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Minerals on Mars Point to More Recent Presence of Water

Atbin Doroodchi

The presence of water in the form of ice on Mars has been known for many years, as ice spots can be easily seen from space. Since the presence of water can be associated with the possibility of life, this phenomena has been an interesting topic in the scientific community. However, scientists still want to know how long ago Mars was wet. In an article in the November issue of the journal *Geology*, scientists working with data from NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) report that they have spotted extensive deposits of opals on the surface of Mars. These opals were found in an area that appears to be two billion years old, younger than previous areas that contained water. Opals are mineraloid gels known as hydrated silicas. Opals are silicon based compound that contain



moles of waters in their molecular formula. Basically, water is wedged into the silica. The water content in opal can vary between three to ten percent. The formation of opals needs liquid water. This data proves the presence of water in younger and over a more widespread area.

(Minerals like opal are shown in cream in this image.)