

AQUANEWS

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Reports on the Helis (YO-153)

Dave Swope

On Sunday, May 22, Eileen and I went down to the Garden State North Reef today and did a dive on the new wreck, "Helis" (YO-153). We wanted to see how it looks just four days after sinking. To our knowledge, we were the first divers on the wreck since it went down.

My first observation is the ocean. The entire water column from surface to sand is clean. We were impressed by the clear water kicked up in our wake while cruising to the wreck. After anchoring, we could see the anchor line going down 30+ feet from the surface. And while descending, I could always see the line 25 feet ahead. Visibility on the bottom was 25 plus feet even with a moderate surge. Since we have had several days of stiff northeast winds, I had very low expectations for the viz. This was a delightful surprise. Another delight was the water temperature. Today it was 50 on the bottom. Almost tropical compared to the 41 degree water we had out of Belmar on May 1.

My second observation is the wreck. The demolition team did a great job. The wreck is sitting perfectly upright. To quote Eileen, "You could put a level on it". The wreck is high. I read 81 feet at the sand, 63 feet on the main deck, 56 feet in the wheel house, and 50 feet on top of the wheel house. It is 170 feet long and can easily be explored in a single dive.

Penetration through the enclosed areas was easy. I made no attempt to go into the tanker area. Only the work areas and crew quarters. The table and some stools are still in the dining room. The safe and desk are

still in the captain's quarters. There are dozens of valve wheels along the deck. Divers looking for a souvenir will have fun.

My third observation is the fish life. I expected the wreck to be void of fish after only four days on the bottom. But I counted literally dozens of blackfish and sea bass that have already taken up residence. And all of them were legal size. A couple blackfish were easily 4 to 5 pounds. I came eye to eye with one huge blackfish as he was coming out of a passageway.

Towards the bow, Eileen found a star fish that had already climbed up several feet from the sand and attached itself to the hull. No lobsters yet but that will come. If this is an indication of future habitation, the "Helis" will be a very popular wreck for fish and fisherman.

The only down side of the diving today were the conditions on the surface. We had a west wind and 4 to 6 foot swells coming from the southeast. This made for a confused sea and lumpy conditions at anchor not to mention frequent rearrangement of everything loose in the cabin. I had planned to check out a subway car while on the reef as my second dive. But when the rain started, we gave into the weather. We called it a day and headed for home.

I took my camera and shot a short roll of what the wreck looks like now. A few of them came out and I will be sending them to Bill Figley to record what the wreck looks like now. Hopefully, someone will do another photo shoot after

(Continued on page 3)

AQUANEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
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AQUANAUTS ORGANIZATION.
WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS &
PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ALWAYS
WELCOMED & ENCOURAGED.
SUBMIT MATERIALS FOR
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THE MONTH

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS

TO CHANGE MAILING
ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER
OR E-MAIL, PLEASE NOTIFY:
JERRY GHERARDI

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 9th, 2005

7:00-9:00 pm at the West Nyack Free Library
65 Strawtown Road
West Nyack, NY 10994
Phone: 845-358-6081; www.westnyacklib.org

Directions:

Thruway from Tappan Zee Bridge

Get off at West Nyack Route 303 (Exit 12). Make a left hand turn; get into the far right land and turn onto Snake Hill Road. Follow Snake Hill Road until you come to the reservoir at the end of the road. Make a left hand turn onto Old Mill Road and follow it until you come to a 4- corner stop sign intersection. Make a left hand turn onto Strawtown Road. The library is located 3/10s of a mile on the right at the intersection of Strawtown and Demarest Avenue.

Thruway from Harriman

From the New York State Thruway, take Exit 13S (Palisades Parkway South) to Exit 8W (Rte 59W). Take Rte 59W to Rte 304N. Take 304N to West Nyack Road which is the first light. Make a right onto West Nyack Road. Proceed to the fork and bear left onto Demarest Avenue. The library is located at the intersection of Strawtown Road and Demarest Avenue. The entrance to the parking lot is on Demarest Avenue.

