

Rory McIlroy wins PGA Championship
SPORTS



TOSSED & LOST
Manager thrown out of game in seventh inning; Cardinals defeat O's, 8-3
SPORTS

A federal fisheries council could issue protections today for the 'hidden treasures' lying off the coast

SUN INVESTIGATES

Transit police probe K-9 unit

Trainer questions certification of one drug-sniffing dog

BY IAN DUNCAN
The Baltimore Sun

The Maryland Transportation Authority says it has launched an investigation into its police K-9 unit after the dogs' head trainer alleged problems with the drug-sniffing hounds.

The trainer said in a deposition that he had discovered deficiencies in the training of one dog, and that police had tried to pass off fake credentials for the animal in a court case after officers could not find the original records.

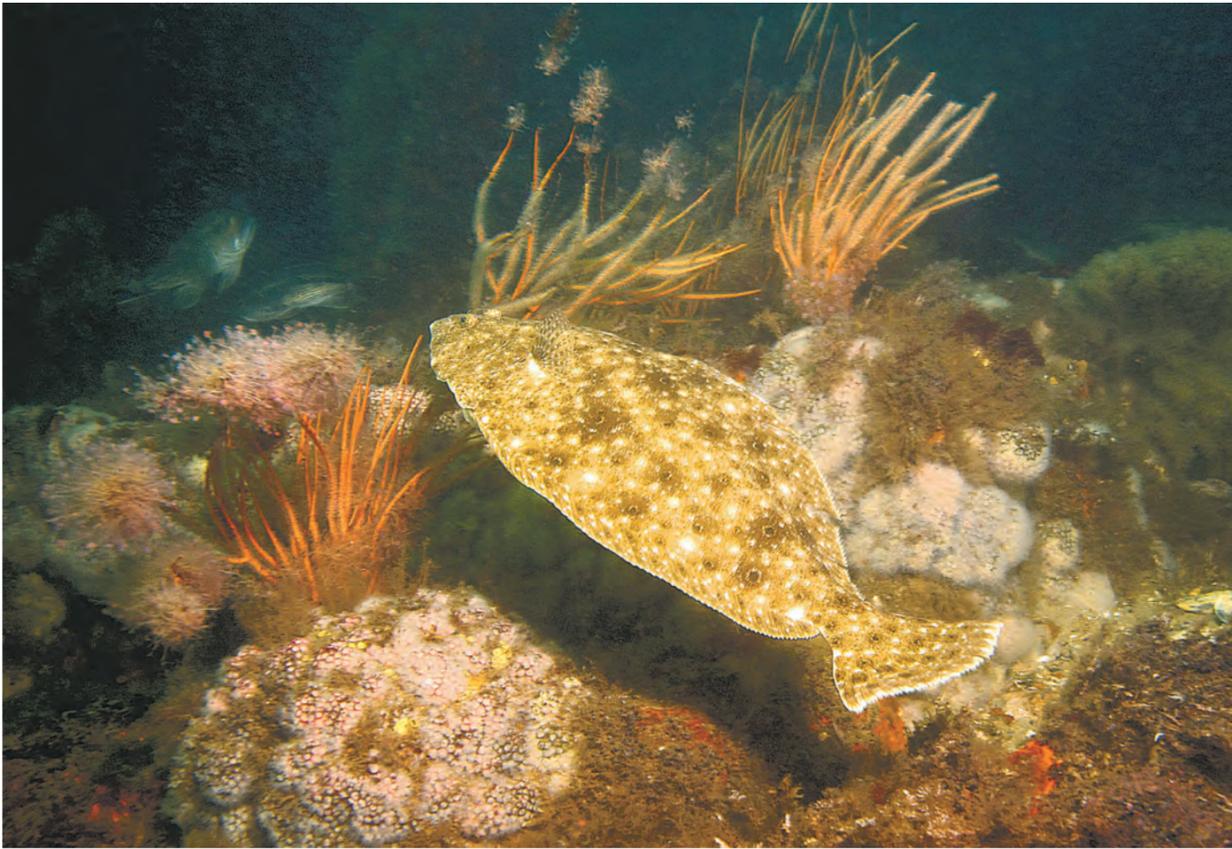
The allegations have emerged in a battle over \$122,000 seized last fall at Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport.

The money — which authorities believe is connected to drug trafficking, according to court documents — was taken from a man at the airport in September. The man's wife, Samantha Banks, says the money was her life savings and was to have been used in a real estate deal. Banks is fighting in court to get it back.

