

## Diving from East to West Falkland aboard the Golden Fleece (April 15-22, 2019)

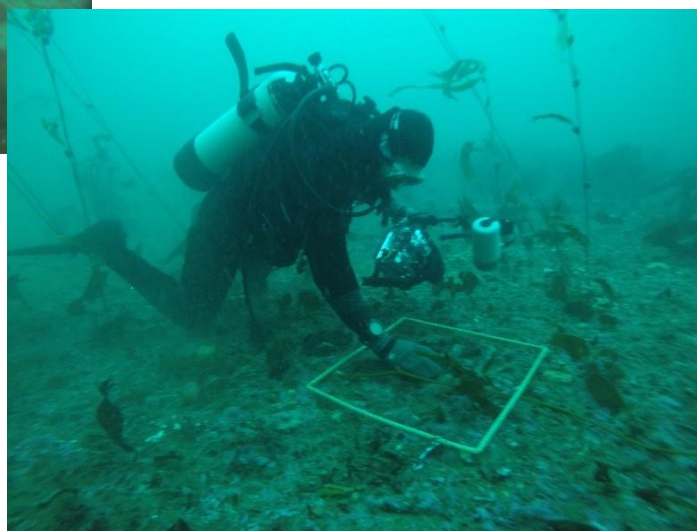
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On a recent diving expedition from East Falkland to West Falkland, eight divers completed underwater benthic surveys as part of the “Fine Scaling of the Marine Management Areas of the Falkland Islands” (MMA) project, funded by Darwin+ (DPLUS0071) and administered by SAERI. The team consisted of Dr Ander de Lecea (project manager), Dr Marina Costa (project officer), Steve Cartwright (Shallow Marine Surveys Group director), Ness Smith (SAERI, kindly volunteering her time), Dr Thomas Farrugia (Fisheries Department, also kindly volunteering his time), and Lauren Shea (MMA project intern), along with the local, well known, Golden Fleece crew, Dion Poncet and Juliette Hennequin. Survey sites included areas that the original AFCAS report identified as potential marine management sites in the Falkland Islands, e.g. Bird Island as well as other areas within the 3NM such as the Arch Islands and Eagle Passage. These surveys consisted of photo quadrats and species counts along 20m transects and will contribute to the growing body of survey data that has been collected over the years by the SMSG . Besides counting and taking quadrat photos, divers collected and photographed species that have not currently been identified or described.



Divers were frequently visited by curious sea lions, fur seals, and even the occasional Gentoo penguin. (Photograph by T. Farrugia).

Left: Dr Thomas Farrugia taking quadrat photos (Photograph by M. Costa).

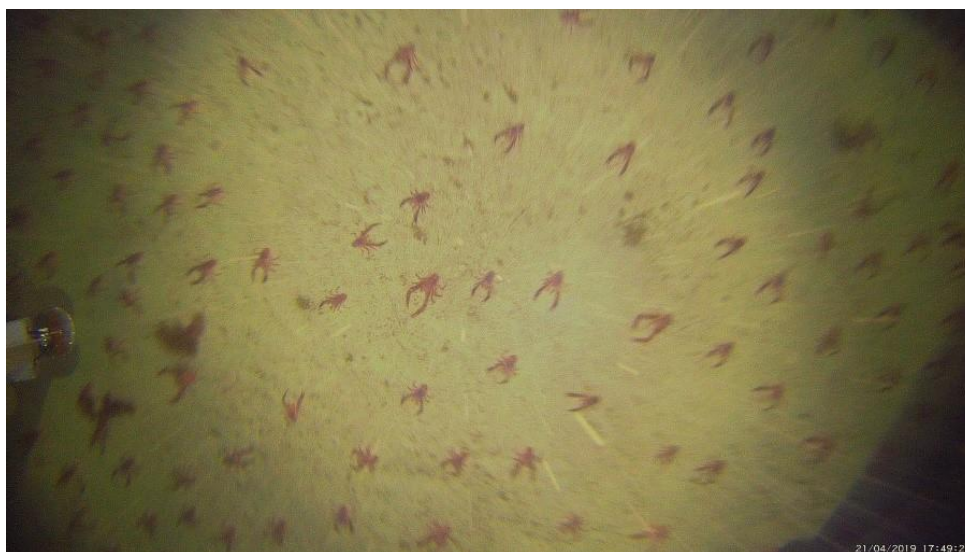


# SAERI NEWS

In addition to the benthic survey data collected by divers, side scan sonar and deep-water camera drops were performed to further characterize the seafloor. These were used on areas not reachable by divers, i.e. depths >30m. The deep-water camera recorded masses of lobster krill (*Munida sp.*) walking along the seafloor and occasionally a curious fish or two coming to check out the lights. On future trips, we will be deploying a ROV (remotely operated vehicle) that will allow the team to photograph and sample other inshore sites that are beyond allowable depths for scuba divers.



Deep-water camera deployment for photo and video footage of the seafloor (Photograph by M. Costa).



A snapshot of a lobster krill (*Munida sp.*) world from the deep-water camera.

# SAERI NEWS

In cooperation with the Darwin Plus-funded MMA project, Dr. Marina Costa took tissue samples and identification photos of two common cetacean species, Commerson's dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus commersonii*) and Peale's dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus australis*), in the Falkland Islands. These photos and samples will aid in the characterization of their populations.

Image left: Dr Marina Costa attempting to take a tissue sample from a Commerson's dolphin that was bow riding (photograph by T. Farrugia)



At the end of each day, the team was rewarded with beautiful sunsets and more incredible wildlife sightings. This expedition, along with future ones, will further inform marine spatial planning in the Falkland Islands. It would not have been possible without the endless hard work from the diving team and the expertise of the Golden Fleece crew. We would also like to thank Darwin Plus for funding this MMA project in order to better conserve the Falkland Islands' inshore waters.



Dr. Marina Costa and Lauren Shea searching for dolphins and whales as the sun sets (Photograph by A. de Lecea).

# SAERI NEWS



An Orca passes by the boat in a protected bay amongst the Arch Islands in search of a sunset meal (Photograph by A. de Lecea).



The team back in North Arm after an incredible and successful trip (from left to right: Dr Ander de Lecea, Dr Thomas Farrugia, Lauren Shea, Juliette Hennequin, Ness Smith, Steve Cartwright, Dion Poncet, and Dr Marina Costa).