

Scientists snare 'superprawn' off New Zealand

February 3 2012



This photo, released by Oceanlab on February 3, shows a scientist from the University of Aberdeen holding one of the 'supergiant amphipods' off the coast of New Zealand. Scientists have captured these crustaceans in waters seven kilometres (4.4 miles) deep off N.Zealand, measuring 10 times the normal size of related species.

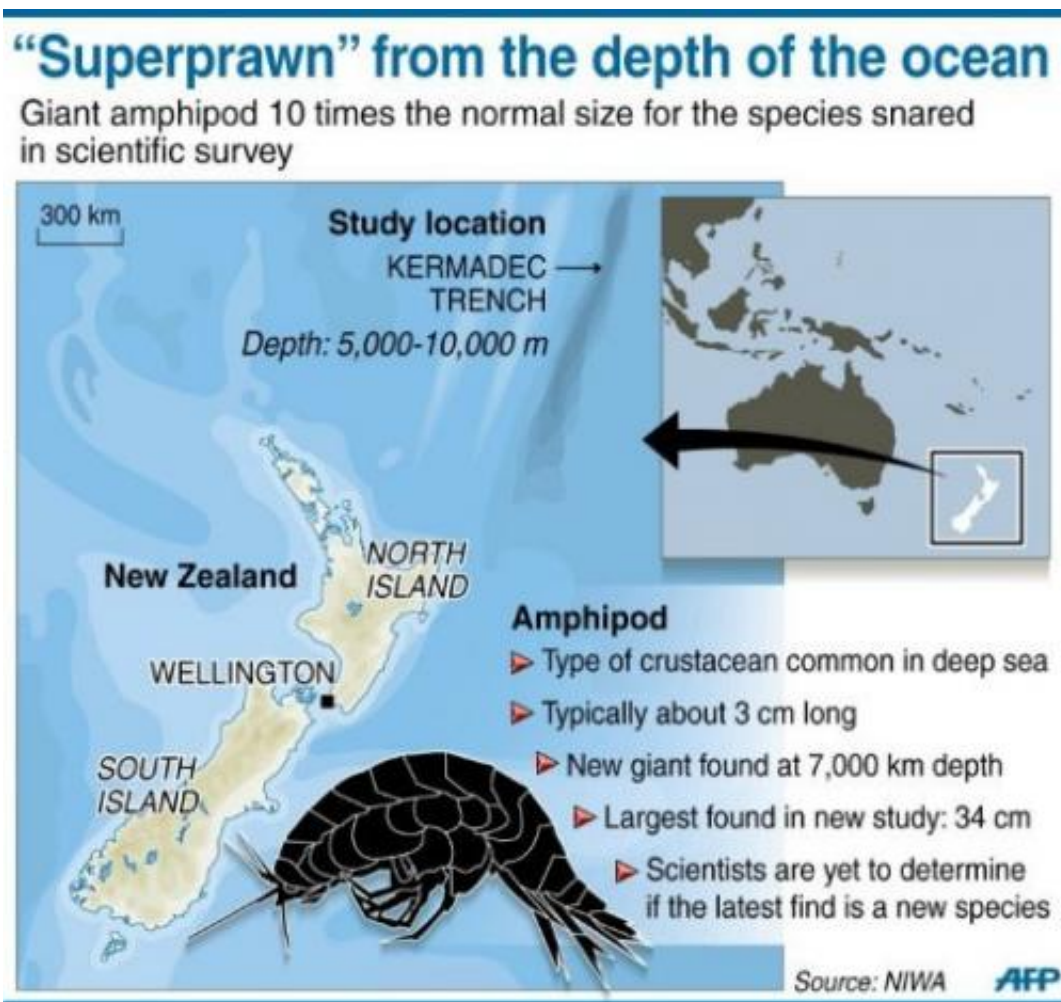
Scientists have captured a "supergiant" crustacean in waters seven kilometres (4.5 miles) deep off New Zealand, measuring 10 times the normal size of related species.

The "supergiant amphipod", which resembles a monster prawn, was

found during an expedition to the Kermadec Trench north of New Zealand by scientists from the University of Aberdeen and Wellington's NIWA marine research institute.

Amphipods are normally up to three centimetres (around an inch) long and the University of Aberdeen's Alan Jamieson said he was stunned to find the 28 centimetre (11 inch) giant when emptying [traps](#) on his research vessel's deck.

"I stopped and thought 'what on earth is that?' whilst catching a glimpse of an amphipod far bigger than I ever thought possible," he said.



Graphic on the discovery of a "supergiant" crustacean in a deep-sea trench off the coast of New Zealand

"It's a bit like finding a foot-long [cockroach](#)."

Another amphipod, which was filmed by the expedition but not captured, was an estimated 34 centimetres long.

"It just goes to show that the more you look, the more you find," NIWA principal scientist Ashley Rowden said.

"For such a large and conspicuous animal to go unnoticed for so long is just testament to how little we know about life in New Zealand's most deep and unique habitat."

Supergiant amphipods have been found only once before, in the 1980s. But that was off Hawaii, about 7,000 kilometres (4,500 miles) to the north, and NIWA said it was yet to determine if the latest catch was a new species.

Scientists said they did not know why the deep-sea creatures evolved to such a huge size.

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