Supplement to Photographic Catalog of Selected Planetary Size Comparisons

Stephen Paul Meszaros

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Supplement to Photographic Catalog of Selected Planetary Size Comparisons

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SUPPLEMENT TO: PHOTOGRAPHIC CATALOG OF SELECTED PLANETARY SIZE COMPARISONS

by

Stephen Paul Meszaros

ABSTRACT

This document updates and extends the NASA Technical Memorandum 86207, "Photographic Catalog of Selected Planetary Size Comparisons," 1985. It utilizes photographs taken by NASA spacecraft to illustrate size comparisons of planets and moons of the solar system. Global views are depicted at the same scale, within each comparison, allowing size relationships to be studied visually.
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This publication may be considered as a supplement to a previously published NASA technical memorandum entitled "Photographic Catalog of Selected Planetary Size Comparisons." It updates the solar system coverage resulting from the Voyager spacecraft encounters with Uranus and Neptune in 1986 and 1989 respectively. Those readers interested in obtaining the original "Photographic Catalog" should consult the Suggested Reading list at the end of this document.

The author would appreciate any comments and suggestions (or questions) concerning the visuals presented here. Contact:

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SUPPLEMENT TO: PHOTOGRAPHIC CATALOG OF
SELECTED PLANETARY SIZE COMPARISONS

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades NASA spacecraft have visited many of the planets and moons of
the solar system. Out of these missions has come a wealth of scientific data and detailed
photographs. Accurate size measurements of the planets and moons, and their surface features, is
one of the most basic types of information to result from this exploration program.

The photographs presented in this publication show planet and moon global views at the
same scale, within each picture. This will allow size relationships to be studied visually.
Generally, original spacecraft photos were used. However, when this was not feasible because of
availability factors, line drawings were substituted.

The publication is divided into two main parts. Part I contains the picture captions while Part
II contains the pictures. The picture captions and pictures are similarly numbered. Thus, caption
number 1 explains picture number 1, caption number 10 explains picture number 10, etc. The
"Suggested Reading" section lists books that were selected especially for their lucid descriptions
and/or their photographic content.

All the illustrations in this publication are available for purchase (as photo prints, slides, vu-
graphs, etc.) using the "H" or "HC" number designation included with each picture. ("H"
indicates that the picture is available in black and white, "HC" indicates that it is available in color.
Some pictures are available both ways.) For information, write:

Broadcast and Audio-Visual Branch
Code PMD
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20546

Educators and scientists may also obtain photo products from the National Space Science
Data Center. For information, contact:

National Space Science Data Center
Code 933
Goddard Space Flight Center
Greenbelt, Maryland 20771

In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey has produced a large number of maps, at global and
larger scales, of many of the planets and moons in the solar system. For information and a list of
the maps available, write:

National Cartographic Information Center
U.S. Geological Survey
507 National Center
Reston, Virginia 22092
Part I

PHOTOGRAPH CAPTIONS
The solar system's four largest planets are compared with the Earth in this photomontage. These giant worlds are composed primarily of hydrogen and helium with lesser amounts of ammonia, methane, and other gases. Various chemical compounds in the upper atmospheres account for the colors present. These photographs of the gas giant worlds were taken by the Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 spacecraft.

### Diameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planet</th>
<th>Diameter (km)</th>
<th>Diameter (miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>142,984</td>
<td>88,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>120,536</td>
<td>74,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uranus</td>
<td>51,118</td>
<td>31,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neptune</td>
<td>49,528</td>
<td>30,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>12,756</td>
<td>7,927</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The solar system's two outermost gas giant planets are compared with the Earth in this photomontage. Their atmospheres are composed primarily of hydrogen and helium; the blue colors are due to methane, which is also present. In size, Uranus has a diameter of 51,118 kilometers (31,765 miles), while Neptune's diameter is 49,528 kilometers (30,777 miles). For comparison, the Earth is 12,756 kilometers (7,927 miles) in diameter. The photographs of Uranus and Neptune were taken by the Voyager 2 spacecraft.
This montage of photographs taken by various NASA spacecraft displays the smaller planets and larger moons of the solar system at the same scale. The inner planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, and the Earth's moon are shown, as well as Jupiter's large satellites Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto, Saturn's large moon Titan, and Neptune's large moon Triton. In the case of the Earth and Mars we are looking through relatively thin atmospheres to the surfaces below. Venus and Titan have deep atmospheres so only their cloud tops are visible. Mercury, the Earth's moon, Io, Europa, Ganymede, Callisto, and Triton have little or no atmospheres, so their varied surface features can be seen directly.

**Diameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Diameter (km)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>12,756</td>
<td>(7,927)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>12,102</td>
<td>(7,520)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>6,786</td>
<td>(4,217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>4,878</td>
<td>(3,031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>3,476</td>
<td>(2,160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Io</td>
<td>3,630</td>
<td>(2,256)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europa</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>(1,950)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganymede</td>
<td>5,262</td>
<td>(3,270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callisto</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>(2,983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titan</td>
<td>5,150</td>
<td>(3,200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triton</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>(1,678)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest moons of the solar system are shown in this photomontage. Earth's moon is located in the center. Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto are satellites of Jupiter; Titan is a satellite of Saturn; Triton is a satellite of Neptune. Titan has a deep atmosphere; consequently, that is all that is visible. The rest of the moons have little or no atmospheres, so their varied surface features can be viewed directly. These photographs--with the exception of the moon--were taken by the Voyager spacecraft.

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</tbody>
</table>
MOONS OF SATURN AND URANUS #1

Photo 5  88 H 371

The medium-sized moons of Saturn and Uranus are shown at the same scale in this photomontage. These photographs were taken by the Voyager spacecraft.

Diameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moon</th>
<th>Diameter (km)</th>
<th>Diameter (miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mimas</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>(242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enceladus</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>(311)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tethys</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>(653)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dione</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>(696)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhea</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>(951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iapetus</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>(895)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>(292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>(721)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbriel</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>(727)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titania</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>(982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberon</td>
<td>1,520</td>
<td>(945)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MOONS OF SATURN AND URANUS #2

Photo 6  88 H 372

The medium-sized moons of Saturn and Uranus are shown at the same scale as Earth's moon in this photomontage. They range in size from Mimas the smallest (diameter: 390 kilometers or 242 miles) to Titania the largest (diameter: 1,580 kilometers or 982 miles). The Earth's moon has a diameter of 3,476 kilometers or 2,160 miles (photograph of Earth's moon courtesy of Lick Observatory).

Diameters

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<td>1,580</td>
<td>(982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberon</td>
<td>1,520</td>
<td>(945)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MOONS OF URANUS

Photo 7  88 H 370

The five larger moons of Uranus are shown at the same scale as Earth's moon in this photomontage. In composition they are made of rock and ice (photograph of Earth's moon courtesy of Lick Observatory).

Diameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moon</th>
<th>Diameter (km)</th>
<th>Diameter (miles)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>(945)</td>
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SMALL MOON COMPARISONS

The outlines of some of the smaller moons of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are pictured here at the same scale. They are generally irregular in shape since their gravities are too weak to pull them into spheres. For comparison, the Island of Hawaii is also shown at the same scale.

URANUS AND EARTH

Uranus is one of the smaller gas giant planets. Yet it is still four times the size of the Earth. The diameter of Uranus is 51,118 kilometers (31,765 miles), compared to Earth's 12,756 kilometers (7,927 miles) diameter. Its bland atmosphere is essentially featureless.

NEPTUNE AND EARTH

Neptune is the most distant of the gas giant planets from the sun. Its diameter is 49,528 kilometers (30,777 miles). This compares with Earth's diameter of 12,756 kilometers (7,927 miles). One of the gases in Neptune's atmosphere--methane--gives it a very blue appearance.

TRITON AND THE MOON

Triton is the largest moon of Neptune. Its diameter is 2,700 kilometers (1,678 miles); for comparison the Earth's moon has a diameter of 3,476 kilometers (2,160 miles). Because of its great distance from the sun, Triton experiences very cold temperatures resulting in ice caps of frozen nitrogen. It also has dozens of geysers. At any one time a number of these may be active, propelling nitrogen gas several kilometers (miles) above Triton's surface.
THE MOON AND THE PLUTO-CHARON SYSTEM

This illustration shows the relative sizes of the Earth's moon, the planet Pluto, and Pluto's satellite Charon. Also shown to the same scale is the Pluto-Charon orbital distance. Since there has not yet been a spacecraft mission to Pluto and Charon, we have no detailed photographs of this system (Pluto appears only as a point of light, even in the largest Earth-based telescopes). The estimated diameter of Pluto is 2,300 kilometers (1,429 miles); Charon's estimated diameter is 1,190 kilometers (740 miles). For comparison, the moon's diameter is 3,476 kilometers (2,160 miles).

