

Unmanned ocean gliders monitor the 'lungs of the world's water'

Unmanned, autonomous ocean gliders are collecting data in the Southern Ocean, 1,000m below the surface, and sending it back to climate scientists and oceanographers, BDLive reports.

"This is the first time measurements of the Southern Ocean are being made on this scale," says Pedro Monteiro, head of the Southern Ocean Carbon-Climate Observatory (Socco) in Cape Town.

The gliders are fitted with four sensors that collect data about conductivity, temperature and depth; dissolved oxygen, light and chlorophyll and this information will increase researchers' understanding of the ocean, the natural carbon-dioxide exchange and, ultimately, climate change, says Dr Monteiro, who is also the principal oceanographer at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR). He adds that the concern is that climate change will disrupt the natural carbon-dioxide exchange balance which will undermine emission reduction efforts.

Isabelle Ansorge of the University of Cape Town's Marine Research Institute, has previously told Business Day that research in the Southern Ocean is critical. "It is the only ocean that is not surrounded by land, but by other oceans.... It is almost like the lungs of the world's water," she said. According to BDLive, data collected will be available to the public and researchers, both locally and internationally.

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