



National Environmental
Research Program

MARINE BIODIVERSITY *hub*

Managing natural and cultural assets deep in the Coral Sea

The NERP Marine Biodiversity Hub is partnering with the team that discovered the Titanic to survey three United States warships sunk during the World War II 'Battle of the Coral Sea': USS *Lexington*, *Sims* and *Neosho*). The team will also survey the surrounding biodiversity at 1000–3000 metres depth.

The survey proposed for 2014/15 on Australia's new RV *Investigator* will involve scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, SEWPaC, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the US National Park Service Submerged Resources Center, CSIRO and other Hub partners.

This will be the first standardised evaluation of deepwater natural and cultural assets in the proposed Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve. It will set a standard for evaluating deepwater marine reserves, contributing to the national blueprint for monitoring marine ecosystem health and the impact of marine reserves being developed by the Hub and SEWPaC.

Ecological questions relevant to managing the proposed Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve include:

- Is Australia's deep eastern Coral Sea biogeographically distinct?

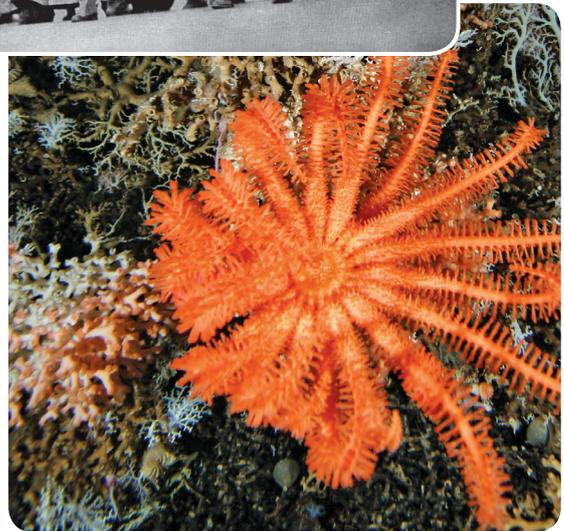
- If diverse epifaunal assemblages including coldwater corals occur on seamounts, can they act as climate refugia, or are they especially vulnerable due to isolation?
- Do deep shipwreck habitats demonstrate model biodiversity patterns such as community

structure, connectivity, growth and colonisation, and responses to environmental conditions?

- Do deep shipwrecks pose environmental threats as sources of pollution?



Natural and cultural assets will be surveyed in the Coral Sea during a voyage of the new Marine National Facility Research Vessel *Investigator* in 2014/15.



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Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities



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The NERP Marine Biodiversity Hub is supported through funding from the Australian Government's National Environmental Research Program, administered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC). Our goal is to support marine stakeholders in evidence-based decision making for marine biodiversity management. Stakeholders include DSEWPaC, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA) and the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS). (February 2013)