

by Jamie De Gregory

Science for the Ears: Radio Science Shows on the Internet

Radio has gone digital and is now accessible anytime, day or night. This is good news for all audiophiles of a scientific bent. Here are six great Web sites where you can hear interesting science coverage during coffee breaks, lunches, or any other time you have a wish to know.

Science Friday—www.sciencefriday.com

Broadcast every Friday on National Public Radio, *Science Friday*, sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF), is a 2-hour-long investigation of current science topics. Subjects have included the discovery of a ratlike mammal that may have coexisted with dinosaurs, global climate change and the movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, and research into how sleep affects learning. Each broadcast, hosted by long-time science reporter and former *Newton's Apple* host Ira Flatow, offers comprehensive looks at specific topics. The first hour typically features

two or three shorter pieces, and the second hour is devoted to a different topic. Experts on the subject answer questions from the host and from callers, expanding the depth of the discussion. The program does a good job of relating science to the environment, economics, and politics and of explaining the nuts and bolts of the science itself. The Web site features a searchable archive, a list of books related to broadcasts, links for additional information, order forms for CDs and transcripts, and resources for teachers.

Engineering Works—engineeringworks.tamu.edu

Engineering Works is a production of Texas A&M University's Engineering Program based in College Station, Texas. Through the Internet, it is available to listeners all over the world. The weekly broadcast consists of a 2-minute explanation of the engineering behind a piece of technology. Topics have ranged from light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to the air conditioner. In addition to the audio file, the full transcript of each broadcast is available on the Web site.

Earth and Sky—www.earthsky.com

Featuring popular science subjects, *Earth and Sky* is a national daily 2-minute broadcast with cohosts Deborah Byrd and Joel Block. The show divides its subject matter into the categories of EarthCare, Edge of Discovery, Your Science Questions, and Women in Science. Many of the daily topics come from listener questions. Owing to time constraints, *Earth and Sky* can give only brief explanations of the topics, but the program still packs a lot of information into 2 minutes. The Web site features audio archives and transcripts, related science links, resources for teachers and kids, and a Skywatching Center, complete with star charts.

Everyday Science—www.everydayscience.org/index2.html

Whereas some science radio programs are sponsored by such organizations as NSF, a private company sponsors *Everyday Science*. The Bayer Corporation produces *Everyday Science* as part of its Making Science Make Sense initiative. The show is directed toward

children—like a *Magic School Bus* for the ears. Each 2-minute broadcast begins with a question like “How do bagpipes work?” The host, Helena Ruoti, then takes the audience with her inside a set of bagpipes, a dolphin's pool, or a sick person's sinus cavity to answer the show's question. Transcripts and a searchable audio archive are available on the Web site, and a small section gives instructions for three hands-on science experiments for parents and kids.

Science Report—www.aip.org/radio

The American Institute of Physics (AIP) sponsors *Science Report*, a nationwide 2-minute radio show dealing with a wide array of science topics. Subjects include nature, humans, the past, technology, the solar system, and the environment. The mix also includes some truly quirky topics, such as how a mother duck's swimming creates a current of water that makes it easier for her ducklings to follow her. The Web site includes transcripts, an audio archive, and a link to AIP.

Are We Alone?—www.seti.org/epo/seti_radio/Welcome.html

Sponsored by the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute, *Are We Alone?* may seem more like a haven for *X-Files* fans than a resource for science news. However, the weekly 45-minute show, hosted by astronomer Seth Shostak, takes an in-depth look at topics in science. True to the sponsoring institute, most *Are We Alone?* episodes focus on aspects of science related to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. For example, a recent broadcast examined research about life on the ocean floor and how better understanding of life forms there may help us discover life elsewhere in the galaxy. *Are We Alone?* also exposes pseudoscience on its monthly “Skeptical Sunday” broadcast. The Shroud of Turin and the rather dubious evidence of shroud-supporter scientists was the feature on “Skeptical Sunday” in May 2004. There are links to the SETI Institute for those interested in its research, an audio archive of shows, and selected commentary by the show's host.

JAMIE DE GREGORY prepared this column while a Science Editor intern.