

# The World Around Us



"Foreign Correspondent"  
Michael Ludwig reports on interesting news from the natural world.

## Unique Surgery for a Yellow-billed Kite

Veterinarians in Wiltshire, the UK, went to new lengths to save the life of a Yellow-billed Kite chick. While incubating in its shell the chick, which became known as Beaky, grew too big for his egg, forcing its growing beak to bend and become deformed. Nine days after he hatched they performed reconstructive surgery on Beaky. They put it under anaesthetic, then broke both sides of the chick's lower jaw to correct it, surrounding it with an acrylic support to keep it straight while healing. Beaky recovered well and is expected to live a normal life with a very nice beak! The lifespan of a Yellow-billed Kite is up to 25 years.



## Name a Storm!

Met Éireann in Ireland and The Met Office in the UK

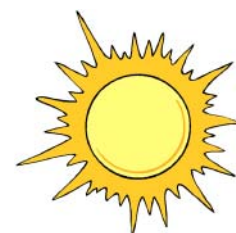
are asking the public to provide names for storms that will strike Ireland and the UK this autumn and winter. They hope that getting people involved in naming them will raise awareness of the dangers of storms and encourage people to protect themselves and their property before one of them strikes.



## Flying Around the World powered only by the Sun

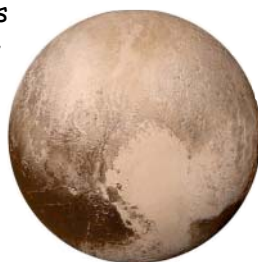


Solar power pioneers, Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg, attempted something that would seem impossible: they began the First Round-The-World Solar-powered Flight, using solar batteries charged by the sun to power their motors and eliminating fuel and polluting emissions. They were demonstrating what alternative energy sources and new technologies can achieve. Taking turns piloting the single seated aircraft, they began their journey in March of this year, taking off from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. They landed in Oman, Myanmar and China making an unplanned stop in Japan, after high winds damaged a wing. The trans-Pacific crossing from Japan to Hawaii took 118 hours and when André Borschberg landed the aircraft near Honolulu he broke the record for the world's longest non-stop solo electric flight. This was just one of many records that the aircraft has broken. The single-seater aircraft, *Solar Impulse 2*, is made of carbon fibre and has a 72 metre wingspan. It weighs just 2,300 kg, equivalent to that of a car. The 17,000 solar cells built into the wing supply four electric motors with renewable energy. During the day, the solar cells also recharge lithium batteries, allowing the aircraft to fly at night. Unfortunately the second half of their adventure has been delayed until April 2016 as the lithium batteries overheated and must be replaced. We look forward to hearing about their progress next year.



## Journey to the Edge of our Solar System

Nine years ago, in 2006, NASA launched the spacecraft *New Horizons* on a journey to Pluto and beyond. This summer it reached the dwarf planet Pluto, which was more than 4.8 billion km from Earth. Pluto orbits the Sun in an oval so sometimes it is closer to the Sun and sometimes further away. As *New Horizons*, which is about the size of a piano, rushed past Pluto it captured stunning photos of its surface, showing mountains and craters, frozen ice plains, a big heart, and vast haze. It also took images of Charon, the largest of Pluto's five moons. *New Horizons* sends back all of its data using a radio transmitter and its 2m diameter radio antenna. It receives commands over this link, and returns both science data and information on the spacecraft's health. It will take about 16 months for all the information gathered by *New Horizons* about Pluto to be beamed back to Earth. Talk about a slow internet connection! *New Horizons* is currently journeying on to the Kuiper Belt, which is a big belt of asteroids beyond the planets.



Pluto