

NOAA and partners to survey marine life at USS Monitor wreck site

August 7 2009

NOAA will participate in a private research expedition to study marine life living on and around the wreck of the USS Monitor. The August 2-8 expedition is the first in the history of Monitor National Marine Sanctuary devoted specifically to understanding how the wreck contributes to the health of underwater creatures and plants living in sanctuary waters.

Using non-invasive techniques, divers will conduct an inventory of various species of [fish](#), crustaceans, mollusks, jellyfish, corals, and sponges. The survey also will examine the population of lionfish on the wreck to determine if this fierce predator is harming the site's natural ecosystem.

"The information collected during this expedition will help us to better understand the role the historic shipwreck has played as an artificial reef and may be important to our efforts to continue preservation of the USS Monitor," said David W. Alberg, superintendent of USS Monitor National Marine Sanctuary.

The biological research will be conducted by dive teams from the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island, the Outer Banks Dive Center, [Ocean Explorer Charters](#), and Associated Design. The data collected will be analyzed by the Smithsonian Institution's Marine Botany Department.

"It is vital that we can better understand the wreck as a reef as we move forward in determining how best to manage the Monitor sanctuary," said

Jeff Johnston, historian for Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. "The collaboration of private citizens and a state and federal agency working together to gain a better understanding of one of America's most significant ships is a great story in itself."

The USS Monitor is located in 240 feet of water 16 miles south of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, where the ship sank on a stormy New Year's Eve in 1862. In an effort to protect the nation's most famous ironclad, the shipwreck was designated Monitor National Marine Sanctuary in January 1975. In the late 1990's through 2002, several iconic Monitor artifacts were recovered and are being conserved at The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va.

Source: NOAA Headquarters ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: NOAA and partners to survey marine life at USS Monitor wreck site (2009, August 7) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-08-noaa-partners-survey-marine-life.html>

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