

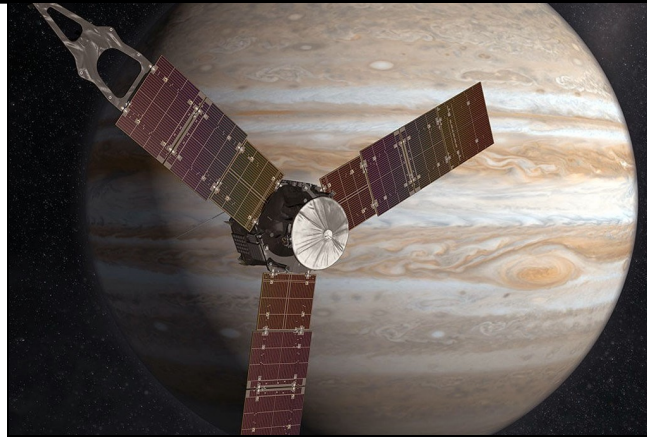
Conservation Corner

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Fireflies and fireworks aren't the only spectacular displays lighting up the skies this summer. On July 4, NASA's Juno spacecraft successfully entered orbit around Jupiter – the King of the Planets. One more reason to celebrate our nation's birthday! As NASA administrator Charlie Bolden puts it, "What is more American than a NASA mission going boldly where no spacecraft has gone before?"



Juno's journey began almost five years ago with its launch from Cape Canaveral on August 5, 2011. Since then, Juno has traveled over 1.74 billion miles to join up with Jupiter. Let's just hope things work out better for the godly couple "the second time around."

Our solar system, of course, contains four terrestrial and four Jovian planets. Jupiter is the largest and strongest of them all with a mass 318 times that of Earth. Jupiter is also one of the brighter objects in our night sky, second only to Venus in terms of brightness.

Juno isn't the first spacecraft to travel to Jupiter. Pioneer 10 and 11 and Voyagers 1 and 2 flew by Jupiter during the 1970s while Galileo explored and studied the Jovian system from 1995 until 2003.

Juno's main goal is to help scientists gain a better understanding of the origin and evolution of Jupiter. To accomplish this goal, Juno's nine science instruments will check out the solid planetary core, map Jupiter's intense magnetic field, measure the amount of water and ammonia in the deep atmosphere, and observe the planet's auroras. Scientists hope their findings will give new insight into our understanding of how giant planets form and their role in putting together and protecting the rest of the solar system. As our primary example of a giant planet, perhaps this mission will also provide knowledge to better understand the planetary systems now being discovered around other stars.



Also on board the Juno spacecraft are three tiny time travelers – LEGO® figurines! One represents Galileo Galilei, who discovered Jupiter's four largest moons in 1610 when he turned his telescope to the night sky. Since then astronomers have discovered more than 60 moons in orbit around Jupiter. Also onboard are the planet and spacecraft namesakes - the Roman king of the gods Jupiter and his wife Juno. Perhaps these LEGO® travelers in space will inspire a new generation to study math and science.

LEGO® figurines in outer space – a timely introduction to this year's Jr. Naturalist Day camp theme: Nature's Building Blocks. Students entering grades K-6 are invited to join us on August 2-4 as we learn more about how everything in nature interconnects. We'll build rock and LEGO® sculptures and enjoy fun crafts, games, and snacks. Our field trip this summer will be a day trip to the Reimen Gardens in Ames to tour Sean Kenney's "Nature Connects®: Art with LEGO® Bricks" now on display. For more info or to register, call 712-335-4395 or email conservation@pocahontas-county.com. You won't want to miss this year's adventure, by Jove!