

## Deep Sea Discoveries

**You never know what you might find lurking in the ocean's depths.**

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Marine biologists are having a field day. The discovery of new marine species, especially in very deep waters, is reaching a feverish pace. We're experiencing a renaissance in deep ocean exploration.

Consider these recent headlines: "Seven New Species Of Deep-Sea Coral Discovered"; "Three New Species Discovered On Deep-Sea Voyage"; "New Fish Discovered In Antarctic Ocean"; "California's Deep Sea Secrets: New Species Found, Human Impact Revealed"; "Astonishing Life In Ocean's Depths: Major Progress Made Towards Historic Census Of Marine Life."

### Deep Water Renaissance

This is just a smattering of recent headlines. All over the world, researchers are pulling back the veil covering the ocean depths. The Census of Marine Life project has undertaken to unify this research and paint a broad picture of life in the world's oceans.

Part of the cause for this explosion in new discoveries is the advent of new underwater research technologies. We're seeing all sorts of new manned and unmanned submersible vehicles that are allowing us to peer deeper into the ocean than ever before.

This research isn't just academic in its implications. Consider a few more recent headlines: "Ancient Climate Secrets Raised From Ocean Depths" and "Biomedical Research Profits From Exploration Of Deep Sea." Through the efforts of these intrepid researchers, our study of the deep ocean environment is helping to advance our understanding of climate change and treatment of disease.

### The Fun of Exploration

These are big issues. Think of how these exciting discoveries might affect our hobby in the future. We could have new corals or fishes never before seen appear in our aquariums over time. We might discover some new organism that acts as a "game changer," possibly altering how we keep aquariums.

We just don't know what we'll find out there. In some of my scuba dives, I've seen some things that, while known to science, were still exciting and surprising for me.

While training for an "Intro to Technical Diving" class I took through the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), I had a strange experience. My dive buddy and I were just off the coast near Veteran's Park in Redondo Beach, Calif. We were practicing swimming backward using our fins, and my buddy was just beginning his turn while I watched.

The visibility was awful that day, and we could barely see more than 3 feet in front of our faces. On a normal recreational dive, we would have canceled because of the poor visibility, but because we were training, we felt the poor conditions would actually help for our training purposes.

We were right next to the first large drop off about 75 yards from the beach, where the underwater Redondo Canyon begins. I was facing toward the canyon – that is, I was facing west away from the coast – and my buddy was facing toward shore.

As my dive buddy was beginning to move slowly away from me, something caught my eye out of the right side of my dive mask, right beside my buddy. At first, I thought what I was seeing was a shark of some kind. I signaled to my buddy and swam closer to the creature and just past my dive partner.

As I got closer, I could see the beginnings of a very large, scaly tail emerge from the cloudy water. I realized I was looking at a large fish but probably not a shark.

When I was close enough, I could see that I was 2 feet from a giant white sea bass. The fish was truly awesome. It was just sitting in about 30 feet of water, too! In my excitement, I tried to get a little bit closer, but the majestic animal wasn't nearly as interested in me and swam out of sight.

I was totally dumbstruck. I swam back to my dive partner, who hadn't realized that I was looking at this giant fish. I pointed into the distance, then I put my arms apart like a fisherman telling about the one that got away.

My friend's eyes bulged out, and we surfaced shortly after. I tried to convince him we should go after the fish to see if we could get a better look, but he wasn't sure I hadn't seen a shark. We finished our training for the day and headed in.

#### Find Something New in Your Tank

New aquatic life and unexplored marine environments are interesting because we never know what we'll find. Every new underwater research mission seems to reveal some new earth-shaking discovery.

I encourage you to get a taste of this new drive to discover the ocean's depths. If you haven't kept a reef tank yet, you should seriously consider it. If you already keep a reef tank, think about expanding and adding new species to your repertoire. If you don't want to keep a reef for yourself, I suggest you make your way to the nearest public aquarium and get an eyeful of what you're missing.

Make an effort to go out and make a discovery, even if it's only something new to you. The hobby opens so many avenues, and there is literally no end to what we can teach ourselves.

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