

## **Astrobiology News May 2022: The Cosmic Journey to Life**

Dear Friends - This will be my last *Astrobiology* column for a few months. There's a lot going on in my life presently, and I'll be undergoing back surgery this summer, which has an anticipated protracted recuperation period. Instead of footnoting this month, I'm hyperlinking items of potential interest, because some of the links are very long.

As I write this, [AbSciCon 2022: From Stars to Cells](#) is in full swing. AbsSciCon brings the astrobiology community together every two years to share research results, collaborate, and plan for the future. You can listen to archived public events with intriguing titles such as, "We Discovered Alien Life, Now What?", learn about searching for life in the Universe with your students, and hear about Keynote Speaker Dr. Tracy Drain's "Jovian Safari." Among her many accomplishments, Dr. Drain is the Lead Flight Systems Engineer for the Europa Clipper mission, which is slated to launch in 2024. The Europa Clipper will explore an exciting icy moon of Jupiter – an "ocean world" that has long been a candidate for possible extant life beyond Earth. While you're checking out events on the linked website, you can also pick up a virtual "swag bag" of artistic virtual backgrounds and Astrobiology Graphic Histories!

Among the many exciting events at *AbSciCon 2022* was the announcement of a new Research Coordination Network titled [LIFE: Early Cells to Multicellularity](#). Research Coordination Networks bring together collaborations of researchers from around the world. *LIFE* is co-led by scientists at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, Arizona State University, and the University of California - Riverside, who will spend the next five years investigating the earliest biological processes and the evolution of life into more complex organisms. The goal of the program is to discern rules governing how organisms and their environments co-evolve, in order to predict how life could evolve on other worlds, and how we might search for it.

*LIFE* joins four other current Research Coordination Networks – each focusing on a specific scientific question of interest. [Nexus for Exoplanet System Science](#) (NExSS) is focusing on studying exoplanets with the greatest potential for signs of life; [Network for Life Detection](#) (NfoLD) is exploring how to detect signs of life; the Prebiotic Chemistry and Early Earth Environments ([PCE3](#)) Consortium is breaking down language and ideological barriers and enhancing communication across the disciplinary divides of early Earth geoscientists and prebiotic chemists; and [Network for Ocean Worlds](#) is focusing on comparative studies to characterize Earth and other ocean worlds.

Finally, earlier this month, I was honored to share my personal faith & vocational journeys in life as the Keynote Speaker for the Erickson Conference at Seattle Pacific University. I've been given permission to share [this link to my presentation](#). I hope some of you will enjoy checking it out!

Until next time,

Grace

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