

Drone lights, cameras and sucking up to a whale

September's sharpest science shots, selected by *Nature's* photo team.

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30 September 2016

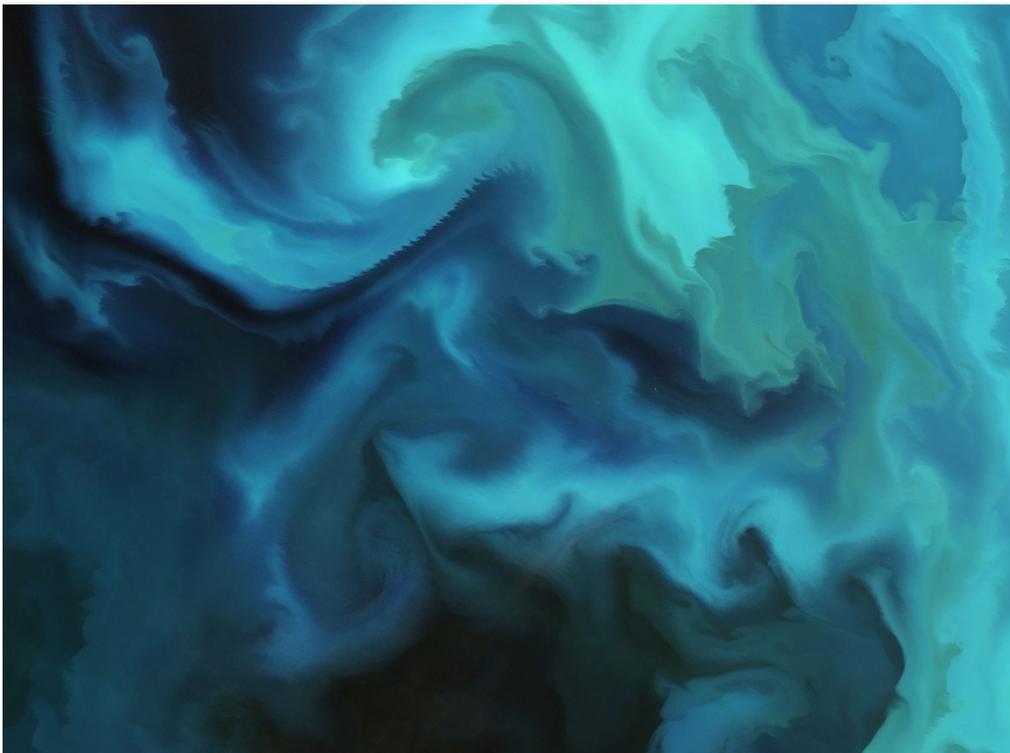
Splash of light



Daniel Hayduk/AFP/Getty Images

People in Tanzania surround a puddle of water reflecting a solar eclipse on 1 September. The event was an [annular, or 'ring of fire', eclipse](#), when the Moon blocks the entire Sun except for a bright ring around the edges.

Water colours



Copernicus Sentinel 2016/ESA

A [plankton bloom](#) paints the Barents Sea, northeast of Russia, with swirls of blue and green. The European Space Agency's Sentinel-2A satellite took the natural-colour image, released on 9 September.

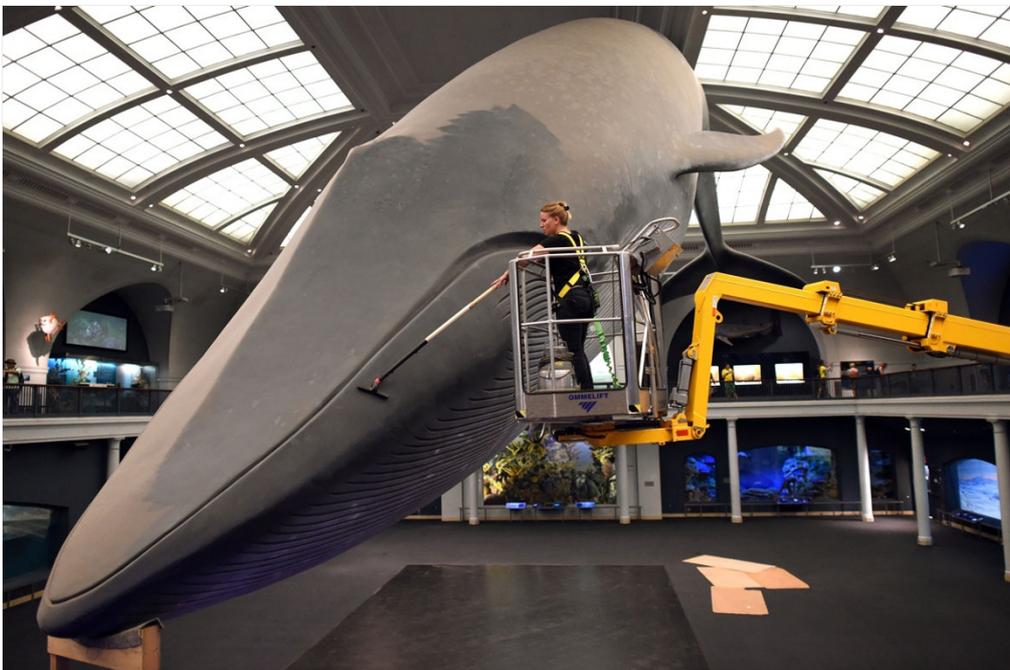
Swarm of lights



Martin Hieslmair (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

A swarm of 100 quadcopter [drones](#) took to the skies over Linz, Austria, on 10 September in a performance that combined music, movement and lights.

