

# Solar-powered aircraft takes first public flight

*Aerospace Testing International*



A solar-powered prototype built by Luminati Aerospace took its first public demonstration flight on June 10, with pilot Robert Lutz at the controls of the VO-Substrata aircraft.

The company reports the flight, which was open to the public, lasted about 20 minutes. Luminati envisions the prototype will lead to a fleet of drones able to provide aerial internet service for an estimated 4 billion people worldwide.

The flight took place at the former Northrop Grumman defense plant on eastern Long Island in New York, USA, which once made military aircraft.

The aircraft has wing-mounted solar cells and a wingspan of about 43ft (13m).

The prototype allows for a pilot to control it, but eventually Luminati plans to build unmanned drones that can fly at 60,000ft (18,000m) or more. The company hopes to start manufacturing by the end of the year.

After his flight, Lutz said that the aircraft is "very birdlike," adding, "hawks will be circling around, and they kind of flock to you. It's the only aircraft I've ever flown where I can hear a helicopter next to me."