

The incredible journey of a camera lost at sea

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PARK LEE

A rock? No, a camera after two years lost at sea

In an extraordinary tale of luck and coincidence, a camera lost at sea for more than two years was discovered and will be returned to its owner.

It washed up on a beach in Taiwan covered in barnacles and barely recognisable - but thanks to a waterproof case, remained in perfect working condition.

The camera was discovered by a group of schoolchildren and their teacher who decided to try and track down the owner by sharing the find on Facebook.

And in just one day they had.

"I couldn't believe it," camera owner Serina Tsubakihara told the BBC.

"I was super surprised when my friends told me about this and sent me the post with those pictures."



SERINA TSUBAKIHARA

A picture recovered from the camera, which was thought to be lost at the bottom of the ocean

The Japanese university student was on holiday on the island of Ishigaki, Okinawa, some 250km (155 miles) east of Taiwan, when she dropped the camera.

"I was scuba diving and I lost the camera when one of my friends ran out of air and needed my help."

Underwater odyssey

That was in September 2015 and when the camera dropped from her hands Ms Tsubakihara assumed it was lost forever.

But safely encased in a diving case, the camera went on a little journey of its own.



SERINA TSUBAKIHARA

The most recent photos on the camera were from a diving trip in 2015

It travelled hundreds of kilometres and eventually washed up on a beach in Taiwan.

That's where it was found by a group of elementary school children on a day out to clean up the beach.

"An 11-year old boy found the camera," teacher Park Lee told the BBC.

The casing looked more like a rock, almost entirely covered in barnacles and shells.

"We thought it was broken but then by chance, knocked off a barnacle on the casing and found a button to open the case."



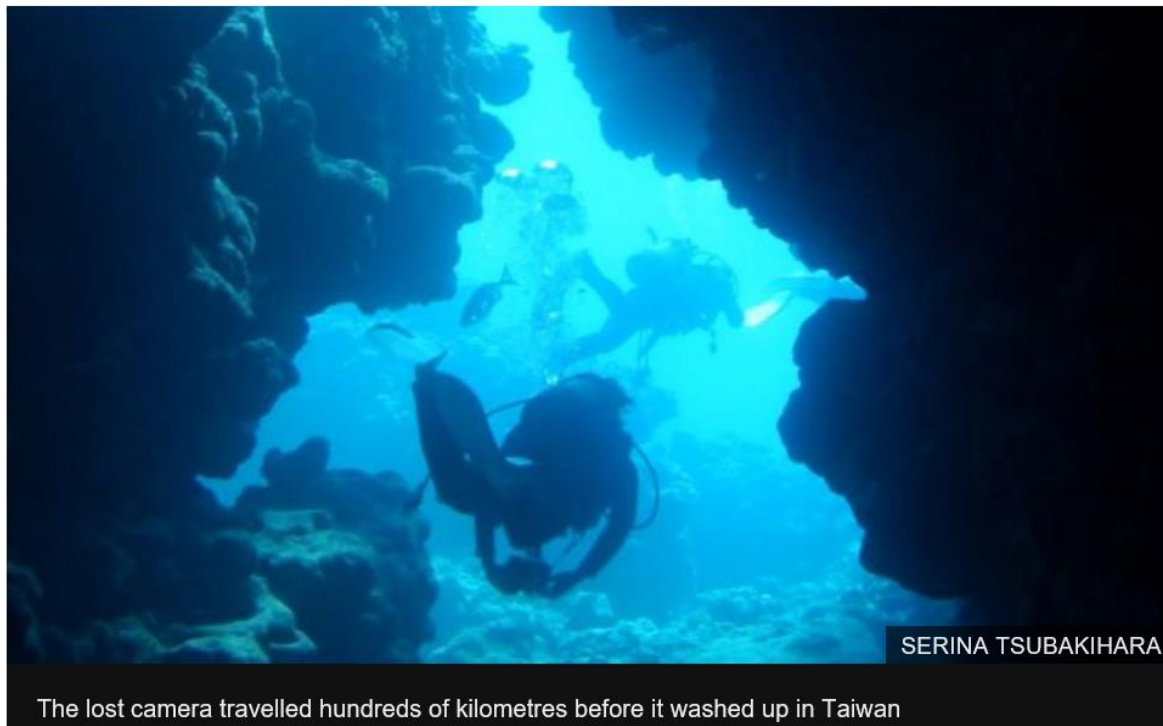
Not a drop of water had entered and the camera inside seemed to be in good shape.

"Even more amazingly, the boy turned the power on and the camera was still charged!"

Back at school, Mr Lee and the students discussed what to do with their find.

"Some children thought we had earned the camera and could keep for ourselves. Others suggested we should try to find the owner - and so we all sat down to think about how to do that."

Mr Lee said they initially had doubts over whether to look at the photos and post them, but it seemed like the only shot at finding the owner.



The lost camera travelled hundreds of kilometres before it washed up in Taiwan

As some of the pictures were from Japan, they thought the owner might be Japanese. So they posted their messages in Chinese and Japanese.

Before they knew it, the post had been shared more than 10,000 times and in one day, found its way to Ms Tsubakihara.

"I am so lucky and happy to have this miracle opportunity to feel kindness of people in my life," she said.

"Those pictures remind me of old memories and brought me back to those."

She told the BBC she now plans to go to Taiwan in June to thank the teacher and the school children and pick up her long lost camera.

Reporting by the BBC's Andreas Illmer.

Questions:

Where was the camera found?

How did the camera manage to stay protected from the water?

Why did some children want to keep the camera?

What was the university student doing when she lost her camera?

What was even more amazing about this camera when they opened the casing?

If you had found this camera on a beach, what would you have done, and why?

Answers:

- 1) A beach in Taiwan
- 2) It was encased in a diving case.
- 3) They felt that they had earned it.
- 4) Scuba diving
- 5) The camera still had charge