



Decoding a Dark Splotch

ESP_016372_1975



Geologists aren't quite sure what to make of the dark splotch in the middle of this image, one of several similar dark splotches that extend east and west for over 100 kilometers. From measurements made in infrared, this and other dark splotches have what we call "high thermal inertia," meaning that it heats up and cools down slowly. Scientists use thermal inertia to assess how rocky, sandy, or dusty a place is: a higher thermal inertia than the surrounding area means it's less dusty.

