

Robot Explorers

by Christine Taylor-Butler



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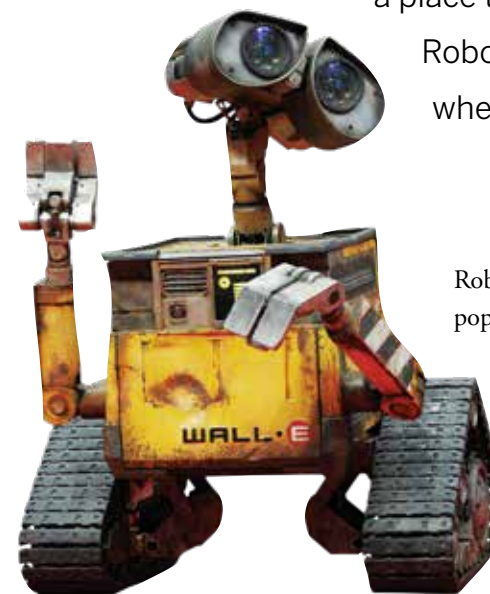
by Christine Taylor-Butler

When you hear the word *robot*, what do you think of? Do you picture a metal person that rolls around on a spaceship or completes tasks for humans? Chances are, you're remembering robots you've seen in science fiction movies or on TV shows.

Today, robots are very real. Most don't look like the robots in movies, though. That's because they are designed to do very special jobs. One of these jobs is **exploration**, which means traveling through

a place to learn about it.

Robots are built to go where people can't.



Robots have always been popular in books and movies.

Amplify Atlas™

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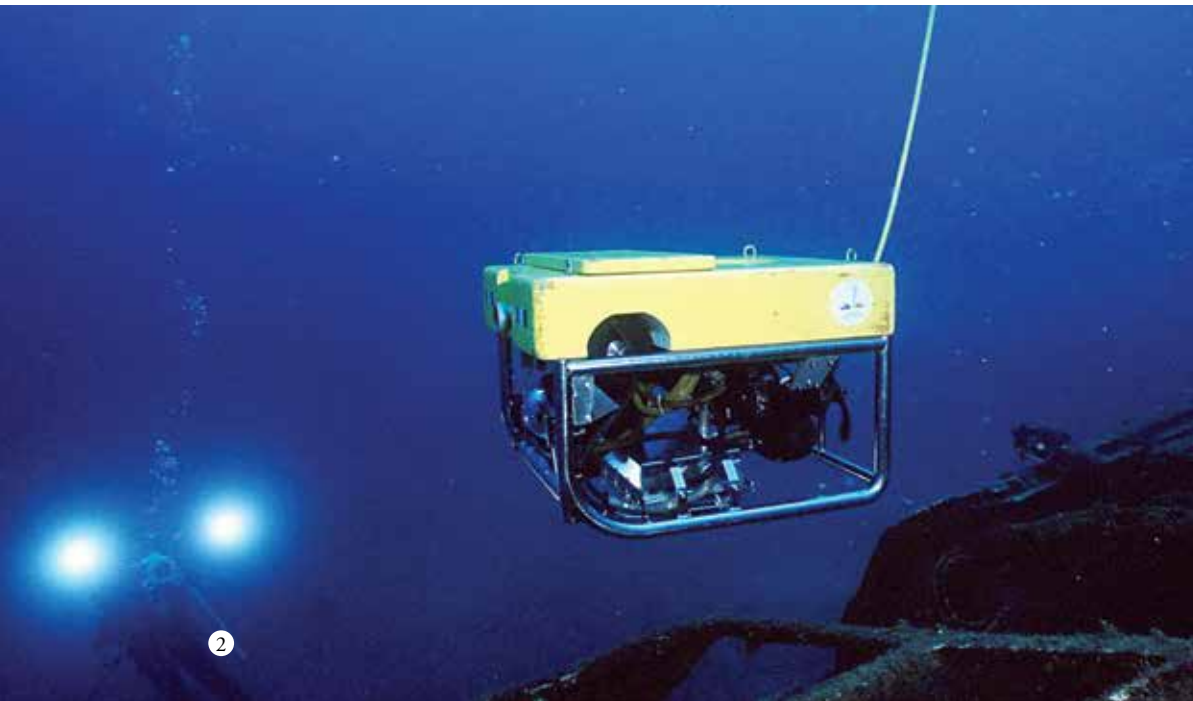
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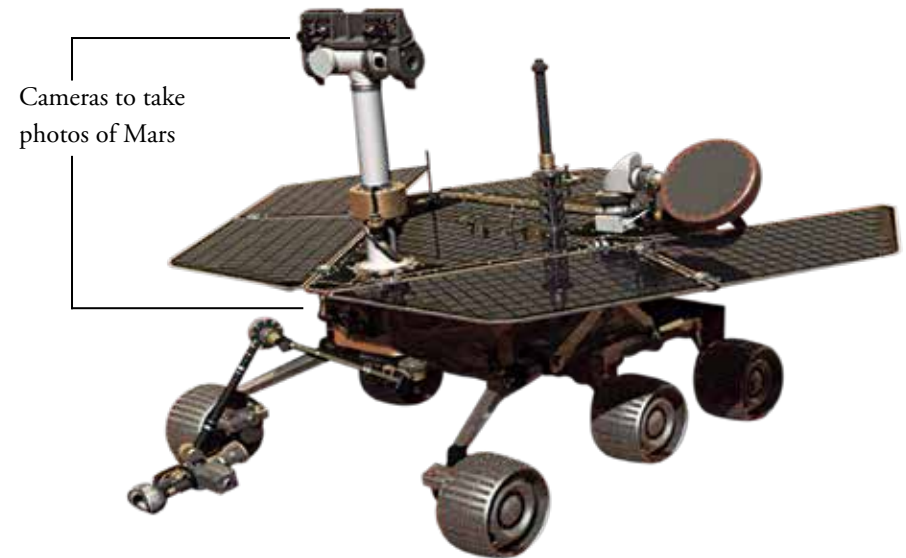
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Think of the oceans, for example. Water covers 70 percent of Earth's surface. Yet less than 10 percent of this area has been explored. The oceans are simply too huge, deep, and dangerous for people to visit every part of them. In 2009, scientists created the first robot to travel across the ocean on its own. As it travels, it sends important information back to the scientists. Other robots have been designed to explore the deepest ocean floors. The **pressure**, or weight of the water pushing in on something, would make it impossible for people to go that deep.

