

The University of Texas at San Antonio

# UTSA Physics and Astronomy



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*Jet Propulsion Lab NASA*

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## **Pluto at Last**

Pluto is the last of the planets to be explored (yes, Pluto is really a planet). Giant nitrogen glaciers, flow features, ice volcanoes, bright icy plains, and snow are some of the wonders the New Horizons spacecraft found when it flew by Pluto in July 2015. As the largest body in the Kuiper Belt, which astronomers believe is a collection of primitive debris left over from planetary formation, Pluto holds clues to the earliest stages of the Solar System. New Horizons will encounter a much smaller Kuiper Belt Object, 2014 MU69, on New Year's Day 2019. Telescopic observations show this body to be very mysterious, perhaps a contact binary or even two objects in orbit about each other.

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