

Nautilus crew discover mysterious purple orb near ocean floor

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(Phys.org)—The crew of the Exploration Vessel Nautilus has posted a YouTube video of their discovery of a mysterious purple orb-shaped creature living very near the bottom of the Pacific Ocean not far off the coast of Los Angeles. In addition to footage of the creature, the researchers can be heard making observations and engaging in a discussion about whether or not to capture it and bring it aboard for

further study.

The Nautilus is a ship operated by the Ocean Exploration Trust, which was set up by Robert Ballard with the goal of conducting both scientific research and capturing images of an undersea world that most people never get to see. Recently, the current crew of eight has been investigating the tectonically active area off the coast of California, looking for organisms that likely live nowhere else. To conduct their studies, they operate two undersea remotely operated vehicles (ROVs)—Hercules and Argus—that they control from onboard the Nautilus. In addition to mobility, the ROVs have appendages that can be used to manipulate the nearby environment and implements, such as a suction hose, for pulling in specimens that are found.

As can be seen in the video, the camera aboard the ROV shows images of various undersea creatures in their environment, when suddenly, a very small purple orb comes into view just above the ocean floor and under an overhang. The researchers clearly have no idea what it is and begin referring to it as a purple 'blob'. They zoom in and discover the blob is actually spherical and is spotted with whitish dots. They toss around some ideas regarding what it may be before deciding to pull it aboard for a closer look. As they maneuver into position, a nearby crab also apparently notices the orb and moves toward it, eventually knocking it around a bit as the crew continues to debate the nature of the creature. Eventually they agree to deploy the suction hose, but first use lasers to determine whether it will fit in their vacuum—their measurements suggest it is no bigger than six or seven centimeters, so they go ahead and suck it up.

In an update, after getting a better look at the creature, the team reported that it unfolded into two lobes and suggested it might be a [new species](#) of nudibranch, a type of mollusk. More research is required to positively identify it as a new species.

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