

Where the ship is stranded

Astrolabe Reef

About 4 nautical miles (7.4km) north of Motiti Island and about 12 nautical miles (22.2km) off the mainland coast.

The pinnacle on the reef is 80m wide and rises 1.5m out of the sea at low tide.

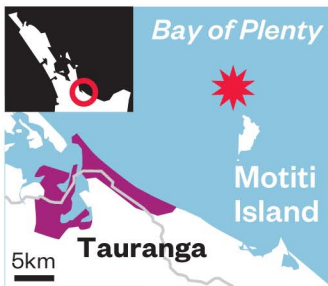
The reef's ecosystem is uncommon in New Zealand because it has both tropical fish such as striped marlin and schools of pelagic (surface-dwelling) fish.

The presence of vertical rock faces, with underwater caves, as well as very large boulders and the presence of high densities of pelagic fish in a very small area, makes Astrolabe a nationally significant scenic dive site.

Marine biologist Kim Westerskov says that because the reef is in the open sea, it is not muddied by run-off or mucky currents and the water is clear.

The current which swirls around the reef attracts bottom-dwelling creatures because it means food is easily found or carried to them by fast-moving water.

"It builds up a whole city of benthic dwellers... which are glued to the bottom and feed the animals which are fed on by other animals... right through to marlins and sharks. So you see the whole high-school biology food chain there in one dive."



Reef residents

Include:

Little blue penguins

Petrels

Seals

Trevally

Yellowtail kingfish

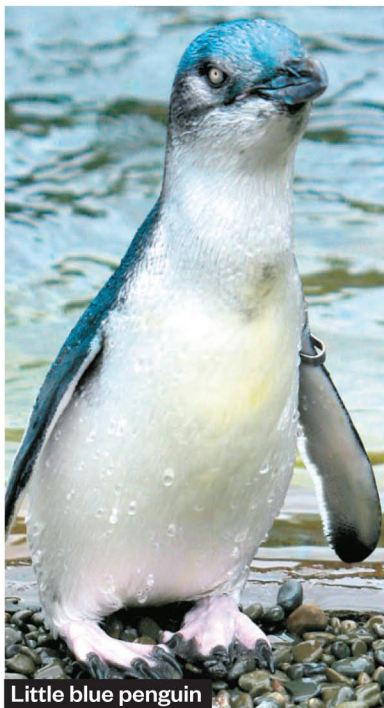
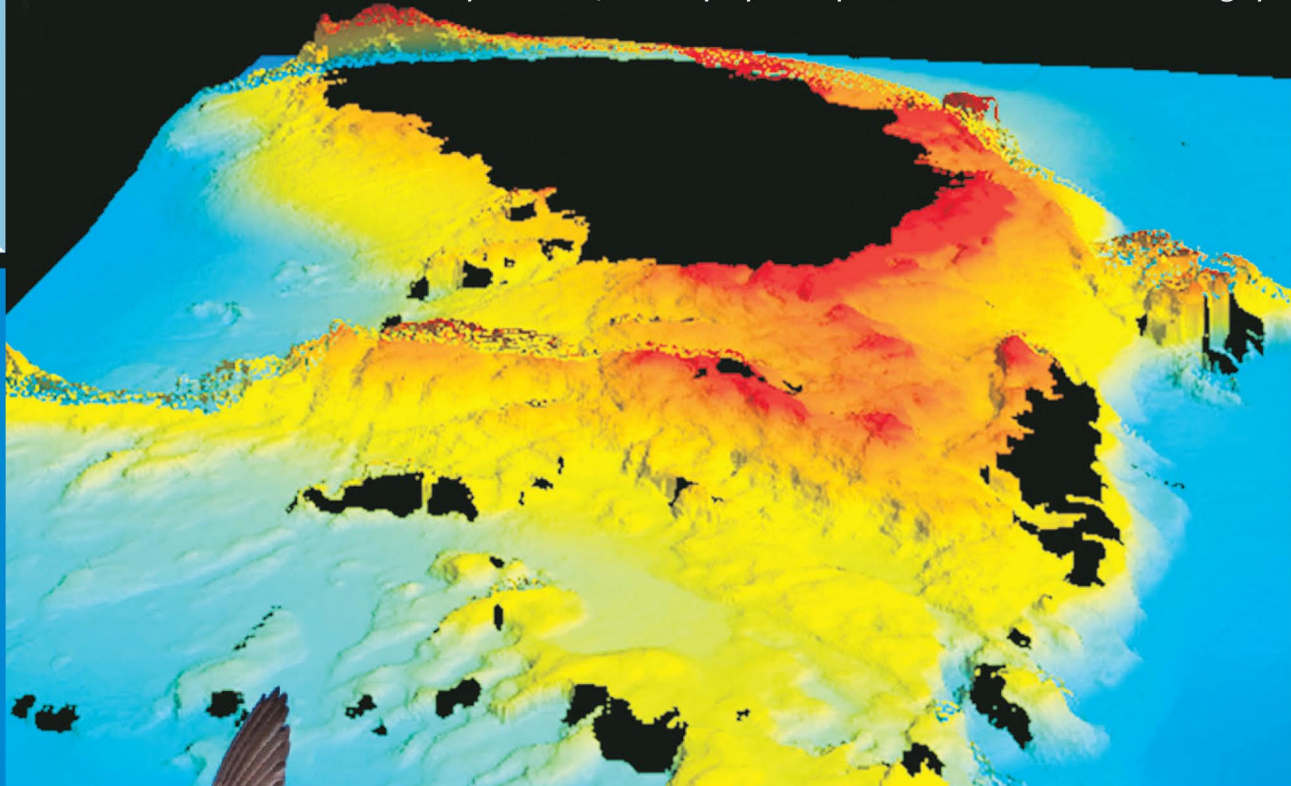
Mako

Kahawai

Mao mao

Striped marlin

Illustration of Astrolabe Reef was created by Triton Elics, a US company which specialises in underwater acoustic imagery.



47,000 tonnes

Cargo:
2171 containers

Fuel:
1700 tonnes of heavy fuel oil and about 70 tonnes of diesel.