

Welcome to Press & Argus Livingston, MI

Customer Service: [Subscribe Now](#) | [Place an Ad](#) | [Contact Us](#)>[livingstondaily.com](#) >[Weather](#) >[Jobs](#) >[Cars](#) >[Apartments](#) >[Real Estate](#) >[Shopping](#) >[Classifieds](#)Search 14-day archive

» Home
 » News
Local News
Sports
Education
Police Blotter
Obituaries
Nation/World
Opinion
Living
Country Living
Neighbor
Business
Travel
Technology
Weather
 » RSS Feeds [XML](#)
 » Customer Service

Email
Newsletter



▼ ADVERTISEMENT ▼

Matt Smith: Dude, where's my solar system?

If Muppets could cry, the Count would be bawling his beady little eyes out right now.

That's because a major astronomical conference (read: geek rodeo) decided last week to whack a planet from our solar system, dropping the tally from nine to eight, with the designation of Pluto as a "dwarf planet."

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| I want a V-8 engine | ▼ |
| I want auto transmission | ▼ |

So we've downsized the solar system. One less planet to count.

It's only a matter of time until some windbag commentator complains that we're dumbing down the solar system.

For most of us, we woke up Thursday and found out that we've lost a planet, eerily paralleling the events of the god-awful movie "Dude, Where's My Car?" Except, unlike the movie, this turn of events with the solar system isn't funny in a so-bad-it's-good way: It's just bizarre.

Pluto was considered a full-fledged planet for 76 years — well, Pluto was always there, but it wasn't discovered until 1930 — but the International Astronomical Union voted Thursday to downgrade its status at a meeting in Prague, Czech Republic.

For the record, that wasn't the first time a heavenly body got the galactic nip-and-tuck and was downgraded from planet status. Ceres, which is in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, was discovered in 1801 and was listed as a planet for about 50 years. Ceres was later reclassified as an asteroid, then as a dwarf planet, like Pluto.

In other words, finding or discarding a planet is a once-in-a-lifetime happening. Not surprisingly, the fallout from the planet vote is supposed to be far-reaching for us all.

Textbooks, for instance, need to be rewritten like Wikipedia all of the sudden because Pluto is no longer a planet.

Then there's astrology. Won't the planet decision ruin astrology? Somebody is going to put two and two together and figure out that horoscopes for the past 76 years have been inaccurate because they've been considering the movement of Pluto, a planet that really wasn't a planet.

Oh, well. At least fortune cookies will always be there to guide the gullible.

I'm surprised the slash-the-planets crowd isn't proposing to downsize other things besides the solar system:

- Slash all NASCAR numbers in half. The only way to make left turns and tire changes even more exciting is to add blurry fractions to the mix.
- Cut the three musketeers down to one. Actually, according to the musketeers' motto — "All for one, and one for all" — this proposed reorganization has been a long time coming.
- Count 46 states, not 50. Rhode Island isn't even an island and barely qualifies as a state. We can afford to lose it. Wayne County (population 2,061,162) has nearly twice as many people as Rhode Island (population 1,048,319) in about half the size (672 square miles vs. 1,219 square miles), and nobody is clamoring for Wayne County to become a state.

Thank God for that, by the way.

Then we could wad North Dakota and South Dakota into one good-sized Dakota. Same for North Carolina and South Carolina. Welcome to Carolina.

Then there's Ohio, which can become a gigantic suburb of Monroe, for all I care about Ohio.

- Make so there was one wise man, not three. That would be the guy who brought gold to the infant Jesus. The so-called wise men who brought frankincense and myrrh? Come on. Those sound like gifts from wise guys, but probably not wise men.
- Scale it back so there's five strings, not six, on a standard guitar. Really, unless you're Jimmy Page or Eric Clapton, how many

E's do you need?

Sound flaky? Of course it does — about as loony as a bunch of scientists meeting in Prague to decide what's really a planet.

Just from a layman's perspective, I can't see any real accomplishment in reclassifying Pluto as a dwarf planet. Pluto's always been there; it's probably going to stay around awhile.

What's more, acting high-and-mighty about the status of a planet is probably not going to be what it takes for the astronomy crowd to land hot babes.

The next time astronomers want to make a contribution to society that's related to their field of work, I'm going to suggest something other than reclassifying planets.

I'm going to ask that they shell out refunds for everybody who didn't like the first two "Star Wars" prequels. That would be out of this world.

Matt Smith is a copy editor for the Livingston County Daily Press & Argus. He can be reached at (517) 552-2848 or by e-mail at mattsmit@gannett.com.

STORYCHAT

 [Post a Comment](#)

This article does not have any comments associated with it

Originally published August 27, 2006

 [Print this article](#)

 [Email this to a friend](#)

 [Subscribe Now](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Place an ad](#)

Copyright ©2006 Livingston Daily Press & Argus
All rights reserved.
Users of this site agree to the
[Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)
(Terms updated 7/20/05)

