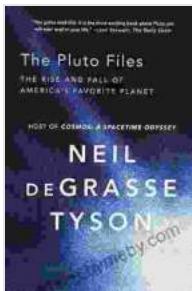


The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet

Pluto was discovered in 1930 by Clyde Tombaugh, a young astronomer at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona. Tombaugh was searching for a ninth planet that had been predicted by Percival Lowell, the observatory's founder. Lowell believed that the irregularities in the orbits of Uranus and Neptune could be explained by the gravitational pull of a ninth planet. Tombaugh spent years searching for this planet, and he finally found it on February 18, 1930.



The Pluto Files: The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet: The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet

by Neil deGrasse Tyson

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2893 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 209 pages



Pluto was named after the Roman god of the underworld. It was a fitting name for a planet that was so far away from the sun. Pluto is located in the Kuiper Belt, a region of icy bodies that lies beyond Neptune. Pluto is the largest known object in the Kuiper Belt, but it is still much smaller than the eight planets in the solar system.

For decades, Pluto was considered to be the ninth planet from the sun. However, in 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) voted to reclassify Pluto as a dwarf planet. The IAU definition of a planet is a celestial body that is in orbit around the sun, has sufficient mass to assume hydrostatic equilibrium (a nearly round shape), and has "cleared the neighborhood" around its orbit. Pluto meets the first two criteria, but it does not meet the third. Pluto's orbit is intersected by the orbits of several other objects, including the dwarf planet Eris. This means that Pluto has not cleared its neighborhood, and it is therefore not a planet.

The demotion of Pluto from planet status was a controversial decision. Many people, including Tombaugh himself, were disappointed by the IAU's decision. However, the IAU's definition of a planet is based on sound scientific reasoning. Pluto is simply too small and its orbit is too cluttered to be considered a planet.

Despite its demotion, Pluto remains a fascinating object. It is the largest known object in the Kuiper Belt, and it is home to a number of interesting features, including a large heart-shaped feature called Tombaugh Regio. Pluto is also the only known dwarf planet that has a moon, Charon. Charon is about half the size of Pluto, and it orbits the dwarf planet in a synchronous rotation, meaning that the same side of Charon always faces Pluto.

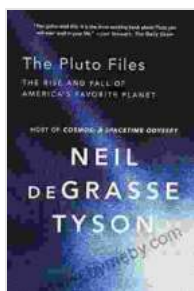
The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet is a fascinating story. It is a story of discovery, controversy, and scientific progress. Pluto may no longer be a planet, but it remains a beloved object in the solar system. It is a reminder of the vastness of space and the wonders that are still out there to be discovered.

Further Reading

- Pluto at NASA Solar System Exploration
- Pluto at the International Astronomical Union
- Pluto: No Longer a Planet, but New Definition Irks Some

Image Credits

- Pluto in True Color by NASA/JHUAPL/SwRI
- Pluto and Charon by NASA/JHUAPL/SwRI



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