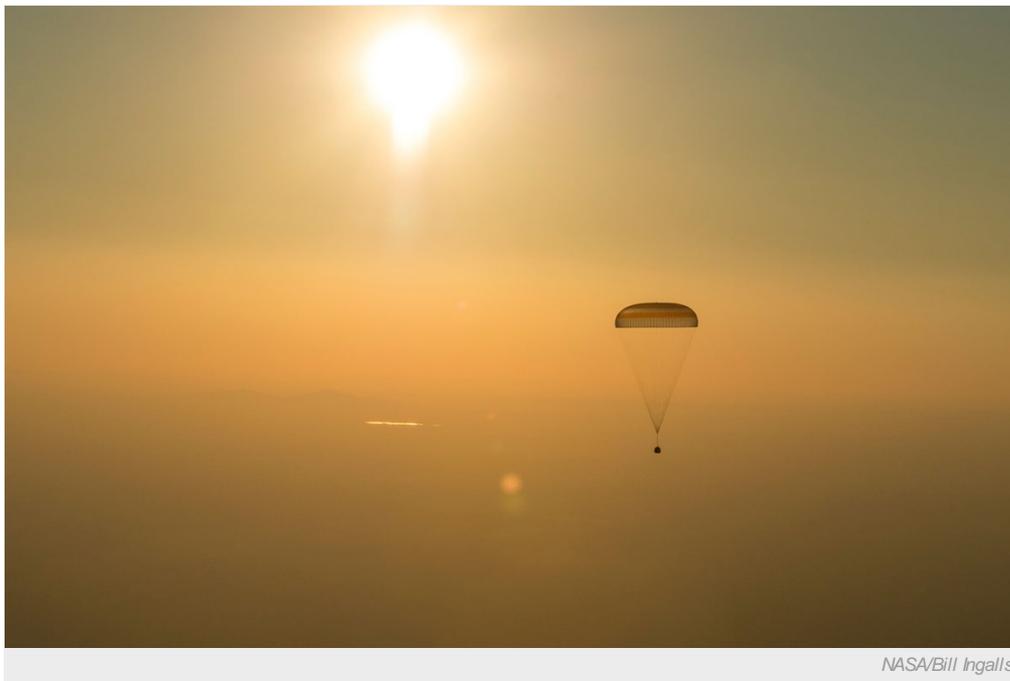
Sucking up



Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images

Armed with brushes, a vacuum cleaner and a crane, workers at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City scrubbed down a life-sized model of a blue [whale](#) (*Balaenoptera musculus*) on 7 September. The 29-metre-long whale accumulates dust as it keeps vigil over the museum's ocean-life exhibits, so employees give it an annual cleaning to keep it looking its best.

Homecoming



NASA/Bill Ingalls

The *Soyuz TMA-20M* spacecraft drifts down to Earth on 7 September, carrying three of the six members of the 48th expedition to the International Space Station. The returning trio spent 172 days in space.

Size matters



Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

Peter Glazebrook shows off the 8-kilogram root vegetable that won the heaviest-carrot competition at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show, UK, earlier this month. It's unclear whether there's an enormous bunny out there to match.

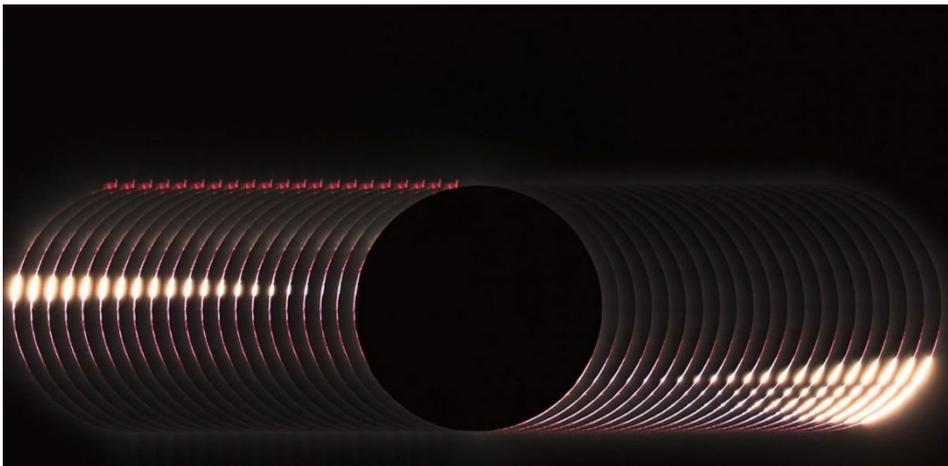
Big mouth



NOAA Okeanos Explorer Program

This deep-sea lizardfish (*Bathysaurus* sp.) lurks on the bottom of Veatch Canyon off the US east coast. These fish are one of many species [now protected](#) in the area, which was designated as the first US marine national monument in the Atlantic Ocean by President Barack Obama on 15 September.

A winning set



The Insight Astronomy Photographer of the Year competition announced its winners on 16 September. Yu Jun's composite image of beads of light ringing the Moon during a solar eclipse in March took top honours. Winners in other categories included an eerie photo of the Moon and Venus hovering over a misty morning landscape and a full Moon apparently perched on top of a mountain in Madrid.

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