



**SKY**  
tonight.com

 PRINT THIS

## Earth-Like Planet Discovered

April 25, 2007

Birmingham Post; Birmingham (UK)

---

An earth-like planet that could be covered in oceans and may support life has been discovered outside the solar system.

The new world, which is 20.5 light years away, orbits a region with the right temperature to allow liquid water on its surface.

Scientists believe it is only 1.5 times larger and five times more massive than the earth, making it the smallest extra-solar planet known.

But the really exciting discovery is that the planet inhabits the habitable zone of its parent star, Gliese 581.

Also known as the "Goldilocks zone", this is the narrow orbit in which temperatures are not too hot, not too cold, but just right for surface water to exist as a liquid.

The habitable zone varies according to the heat output of the star, and Gliese 581 is much smaller and colder than the sun. So even though the planet is 14 times closer to the star than the earth is to the sun, it lies in a region where rivers, lakes and oceans are possible.

Liquid water is one of the pre-requisites for life.

The new planet was found by Swiss, French and Portuguese astronomers.

(c) 2007 Birmingham Post; Birmingham (UK). Provided by ProQuest Information and Learning. All rights Reserved.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.skytonight.com/news/wires?id=105607792&c=y>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.