

Crab with 'ears' among rare finds by S'pore-Indonesia team

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Hidden over 1,000m underwater along the Sunda Strait off the coast of Jakarta is a peculiar spider crab with plates resembling ears that actually protect its eyes.

It had not been seen for some 10 million years, till researchers from Singapore and Indonesia discovered it while trawling the depths of the sea last month.

Researchers believe the 6cm-wide crab, dubbed "Big Ears", is from the *Rochinia* genus.

More than a dozen new species of crustaceans were discovered on the pioneering expedition into the deep waters off the southern coast of West Java.

They also included a distinctive new species of *Paguristes* hermit crab that has green eyes and orange banded pincers, squat lobsters with a distinctive

zebra pattern on their bodies, and shiny-eyed shrimps that possess unique mechanisms to lock their abdomens to protect themselves against predators.

In total, some 800 species from more than 200 families of sponges, jellyfish, molluscs, starfish, urchins, worms, crabs, prawns and fish were discovered, accounting for more than 12,000 individual animals.

Professor Peter Ng, head of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore, and Professor Dwi Listyo Rahayu, senior research scientist at the Research Centre for Oceanography of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, led the 31-member team on the 14-day trawling expedition.

Using trawls, dredges and other devices capable of capturing creatures even a few millime-



The spider crab that had been thought to be lost for 10 million years. PHOTO: SJADES 2018

tres long, the team collected samples from 63 stations, at depths of between 500m and 2,000m under the sea.

Prof Rahayu said trash was a problem.

Only five to six stations were able to trawl the sea without picking up rubbish.

But there was treasure in the trash. One of the hermit crabs was found hidden in discarded

underwear.

The samples will be studied, and the findings will be shared and discussed at a workshop slated to be held in Indonesia in 2020, and later published in *The Raffles Bulletin Of Zoology*.

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