Meeting Topic– Open Forum!

We would like to thank Peggy Howland for her presentation on the humpback whales last month!

Rockland Aquanauts Annual Picnic

For those of you who missed the Picnic on May 22nd, it really turned out to be a nice day. Thanks to Les Parker and Melissa Bogen the food was ready on time. They even brought a treat of Venison Steaks that were marinated and delicious, as far as I am concerned. We had 5 brave divers in the water and an additional 11 people to set up, cook and provide shore support. As usual a Good time was had by all.

Members of the Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.

We need articles for our newsletter! Any help is appreciated.
Contact our webmaster webmaster@rocklandaquanauts.org

Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc. Mission Statement:

To provide, promote, and advance environmental protection, care, and voluntary clean-up of waterways by any and all lawful means; to promote the importance and care in every manner possible by environmental awareness and otherwise; to purchase, print, publish, and circulate literature to promote the importance and care of the waterways and the work of the Corporation. To perform all acts the Corporation may deem appropriate or advisable in such operation; to establish, provide, and voluntary clean-up waterways, to encourage, support and subsidize the cleaning and protection from pollution.

Reports on the Helis (YO-153)

(continued from page 1)

the "Helis" has been down a few years. My first impression is that this is a great addition to our artificial reef system and one more reason to dive New Jersey. The Fish and Wildlife Division did well.

The next time I dive the "Helis", the spear gun comes along and the camera stays home.



YO-153, a World War II-era Philadelphia Navy Yard refueling vessel, sinks 6.5 miles off Long Beach Island to become part of an artificial reef. At left, crewmen of a tug boat show where holes were cut in the ship.
(picture and caption from APP.com)

From Tom Gormley:

Rehabilitated Dolphins Released in Fla.

The Associated Press

KEY LARGO, Fla. (AP) - Seven rehabilitated rough-toothed dolphins were released Tuesday off the Florida Keys, two months after stranding on a mud flat near Marathon in the middle Keys.

Marine Mammal Conservancy volunteers took the dolphins to a point in the Atlantic Ocean about 14 nautical miles off Key Largo in two catamaran dive boats. They were released almost simultaneously and stayed together, and were seen foraging for food.

The day was a triumph for the MMC volunteers, who invested thousands of hours in the rehabilitation effort, working round-the-clock.

``This is the day we live for," said Robert Lin Genfelser, MMC president. ``This is all the payoff for all the hard work, the dedication of our volunteers and the Florida Keys community."

The mammals were among 68 that grounded March 2. Thirty-six of the dolphins died on the beach or in the water, but 32 were treated at three South Florida marine mammal centers. Five are still being treated. It is not known when they will be released.

Before their release, each animal was fitted with a VHF radio transmitter and two had satellite transponders. The tracking gear should automatically fall off in about six weeks, Gomez said.

Marine mammal experts still do not know why the animals stranded. Some conjecture that sonar, from a Navy submarine operating off the Keys around the time of the stranding, may be to blame.

``We don't have a smoking gun," said Sarah Gomez, a biologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries service. She said it could take up to a year before a final report is issued.

On the Net:

Marine Mammal Conservancy: <http://www.marinemammalconservancy.org>

NOAA Marine Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

Researchers Locate Lost Fishing Nets
April 29, 2005 12:26 PM EDT

WASHINGTON - Researchers using satellites and aircraft have located a concentration of lost or abandoned fishing nets that drift through the oceans posing a danger to fish and other wildlife.

Now that they have confirmed the location of the nets, the researchers are trying to determine the best way to clean them up and to arrange funding for the effort, James Churnside of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Friday.

"There is a lot more trash out there than I expected," said Churnside, a researcher with the NOAA Environmental Technology Laboratory in Boulder, Colo.

He said the project got underway when NOAA officials asked if technology being used to track fish could also be used to locate debris.

