

# 'Popping rocks' gases key to Earth's gases

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"Popping rocks" off Mexico, near Guadalupe Island, give clues about rare gases from "young" seafloor volcanoes.

Scientists aboard the Scripps research vessel Roger Revelle solved a 45-year-old geological mystery concerning the rocks, which spontaneously explode with a sharp snapping sound when brought to the surface.

A team of U.S. and Mexican geologists and student researchers explored the region, including the area now known as Popcorn Ridge, to find the source of the popping rocks.

The researchers hit the jackpot with the area labeled "D-11," located along the flank of what the scientists are calling Krause Volcano -- after Scripps oceanographer Dale Krause, who discovered the deep-sea volcanic rocks in 1960.

"As soon as we took the rocks out of the water we could hear them popping, much like a firecracker," said Barry Eakins.

The rocks are important because the volcanic gases trapped in the bubbles did not escape during eruption. That could give researchers more information about the inventory of gases within Earth, but also help them better understand the origin and history of Earth's atmosphere.

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