**Scientists Return to Norfolk Island   
for Major Scientific Expedition**

*AMRI expedition puts the impacts of climate change on marine biodiversity*   
*under the microscope at Norfolk Island*

**Sydney, Wednesday, 4 June:** The Australian Museum (AM) has undertaken the second phase of the [Norfolk Island scientific expedition](https://australian.museum/learn/expeditions/norfolk-island/), working in collaboration with The University of Sydney, Parks Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, alongside the local Norfolk Island community.

This second of two expeditions to Norfolk Island builds on the terrestrial survey completed by AMRI Scientists in 2022-2023. On this expedition, scientists will undertake shore and vessel-based activities to collect fish and marine invertebrates, such as corals, crabs and molluscs, as well as algae, to expand knowledge of the marine environment. A team of educators will also take part in an education program at the Norfolk Island school.

Director and CEO, Australian Museum, Kim McKay AO, said scientific expeditions of this scale were pivotal to the continued monitoring, protection and understanding of diverse and isolated bioregions, like Norfolk Island, which are particularly vulnerable.

“For nearly two centuries, the Australian Museum has conducted expeditions to document, collect and examine information on the habitats of our region and beyond. From this we have developed one of the most valuable natural science collections in the world, which aids in international research and will be conserved for generations to come,” Kim McKay said.

“This second expedition to Norfolk Island will focus on the marine environment’s native and introduced fauna and flora and will help to expand existing scientific records and collections, informing the future management of these areas,” she said.

Norfolk Island is an external Australian territory, located in the Tasman Sea between Aotearoa, New Zealand, and New Caledonia, 1600km northeast of Sydney. An isolated volcanic island which spans tropical and temperate ecosystems, the region hosts diverse species of animals and plants, which the expedition will document alongside the effects of a dramatically changing climate.

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Acting Chief Scientist of the Australian Museum Research Institute, Professor Shane Ahyong, highlighted the importance of prioritising field research and working closely with cross-sector colleagues with complementary research interests and expertise.

“There is a huge amount of value in bringing together scientists from different research institutions to focus on a specific location of scientific significance, like Norfolk Island. Norfolk Island is a key oceanic steppingstone for species between tropical New Caledonia and temperate New Zealand, making it an important bellwether location for detecting species movements and climate change effects. In this return trip, the team will build on the knowledge we developed during the Norfolk Island Terrestrial Biodiversity Survey and the archaeological excavations that took place in 2022,” Professor Ahyong said.

The first expedition was a terrestrial survey, focusing on animals, such as rats, bats, lizards, insects, birds, and snails. This involved setting up mist-nets to study the diverse aerial fauna, and soil sifting and trapping to discover spiders, insects and other invertebrates. One of the expedition’s archaeological digs uncovered two adzes (stone axes) and hundreds of flakes dating from pre-European Polynesian settlement.

Head of Natural Sciences at Auckland Museum, Dr Tom Trnski, said the expedition is integral to understanding patterns of marine biodiversity in the region.

“This expedition has been a priority for the Australian, Auckland and Te Papa museums as Norfolk Island is a major gap in our knowledge. This is an important opportunity to document the marine biodiversity in the southwest Pacific region so we can support the understanding of the biodiversity connections among the islands in the region and help predict dispersal pathways in a changing ocean environment,” Dr Trnski said.

If weather conditions are favourable, while in transit from New Zealand to Norfolk Island on the *Manakai*, a team of scientists from Auckland Museum, Te Papa and The University of Sydney will use an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), to document the never imaged before seabed along the Norfolk Ridge.

The AUV will be deployed (weather dependant) by a team led by Professor Stefan Williams from the Australian Robotics Centre at the University of Sydney.