Ocean winds and currents can concentrate drifting materials, so the scientists used satellites to study the winds and currents to determine areas where concentrations can occur - locating one such area in the Pacific Ocean north of Hawaii.

They confirmed their theory, flying out to the area in a NOAA P-3 aircraft in late March and early this month.

They found a large concentration of drifting nets, balls of fish net up to 30 feet across and other debris in an area that forms a boundary between northern waters and southern waters.

Along that front is a region of relatively high biological activity, Churnside said. "A lot of turtles hang out there," he said, along with dolphins, tuna and billfish.

Churnside said the nets were found using a digital imaging system aboard the aircraft flying from Hawaii. Most modern nets are made from synthetic materials which decay extremely slowly. They can continue to drift for years and the researchers said many of them get caught on coral reefs, where they both entangle fish and damage the fragile coral.

Churnside said that during three days of study, about 2,000 individual pieces of debris were seen including at least 100 that were identified as nets or pieces of net. A number were balls of net up to 30 feet across.

"One piece of driftnet that was still stretched out, and presumably still fishing, was 200-300 meters (650-975 feet) long," Churnside said.

On the Net: NOAA Ghostnets <http://www.etl.noaa.gov/programs/2003/ghostnet/>

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Probe finds war relics in Hudson

Author: Poughkeepsie Journal
Dan Shapley

CORNWALL -- Using high-tech sonar equipment Thursday, scientists identified one of four obstructions colonial rebels placed in the Hudson River in 1777 to thwart the British's attempt to split the colonies.

The "chevaux de frise" was a series of square wooden structures, each something like a stack of Lincoln Logs outfitted with spiked logs facing south.

They were sunk in a line from the west shore south of Newburgh to Bannerman's Island -- then called Pollepel Island -- and were meant to snare British ships and prevent their passage north.

Rebels also strung heavy chains and other obstructions across the Hudson at West Point, Fort Montgomery and New York City -- all part of a strategy to prevent the British from uniting troops in New York City and upstate New York.

Military historians believe, as Gen. George Washington did then, losing the Hudson would have devastated the rebels by cutting off supply and communication ! lines between New England and the other colonies.

"The Revolutionary War aspects of the Hudson were just amazing. So much was at stake," said Daria Merwin, the project archaeologist from Stony Brook University.

First exploration

The archaeological exploration is the first of its kind on the Hudson. Roger Flood, a marine geologist at Stony Brook, is the lead investigator.

The scientists spent this week aboard the ship Rude, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's smallest hydrographic vessel. Its usual mission is to identify shipwrecks and other obstructions to navigation in Northeast ports.

The exploration has also revealed in greater detail shipwrecks, some of which are likely associated with the Battle of Fort Montgomery.

The British won the battle, but it is nevertheless considered important to the eventual American success because it held up troops that could otherwise have bolstered British troops in Saratoga.

The Saratoga force, a quarter of its North American army, surrendered at the pivotal October 1777 battle.

The shipwrecks are expected to include two gunships, the frigates Congress and the Montgomery, both of which were built at a shipyard on the City of Poughkeepsie's southern waterfront. They were among the 13 ships in America's first naval fleet.

To prevent their capture by the overwhelming British force, both were burned by the rebels shortly after arriving at Fort Montgomery. Five American ships and 700 troops faced a 56-vessel British fleet and 3,000 men.

Historic listing possible

The sunken vessels, if found in appropriate condition, could be named to the National Register of Historic Places, said Mark Peckham, national register program coordinator for New York's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

"An awful lot of our maritime history is underwater, and it deserves to be preserved," he said.

The archaeological project grew out of an ongoing state Hudson River Estuary ! Program project to map the bottom of the Hudson River to better understand and manage river ecology.

The estuary program and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration contributed money to the weeklong project, which ended Friday. Scientists hope to return in the fall to dive, or possibly use robots, to confirm their discoveries.