ENCELADUS AND MIRANDA

Enceladus, a moon of Saturn, is compared in size with Miranda, a moon of Uranus. Enceladus has a diameter of 500 kilometers (311 miles), while the diameter of Miranda is 470 kilometers (292 miles). These two moons are of special interest to space scientists because of their unusual surface features. Parts of Enceladus have very few craters, indicating recent resurfacing from the interior of the moon. This may be the result of ice volcanism, which could also explain the high albedo (reflected brightness) of Enceladus as well as the concentration of Saturn's E-Ring particles in Enceladus' orbit. Miranda has three visible areas of layered terrain on its surface. These may indicate that this small satellite was broken up by asteroid or comet impact in the past and has gravitationally reassembled itself. Another possibility is that the interior of Miranda was in the act of differentiating (separating) and froze before the process was complete.

NUCLEUS OF HALLEY'S COMET AND MANHATTAN ISLAND

The approximate size and shape of the nucleus of Halley's Comet is shown in this visual. Its size is estimated to be about 8 kilometers (5 miles) by 16 kilometers (10 miles). This information was obtained by the European Giotto spacecraft and the Soviet Vega spacecraft when they flew by the comet in 1986. The outline of Manhattan Island is shown at the same scale for comparison.
RINGED PLANET COMPARISONS

This diagram compares the rings of the four planets with ring systems in the solar system. The Earth is also shown at the same scale. All four ring systems are very different in character. The main rings of Saturn (designated A, B, and C) are bright and are extremely complex in structure. Jupiter's ring is apparently composed of fine particles that may be slowly spiraling down into the cloud tops of the planet. The rings of Uranus are dark and thin in nature (they are exaggerated in width, in this sketch). Neptune has both thin and wider diffuse rings.

THE GREAT DARK SPOT

The Earth is shown at approximately the same scale as the Great Dark Spot of Neptune. The Dark Spot is a huge long-lived storm in Neptune's upper atmosphere.
Part II

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS
Photo 1 - GIANT PLANETS
Photo 2 - LARGE PLANETS

URANUS

EARTH

NEPTUNE

ORIGINAL PAGE IS OF POOR QUALITY

90 H 593
90 HC 545
Photo 4 - LARGE MOONS
Photo 7 - MOONS OF URANUS
SMALL MOON COMPARISONS

JUPITER
- AMALTHEA

SATURN
- HYPERION
- PUCK

URANUS
- "N1"*

NEPTUNE
- "N2"*
- NEREID

HAWAII
(to same scale)

300 km

*TEMPORARY NAME DESIGNATION
Photo 10 - NEPTUNE AND EARTH

EARTH

NEPTUNE

ORIGINAL PAGE IS OF POOR QUALITY
THE MOON AND THE PLUTO - CHARON SYSTEM
(TO SCALE)

PLUTO - CHARON ORBITAL DISTANCE (TO SCALE)

CHARON

MOON

PLUTO

Photo 12 - THE MOON AND THE PLUTO-CHARON SYSTEM
Photo 14 - NUCLEUS OF HALLEY’S COMET AND MANHATTAN ISLAND

MANHATTAN ISLAND

NUCLEUS OF HALLEY’S COMET
RINGED PLANET COMPARISONS

JUPITER

SATURN

URANUS

NEPTUNE

Photo 15 - RINGED PLANET COMPARISONS

90 H 600
Photo 16- THE GREAT DARK SPOT

90 H 596
90 HC 548
SUGGESTED READING


This document updates and extends NASA Technical Memorandum 86207, "Photographic Catalog of Selected Planetary Size Comparisons," 1985. It utilizes photographs taken by NASA spacecraft to illustrate size comparisons of planets and moons of the solar system. Global views are depicted at the same scale, within each comparison, allowing size relationships to be studied visually.