Authorities have not found drugs, but say the narcotics dog, Falco, gave a positive response when it sniffed the money. Among the evidence turned over to Banks' lawyer was a certificate that was supposed to show the qualifications of Falco and his handler. Neither Banks nor her husband has been charged.

But in a deposition in July, one K-9 trainer said the certificate was created after the dog's handler could not find the original, and another trainer said in an affidavit that he produced the certificate on his home computer under instructions from the handler.

An MdTA spokesman said the agency is taking the allegations seriously. Spokesman See **K-9**, page 11



MICHAEL EVERSMIER PHOTO

A summer flounder swims among the coral near the wreckage of a ship in the Atlantic. Cold-water relatives of the showy corals found in warm tropical seas, these deep-sea corals harbor a rich variety of fish, sponges and other marine life.

Exploring the Atlantic's deep coral-lined canyons

BY TIMOTHY B. WHEELER
The Baltimore Sun

Seventy miles off Ocean City, scientists aboard the federal research vessel Henry B. Bigelow are exploring a lush underwater landscape that until recently few would have imagined — colorful corals clinging to the rocky slopes of deep-sea canyons.

On this and other research cruises, remotely guided submersible cameras have captured scenes of bubblegum corals, sea whips and more growing in the dark, hundreds to thousands of feet below the Atlantic Ocean's surface. Other smaller patches dot the ocean floor in shallower waters closer to shore. Cold-water relatives of the showy corals found in warm tropical seas, these also harbor a rich variety of fish, sponges and other marine life.

"The deep sea is not just this barren place — there's amazing things that live

down there," said Martha Nizinski, a National Marine Fisheries Service zoologist leading the Bigelow's recent exploratory cruise off the Delmarva Peninsula.

Today, prompted by what researchers found in recent years, a federal fisheries council is expected to move toward protecting some or all of the coral-lined canyons along the eastern edge of the continental shelf, which one environmental group calls "hidden treasures" of the Mid-Atlantic.

"These are fragile and beautiful creatures in areas that are just beginning to be explored," said Joseph Gordon, manager of ocean conservation efforts in the Northeast for the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Depending on what the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council decides, he said, it could establish the largest protected marine habitat ever in the Atlantic — a stretch of ocean bottom as big as Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania combined. See **CORAL**, page 11



DEEPWATER CANYONS 2012 EXPEDITION
A squat lobster and a small black-belly rosefish huddle near a den on a small ledge in Baltimore Canyon.

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

MARYLAND

SMOOTH MOONRISE FEST: The second and final day of the first Moonrise Festival, the electronic dance music event that attracted thousands to Pimlico Race Course over the weekend, appeared to be running smoothly Sunday evening, city officials said. The festival drew increased attention after the deaths of two attendees at an electronic dance music event the previous weekend in Columbia from what police believe were drug overdoses. **NEWS PG 2**

WORLD

ANOTHER CEASE-FIRE: Israel and Palestinian militants agreed to a new 72-hour cease-fire that started Sunday night. **NEWS PG 7**

TODAY'S WEATHER

PARTLY SUNNY

82 | **67**
HIGH | LOW

Storm possible Tuesday **SPORTS PG 12**

Airstrikes turning tide, Kurds say

U.S. planes continue third straight day of attacks as Obama is hit with criticism at home

BY KATHLEEN HENNESSEY,
PATRICK McDONNELL
AND MICHAEL A. MEMOLI
Tribune Newspapers



SEBASTIEN MEYER/PHOTO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Men carry a Yazidi woman who fainted Sunday after crossing from Syria back into Iraq. Tens of thousands of Yazidis, a religious minority, had fled Iraq after attacks by Islamic State fighters.

IRBIL, IRAQ — U.S. warplanes and armed drones pounded Sunni militants in northern Iraq on Sunday with multiple airstrikes near the Kurdish capital of Irbil, marking the third straight day of punishing attacks on Islamic State forces.

The four airstrikes destroyed three armed vehicles and a mortar position used by the extremist group to fire on Kurdish security forces, according to U.S. Central Command. All the aircraft returned safely.

It apparently was the first time U.S. airstrikes were called in to defend the beleaguered Kurdish forces, who have struggled against the well-armed militants. See **IRAQ**, page 11

Inside
Yazidis in Nebraska fear for those they left behind.
NEWS PG 6

U.S. airstrikes turning tide, Kurdish officials say

IRAQ, From page 1

Previous attacks targeted the insurgents' heavy weapons near Irbil, or their firing on Yazidi refugees who have fled to the rugged Sinjar mountains for safety.

