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2021 Accomplishments

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 “2021 Accomplishments”.



Victor Vescovo | Photo Credit: Caladan Oceanic

From the first ever “full ascent” of Mauna Kea to the world’s deepest shipwreck dive in history, this year has been triumphant. Commander Victor Vescovo, USN (Ret.) began 2021 with yet another breakthrough expedition.

In February 2021, explorer Vescovo and renowned native Hawaiian marine biologist Dr. Clifford Kaponu achieved the greatest earthbound vertical ascent in history. Mauna Kea was ascended for the first time ever from bottom to top – from its underwater base at -5,115m to its summit at +4,207m – a distance higher than Mount Everest. This expedition was one continuous effort, using only natural buoyancy and human power. Victor’s spirit of inclusivity cloaked the expedition in powerful mana.

“To be able to scale Mauna Kea from its submarine base to its earth-and-sky summit was one of the

most rewarding and physically demanding adventures I've set out on," said Victor Vescovo, who has climbed Mount Everest and achieved the Explorers Grand Slam. "It's fascinating to see the shifting terrain and ecosystems on a singular peak and was a really unique experience."

In March 2021, Vescovo took another voyage in his Deep-Submergence Vehicle (DSV) Limiting Factor as part of Caladan Oceanic's 2021 "Ring of Fire Part II" Expeditions. Oceanographer, Dr. Deo Florence Onda, dived with Vescovo to the third-deepest place on Earth, Emden Deep in the Philippine Trench. This extraordinary mission was special in that it was not only the first dive to the bottom of the Philippine Trench, but Dr. Deo also became the first deepest-diving Filipino.

Offshore Samar Island in the Philippines Sea, two former US Navy Officers successfully relocated, surveyed, and filmed the USS Johnston, the world's deepest known shipwreck that principally lies at a depth 6,456m. Commander Victor Vescovo, USN (Ret.) personally piloted his submersible DSV Limiting Factor down to the wreck during two separate, eight-hour dives. These constituted the deepest wreck dives, manned or unmanned, in history.

During the same month, Victor welcomed onboard the new head of the Explorer's Club Richard Garriott as well as Mike Dubno, an accomplished technologist. Both helped to support scientific missions in Challenger Deep as well as directly worked on new technology to enable more efficient sediment-sample collection at the bottom of the ocean.

The final dive at Challenger Deep in 2021 by the Caladan Oceanic team welcomed Nicole Yamase of the Federated States of Micronesia. She was the first citizen of that country to voyage to the bottom of the ocean, in an area that is the territory of her home country. A trained ocean scientist currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Hawaii, she was able to encounter first-hand the experience of descending through the entire water column.



Victor Vescovo aboard Triton 36000/2 submersible "Limiting Factor" | Photo Credit: Caladan Oceanic

On December 11th, 2021, Caladan Oceanic, led by Vescovo along with expedition partners EYOS Expeditions, Triton Submarines, and Greenroom Robotics, successfully dived to the deepest point of the Kermadec Trench in the South Pacific Ocean at a preliminary, calculated depth of 10,003 meters (+/- 4 meters). It is the fourth-deepest ocean trench in the world, and this was the first time a human had ever dived to its deepest point. The completion of this dive sets a new world record for Vescovo, having now completed dives to all four of the world's 10,000-meter trenches – the Mariana, Tonga, Philippine and Kermadec trenches.

The Kermadec Trench was the final dive in the South Pacific leg of the *Ring of Fire 2021* diving expedition, which has also included the first ever human descents to the bottom of the San Cristóbal

(8,483 meters), Santa Cruz (9,142 meters) and New Hebrides (7,794 meters) trenches.

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 and paved the way for important scientific research. We are proud to present Victor Vescovo with the well-deserved 2021 SeaKeeper of the Year award.

**We look forward to honoring him on 2.17.22 at the SeaKeepers Award Event.
For event details, please [click here](#).**

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