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Dutch Volunteers Visit English Waters For Diving And Cleaning Expedition



Expedition ship the Cdt Fourcault (Photo: Udo van Dongen)

● **By Mark 'Crowley' Russell**

The Dutch Dive the North Sea Clean Foundation (DtNC) departed Stellendam in the Netherlands on Thursday, 14 June for their 12th diving expedition in the North Sea.

Expedition North Sea 2018, a collaboration between DtNC and the UK's Marine Conservation Society, will see a team of 30 experienced divers remove waste, ghost nets, and other abandoned fishing gear from 20 different locations during their 10-day voyage. The team will free any trapped animals they encounter, collect biological and archaeological data and document the expedition through filming and photography.



Dead seal trapped in ghost nets at Dogger Bank (Photo: Udo van Dongen)

The expedition ship Cdt Fourcault will first sail to wrecks near the Dutch Coast to perform a photogrammetry scan to create

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3D images of the wrecks. From there, the team will sail to the Nautra 2000 protected areas on the border between the Netherlands and England, including Brown Ridge and Dogger Bank, home to some of the North Sea's endemic species

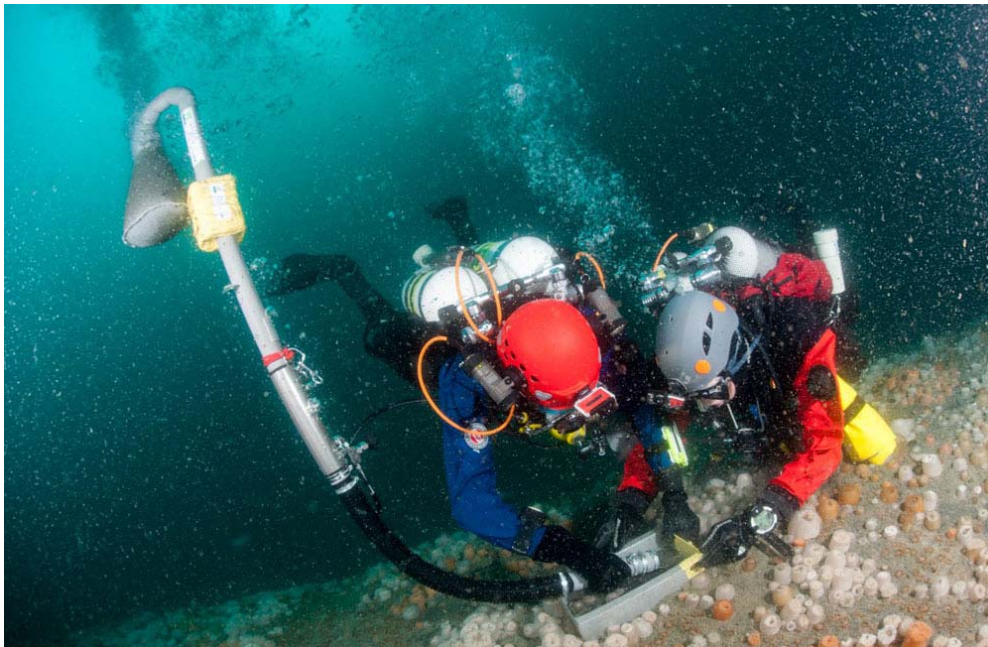
Following dives on some of the North Sea's coastal wrecks (including a sunken oil platform), the expedition will sail into English waters, including the vast Southern North Sea protected area for harbour porpoises. Areas to be explored include Farnes East and the Berwickshire and northern Northumberland protected areas with their rich reefs and mud flats. This area is also home to many marine birds, along with the famous grey seals.



Removing lost fishing nets from a ship's propeller (Photo: Cor Kuyvenhoven)

Over a 10 year period, the team has so far cleaned 145 different wrecks along the Dutch continental shelf, removing more than 32 tonnes of lost gill nets, 12 tonnes of fishing lead, and surfaced over 40,000 kilometres of fishing lines. All the nylon, plastic, lead and other recovered materials are recycled by registered recycling companies.

Cleaning has a high priority because nets, lines and other rubbish break off slowly into smaller pieces which are subsequently difficult to remove from the sea. In addition to cleaning, the research and documentation of the expedition help bring awareness of the North Sea's important biological diversity to the public. 'With this expedition, we want to bring both the beauty, vulnerability and litter of the North Sea to the attention of the general public,' says Ben Stiefelagen, Expedition leader and founder of the DtNC.



Marine biologists collecting samples from the seabed (Photo: Cor Kuyvenhoven)

You can follow the expedition on the websites and Facebook pages of **The North Sea Clean Foundation** (http://click.deliveryengine.agilitypr.com/wf/click?upn=5a-2FoAH-2FYzhrB1FK3H5-2B1yzriBLspkWPgwm98rYc-2FKm4cHzKfWj4l4wwVkdAiXD0Jo_VtuzdbDv2knLFj-2FzYPQsgzUk8vEg6fEa20dF3Mkklr2fbVz74mjCRVro490z3rhkUmw3BzXy0Cyz05ygrOrBdjkn4cyK1sNRDKJscp7r837FifsHOGW6PBc7TvrZ2jRj9YNrNdLu1waSkEJY-2BhR7J3UxpJZwjTq-2FBThuFBIxtk9BPta8z8KHSjpfopgdJidOuLgy-2FyfqmGODNJKpns8kF8DKPYOSO-2BH-2F5GaaPsLymKJdi4jyH0NE-2Bx9BXRkNg70fKO6U2qKJnr2GR-2BoPL91gXjtfZ2DGpQT994fCEkbp07v8mSxa8Q3-2BhGY-2BIQdXpmdLLpLRKpmc9ysOK5q80kNvsH5amEtecK4M18PhRcEda5rZ-)

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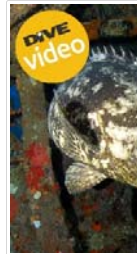
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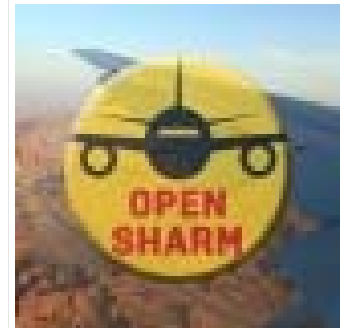
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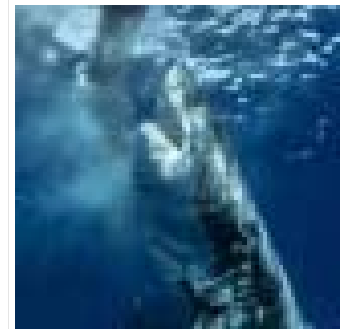
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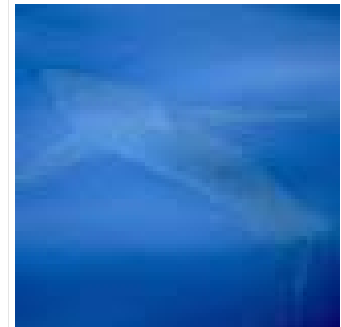
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