



# Northeast Dive News



MARCH

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USS Algot's final duty station  
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The Dive News Magazine believes in honesty and integrity in business and will support all efforts related to this. We encourage readers to participate in determining the content of this publication by giving us their opinions on the types of articles they would like to see. We invite letters to the editor, manuscripts and photographs related to diving or diving-related business. Send us your stories and photos!

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▲ Michael Salvatorezza and Christopher P. Weaver make up Eco-Photo Explorers, a New York-based organization formed in 1994 to help promote public interest in protecting the underwater environment through knowledge and awareness using underwater photography.



▲ Synowiec has been involved in the diving industry since 1988 when he began as a stock boy for Michigan Underwater School of Diving. His talent for sales and his love for diving led him to where he is today – owner of Divers Incorporated in Ann Arbor, MI and Divers Incorporated-White Star, located at White Star Quarry, Gibsonburg, OH.

**NORTHEAST US DIVES**



**12 Beneath the Sea**

Beneath the Sea Celebrates its 34th Anniversary on March 26-28 at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, Secaucus, N.J. with a bevy of activities to mark this auspicious occasion. Join us as we celebrate 34 years of diving enthusiasm at the nation's largest consumer dive show. *By NEDN Staff*



**18 The USS ALGOL: On Final Duty**

You sank my battleship...and I'm ok with that! Many of the shipwrecks in the Northeast have found their final resting places beneath the waves as a result of tragic circumstances but the USS Algol went willingly and is now resting quietly, providing marine life a home and divers a new place to explore. *By Michael Salvatorezza and Christopher P. Weaver*

**MIDWEST DIVES**

**24 Don't Overlook Ohio**

The Buckeye State has great inland diving opportunities, take it from a guy who was born and raised in Michigan, but does a good portion of his dives in the state of Ohio. Why? Because Ohio, especially northwest Ohio, has some of the best inland diving I have ever had the privilege to experience. In fact the diving is so good you might get used to seeing that "Welcome to the Buckeye State" sign. *By Rich Synowiec*



**TROPICAL DESTINATIONS**

**30 The Lure of Sipadan Island**

Dawn barely warmed the horizon as we rolled into the water and descended to the top of the wall on Sipadan Island. Almost immediately, they appeared out of the darkness, like a herd of buffalo galloping across the prairie...bumphead parrotfish on the move. *By Sandy Sondrol*





# THE *USS ALGOL*

## On Final Duty



Diver takes a close look at a jellyfish. Photo © Eco-Photo Explorers

Story and photos by Michael Salvatore and Christopher P. Weaver

Although many of the shipwrecks in the Northeast have found their final resting places beneath the waves as a result of tragic circumstances, some have made their way to the bottom intentionally and are now resting quietly in the noble service of providing marine life and human beings with new reef environments to inhabit and explore.

The *USS Algol* is one such ship.

On Nov. 21, 1991, the *USS Algol* (AKA-54) became part of New Jersey's artificial reef program. At 12:30 p.m. that day a series of explosive charges tore through her hull as if it were made of thin sheets of paper. Minutes later, the *Algol* was resting almost silently at 120 feet on the soft, sandy bottom 14 miles off of New Jersey's Shark River Inlet. The serenity beneath the sea was disturbed for many hours by the sounds of belching air escaping from the holes and other cracks and crevices of her hull.

Launched and christened the *James Baines* on Feb. 17, 1943, in

Oakland, Calif., and affectionately known as the Steamin' Demon, she was converted months later on Dec. 3 to an auxiliary cargo attack vessel and renamed the *USS Algol*. With eight decks, 459 feet of hull and rising nearly 100 feet high, the *Algol* was truly a massive sight to see. Being well designed, she was able to carry a wide assortment of equipment such as tanks, trucks and other needed artillery hardware as well as to ferry troops to and from shore during amphibious beach assaults. This was accomplished by her 14 LCVP boats complete with two 30-caliber machine guns and eight LCM boats, which sported two 50-caliber machine guns. These landing craft were not going out unprotected! The *Algol* itself carried a wide array of armament, consisting of a five-inch mount, four double 40-millimeter mounts and six double 20-mm mounts.

After being fully commissioned on July 21, 1944, the *Algol* was hastily pressed into active duty. On Jan. 13, 1945, she successfully transported reinforcements for the 25th infantry division that was making an amphibious assault in the Lingayan Gulf. Sixteen days



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USS Algol is under way along the shore.  
File Photo

later, she was putting other U.S. troops ashore in the Zamabales of Luzon. The *Algol* also participated in and survived three amphibious invasions of Okinawa in April of 1945 without sustaining any damage to herself or loss of life.

After a brief rest and being inactive in November 1947, the *Algol* was once again thrust into harm's way. This time the place was Korea, Aug. 30, 1950, and the task was to ferry vital supplies and personnel to awaiting U.S. Marine troops. She also took part in two more invasions. The first was at Inchon on Sept. 17, 1950, and the second at Wonsan in October. On Dec. 4, 1950, the *Algol* assisted in the evacuation of Chinnampo. Years later on Jan. 2, 1958, she was finally put to dry-

dock and de-commissioned but not after receiving two World War II battle stars and five Korean War battle stars.