Kurdish authorities said Sunday that their forces had regained effective control of several towns outside Irbil that had fallen to the Islamic State, an offshoot of al-Qaida that has seized a broad swath of Iraq and Syria in recent months.

Peshmerga forces, as Kurdish troops are known, have chased the militants from the Gwer region and have regained "effective control" of Makhmour, officials said. Both areas are about 30 miles from Irbil.

The towns' seizure by Islamic State forces last week had spurred fears that the militants could threaten the heartland of the semiautonomous Kurdish region, whose leaders have long been major U.S. allies.

Kurdish officials were quoted in the local press saying the recapture of the towns indicates that Kurds, now backed by U.S. intelligence and jet fighters, have turned the tide in the battle against the extremists.

President Barack Obama, who is vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, launched America's latest intervention in Iraq on Thursday.

He authorized what he called targeted airstrikes to prevent the potential genocide of the Yazidis, a religious sect, and to stop the militants from capturing Irbil, which is home to hundreds of U.S. diplomats, troops, contractors and other Americans. On Sat-



AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP/GETTY PHOTO

Iraqi Yazidis, who fled their homes a week ago when Islamic State militants attacked the town of Sinjar, gather inside a building under construction in the Kurdish city of Dohuk.

urday, he said the operation might take months.

In Washington, Obama's chief foreign policy critics accused him Sunday of lacking a clear strategy for confronting the Islamic State, saying that targeted airstrikes will not be enough to defeat the growing threat.

In separate TV interviews, Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina warned that the Islamic State posed a threat to America and

that the president's focus on political reconciliation in Iraq was not the answer.

"This is not a replacement for a strategy to deal with an existential threat to the homeland," Graham said on "Fox News Sunday." "We have to have a sustained air campaign in Syria and Iraq."

McCain, appearing on CNN's "State of the Union," said the U.S. should launch airstrikes in Syria as well as Iraq, and give further assistance to Syrian opposition

forces and to the Kurds.

"This is turning into, as we had predicted for a long time, a regional conflict which does pose a threat to the security of the United States of America, and launching three strikes around a place where a horrible humanitarian crisis is taking place ... is clearly very, very ineffective, to say the least," McCain said.

Democrats offered a more cautious assessment. Sen. Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Democrat in the Senate, said the president needed to stick to his "limited" mission.

"Escalating it is not in the cards," Durbin said on NBC's "Meet The Press." "I think the president's made it clear this is a limited strike. He has, I believe, most congressional support for that at this moment."

Former U.S. diplomats and military commanders in Iraq similarly offered mixed assessments.

Zalmay Khalizad, the former U.S. ambassador to both Iraq and Afghanistan, said that waiting for the formation of a more inclusive Iraqi government, as Obama has urged, won't be a "magical solution."

Although the White House wants Nouri Maliki, Iraq's authoritarian prime minister, to step down, "he could be replaced by someone who is not as competent," Khalizad said on CNN.

Retired Army Gen. Carter Ham, the former U.S. commander in Mosul, said the first three days of U.S. airstrikes appear to "have at least given pause to the Islamic extremists."

Exploring Atlantic's coral-lined canyons

CORAL, From page 1
bined.

It's a new frontier for science and for conservation. Only in the last several years have scientists realized how many corals can be found in the many "submarine" canyons carved into the eastern edge of the continental shelf, from the Gulf of Maine to Cape Hatteras.

"Even though they're right off some of the most populated areas of the United States, most of these canyons have never been explored," other than for some oil surveys in the 1980s, said Thomas Hourigan, chief scientist for deep-sea coral research with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Unlike their shallow-water cousins, the deep-sea corals don't depend on sunlight, as they have no algae growing on them and supplying them food. Instead, the deep-sea corals sustain themselves by trapping tiny organisms carried along in the ocean currents.

Relatively few deep-sea corals are the stony type that build reefs. Many tend to be smaller than the warm-water corals, though some commonly known as sea fans or whips can grow larger.

"Like shallow-water corals, they appear to be hot spots of diversity," Hourigan said, with anemones and sponges growing on them and "everything from crabs to starfishes to shrimp and all kinds of little critters" crawling over and under them.

Experts thought deep-sea corals existed only in scattered patches around the world. With better submersibles and remotely operated vehicles for exploring deep underwater, scientists have learned they are much more broadly distributed, some are hundreds and even thousands of years old, and they're habitat for many fish and other marine life.

