



Where I work Andrew Hosie

Photographed by
Alex Ingle/SOI.

When you're collecting sea-floor creatures in the abyss off the coast of Western Australia, just about every find is worth a closer look. This beautiful crustacean is a squat lobster – most likely *Galacantha rostrata* is my best guess. A remotely operated vehicle (ROV) spotted it on a bare rock 2.5 kilometres deep in the Ningaloo Canyon System and sucked the creature up using its slurp gun.

I was one of about a dozen scientists aboard the research vessel *Falkor* for a month-long biodiversity survey that was upended by the coronavirus. We left in early March, and were supposed to make a port call in Exmouth halfway through to swap researchers, but that plan got scrapped because of the pandemic. The original crew finished the expedition and collected 30 new species – including swimming worms and heavily armoured barnacles – from depths exceeding 4 kilometres.

The squat lobster didn't survive the trip to the surface, so before it starts degrading, I'm carefully photographing its features with an

inexpensive Olympus camera. Sophisticated photography equipment can really eat into a research budget, and this workhorse does the job. Many of the photos will be displayed at the newly renovated Western Australian Museum in Perth, where I'm curator of crustaceans and worms, when it reopens.

We saw some wildly unexpected things on this expedition. There was a metre-tall hydrozoan, related to jellyfish, that stood like a giant flower above the ocean floor. And as the ROV returned to the surface one evening, it passed by a 45-metre-long siphonophore, a string-like colonial organism that is possibly the longest creature ever recorded. The scientists were eating dinner in the galley when the animal appeared on the live video stream. It was an amazing and totally unplanned encounter. Down there, you never know what you'll find next.

Andrew Hosie is curator at the Western Australian Museum in Perth, Australia, and a zoology PhD student at Curtin University in Perth. **Interview by Chris Woolston.**