In 1983, the late Senator Edwin B. Forsythe petitioned the U.S. Maritime Administration for a surplus Liberty Ship to be used as part of New Jersey's Artificial Reef Program. When no such ship was found, the *USS Algol* was substituted. The *Algol* was about to begin her final tour of duty.

The sinking was finally arranged for Nov. 21, 1991. The Steamin' Demon was truly an unbeaten hero to many and scores of loyal crewmembers came from across the country to say their final goodbyes and witness the sinking of their ship as she began to proudly serve

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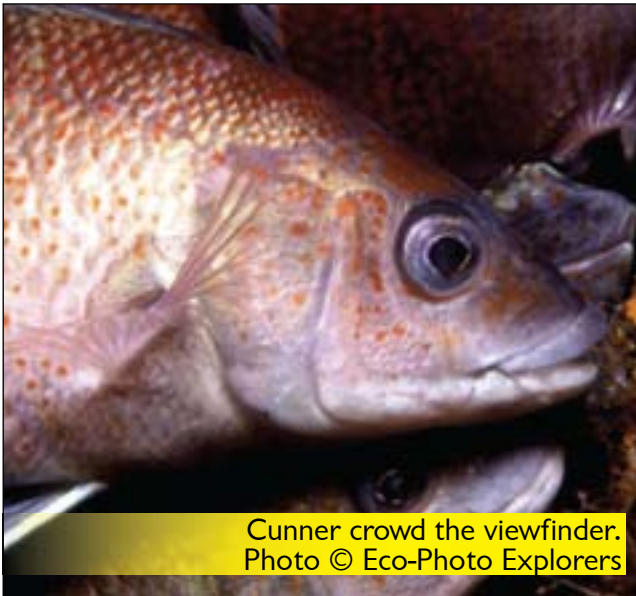
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Cunner crowd the viewfinder.  
Photo © Eco-Photo Explorers



Frilled anemones grow on the hull.  
Photo © Eco-Photo Explorers

her final duty as a living artificial reef, a permanent home to local marine life.

As part of the artificial reef program, the *Algol* was cleaned of all pollutants and floatable material prior to its sinking. Portholes and other large objects were removed as well.

Seven months after the sinking, the *Algol* was still easily recognizable, sitting perfectly upright on the bottom. She lies in close proximity to several other prominent New Jersey shipwrecks, such as the *Stolt D'Agali* and the *Coney Island*. The *Algol* still appeared pretty much as it did when it was sunk, with little or no marine

growth to disguise its features. Although still sterile, the *Algol* was just beginning to attract some aquatic life.

Today, the *Algol's* superstructure has been completely covered with mussels and other shellfish, and schools of blackfish, bergall, Pollack and black sea bass are routinely spotted on the wreck. Macro Photographers have been delighted to spot several colorful nudibranchs on the forward boom control structure. Like all of the shipwrecks in these waters, the *Algol's* exterior has also become covered with anemones, shellfish and other various plants and animals, and a thriving fish haven has been created.

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Divers who descend to the *Algol* will generally find visibility of 20 to 40 feet. Because the ship is intact, and sitting upright, navigation along its exterior is not difficult. Swimming along the main deck at a depth of 100 feet divers will pass over open cargo bays, past pieces of the ship's superstructure and will notice various items such as gun turrets, winches, boom control structures and cable reels. For the more experienced diver, penetration is possible into the main superstructure and below decks. Because of the orientation of the wreck, and because of the preparation of the vessel for intentional sinking, navigation is relatively easy. However, penetration of any wreck

requires specialized training and equipment. In 1991, the *Algol* began the next phase of her distinguished career as part of the New Jersey Artificial Reef program. Today, this "intentional" shipwreck appears as any other shipwreck in these waters would: covered with marine growth and serving out the remainder of her existence in the seclusion of the ocean world. As a wreck, the *Algol* has plenty to offer. Divers new to wreck diving will enjoy seeing a recognizable shipwreck with all its features intact. More experienced divers can explore the deeper recesses with numerous interesting passageways, rooms and compartments. Photographers have many opportunities to photograph an intact

wreck. People interested in studying the creation and development of marine habitats are able to witness the *Algol's* transition from a military vessel to an artificial reef. The *USS Algol*, on final duty 14 miles off the coast of New Jersey, has truly become one of the area's diving hotspots. ■

*Michael Salvarezza and Christopher P. Weaver have documented a world of adventure topside and underwater through their Long Island, N.Y.-based business Eco-Photo Explorers. They are popular lecturers and their work has been published in leading diving and general interest magazines. Learn more at [www.ecophotoexplorers.com](http://www.ecophotoexplorers.com).*



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