

Drone exploring what's beneath Lake Tahoe

By John Markoff, New York Times

GLENBROOK – A vast, largely unexplored world is being opened by hobbyists piloting robotic submarines capable of traveling hundreds of feet below the surface of lakes, rivers and oceans.

Styling themselves as citizen scientists, two young engineers, Eric Stackpole and David Lang, have created OpenROV, a small start-up based in Berkeley that builds submarine drone kits. They hope to create a mirror image of the airborne drone craze.

This month, the OpenROV researchers took over a vacation home here and turned it into a command center for the maiden dive of a prototype of the next version of their Trident submarine. The sub explored the wreck of the Tahoe, a turn-of-the-last-century steamer that now lies less than a half-mile offshore in depths up to almost 500 feet below the surface of Lake Tahoe.

OpenROV has sold more than 3,000 of a first-generation submarine, which is able to navigate below the surface, connected by a thin cable and controlled by software running on a tablet or smartphone.

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