

Seychelles

# NATION

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## ENVIRONMENT

**OceanX, government achieve success with a record-setting dive of 4,600m | 12 February 2024**



**A full picture of how the ocean is with different types of seas creatures (Photo: OceanX)**

Three major breakthroughs occurred during the latest OceanX expedition, conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, focusing on

deep-sea research exploration in the Seychelles' outer islands.

Nineteen Seychellois researchers led the scientific objectives of the expedition and conducted the deepest dive ever recorded, reaching depths of up to 1,000 metres in submersibles.

Additionally, a historic dive took place in the Amirantes trench, with a remotely operated vehicle reaching depths of 4,600 metres, marking the deepest dive in Seychelles' history.

The third major accomplishment involved the 3D mapping and deep-sea exploration of Aldabra and Assomption islands. Furthermore, the expedition contributed to mapping 12,000 square kilometers within the Seychelles' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Mattie Rodrigue, science programme director for OceanX, highlighted these achievements yesterday during a visit for local media on board the vessel docked in Port Victoria.

The preliminary report will be submitted to the government this week, and the final report will be submitted in May. The mission was conducted from January 14 to February 11.

"The mission was aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Seychelles ocean ecosystem, assess ocean conditions, and build knowledge among local scientists to promote marine conservation and future climate decisions and create new network opportunities," shared Ms Rodrigue.

The research was conducted in the following areas – Aldabra, Assomption, Poivre, Alphonse, D'Arros, St Joseph, Amirantes trench. "The main objective was to study the habitats of the deep sea as they are outside the range of what humans can see. We are recording the different habitats at different levels – 500 metres, 750 metres, 1,000 metres, and 1,500 metres. We saw multiple types of deep-sea sharks and other sea creatures. We saw whales, dolphins, dugong, etc. We were getting a full picture of how the ocean is and establishing the biodiversity," shared Ms Rodrigue.

The research was conducted aboard OceanXplorer, the most advanced exploration, scientific research, and media production vessel ever built used by OceanX to conduct its missions.

Before conducting this expedition, six months ago, the OceanX team started consultation with the Seychellois scientists to learn more about Seychelles' ocean. "During the expedition, I was stunned by the diversity of deep-sea healthy corals. Now we are in the process of finalising the data and will share them with the government for their future plan to manage the areas. I also want to point out that the young Seychellois scientists are very talented and they need to be encouraged to further their passion," shared Ms Rodrigue.

During the expedition, all 19 young Seychellois had a chance to do a ROV (remotely operated vehicle) dive, which was also performed across the islands to better understand the benthic and pelagic fauna at these depths.

For the first time in history, they dived to the deepest recorded depth in Seychelles history of 1,500 meters and executed a dedicated megafauna's survey of the region via helicopter. The Aldabra atoll contains one of the most important natural habitats for studying evolutionary and ecological processes, and this new data will be crucial for future decision-making to support the preservation of Seychelles' oceanic environment.

Researchers live-streamed a deep-sea submersible dive from the mission to the 2024 World Economic Forum in Davos, transporting audiences 300 metres below the surface.

This mission was conducted by OceanX in partnership with Seychelles' Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment through its environment department, Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), Island Conservation Society (ICS), University of Seychelles, Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), Island Development Company, Save Our Seas Foundation-D'Arros Research Centre, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) and Talma Consultancy.

Rodney Quatre, director general for biodiversity and conservation management at the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment (MACCE), shared that MACCE really appreciates this collaboration.

"As a small country, we could never afford this type of boat and we thank OceanX for this opportunity. Three Seychellois were able to arrive at 1,000 metres and discover our ocean. We now have a better idea how the situation is out there and we will be able to better plan to conserve our ocean," said Mr Quatre.

OceanX partners with governments, universities, NGOs and other local organisations, providing the technological, scientific and capacity building resources to local scientists and institutions so they can achieve their goals of better understanding their ocean environment and taking action to protect it. This mission supports OceanX's broader effort to explore the ocean and bring it back to the world.

Data collection and findings from the OceanX mission will form a solid foundation for Seychelles' ocean conservation and protection.

The press was able to visit the OceanXplorer docked at Port Victoria yesterday and learnt about the various procedures done during the expedition. Today, the boat leaves for Singapore.

OceanX is a mission to support scientists to explore the ocean and to bring it back to the world through captivating media. Uniting leading media, science, and philanthropy partners, OceanX utilises next-gen technology, fearless science, compelling storytelling, and immersive experiences to educate, inspire, and connect the world with the ocean and build a global community deeply engaged with understanding, enjoying, and protecting our oceans.

OceanX is an initiative of Dalio Philanthropies, which furthers the diverse philanthropic interests of Dalio family members.

## **Vidya Gappy/ Press Release from MACCE**



The remotely operated vehicle that dove 4,600 metres in our ocean  
(Photo: Kurtrine Albert)

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