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CU, Sciencenter to Snap Earth from Saturn

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This promises to be a wave like no other.

Cornell University is partnering with the Sciencenter to host a Wave at Saturn event on Friday as NASA's Cassini spacecraft takes a picture of Earth from its current location near Saturn.

The event begins at 3:30 p.m. at the Sciencenter, with Cornell astronomers giving presentations. The official wave will take place at 5:30 p.m.

The interplanetary portrait will be the first to capture the Earth in natural color, as human eyes on Saturn would see it.

It also will be the first picture to capture Earth and its moon with Cassini's highest-resolution camera.

When the picture is taken, Cassini will be about 898 million miles away from Earth.

That distance is nearly 10 times the distance from the sun to Earth.

"This is a unique opportunity to see our home planet in the context of its vast surroundings, and to contemplate our place in the universe," said Matt Tiscareno, a Cassini science team member at Cornell's Center for Radiophysics and Space Research. "We would like people in Ithaca to come to the Sciencenter, learn about and celebrate our intrepid robot explorer of Saturn, and wave our best wishes to it as our picture is taken."

The long-distance snapshot will also allow Cassini, which launched in 1997 and entered Saturn's orbit in 2004, to examine Saturn's rings, which are difficult to see from ground-based telescopes.

This event is sponsored by Cornell University's Center for Radiophysics and Space Research, Space Planetary Imaging Facility and Department of Astronomy, and by the Sciencenter.

Online: <http://www.ithacajournal.com/article/20130714/NEWS01/307140017/CU-Sciencenter-to-snap-Earth-from-Saturn>