



## Media Release

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### The view from Space: Changing Landscapes

In the 50 years that humans have been photographing Earth from Space, highly significant changes have taken place on our planet. Cosmonaut Viktor Petrovich Savinykh will lead an expert panel to share photographs of these changes at the inaugural event of the Edinburgh Lectures (2007/08) on Wednesday 19 September 2007. Exploring the theme *Changing Landscapes: Changing Planet*, Savinykh will share the platform with NASA astronaut, Dr Jay Apt and Cosmonaut, Sergei Vasilyevich Avdeev who have flown at different stages in the 50 years of space flight. Avdeev is credited with the record of having travelled 20 milliseconds into the future.\*<sup>1</sup> Illustrating their talks with stunning images taken from Space, the expert Speakers will outline the effects of natural and human activity on the Earth's environment. At the public event, being held at Edinburgh's Sheraton Grand Hotel, they will also consider the vital role that space research has and is playing in addressing these issues. This first Edinburgh Lecture is presented by The Royal Society of Edinburgh and being held in association with Careers Scotland and the Association of Space Explorers (ASE). Around 100 astronauts and cosmonauts (fliers) will spend a week in Scotland (September 17 - 21) for the Association of Space Explorers (ASE) Planetary Congress in Edinburgh\*<sup>2</sup>, hosted by Careers Scotland.

Under the banner *Changing Landscapes*, the sixteenth series of The Edinburgh Lectures will explore issues about our universe, our heritage, our society and how it is changing. Nine of Edinburgh's key organisations work in partnership to bring together the series, which takes place in the Capital from September through to March. From astronauts to zoologists, each speaker will share their unique perspective on Planet Earth.

Speakers include inspiring zoologist, broadcaster and writer, Professor Aubrey Manning OBE, FRSE; award-winning filmmaker Jill Fullerton-Smith, producer of the landmark BBC television series *The Truth about Food*; and Scotland's leading historian, Professor Tom Devine, OBE, FBA, FRSE.

#### **The Edinburgh Lectures (2007/08)**

19 Sep 07 Astronaut and Cosmonaut Panel: *Changing landscapes: changing planet*

2 Oct 07 Malcolm Cooper: *If nobody speaks of remarkable things: the role of heritage in Scotland's future*

18 Oct 07 Professor Tom Devine: *Landscape and people: the Lowland Clearances*

24 Oct 07 Professor David Spergel: *Our changing view of the universe*

15 Nov 07 Jill Fullerton-Smith: *The truth about food ... how to be slim*

29 Jan 08 Alan Grant: *Writing tomorrow yesterday: how fiction became reality*

20 Feb 08 Professor Aubrey Manning: *2008: International year of Planet Earth*

22 Feb 08 Tim Waterstone: *Brave New World: the changing face of entrepreneurship*

28 Feb 08 Gareth Hoskins: *Inside out: Buildings and their landscape*

*Scottish Executive hosted lecture to be announced*

The Edinburgh Lectures are presented annually by the City of Edinburgh Council in association with Heriot-Watt University, Napier University, National Museums of Scotland, the Open University in Scotland, Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Executive, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the University of Edinburgh.

The Right Hon George Grubb, Lord Provost of Edinburgh said:

*The United Nations has designated 2008 as International Year of Planet Earth and it is certainly time for us to take stock. Each of the speakers in the series brings a unique perspective on our universe, our heritage, our society and how it is changing. The lectures are open to everyone, making this a truly accessible way to engage in one of the most important debates of the present time.*

The Edinburgh Lectures are ticketed events. Tickets can be booked through the Hub Box Office for a £3.00 per ticket administrative fee. Book online [www.hubtickets.co.uk](http://www.hubtickets.co.uk), by phone 0131 473 2000 or in person at the Hub, Castlehill, Royal Mile, Edinburgh, 10am-5pm Monday-Friday

For more information about The Edinburgh Lectures, including speakers' biographies, synopses and venues, please visit [www.edinburghlectures.org](http://www.edinburghlectures.org)

#### \*1 **Astronaut/Cosmonaut Biography & Abstracts**

**Viktor Petrovich Savinykh** was selected as a cosmonaut in 1978 and spent over 252 days in Space before retiring in 1989. He has been decorated twice as Hero of the Soviet Union.

Over the past 50 years the Earth's ecosystems have undergone such anthropogenic changes as have not been experienced over the whole course of evolution from the Holocene period. At the same time, natural disasters have become an integral feature of the development of modern civilization. In spite of technological advances, increased knowledge of the reasons behind them and the precautionary measures being taken, the consequences of these natural disasters are becoming more and more appreciable and larger in scale.

This is linked primarily to population growth and the concentration of large masses of people in places that are susceptible when dangerous natural disasters develop. At the very start of the space age, conclusions were drawn about the great prospects offered by using data from space observations for tracing natural disasters and studying their features. To date, a wealth of experience has been gathered from using these photographs of Earth taken from space for monitoring various disasters as well as the changes connected with such phenomena, such as global warming, caused by the increased concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and destruction of the ozone layer.

**Sergei Vasilyevich Avdeev** was selected as a cosmonaut in 1987, holds the current known record for time travel. Having spent 748 days aboard Mir (cumulative across three missions) he went approximately 17,000 mph and travelled roughly 0.02 seconds (20 milliseconds) into the future.

**Dr Jay Apt** was selected as a NASA Astronaut in 1985. He spent over 35 days in Space, performed two space walks (one an emergency rescue of a satellite), has been to the Russian Space station Mir and is the recipient of NASA's highest medal.

Using many of the stunning photographs from his book *Orbit: NASA Astronauts Photograph the Earth*, Jay Apt will share the experience of looking at Earth and observing its changes from orbit. Geography, natural change, and change to the planet caused by people are all part of this unique view of Earth. Apt, currently a professor at Carnegie Mellon University and the former head of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, will show examples of how deforestation and other land use practices, water management, and agricultural practices have affected the Earth as photographed by astronauts and cosmonauts from orbit.

#### **Media contacts:**

Stuart Brown, The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), 0131 240 5016, [sbrown@royalsoced.org.uk](mailto:sbrown@royalsoced.org.uk)

Britt Melville, The City of Edinburgh Council, 0131 529 6462, [britt.melville@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:britt.melville@edinburgh.gov.uk)

#### \*2 **The Association of Space Explorers (ASE) Planetary Congress & Careers Scotland**

The Association of Space Explorers (ASE) Planetary Congress will be hosted by Careers Scotland, Scotland's national careers guidance organisation. This will be the first time this major event has been held in the UK and is a result of Careers Scotland's relationship with NASA and the international space community.

Careers Scotland runs several programmes to encourage students to study science and technology and it is hoped the ASE congress will help promote careers in these fields to Scottish pupils. A key element of the week-long visit will be a Community Day, when teams of astronauts and cosmonauts will visit schools in every local authority area in Scotland. The fliers will speak to pupils about their experiences in space and help generate enthusiasm about science and technology and the career opportunities available in the field.

Further information about Careers Scotland initiatives to promote science and technology is available at [www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk)

The Association of Space Explorers (ASE) is an international organisation made up of 300 members from 30 different countries - all of who have flown in space at least once. The group brings members together for debate and dialogue, promotes education in science and engineering and encourages international cooperation in the exploration of space.