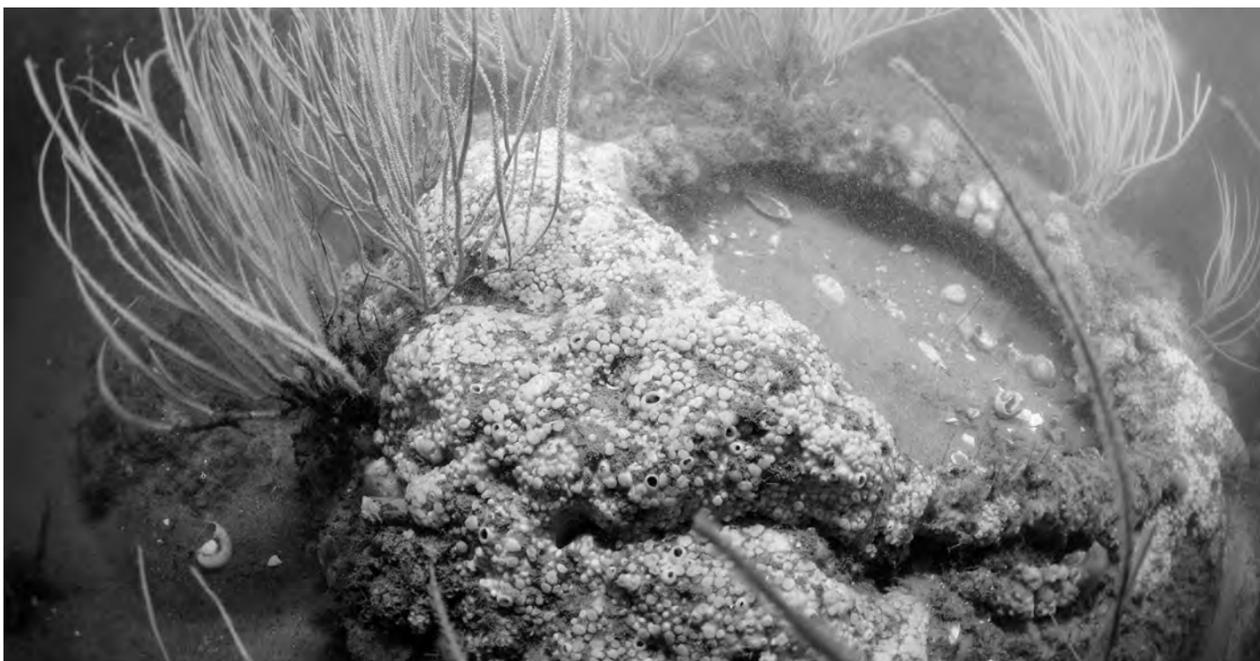
"And that's really galvanized efforts, not just in the United States but internationally, to protect these habitats," Hourigan said.

Several years ago, Congress directed federal scientists to make a concentrated search for them in U.S. waters. There have been a series of cruises to probe the depths along the Pacific, Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

The mission of the NOAA vessel *Bigelow* during its 12-day cruise this month is to explore some of the canyons along the Mid-Atlantic coast. Nizinski said it's too early to say what they'll find. On previous explorations of the Baltimore, Norfolk and other major canyons, she and other scientists have seen many soft gorgonian corals in "fantastic colors," ranging from white to shades of yellow, gold, red, pink and orange, she said.

"I have to say we are excited about every dive that we do, because we're just not sure what we're going to find," Nizinski said.

Congress also gave the councils regulating fishing off the U.S. coasts the authority



NICK CALOYIANIS PHOTO

Deep-sea coral commonly known as sea whips dwell on what appears to be a man-made object.

to protect them. The Mid-Atlantic council is the first to use that authority to consider broad-based protection for canyons.

The council, which meets today in Washington, is weighing whether to limit commercial fishing either across wide swaths of ocean bottom beyond a certain depth, or in more narrowly targeted zones around individual canyons. The biggest threat to the corals appears to be bottom trawling, in which fishing vessels haul nets across the ocean floor.

"Other places in the world, areas like this have been demolished," Pew's Gordon said.

If the most protective option under consideration is adopted, he said, it could safeguard roughly 37,000 square miles of ocean bottom.

Commercial fishing interests hope the council doesn't bar them from current fishing grounds.

The bulk of the world's catch of longfin squid comes from the Atlantic from Massachusetts to Virginia, according to NOAA. And the prime areas for catching squid are along the canyon rims, said Greg DiDomenico, president of Garden State Seafood Association, an industry group.

