

PRESS RELEASE

GOMBESSA : The mystery of the rings

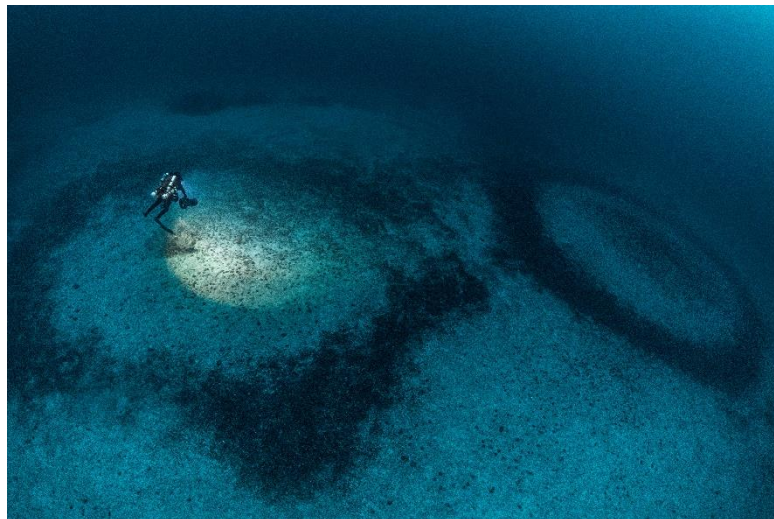
Final mission to the heart of the underwater rings to unravel the mystery of these treasures of Cap Corse.

E Ville di Petrabugnu, July 18 2023

Natural Marine Park of Cap Corse and Agriate / Parcu naturale marinu di u Capicorsu è di l'Agriate welcomes and supports the fourth and final mission to continue the study of rings, unique formations in the Mediterranean.

Since July 13, the ANDROMEDE-OCEANOLOGIE team has been on the spot of the northeast coast of Cap Corse, coordinating the entire exploration operation.

This expedition is mobilizing additional technical resources, which will be presented at sea in the study area on July 27.



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Impressive technical resources and scientific mobilization

Even if the 2021 mission has already fulfilled all its scientific and artistic promises (I TESORI DI CAPICORSU exhibition last October in Bastia), the mysteries of these formations located at a depth of 120 m have apparently not yet been fully revealed. In fact, the 2023 mission should provide a better understanding of the origin and formation of these 20-meter diameter rings, which can only be found at Cap Corse.

Some **forty French and foreign scientists are mobilized**. Coming from different disciplinary fields and several countries, they are involved in the experimental protocols set up as part of the mission, with the aim of producing knowledge on the geomorphological, environmental and biological aspects of these formations and the surrounding habitats.

In spring-summer 2023 and until mid-August, cutting-edge technical resources will be mobilized to gather data on the underground structure of these submarine formations:

- **An autonomous surface drone (Drix)** with an echo sounder has been used to collect the initial scientific data needed to understand the geology beneath the coralligenous reefs.
- **Two exploration submarines** will complete this first series of data, this time as close as possible to the rings, by "flying over" the 20 km² ring zone. The submarines will also be used to explore and collect scientific data on the biodiversity associated with these formations.
- **The Diomède ROV** will facilitate exploration of other nearby habitats of interest: obscure caves, kelp forest, *Isidella elongata* mudflats.

Better knowledge for better protection

The analysis that will be made of all this data, and the images and film that will be produced during this mission, will have the dual aim of improving the knowledge and function of these little-known and not very accessible environments, as well as raising awareness among the public and decision-makers of the fragility of these reef formations and their associated habitats.

Management and protection measures may be envisaged within the appropriate regulatory framework.

The GOMBESSA CAP CORSE cruise was led by Andromède Océanologie and supported by Manufacture de Haute Horlogerie Suisse Blancpain and Blancpain Ocean Commitment, the Prince Albert II de Monaco Foundation, the Société des explorations de Monaco, Office Français de la Biodiversité, Agence de l'eau Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse (French Water Agency), National Geographic, Iris Foundation and Lemarchand Foundation. The mission was also supported by La Marine Nationale (France Navy) and Préfecture Maritime de la Méditerranée. The authors also want to thank ARTE, INPP (Institut National de Plongée Professionnelle), Les Gens Bien Production, CNC, Parc Naturel Marin du Cap Corse et de l'Agriate (France Relance program), Ushuaïa TV, AP diving, Aqualung, Nikon, Molecular, Seacam, Yamaha, Paralenz, Bigblue, Neotek, Seaowl, Marlink, Subspace, Suex, Dive System and Francqueville without whom this expedition would not have been possible. GOMBESSA CAP CORSE is an action recognized by the United Nations Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development.

To find out more about the Cap Corse and Agriate Marine Park :
<https://www.facebook.com/parcmarin.capicorsu.agriate/>

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