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Expedition Reveals Thirteen Shipwrecks from WWII Battles off Guadalcanal

International team explores WWII history in never-before-seen detail in Solomon Islands, including discovering three brand-new shipwrecks.

[See accompanying assets and associated information here.](#)

(Honiara, Solomon Islands — August 1, 2025) An expedition led by Ocean Exploration Trust (OET) aboard Exploration Vessel (E/V) *Nautilus* has just completed comprehensive archaeological surveys of more than a dozen vessels lost during the World War II Solomon Islands campaign. While livestreaming online for an audience of millions, the team imaged four ships for the first time, including discovering two ships— the bow of the [USS New Orleans](#) and the Imperial Japanese Navy destroyer [Teruzuki](#). Throughout 22 days at sea, the team also collected ultra-high resolution visual and sonar data on the vessels [USS Vincennes](#), USS *Astoria*, USS *Quincy*, [USS Northampton](#), [USS Laffey](#), [USS DeHaven](#), USS *Preston*, [HMAS Canberra](#), [USS Walke](#), *Yudachi*, and a landing barge, to help understand their condition on the seafloor after over eighty years.

“It was wonderful to return to Iron Bottom Sound, where we discovered Japanese, Australian, and American warships over 34 years ago,” says **Dr. Robert Ballard, President of Ocean Exploration Trust**. “This expedition was special, allowing us to film these sites in a manner not possible back then, as well as document other ships, while at the same time sharing our work live to the entire world.”

This [expedition](#), supported by NOAA Ocean Exploration via the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute, brought a specialized technology approach to advance exploration of Iron Bottom Sound that has been underway for decades. Uniquely, the team utilized the University of New Hampshire’s uncrewed surface vehicle (USV) *DriX*, controlled from a shore-based station in Honiara, to search out shipwrecks in Iron Bottom Sound through seafloor mapping and then deployed E/V *Nautilus*’ remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to visually survey the sites, assessing the condition of each wreck.

Located in the Solomon Islands between the islands of Guadalcanal, Savo, and Nggela, Iron Bottom Sound was the scene of five major naval battles between August and December 1942, resulting in the loss of over 20,000 lives, 111 naval vessels, and 1,450 planes. In deep water, dozens of ships remain to be located. The



team mapped over 1,000 square kilometers using *DriX*, constructing the highest-resolution maps of the sound ever created and identifying many dozens of potential targets. The expedition team spent over 138 hours exploring the wrecks with ROVs down to depths below 1,000 meters.

“The use of our uncrewed vessel allowed a tremendous increase in exploration efficiency as we were able to continuously map and identify potential targets while the *Nautilus* was deploying its ROVs,” says **Dr. Larry Mayer, Director, Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the University of New Hampshire**. “This technological achievement, combined with the tremendous historical significance of our discoveries, made this one of the most rewarding missions I have ever participated in.”

The surveys documented these historically significant wrecks while introducing their history to a new generation to honor all those who lost their lives in these battles. Throughout the mission, the ROV surveys were streamed live via NautilusLive.org, allowing the public and those with personal connections to the Solomon Islands campaign an opportunity to explore and honor this history and engage with the onboard expedition team.

“NOAA Ocean Exploration is dedicated to increasing our understanding of the deep ocean through scientific discovery, technological advancements, and data delivery,” said **Captain William Mowitt of the NOAA Corps, acting director of NOAA Ocean Exploration**. “This expedition highlights the importance of such cutting-edge technologies and the strong partnership component of the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute in not only making discoveries that advance science and resource management, but also engaging and educating the public on the wonders of what lies in our ocean depths.”

Archaeologists from Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., and over 130 experts around the world were able to connect to ship operations via telepresence technology, helping guide the mission and providing valuable real-time interpretations throughout the surveys.

“This expedition was a great opportunity to remember the valor and sacrifices of sailors who fought with extreme tenacity and skill, on both sides. Sailors don’t start wars, but they do what their governments ask, and in the waters of Iron Bottom Sound, they did their duty to the fullest. Yet, the end result of that terrible war brought not only freedom for the United States and Allies, but for Japan as well,” said **Naval History and Heritage Command Director Samuel J. Cox, U.S. Navy rear admiral (retired)**. “This survey of the ships of the United States, Australia, and Japan will add immeasurably to the understanding of one of the most costly naval campaigns in history, a campaign that hopefully will never be repeated.”

This exploration is made possible by the expertise, support, and collaboration of many partners, including Ocean Exploration Trust, NOAA Ocean Exploration, U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, Solomon Islands government, University of New Hampshire Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping, University of Rhode Island, Solomon Islands National Museum, Kyoto University, Tokai University, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Air/Sea Heritage Foundation, Major Projects Foundation, and Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Centre. The marine research permit was issued by the government of the Solomon Islands via the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.



“The vast majority of our ocean lies in very deep waters that we know virtually nothing about,” says **OET Chief Scientist Dr. Daniel Wagner**. “These deep-sea explorations highlight how many extraordinary things are still hidden and waiting to be found in the great depths of our ocean.”

About the Ocean Exploration Trust

The Ocean Exploration Trust was founded in 2007 by Dr. Robert Ballard to explore the ocean, seeking out multi-disciplinary discoveries while pushing the boundaries of STEAM education and technological innovation. Our international program is launched from aboard the Exploration Vessel (E/V) *Nautilus*, offering live exploration to participants on shore and the public via live video, audio, and data feeds. [Learn more about Ocean Exploration Trust.](#)

The 2025 E/V *Nautilus* expeditions are primarily sponsored by NOAA Ocean Exploration via the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute. OET program sponsors and partners for 2025 also include the Office of Naval Research, QPS, and the Phillip Stephenson Foundation. [Learn more about our partners and sponsors.](#)

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