

Explore lost worlds of the deep

NORFANZ VOYAGE

10 MAY TO 8 JUNE 2003



Fact sheet – Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands

Norfolk Ridge and Lord Howe Rise lie between Australia and New Zealand in an area that extends from the Tasman Sea into the South Pacific Ocean. Marine biota in this area is still relatively unexploited and the area has received very little impact from human activity. It is therefore a good candidate for biodiversity research.

Deepwater fishes remain largely unexplored except for unresearched collections made by the Japan Fishery Agency vessel *Kaiyo Maru* in 1976, and occasional subsequent exploratory ventures by small Australian and New Zealand vessels.

Limited initial biodiversity research has shown that in some localities the Norfolk Ridge supports marine communities that are particularly rich and diverse, and support a remarkably high number of species and genera that are new to science. Distribution patterns are poorly known in most areas. However, the few areas that have been sampled have revealed some rare and endemic species and a scattered distribution among seamounts of some common species.

The research conducted as part of the NORFANZ voyage will provide a major increase in our knowledge of marine biodiversity in this area. Higher diversity is found on or adjacent to seamounts, which have been designated priority areas of biodiversity research. The project will for the first time provide baseline biodiversity and seabed depth/topography data for the most diverse habitats along the Norfolk Ridge in depths of around 200–1200 m, and provide identification keys, descriptions and accurate names for fishes and invertebrates. These outputs will improve our understanding and underpin the sustainable management and conservation of these important communities.

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