New highly detailed maps of bedrock reefs in southern Tasmania

Introduction

Multibeam sonar mapping of bedrock reefs on the inner shelf of southeast Tasmania by the Marine Biodiversity Hub reveals new detail of the physical structure of an important marine habitat. These new data include a reef that surrounds The Friars islands, immediately south of Bruny Island and reef around the Hippolyte Rocks, to the east of Tasman Peninsula.

The Friars

At The Friars, highly fractured dolerite reef covers an area of 18 km² in water depths of 10 – 75 m with local relief of up to 16 m. Photographs of the reef taken by an autonomous underwater vehicle show it is covered in soft coral and sponge communities and provides a habitat for lobsters.

The Hippolyte Rocks

The Hippolyte reef is also formed in dolerite, covering an area of approximately 2 km² in water depths of 10 – 90 m. This reef is characterised by high relief with peaks that rise up to 30 m above the deeper parts of the reef. Key biological assemblages include dense kelp, sponge and sea whip communities.

Significance of Results

These results demonstrate the value of multibeam sonar mapping and underwater photography for accurately delineating the extent and detailed morphology of bedrock reefs and the distribution of associated benthic communities.

This Marine Hub case study is revealing key physical features that control patterns of biodiversity on temperate reefs at scales useful for conservation management.

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