

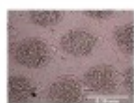
Unknown life form found at Fallen Leaf Lake

By Ky Plaskon, Capitol Public Radio

A Lake Tahoe area scientist has found an unidentified life form in Fallen Leaf Lake.

Now agencies in the area are trying to figure out what it is.

UNR professor emeritus, John Kleppe, pilots a remotely operated vehicle, or "ROV," into the frigid depths of the South Shore lake. Particles whiz by the ROV's lights like stars.



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Photo/Capitol
Public Radio

"It is sort of amazing because when you think about it no humans have seen a lot of what we see. It is like walking on the moon," said Kleppe.

He discovered a 3,000-year-old hidden forest still standing. He says it's evidence of past mega droughts. As if that's not strange enough, he has found something living in the forest.

"What we are seeing here is a thing, which is like a balloon

of green jell and it will eventually look like a baggie and then like it is creating a gas in it and then float away," said Kleppe.

He's collected samples and sent them to scientists who disagree on what they might be. Last week he got confirmation that they are not jellyfish. Researchers don't yet know whether they are plants or animals or a combination of both. Researchers are trying to figure out if they are an invasive species that should be wiped out. Kleppe doesn't think so.

"They only found them in very clean lakes that were high altitude, maybe it is a natural indicator of clarity. Wouldn't that be a concept. In other words, you wouldn't want to get rid of them, you would want to observe them," said Kleppe.

He had only found them in July in the ancient submerged forest until last year when one of the blobs actually attached itself to his pier.

"We should know what they are and so far nobody does so I am going to find out," said Kleppe.