

THE INTERNATIONAL  
**SEAKEEPERS**  
SOCIETY

## Launch of the 2020 Voyage

SeaKeepers is pleased to share a series of profile pieces on the work and accomplishments of 2021 SeaKeeper of the Year, CDR Victor Vescovo, USN (Ret.). This installment covers “2020 Expeditions”.



Victor Vescovo | Photo Credit: Tamara Stubbs | Caladan Oceanic

In February 2020, following the extraordinary global success of “The Five Deeps” the previous year, Commander Victor Vescovo, USN (Ret.), and the Caladan Oceanic team, launched a new series of groundbreaking expeditions over the course of the next six months. Through the collaboration between investor and explorer, Victor Vescovo, Triton Submarines and EYOS Expeditions, the 2020 Caladan Oceanic expeditions voyaged to previously unexplored ocean depths and historic sites.

The mission was completed in four dives: Phase I: “La Minerve” (West Mediterranean); Phase II: The Calypso Deep (East Mediterranean); Phase III: The Red Sea; and Phase IV: The “Ring of Fire” Expedition. Between February and July 2020, the recently refitted Triton 36000/2 submersible, the Limiting Factor, designed and manufactured specifically for extreme deep-sea exploration endeavors, brought stories of the voyage to the world in near-real time.



Triton 36000/2 submersible "Limiting Factor" aboard research vessel "Pressure Drop"

Photo Credit: Reeve Jolliffe

The expedition began on February 1-2, 2020, when the team at Caladan Oceanic sailed to the southern coast of France. They dove twice on the tragic wreck of the French submarine, *Minerve*, to discover why she sank for unknown reasons in 1968. They discovered the most likely reason, based on direct observation of the wreckage with an expert from the French submarine force, that its snorkel system was run over by a container ship during poor weather and visibility which caused uncontrollable flooding. On the second dive, Vescovo was accompanied by Herve Fauve, the son of the submarine's Captain Lieutenant André Fauve. They placed a memorial plaque on the remains of the sunken vessel at over 2,250 meters depth. This was the first manned visit to the site since the *Minerve's* sinking in 1968.

*Vescovo later said: "It was very moving to be with the son of the Minerve's Captain, at the actual wreck, and pay our respects to the brave sailors who gave their lives in the defense of France. As a former naval officer myself, I was very honored to partner with our French allies to do this."*

After France, the second phase was completed by sub-pilot, Vescovo and His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of Monaco. They dove to the bottom of the Calypso Deep, the deepest point in the Mediterranean Sea at approximately 5,627 meters (17,280 feet) and surveyed the unfortunate, extensive, human contamination on the seafloor there and submitted the video of the dive to the EU scientific establishment for further analysis. The third phase took place in the Red Sea, where the first manned descents to the deepest point in the Red Sea, the Suakin Trough, were performed by Vescovo and Saudi-national Mohammed A. Aljahdli. In the last, but certainly not least, final phase, the team conducted several dive sites around the western portion of the Ring of Fire in the Pacific Ocean. In Summer 2020 astronaut and oceanographer Kathy Sullivan joined Vescovo to dive the Mariana Trench at its deepest point (Challenger Deep), becoming the first person to both walk in space and to descend to the deepest point in the ocean.

Kelly Walsh also joined Vescovo to complete a historic dive to approximately 10,925m in the Challenger Deep. Walsh dove in the Western Pool, the same area that was visited by Kelly's father, Captain Don Walsh, USN (Ret), PhD, who was the pilot of the bathyscaph 'Trieste' during the first dive to the Challenger Deep in 1960. To learn more about each phase, please visit [Caladan Oceanic online](https://www.caladan.com).

Vescovo's global ocean expeditions have paved the way for scientific research, a key pillar of The International SeaKeepers Society's mission. The Five Deeps Expedition, as well as expeditions in the

Mediterranean and Red Seas, and two annual 'Ring of Fire' expeditions throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans, have illuminated the depths of the oceans revealing unique scientific discoveries. We are proud to present Victor Vescovo with the well-deserved 2021 SeaKeeper of the Year award.

**We look forward to honoring him. For event details, please [click here](#).**

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**The International SeaKeepers Society**

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