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## Rare shark, giant grouper sighted in Ormoc Bay

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ORMOC CITY – As it continues with the exploration for sunken warships in Ormoc Bay, *RV Petrel* – the research vessel owned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen – has reported sighting a rare bluntnosed sixgill shark and a giant grouper, known to Filipinos as *lapu-lapu*.

Robert Kraft, expedition leader, gave the “surprise” information to Mayor Richard Gomez during a visit to the *RV Petrel* on Friday, saying they “thought it better that you be the one to announce it.”

Kraft said they sighted the two fishes on separate occasions.

He pointed out that the sighting of the rare bluntnosed sixgill shark, listed as “near threatened” on Dec. 2, 2017, at a depth of 259 meters could be the first ever recorded in the Philippines, as the country is not a recorded habitat.

As for the “giant” grouper, Kraft described it as “really huge,” estimating its length at about six feet as judged from the backdrop of a huge Sumner artillery gun of the sunken *USS Cooper*.

Gomez said a giant grouper’s existence in Ormoc Bay was previously more of a “fisherman’s tale,” but the sighting, recorded on *RV Petrel*’s high-definition underwater cameras, confirms it.

The mayor added that he was right all along in pushing for the creation of the Ormoc Bay Management Council, which aims to protect the bay from environmental degradation and illegal fishing.

He recently signed a memorandum of agreement with Mayor Marthon Solafia of Merida and Mayor Rosa Meneses of Albuera to band together and protect the marine area.

“I knew Ormoc had gems but I did not know it had so many treasures – from historic

to natural,” Gomez said after being told that *RV Petrel* documented six sunken warships in Ormoc Bay.

“We have shipwrecks, we have big fishes also,” he added, pointing out that the news strengthens his resolve to protect and preserve the bay.

Gomez, who is developing the old city hall into the Ormoc Museum, was the one who requested the National Museum to conduct an exploration of Ormoc Bay to pinpoint the location of sunken warships.

Lacking of resources, the National Museum, in turn, requested *RV Petrel* which was doing research on the Battle of Surigao Bay, to include Ormoc Bay.

*RV Petrel* is doing research together with *MV Octopus* – Paul Allen’s famed \$250-million yacht that has two helicopters, a smaller yacht and a yellow submarine, which is being used to scour the depths to find more sunken warships.

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