

JOURNEY INTO MIDNIGHT

LIGHT AND LIFE BELOW THE TWILIGHT ZONE

SEAMAIL™

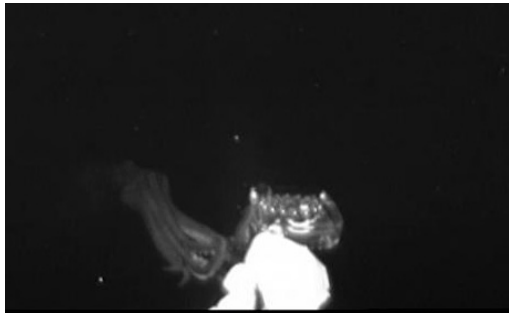
TO: Virtual Deep-Sea Science Team
FROM: Dr. Edie Widder
SUBJECT: Squid Selfie!

Hello again explorers!

We did it! We recorded a giant squid!

Monday was Medusa's fifth dive. We dropped the camera system down thousands of feet into the sea. That means unrolling a lot of blue plastic line as the Medusa sank down to 2490 feet (759 meters). There it quietly waited and watched the sea. The e-jelly glowed like the Atolla jellyfish. A perfect invitation to dinner. The camera recorded anything that came to investigate.

On Tuesday just before dinner, we brought the Medusa back aboard the ship. It takes many hours to download all the video. Then many more to review it. Dr. Nathan Robinson and I took turns watching the recorded video. On Wednesday just after lunch I was still sitting in the mess (dining room) when Nate trotted in and eagerly got my attention. He didn't say anything. But I knew he must have seen something cool on the video. We raced back to the lab.



There it was, on my very own computer screen, a really big squid. With its tentacles fully extended we figured it was as tall as a two-story building! Everyone gathered around the computer monitor watching the video over and over again.



Dr. Heather Judkins and the rest of the science team thought it was a giant squid. We all grabbed books to try to verify the identity of the squid by the shape of its tentacles and whatever else was visible.

Before we announced this amazing discovering to the world, we wanted another opinion. We planned to send the video to one of Heather's fellow experts at the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Services - National Systematics Laboratory at the Smithsonian in Washington DC.

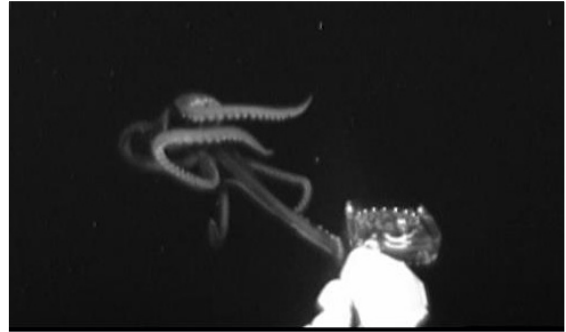
However, a sudden storm came up. The Internet went down. Then disaster struck.

– continued –

Screenshots taken from video taken by Medusa. Photo courtesy Dante Fenolio

Squid Selfie! CONTINUED

Crack! Lightning struck the ship! We ran onto the deck. A big brown and yellow smoke plume led us to the shattered antenna that was scattered across the deck. The lightning struck near people on the deck and people inside the ROV van. (The ROV was exploring the ocean at that moment.) Fortunately, everyone was safe. That's when we realized we hadn't had time to back up our recording. Did the lightning zap the Medusa computer? Did we lose all that footage?



Fortunately, it was OK. It's good thing too. It is the first giant squid ever recorded in American waters! And only the second time a (free-swimming) giant squid has been ever caught on tape. (The first time was also filmed by the Medusa in the Sea of Japan.)

All the years scientists have used ROVs and submersibles to explore the ocean throughout the world and only the Medusa has captured film of a giant squid. **What do you think that suggests?**

Then the captain told us a waterspout was gathering off the port bow. What a day! All this happened in less than an hour's time. Expect the unexpected on any ocean research cruise!

While we were still at sea, we shared the news with the New York Times. I did an interview over the ship's ship-to-shore radio. Afterward, the news of our discovery went viral throughout the world. Apparently, people love giant squid as much as we do!

How many more such creatures are there lurking in the depths that we don't even know exist because we've been scaring them away? Maybe you can become an ocean explorer and find an even more amazing animal!

Edie

Dr. Edith Widder
Deep-Sea Explorer
Journey into Midnight
WhaleTimes.org

Okay, fellow Science Team members, I'd like you to watch the video. Help us think about what was captured. Observe and discuss the squid's behavior. **What do you notice about the animal's behavior? How does it approach the e-jelly? How does it use its tentacles? Why do you think it leaves?** Share with us what you observe, what questions this footage leads you to ask, and what kinds of research is needed to answer those questions.



Journey into Midnight: Light and Life Below the Twilight Zone research funded by NOAA-Office of Exploration and Research

