Biological communities studied at historical WWII shipwrecks along North Carolina

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In the waters off the North Carolina coast, historically-significant World War II submarines and shipwrecks rest on the seafloor, a testament to a relatively unknown chapter in U.S. history. According to a new NOAA report, the shipwrecks are not only important for their cultural value, but also as habitat for a wide diversity of fishes, invertebrates and algal species. Additionally, due to their unique location within an important area for biological productivity, the shipwrecks are potential sites for examining community change.

In June 2010, scientists conducted biological and ecological investigations on four World War II shipwrecks (Keshena, City of Atlanta, Dixie Arrow, EM Clark), as part of NOAA's Battle of the Atlantic research project. At each shipwreck site, fish community surveys were conducted and benthic photo-quadrants were collected to characterize the mobile conspicuous fish, smaller prey fish, and sessile invertebrate and algal communities. In addition, temperature sensors were placed at all four shipwrecks, as well as an additional shipwreck, the Manuela.

The data, which establishes a baseline condition to use in future assessments, suggest strong differences in both the fish and benthic communities among the surveyed shipwrecks based on ocean depth.

More information: The full National Marine Sanctuaries' Conservation Series report, "Fish and Habitat Community Assessments on North Carolina Shipwrecks: Potential sites for detecting climate

change in the Graveyard of the Atlantic," can be viewed here: sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/c … vation/pdfs/bota.pdf

Provided by NOAA