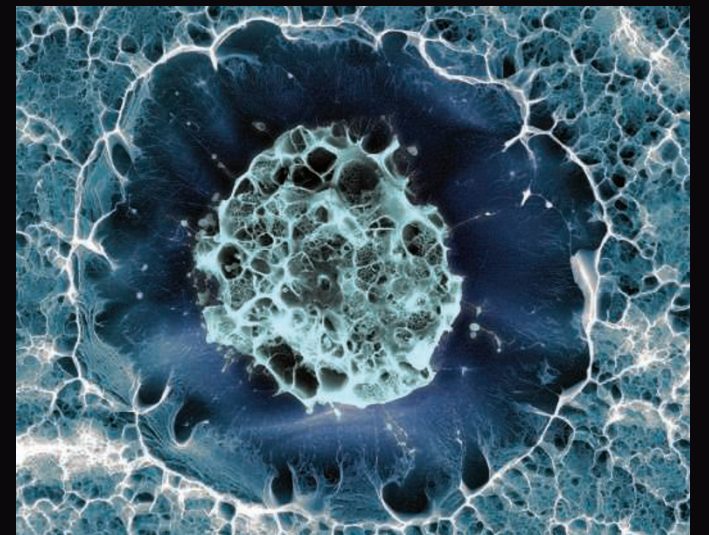
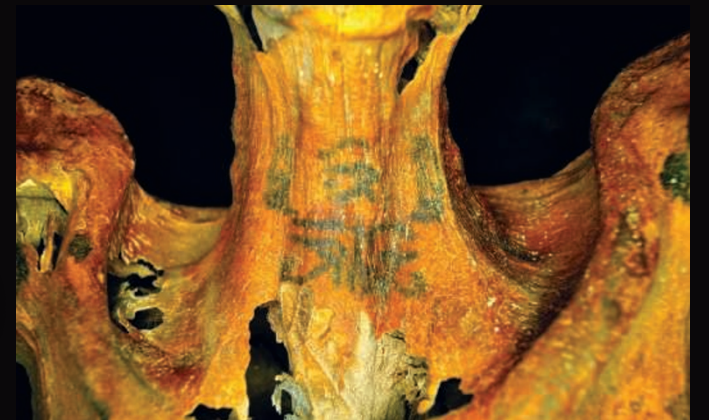
CRYSTAL STEPS

These strange structures are calcium carbonate crystals, imaged at 2,000x magnification.



SACRED SYMBOLS

In April, remarkable images of ancient Egyptian tattoos found on a mummy were shown at a meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. The tattoos include two seated baboons and a symbol of protection on the mummy's neck.



STRIKING CELL

This human stem cell is just 15 micrometres across, and was false-coloured after being imaged using cryogenic scanning electron microscopy.