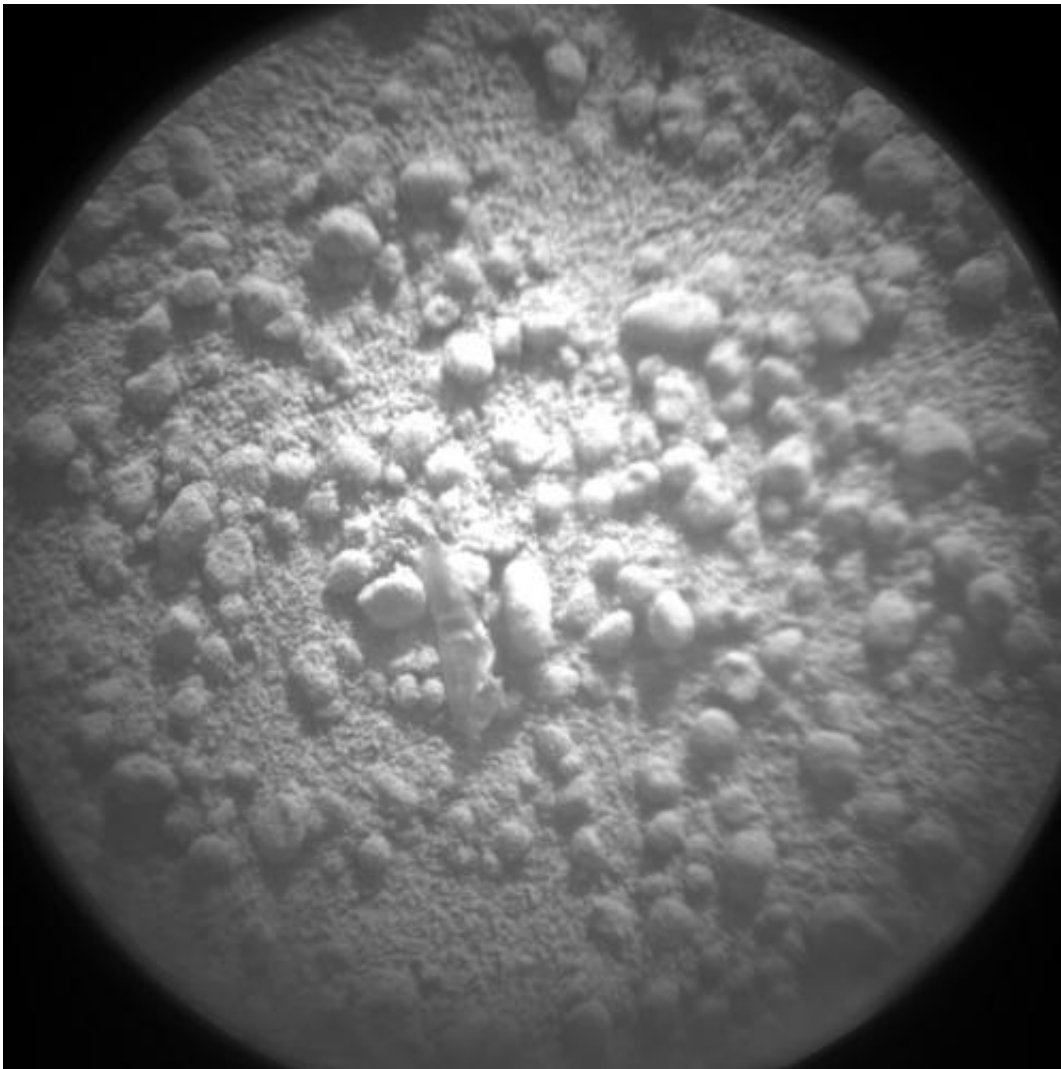


Bright object on Mars is likely plastic from rover

October 10 2012

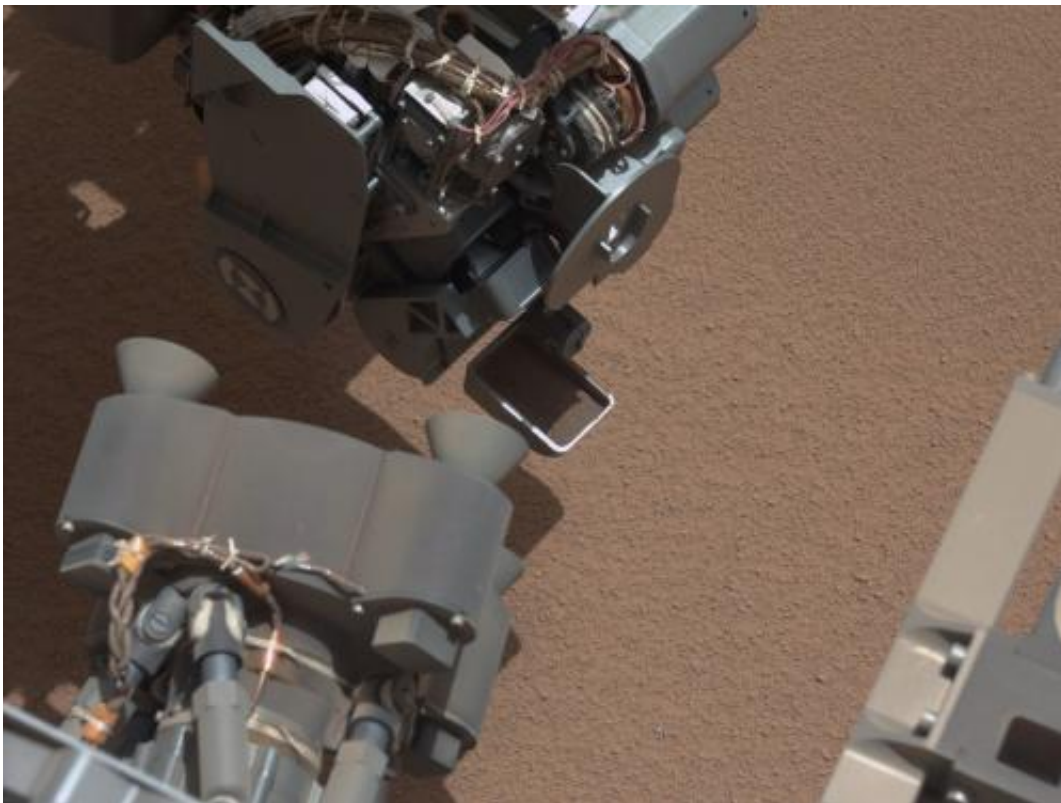


This image was taken by ChemCam: Remote Micro-Imager (CHEMCAM_RMI) onboard NASA's Mars rover Curiosity on Sol 62 (2012-10-08 22:00:04 UTC).
Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/LANL

NASA says a [small bright object detected on Mars](#) is likely a piece of plastic from the Curiosity rover.

The six-wheel spacecraft captured an image of the puzzling object Monday after scooping up Martian sand and dust over the weekend.

In a statement Tuesday, the [space agency](#) says the plastic bit that fell off the rover is "benign." While plans are continuing to positively identify it, NASA says it is not "Martian material."



This image from the right Mast Camera (Mastcam) of NASA's Mars rover Curiosity shows a scoop full of sand and dust lifted by the rover's first use of the scoop on its robotic arm. In the foreground, near the bottom of the image, a bright object is visible on the ground. The object might be a piece of rover hardware. This image was taken during the mission's 61st Martian day, or sol (Oct. 7, 2012), the same sol as the first scooping. After examining Sol 61

imaging, the rover team decided to refrain from using the arm on Sol 62 (Oct. 8). Instead, the rover was instructed to acquire additional imaging of the bright object, on Sol 62, to aid the team in assessing possible impact, if any, to sampling activities. For scale, the scoop is 1.8 inches (4.5 centimeters) wide, 2.8 inches (7 centimeters) long. Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS

[Curiosity](#) will continue taking pictures of its surroundings as the project team decides the next move.

Curiosity landed in an ancient crater in August on a two-year mission to determine whether the environment was ever favorable for [microbial life](#). It started driving toward its first science destination after a month checking out its instruments.

More information:

NASA's statement:

Curiosity's main activity in the 62nd sol of the mission (Oct. 8, 2012) was to image a small, bright object on the ground using the Remote Micro-Imager of the Chemistry and Camera (ChemCam) instrument.

The rover team's assessment is that the bright object is something from the rover, not Martian material. It appears to be a shred of plastic material, likely benign, but it has not been definitively identified.

To proceed cautiously, the team is continuing the investigation for another day before deciding whether to resume processing of the sample in the scoop. Plans include imaging of surroundings with the Mastcam.

A sample of sand and dust scooped up on Sol 61 remains in the scoop.

Plans to transfer it from the scoop into other chambers of the sample-processing device were postponed as a precaution during planning for Sol 62 after the small, bright object was detected in an image from the Mast Camera (Mastcam).

A Sol 62 raw image from ChemCam, at 1.usa.gov/R1fZHt, shows the object in question just to left of center of the image.

Sol 62, in Mars local mean solar time at Gale Crater, will end at 12:23 a.m. Oct. 9, PDT (3:23 a.m., EDT).

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