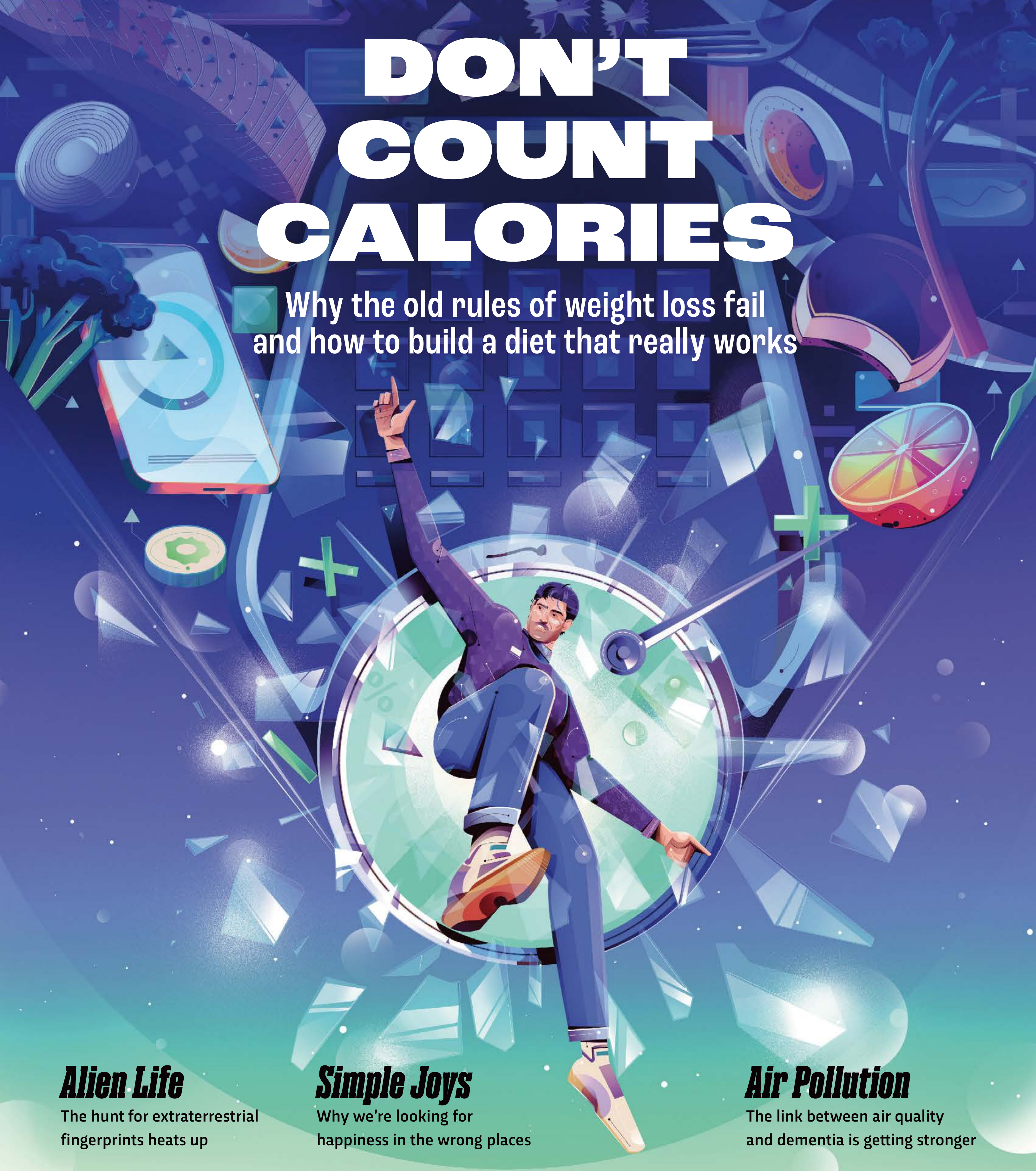
BBC

HOW THE MAYA PREDICTED THE FUTURE

Science Focus

DON'T COUNT CALORIES

Why the old rules of weight loss fail
and how to build a diet that really works



Alien Life
The hunt for extraterrestrial fingerprints heats up

Simple Joys
Why we're looking for happiness in the wrong places

Air Pollution
The link between air quality and dementia is getting stronger

Over the course of 2025, there was no shortage of mind-blowing images that helped us visualise scientific progress. From awe-inspiring cosmic explosions to a ray of hope for a struggling species, we've curated the most awe-inspiring images of the last 12 months. Here's our selection of the best, and what they taught us…

THE BEST SCIENCE IMAGES OF 2025

BLOOD MOON

TOKYO, JAPAN

From Cape Town to Canberra, stargazers were treated to a stunning sight on 7–8 September, as Earth's shadow fell across the Moon. Here, the 'blood moon' – the result of a total lunar eclipse – is peering out from behind Tokyo's 634m (2,080ft) Skytree broadcasting tower.

Throughout history, blood moons have been regarded as bad omens. Only a couple of centuries ago, the Chinese Navy would have fired artillery upon seeing one, trying to scare off the dragons they believed were trying to swallow the Moon. Similarly, the Incas and Mayans feared that a jaguar was trying to devour the Moon.

Today, we know that a lunar eclipse occurs when Earth passes directly between the Sun and Moon. This blocks the Sun's light from reaching the lunar surface directly. In a total lunar eclipse, such as this one that took place in September, the only light touching the Moon is light that's filtered through Earth's atmosphere. The Moon appears to be red because red light has a longer wavelength that can escape more easily through our atmosphere.

This autumn's eclipse was one of 85 total lunar eclipses that will occur this century. If you haven't seen one yet, you've already missed 23.

GETTY IMAGES

TOP-SECRET TRAJECTORY

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA

As well as launching its own technology (see Twilight Jellyfish), SpaceX has been helping the US military conduct secret missions. Relatively little is known about what the US Space Force is testing with its uncrewed, reusable spaceplanes. But, on 22 August, the X-37B spaceplane left the Kennedy Space Center aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with a mission to demonstrate 'laser communication' and 'quantum navigation'.

There were suggestions that laser communication might involve SpaceX satellites. Meanwhile, quantum navigation, officials confirmed, refers to a system that would allow astronauts to navigate without the guidance of GPS.

First launched in 2010, the Boeing-made X-37B spaceplane remains operational, having now completed seven secret missions and more than 4,000 days in orbit. It launches vertically, as in traditional space missions, but lands horizontally like a plane.