A deep-sea robot explores the ocean floor.



While many robots explore Earth, other robots explore outer space. In the 1960s, special robots were sent to the moon. They collected **data**, or information, that told scientists the surface was safe for humans to visit. Today, two robots called Spirit and Opportunity are exploring the surface of the planet Mars. They take photographs and collect soil samples. The data is then sent back to Earth. New snake robots are being built to work alongside these Mars robots. They will be able to wriggle into places the larger robots cannot.

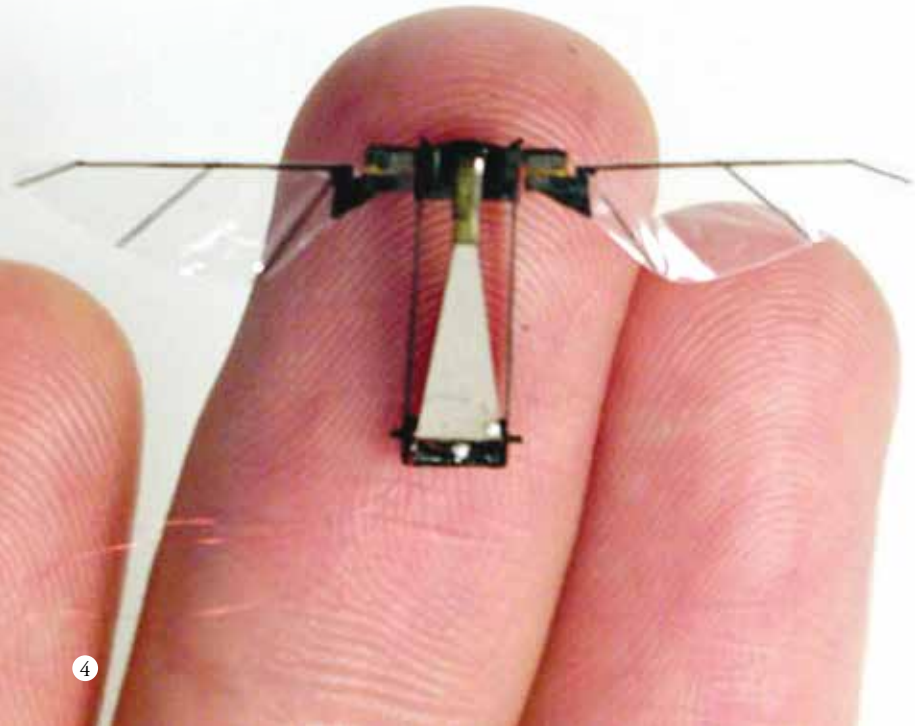


The robot Opportunity has been exploring Mars for over 10 years.

Tiny robots, less than 1 millimeter in size, are being developed to explore even stranger places. These **miniature** robots, called microbots, will search for survivors in collapsed buildings after an earthquake. Others will serve as **scouts**. They will be sent out ahead of human travelers to check for danger. Some may even travel through the human body, looking for unhealthy cells.

All of these special robots help us learn more about our world. They go where no one has ever gone before.

The small size of microbots helps us explore new places.



Glossary

data (n.): information that is collected for study

exploration (n.): traveling through a place to learn more about it

miniature (adj.): much smaller than normal

pressure (n.): when one thing pushes in on another

scouts (n.): people or machines sent out ahead of the main group to check out an area

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Informational

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