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### Solar System Moon Studied

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Date: Fri, 13 Dec 1996 10:58:10 -0500  
Fwd Date: Sat, 14 Dec 1996 12:22:45 -0500  
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Forwarded message:

From: AOLNewsProfiles@aol.net  
Date: 96-12-13 08:18:36 EST

.c The Associated Press</I></PRE></HTML>  
By JANE E. ALLEN  
AP Science Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- The solar system's largest moon has all the characteristics of a planet, including a cocoon of magnetic particles similar to the one enveloping Earth, scientists say.

The evidence of the planet-like characteristics of Jupiter's huge moon Ganymede were revealed by audio recordings relayed to Earth from the Galileo spacecraft, scientists said Thursday.

The soaring whistle and hissing static provide evidence that Ganymede -- three-fourths the size of Mars -- has its own planet-like, magnetic field called a magnetosphere.

Such a region of hot, ionized gases and highly charged particles never before has been found around a moon.

Donald Gurnett, a University of Iowa physicist and Galileo researcher, said the noise is consistent with magnetospheres he's studied on Earth, Saturn and Jupiter.

He said the spacecraft's approach to Ganymede was quiet ``until all of a sudden, there's a big burst of noise that signals the entry into Ganymede's magnetosphere. Then for about 50 minutes we detected the kinds of noises that are typical of a passage through a magnetosphere.''

Ganymede, 3,269 miles across, has ridges, icy grooves and craters that hint at an Earthlike crust that pulls apart and fills in with flowing rock.

NASA is preparing for next Thursday's encounter with Jupiter's moon Europa, suspected of hiding a frozen ocean and possibly life beneath its fractured, icy crust. The unmanned Galileo spacecraft, now making a two-year tour of Jupiter and its largest moons, will come within 433 miles of Europa.

AP-NY-12-13-96 0812EST

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