(Dan Shapley can be reached at dshapley@poughkeepsiejournal.com)

Sting Ray City

While perhaps the most dangerous patch of underwater real estate anywhere in the world, Sting Rays City is widely promoted the Grand Cayman Tourist Bureau, though the resident critters often harm the tourists. On April 1, reports the Wisconsin State Journal, eleven-year-old Justin Weber was scuba diving with his parents, when a six-foot green moray chomped down on his forearm, severing several arteries and pouring blood into the water. The eel held on tight until Justin's dad pried its jaws apart (Justin later said "It was more pain than I've ever had. I was just scared"). The moray may have been attracted to the diabetes medical bracelet Justin wore, thinking it was another bit of chum tossed into the water. Justin underwent six hours of surgery on Grand Cayman, where doctors used a vein from his leg to help restore blood flow to his hand. The Webers arranged for a chartered medical jet, which cost \$21,400, to fly Justin to Madison, Wisconsin, for further surgery. His family is hopeful he'll regain full use of his hand. His mother Laura said the family will resume diving, but not where fish are fed. "We believe this changes the way the animals react to human beings," she said. Experts would agree, though tourist bureaus don't seem to care. The eel was "relocated."

A Walking Two-Legged Octopus?

Two species of tropical octopus have evolved a neat trick to avoid predators - they lift up six of their arms and walk backward on the other two. When walking, these octopuses use the outer halves of their two back arms like tank treads, alternately laying down a sucker edge and rolling it along the ground.

Robert Full, professor of integrative biology at UC Berkeley, and grad student Crissy Huffard, co-authors of a report in the March issue of Science, think that this bipedal walking is a strategy octopuses use to backpedal away from predators while remaining camouflaged. "This is the first underwater bipedal locomotion I know of, and the first example of hydrostatic bipedal movement," says Huffard.

And what does science think it can learn from this? According to Full, "understanding behavior like this could usher in a new frontier of 'soft' robotics," in contrast to the rigid robots common today.

For more details and a video clip of this two-legged marvel, check out
<http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2005/03/24_octopus.shtml>

North Carolina– Summer 05 Max Estroff

So I'm trying to plan a trip to Moorehead City, North Carolina. So far no one has responded to last month's request. Our club has a dive at Hessian Lake on Saturday, June 25th. Sunday, June 26th, could be our 10-12 hour drive down. Olympus Divers is booked every weekend. The only option we have for diving is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday optional. This is subject to sell out unless we get back to them real soon. Rooms are still available at the Ramada on the Beach and the Amerisuites (for pet owners) across the road. This is also subject to selling out real soon. So, let us know if you are interested. Telephone # 845-268-5272

Scheduled Dive Dates

Sunday May 22nd 9:00 AM Hessian Lake
Annual Picnic

Saturday June 25th 9:00 AM Hessian Lake

Saturday July 16th 9:00 AM Lake TBA

Sunday August 21st 9:00 AM Hessian Lake
NYSDA Dive

Sunday September 18th 9:00 AM Lake Welch

Saturday October 15th 10:00 AM Hessian lake
Oktoberfest

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

How good are you about achieving your goals? Are you ready for a new set for New Year's resolutions, because you abandoned the old ones? Did you lose those last five pounds in time for the holidays the way you planned? Have you kept up with your fitness regime? Have you paid your Rockland Aquanaut Annual Membership fees?

Collecting fees is one of the unpleasant necessities of organizational life. Until we find a rich member to support the Aquanauts exclusively, we depend on your annual fees to keep the organization going. A full year will only run you \$42.

Kindly remit your check to:

Paul Galeazzi Jr.



**Rockland Aquanauts
Post Office Box 387
New City, NY
10956**

June 2005

Helis, Rehabilitated Dolphins Released in Fla., Locating Lost Fishing Nets, Sting Ray City

****Next Meeting Thursday, June 9th, 2005****

7:00 pm at

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65 Strawtown Road

West Nyack, NY 10994

(845) 358-6081

Directions inside
