

New camera set for maiden dive

Staff report

BOCA RATON — An innovative deep-sea lander designed and built at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University is on a ship headed for Australia, where it will be used by scientists from the University of Queensland and others to reveal secrets of the deep.

The new camera and sensor unit, named Medusa, can be deployed to depths of 2,000 meters, about 6,562 feet, and is designed to film ocean life without startling it.

“Capturing images of life in the deep sea is complicated by the fact that most creatures tend to shy away from light and noise, as with a submersible,” Medusa



Photo provided

The Medusa lander was developed by Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute.

project manager and Harbor Branch engineer Lee Frey said. “By eliminating those factors, we hope to be able to see things no one has seen before.”

Although the concept is not new, the configuration of Medusa is. Frey helped to design Eye in the Sea, a large camera unit that requires an underwater

vehicle for deployment. Eye in the Sea is at work on the floor of Monterey Bay in California.

In contrast, Medusa can be deployed from the side of a small boat and, with its legs detached and a tether line and stability fin added, can operate higher in the water. Power is supplied via battery packs that allow Medusa to run continuously for up to 72 hours.

To retrieve the unit, an acoustic signal sent from the surface causes Medusa to jettison its drop weight and float back to the surface.

The unit was commissioned by Justin Marshall of the University of Queensland, who required a camera unit that was modular and cost-effective.