

NASA'S KEPLER SPACE TELESCOPE TO RETIRE

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The Kepler discovered over 2,600 of the roughly 3,800 exoplanets. NASA/AP

The Kepler space telescope has run out of fuel and will be retired after a 9-1/2-year mission in which it detected thousands of planets beyond our solar system and boosted the search for worlds that might harbour alien life, NASA said on Tuesday.

Currently orbiting the sun 156 million km from the earth, the spacecraft will drift further from our planet when mission engineers turn off its radio transmitters, the U.S. space agency said.

The telescope laid bare the diversity of planets that reside in our Milky Way galaxy, with findings indicating that distant star systems are populated with billions of planets, and even helped pinpoint the first moon known outside our solar system.

The Kepler telescope discovered more than 2,600 of the roughly 3,800 exoplanets — the term for planets outside our solar system — that have been documented in the past two decades.

The telescope has now run out of the fuel needed for further operations.

The researchers propose that the bird be given an IUCN categorisation of “Vulnerable.”

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