

Discovered: Most Earth-like planets yet

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>>*From a story in World Science:*

Link: http://www.world-science.net/othernews/040831_newplanetsfrm.htm

"Astronomers this morning announced the discovery of a major new class of planets, including some that are far more Earth-like than any discovered before.

Some of the newfound planets appear to be substantially more small and solid than the giant, gaseous planets discovered before, researchers said. This means these newer planets are more likely to be able to harbor life forms, although they do so is completely unknown.

Two newfound planets, not far from our galactic neighborhood, are only two to three times as wide as Earth and weigh 15 to 20 times as much, said Geoff Marcy of the University of California at Berkeley, one of the co-discoverers.

"We're poised for the next step in planet discovery, namely finding truly Earth-mass planets," he said. NASA and the astronomers reported the discovery at a news conference on Tuesday."