

《NASA发布照片：冥王星给了我们最大的惊喜！》



During a news briefing at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory on Tuesday, NASA scientists revealed what they've gleaned from the latest photos of Pluto. The New Horizons spacecraft was set to make its closest approach of the dwarf planet on Tuesday, and while scientists wait for confirmation of that flyby -- and the 16 months worth of data that it will bring.

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Remember Pluto's heart?

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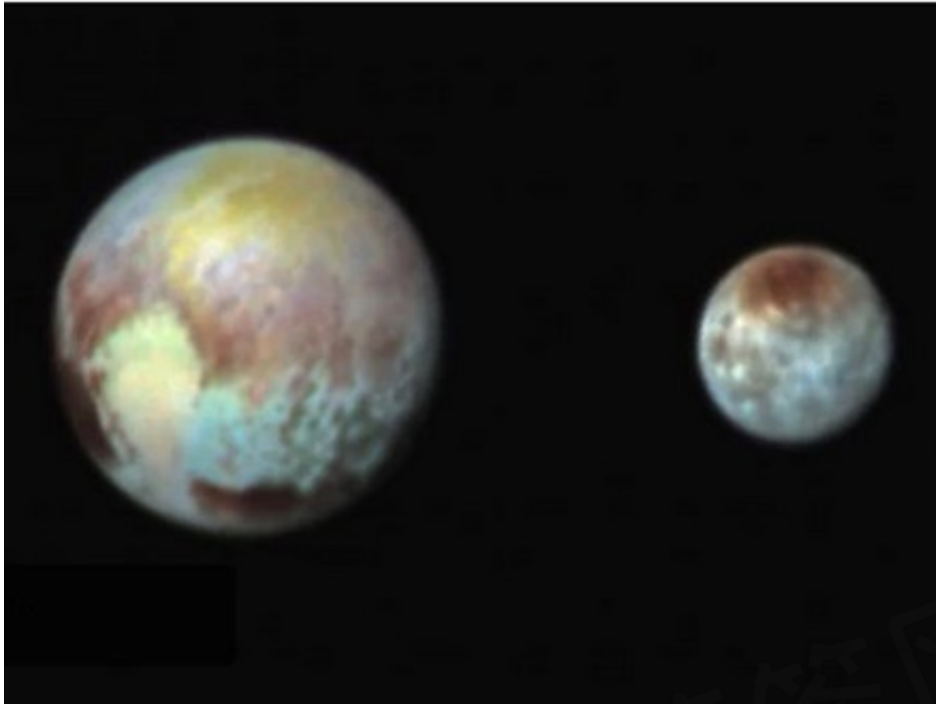
Well, it's broken.

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What you're looking at is an image of Pluto with heavily exaggerated color data -- like when you amp up the saturation on an Instagram. It's a bit hard to see (sorry) but one side of the "heart" is much bluer than the other. In fact, the left-hand side seems pretty beige-y.

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This seems to confirm something that the NASA scientists suspected based on recent photos of the "heart" feature: It's actually two features. In the latest images, it looks like the left half of the heart is smoother than the right, the team said at the briefing. It's possible that some texture has been lost in the compression of the image, but it could also mean that one side of the heart is a different geological feature than the other -- they're just both very bright, compared with the rest of the surface.

[illegible]

And speaking of Pluto's features, NASA scientists are now giving unofficial names to some of the things they've spotted -- names they can submit to the International Astronomical union for official approval. They're sticking with the trend of underworld creatures and gods -- Pluto, after all, was the Roman god of the underworld -- and have tentatively named a previously observed dark, whale-shaped splotch (just to the left of the broken heart) after "Cthulhu," the dark deity invented by author H.P. Lovecraft.

[illegible]