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Knight Statue Removed From Depths of Lake Baikal After Public Outcry

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@kisurinmark

An underwater knight statue has been removed from the bottom of Lake Baikal in Siberia after an outcry over its impact on the lake's delicate ecosystem, law enforcement officials said Monday.

The two-meter statue was discovered 40 meters (130 feet) from the shoreline by a local diver. Media reported that the knight had been placed there last month by a diving club to honor Grigory Galazy, a Soviet conservationist known as the "Knight of Baikal" by colleagues and students.

However, the underwater installation sparked criticism online, with some accusing it of polluting Baikal, the world's deepest and oldest freshwater lake.

The Baikal environmental prosecutor's office announced Monday that the statue was removed by unidentified individuals, following their "intervention."

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In recent decades, Lake Baikal has faced environmental problems caused by industrial pollution, mining and agricultural runoff. UNESCO designated the lake as a World Heritage Site, requiring Russia to ensure its environmental protection through law.

Mark Kisurin, a free diver who posted videos of the submerged statue, said that the knight was not the only form of pollution at the lake's bottom.

"If only the angry [online] commentators knew how many bottles, beer cans, rusty disposable charcoal grills, car tires, plastic and other household garbage we collect almost daily along the coast," Kisurin wrote on Telegram last week.

He added: "Nobody except for a few dozen divers knows how much rusty metal and rotting wood from pre-war and even pre-revolutionary times lies along the shores of Baikal."

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