



## Scientists Explore Prehistoric Forest Entombed off the Coast of Alabama

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Scientists have found an ancient submarine forest of bald cypress trees entombed in Mobile Bay off the coast of Alabama.

According to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#), the forest flourished on the banks of a prehistoric river near the Gulf of Mexico nearly 60,000 years ago. When the trees died, their massive trunks became entombed in peat and sediment. Eventually, sea levels rose, the coastline receded, and the remains of these [ancient trees](#) were buried by the sea. The forest was preserved, undisturbed for millennia, until recent intensifying storms along the coast began to expose it.

Scientists from Northeastern University and the University of Utah have joined forces with the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) to “unlock the forest’s secrets, including its potential to harbor new compounds for medicine and biotechnology.”

“The team’s focus is on bacteria found in wood-eating ‘shipworms,’ a type of clam,” NOAA reports. “These ‘termites of the sea’ convert wood into animal tissue, forming the base of a food chain that can support a rich diversity of fish, invertebrates, and microorganisms in communities that resemble [thriving coral reefs](#).”

### Scientists Discover Tree Older Than Christianity in North Carolina Swamp

Scientists began collecting timbers from the submerged forest in December. So far, they have only sampled a tiny fraction of the ancient forest site, but they already discovered “more than 300 animals” and “100 strains of bacteria” hosted by the wood.



Image courtesy of Brian Helmuth/NOAA

Previous work by the research team on bacteria in shipworms has resulted in at least one antibiotic being investigated as a drug to treat parasitic infections.

Source: <https://news.yahoo.com/scientists-explore-prehistoric-forest-entombed-135127591.html>