



Monday May 9 2011

Kermadec specimens may hold global warming answers

Small fish and marine plants being gathered from 1000km north east of New Zealand could be the key to tracking changes in species brought on by global warming effects.

A team of 15 researchers led by Auckland Museum is travelling to the Kermadec Islands for three weeks hoping to identify new species in one of the world's most pristine marine environment.

"The remoteness and isolation of the Kermadecs means only a fraction of information has been collected about its marine life. The species have been left to their own devices without intrusion from humans. It is like a journey back in time."

"We have several goals for the expedition and one of them is to establish a record of species diversity which we can use as a baseline to monitor changes over time," says Auckland Museum marine curator Tom Trnski.

"This will be a really significant reference survey to track changes in species composition that may result from global warming effects on regional water temperatures and currents."

"At Auckland Museum we currently have around 6000 specimens which sound like a lot but actually represent a tiny fraction when you look at the species diversity of the Kermadecs. My interest area is fishes and we only have 8 species of fish within our collection."

The team leaves from Tauranga on Monday, May 9 at 11.30am on the *RV Braveheart*.

The experienced research team is made up of scientists from five agencies and they have superior knowledge of marine species in the region. The projects they are advancing during the three-week expedition complement each other and previous surveys.

Auckland Museum: Dr Tom Trnski (expedition leader and fish specialist), Stephen Ullrich and Ged Wiren.

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa: Carl Struthers, Dr Vincent Zintzen (fish specialists) and Charles Bedford.

Department of Conservation: Clinton Duffy (shark specialist), Dr Peter de Lange (plant specialist) and Dr Ian Stringer (insect specialist).

NIWA: Dr Malcolm Francis (fish specialist and underwater photographer).

Australian Museum: Mark McGrouther (fish specialist), Dr Stephen Keable and Dr Mandy Reid (marine invertebrate specialists).

Radio NZ: Alison Ballance (science communicator and radio journalist).

New Zealand Geographic: Richie Robinson (photographer)

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