



BRILLIANT: A sea cucumber (left) found by the survey and (above) the 'Lipstick' anemone which may not have been recorded anywhere else in the world.

PICTURES: NPARKS

MARINE BIODIVERSITY SURVEY

New species found, some rediscovered

THE Comprehensive Marine Biodiversity Survey, launched in 2010, has collected some 30,000 specimens and 14 species have been identified as possibly new to science, the National Parks Board said yesterday.

The survey, conducted in mudflats, seabeds and reef habitats, has also led to about 10 species being rediscovered.

One of the species identified as possibly new is the "Lipstick" sea anemone, found in mudflats at Pulau Ubin. This predatory animal has a distinctive red mouth and may not have been recorded anywhere else in the world, NParks said.

Other species identified as possibly new include the orange-clawed mangrove crab and a small goby fish, nicknamed Zee, found in mudflats off Lim Chu Kang.

Some crabs were rediscovered during the survey. The zebra crab, found in the Southern Islands, was last seen in the early 1960s.

Another interesting rediscovery is a species of large coastal catfish last seen in Singapore waters more than 100 years ago, the NParks said.

NParks and the National University of Singapore's Tropical Marine Science Institute have begun a second marine biodiversity expedition as part of the survey. The first expedition, in October last year, surveyed the Johor Straits.

The current three-week expedition will focus on the Singapore Strait and the Southern Islands.

Along with local researchers who are collecting and identifying specimens is a group of 25 internationally renowned scientists from 10 countries. They are experts with interests in creatures such as crustaceans, molluscs, sea anemones, seagrasses and sponges.

Mr Leong Chee Chiew, deputy chief executive of NParks, said the survey shows the "significant progress" that Singapore has made in conserving its natural heritage.

The Straits Times quoted him as saying: "It is very important that we continue working with the community to nurture healthy ecosystems and promote the appreciation of our rich biodiversity to future generations of Singaporeans."