

New species of coral, sponges found near Hawaii

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(AP) -- New and dramatic species of coral and sponges have been found in the Pacific during deep sea dives near the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, scientists said Monday.

Submersibles operated by the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory discovered the species in early December in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. They found the species during dives nearly 1 mile deep.

Christopher Kelley, the lab's program biologist, called [sponges](#) found at dive sites off Middle Bank, some 120 miles northwest of [Hawaii](#), "absolutely bizarre."

During radio transmissions between the submersible Pisces IV and its support ship, Kelley said one observer remarked when first seeing the sponges, "It looks like something out of Dr. Seuss."

Kelley will be working with other scientists to identify the sponges.

"There are lots of things down there that are just brand new," he said.

"We don't know what they are, and this is a fantastic opportunity to try and help the monument and determine what some of the deep water resources are."

The expedition marked the first time the lab used high definition video cameras to capture images of its [deep ocean](#) work.

The quality of the HD video is so good, scientists expect to be able to identify some animals from the video alone, rather than having to collect actual specimens, Kelley said.

In addition to its research value, HD brings the deep [sea](#) experience to the general public, he said.

"It's really the type of quality we see out the windows of the submersible," Kelley said. "People are going to be seeing what we're seeing. People are going to see why we're so excited about these deep water environments, because these animals are spectacular."

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