

THE SPACE TELESCOPE
THAT COULD FIND
ANOTHER EARTH

AIR & SPACE

MAY 2021

Smithsonian

GIANT

HOW TO HIRE ANTONOV'S HEAVY LIFTER

Rover Killers
Dodging Hazards
On Other Planets

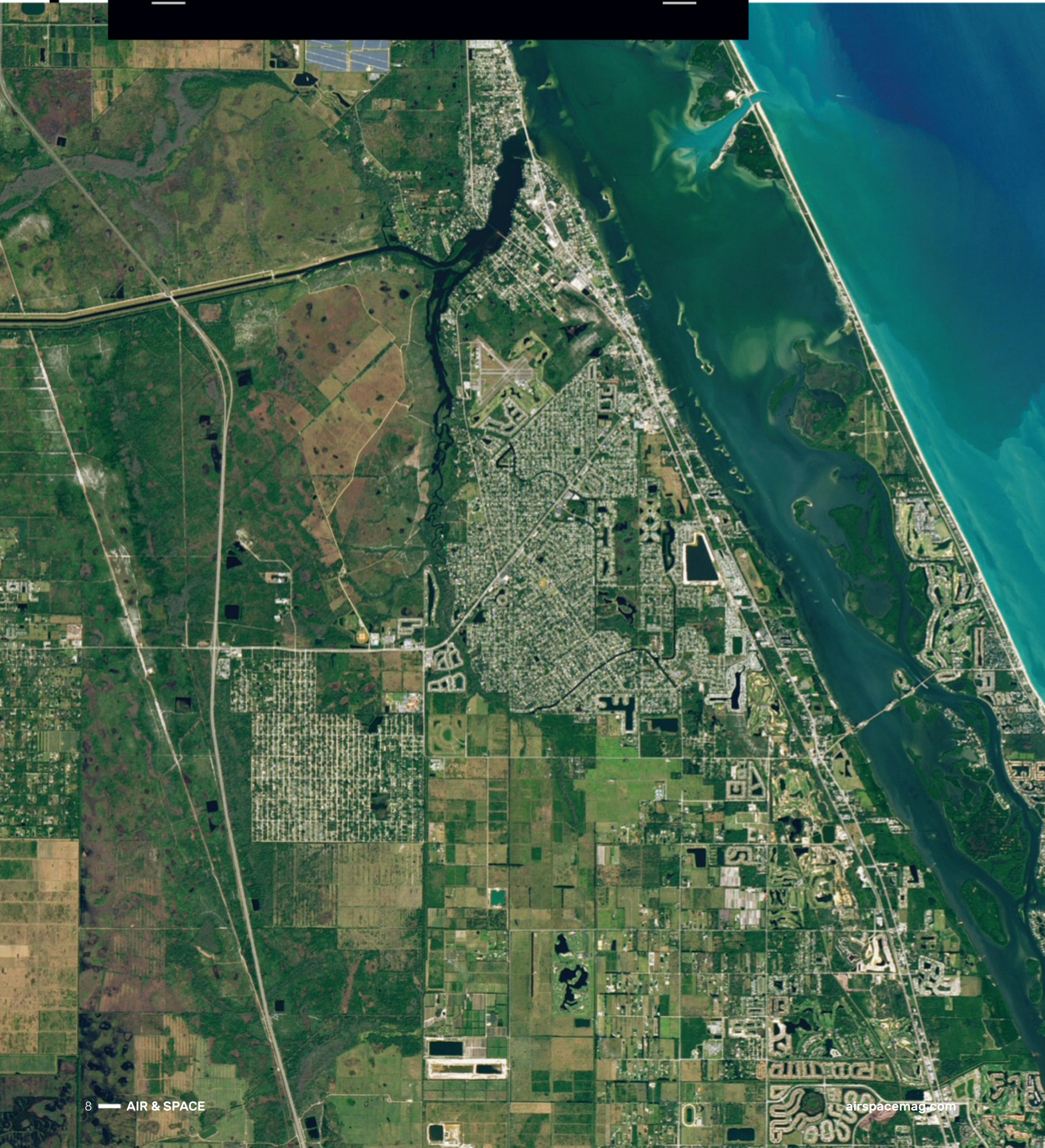
Antonov An-225

AIRSPACEMAG.COM

Up to Speed

IN THE SKY
IN SPACE
IN THE NEWS

BY MARK STRAUSS
AIR & SPACE
DEPARTMENTS EDITOR





This Island Earth

Each year, more than 190 countries participate in the celebration of Earth Day (April 22), which marks the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. As Kathleen Rogers, president of the Earth Day Network has noted, that movement owes its existence, in part, to Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders, whose iconic 1968 Earthrise photograph raised “the level of ecoconsciousness that had been stirring for almost a decade.”

That era also saw the start of systematic study of Earth from space with the birth of Landsat, the joint NASA/U.S. Geological Survey program that is the longest continuous space-based record of Earth’s land in existence, providing data on natural resources and the environment since 1972. This recent image taken by Landsat 8 (launched in 2013), gives us a satellite’s-eye view of an environmental landmark: Pelican Island, the first National Wildlife Refuge established in the United States. The three-acre refuge—located in the Indian River Lagoon on the east coast of Florida—is used by more than 140 species of birds as a site for nesting, roosting, and feeding.

Before Pelican Island became a refuge, it was also a popular destination for hunters who slaughtered the birds for their feathered plumes, which adorned women’s hats in the 19th century. That changed when Paul Kroegel, a local bird lover, designated himself as the shotgun-armed guardian of the island. His efforts caught the attention of ornithologists and, eventually, President Teddy Roosevelt, who signed a 1903 executive order making the island a bird reservation. Since then, national leaders have followed Roosevelt’s example, and today there are more than 567 national wildlife refuges.

Landsat will continue its mission as well, with the launch of the Landsat 9 satellite this September.