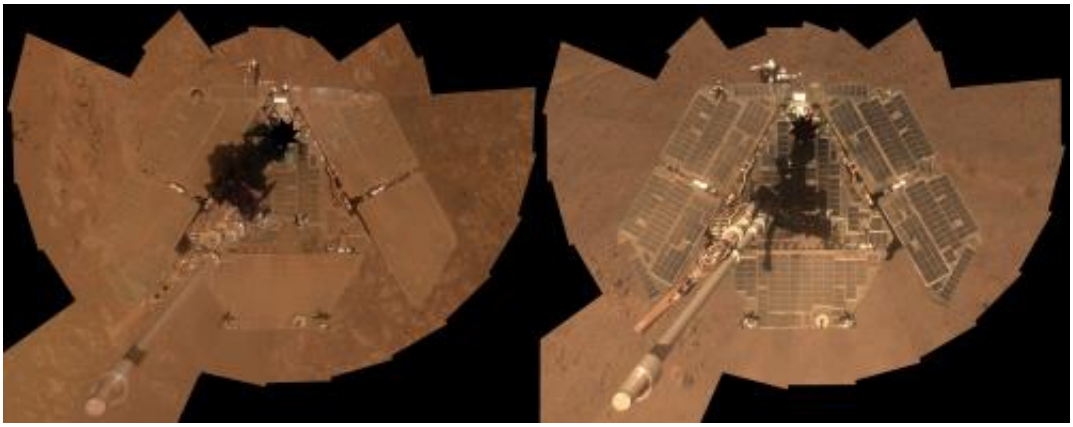
Image: NASA rover Opportunity's selfie shows clean machine

April 18 2014, by Guy Webster



A self-portrait of NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity taken in late March 2014 (right) shows that much of the dust on the rover's solar arrays has been removed since a similar portrait from January 2014 (left). Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/Cornell Univ./Arizona State Univ.

In its sixth Martian winter, NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity now has cleaner solar arrays than in any Martian winter since its first on the Red Planet, in 2005. Cleaning effects of wind events in March boosted the amount of electricity available for the rover's work.

A new self-portrait from Opportunity's panoramic camera (Pancam), showing the cleaned arrays, is pictured here.

The mission is using the rover's added energy to inspect "Murray Ridge," on the western rim of Endeavour Crater, to learn about wet environments on ancient Mars.

During Opportunity's first decade on Mars and the 2004-2010 career of its twin, Spirit, NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Project yielded a range of findings proving wet environmental conditions on ancient Mars—some very acidic, others milder and more conducive to supporting life.

Provided by NASA