A bizarre-looking marine creature nicknamed "headless chicken sea monster" has been spotted above the seabed off the coast of East Antarctica. How exciting is the discovery of this unusual creature in Southern Ocean waters and why does it matter?

Sputnik has discussed the discovery with Claire Christian, executive director of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition.

**Claire Christian:** I think it’s so important because you know we are making decisions about what kinds of human activities can go on in our oceans every day and especially in places like Antarctica where the headless chicken monster was spotted.
Sea Monster From Dinosaur Era Sensationally Washes Up on Beach

You know we are making decisions about you know who can fish there, who can send tourist ships there, all these things, and when you are making those decisions you really want to know what kind of impact might human activities have on the marine life there and if you don’t know what the marine life is, you won’t understand what impact you might have.

Sputnik: But I think this is not the first I mean like in recent years there was a fifty-foot decane creature that you know appeared on an Indonesian Island that nobody knew what it was and nobody knew what it was! There was a 300 tooth snake-headed shark that seemed to be like a survivor of prehistoric times. There are just a lot of things that you know we don’t really understand but, oh, and Hurricane Harvey deposited some kind of a mysterious sea creature with fangs and no face on a Texas beach. So, I’m wondering do you think that this could be mutations or are they just things that we don’t know about. I mean are these mutations that have occurred because of the way we’ve been treating the ocean?

Claire Christian: No, I think these are just creatures we don’t see all that often because a lot of them are found mostly in deep waters and it’s only recently that we have that kind of technology like the cameras that filmed this particular creature. You know we just in the past we haven’t had the opportunity to see these habitats without a lot of specialized equipment.

And now that you can send down submersibles, you can send down cameras on fishing lines. We can see a lot of these creatures that we normally just wouldn’t be able to access very easily.

And they look very strange but only because we haven’t seen them before. And yes there a lot of very strange creatures in the deep but they are totally normal and they have looked like that for probably thousands of years. We humans just haven’t gotten a chance to get acquainted
with them yet.

Sputnik: Now I understand that this is also very important for conservation and particularly Antarctic conservation. Perhaps, this could actually lead to the creation of some kind of an Antarctic conservation zone which would be really amazing because I think that there is a lot of people who are thinking about digging for oil and other carbon fuels in the Antarctic. What are your thoughts and what are the prospects of actually creating a conservation zone?

Claire Christian: There’s been a consideration of an Antarctic marine protected area and East Antarctica for several years now, so that’s definitely something that’s been considered. In terms of this new creature having an influence on it.

I think any time you can get people thinking about Antarctica which is a place that’s very far away, whether it’s because, you know, because of an iceberg breaking up or because of a new creature been discovered, I think it just helps people understand that this is a place that is, even though it’s far away, it’s part of our ocean system, it’s got a lot of interesting creatures and it does have unique and vulnerable ecosystems that are worth protecting.

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So, I do hope that you know, new discoveries like this help people understand that, yeah, there is a lot going on down there and it’s worth it to make sure that we don’t inadvertently harm the next headless chicken monster that we haven’t yet discovered.

Sputnik: How instrumental in the past has you know a public interest and media interest been to creating, to putting pressure on, you know, the governments and organizations that can, in fact, create protective zones or start programs to conserve nature?

Claire Christian: I think it’s really important because especially, you know, it’s easy to get people interested in protecting what’s in their backyard because you know if their river is polluted they, you know...
There is a very obvious thing that is a problem and you see it every day and you want to fix it. But when you are talking about remote areas like Antarctica that are you know they are just as worthy of protection in our part of our wonderful world. You know we have to find a way to help people understand what’s going on down there.

And so I think these things can do a great deal because they just help connect people to a place that they may not think about ordinarily. So, I think it’s all helpful. Can I say that there is a direct line between the discovery of a weird creature and the ocean and the creation of a protected zone? – Maybe not; but everything helps and it helps people you know think “okay, this is Antarctica and Antarctica is cool I am excited about it and you know I’m going to show my support for it”.

And when there is a lot of public support for things then usually politicians are more inclined to carry them out. So, I think it’s all very favorable.

Views and opinions expressed in this article are those of Claire Christian and do not necessarily reflect those of Sputnik.