

SPORT

Sailing: Volvo Ocean Race doubles as scientific expedition and awareness programme

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The Volvo Ocean Race shares its environmental message across the world. Photo: Pedro Martinez/Volvo Ocean Race

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For the first three decades of its existence, it was a race around the world and nothing more.

But the Volvo Ocean Race has become so much more than just a race.

Since the event partnered with the Save the Albatross campaign in 2005, awareness of the environment has been a core message to the expedition.

Now, the event is not only one of the toughest races on Earth, but also a scientific expedition as well as an environmental awareness project.

The race around the world visits a number of remote places in the ocean few scientific expeditions can get to, and Volvo Ocean Race sustainability communications manager Robin Clegg said the event was an opportunity to learn more about what's going on in our seas.

"This data has never been found before. We're going to these places where we simply don't know anything about."

In this year's campaign, the fleet has been dropping drifter buoys into the sea, which send real-time information on the currents and weather patterns back to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States.

"That's what boats need," sustainability education manager Lucy Hunt said. "A real-time forecast...it's helping to build more real-time understanding of the weather and how changes in sea temperature are affecting the weather."



Volvo Ocean Race sustainability education manager Lucy Hunt. Photo: Anihoa Sanchez/Volvo Ocean Race



A NZ\$507,000 piece of bespoke equipment has also been used on board the vessel of Turn the Tide on Plastic, which has been measuring waters for salinity and chlorophyll levels, but also for micro-plastics.

When the crew gets to port, filters on the machine are removed and sent to a laboratory in Germany where they are analysed.