“It’s the first time the seabed in the Norfolk Ridge will be imaged in this detail. The AUV’s visual and acoustic sensors will gather data to generate high resolution 3D models of the   
seabed and marine habitat – we’re excited to support the expedition and see what our environmental survey of the area will uncover.” **2/4**

In addition to the scientific surveys, the Norfolk Island local community has been invited to engage with scientists through education activities with the Norfolk Island Central School and a range of programs and events to learn about the expedition.

For more information, visit https://australian.museum/learn/expeditions/norfolk-island-2022/

Interviews, images, video interviews, vision and further information will be available contact the AM media team for details.

***#ENDS#***

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**Acknowledgements**

We acknowledge the Polynesian/Tupuna/Tipuna who first called Norfolk Island home, whose story is still being written and pieced together. Through our work, we endeavour to add pages to their widely unknown narrative. We honour their connection to this land/whenua and fauna in times gone by and invite them to guide and breathe life back into the treasures which they left for us to uncover and to piece together the story they did not tell. We extend that acknowledgement to the descendants of the Pitcairn Islanders who still walk this land and whose Polynesian ties link them back to the East of this Great Ocean – Tahiti. We honour their Pacific story on this land, we acknowledge their Tupuna/Tipuna ancestors and the culture they forged on Norfolk Island. A culture that continues to thrive today. And finally, we acknowledge the other Pacific Island communities that now call this Island home. The Pacific diasporas from across the Great Ocean – whose connection to this land may be more recent but whose presence also adds to the Pacific narrative of Norfolk Island in the here and now.

**About the Australian Museum**

The Australian Museum (AM) was founded in 1827 and is the nation’s first museum. It is internationally recognised as a natural science and culture institution focused on Australia and the Pacific. The AM’s mission is to ignite wonder, inspire debate and drive change. The AM’s vision is to be a leading voice for the richness of life, the Earth and culture in Australia and the Pacific. The AM commits to transforming the conversation around climate change, the environment and wildlife conservation; to being a strong advocate for First Nations cultures; and to continuing to develop world-leading science, collections, exhibitions and education programs. With 22 million objects and specimens and the Australian Museum Research Institute (AMRI), the AM is not only a dynamic source of reliable scientific information on some of the most pressing environmental and social challenges facing our region, but also an important site of cultural exchange and learning.

**About Auckland War Memorial Museum**

Auckland War Memorial Museum is one of New Zealand's first museums and the oldest research institution in the country. The Museum tells the story of New Zealand, its place in the Pacific and its people. The Museum is a war memorial for the province of Auckland and holds one of New Zealand's top three heritage libraries.

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It has pre-eminent Māori and Pacific collections, significant natural history resources and major social and military history collections, as well as decorative arts and pictorial collections.

**About University of Sydney**

As Australia’s first university – founded in 1850 – the University of Sydney has been sharing knowledge, empowering students and addressing the world’s most complex challenges for 175 years. Currently ranked 18th in the world in the QS World University Rankings 2025, we’re consistently placed among the best universities and globally renowned for our teaching and research. The Australian Centre for Robotics is a global leader in robotics research, focusing on the research, development and application of autonomous and intelligent robots.

**About Te Papa**Te Papa is Aotearoa New Zealand's much-loved national museum, known for attracting diverse audiences and bringing world-class international exhibitions to visitors. Since opening, Te Papa has attracted over 35 million visits total and an average of 1.4 million visitors per year.Located in Wellington, Te Papa is one of New Zealand's most well-known and trusted brands, with research showing it’s closely associated with being for all New Zealander's, a kaitiaki of knowledge, a trusted source of information, and a world-class destination.Te Papa is a top-rated Trip Advisor visitor attraction and was rated #1 in Wellington, #2 in New Zealand and #6 in South Pacific.

**About** **Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum**Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum tells the story of New Zealand, its place in the Pacific and its people. The Museum is a war memorial for the province of Auckland and holds one of New Zealand's top three heritage libraries. It has pre-eminent Māori and Pacific collections, significant natural history resources and major social and military history collections, as well as decorative arts and pictorial collections. **4/4**