Fishermen avoid trawling in the canyons, DiDomenico said, because modern navigation and sonar technology enables them to make precise hauls near but not over the edges. Moreover, it could cost upward of \$100,000 to replace nets and electronic gear snagged in the rugged terrain of the steep valleys.

"If we know there's hard and soft corals

in the heads of the canyons, there's no way our gear is going to interact with those," he said. "Let the guys fish right next to [the edge] because they've been doing it for 30 years."

Conservation advocates want to "freeze the footprint" of current fishing activity, allowing it to continue but barring it from expanding or moving.

"Over the decades, intensively fished areas have extended farther from shore and deeper due to technological advancements and market demand," said Jay Odell, director of The Nature Conservancy's Mid-Atlantic marine program, "so protecting remnant intact coral habitat where nobody is fishing yet would be a big conservation win."

While protection may be on the way for the corals deep in the Mid-Atlantic canyons, scientists acknowledge they may be more extensive than that.

Monty Hawkins, longtime skipper of the party boat *Morning Star*, regularly takes groups out from Ocean City to fish over man-made and natural reefs 10 to 20 miles offshore, where the water is 70 feet to a little over 100 feet deep. Underwater video and photography show those reefs have growths of sea whips and bubblegum corals, Hawkins said. And they teem with fish, particularly black sea bass, he said.

"Very few people have any idea we have corals growing off the coast of Maryland," Hawkins said one day recently as he took out another fishing party.

The corals dot the bottom in waters that

the federal government has put up for lease to develop offshore wind energy. Hawkins said he's hopeful regulators will ensure that the massive turbines aren't built atop patches of coral. At the same time, he suggested, the structures could provide additional hard surfaces on which corals would grow — and attract more fish.

Hawkins said he's more worried about commercial fishing. Bottom trawling and clam dredging could wipe out some shallow coral communities, he said. He has appealed — without success — for federal agencies to designate the shallower cold-water coral reefs essential fish habitat, which would give them a measure of legal protection.

Hourigan said "the patches we've seen have been relatively small patches. ... It's not immediately clear the extent to which what we see today is all there ever was or whether there was more once and it was destroyed."

Odell, whose organization is seeking to help map corals and other ecologically important features on the ocean bottom, said he's convinced that all of it needs to be shielded from fishing and offshore energy projects.

"The black sea bass absolutely depend on this coral patch habitat," Odell said. "We only roughly know where it is, and it has yet to be mapped and protected. ... It's astounding that we have better maps of the surface of Mars than we do of the sea floor now."

tim.wheeler@baltsun.com

Maryland transit police launch probe of K-9 unit

K-9, From page 1

John Sales said MdTA police are starting an investigation and have assigned additional commanders to watch over the K-9 unit.

"We hold ourselves to the highest levels of professionalism, compliance and integrity," Sales wrote in an email. "With that basis we are proceeding with due diligence regarding these allegations."

Banks' attorney wrote in court filings that federal prosecutors "obscured the truth" about the document. A spokeswoman for the U.S. attorney's office said there was no wrongdoing.

MdTA police have responsibility for law enforcement at BWI, the port of Baltimore, and the state's tunnels and bridges. The K-9 unit took over responsibility for detecting explosives at the airport from the state police in 2001 and began using them for detecting drugs three years later.

The four drug-sniffing dogs are certified

by the MdTA police. The explosives dogs are certified by the U.S. Transportation Security Administration and are not implicated in the case, Sales said.

When prosecutors turned the certificate in question over to Banks' attorney, they described it in a letter as a "reproduction."

In a subsequent deposition, attorney C. Justin Brown asked K-9 trainer Michael McNerney if it was "an authentic certification."

"No," McNerney said.

"Is this a fraudulent certification?" Brown asked.

"I believe so," the trainer said.

Another trainer, John McCarty III, said in an affidavit that he was directed by the dog's handler to create the certificate on his home computer using Microsoft Word. McCarty said he believed the certificate had no value because there was no underlying paperwork to show the dog had been

trained.

McNerney said in the deposition that he told the U.S. attorney's office that he thought the document was fraudulent and that he talked to his superiors about it.

Brown wrote in court filings that the two prosecutors assigned to the case had "obscured the truth" about the certificate, and decried "the lengths to which [MdTA Police] and the U.S. Attorney's Office went to mislead the claimant and gain advantage in litigation."

The U.S. attorney's office has not responded to Brown's filings in court. But in a statement, spokeswoman Vickie LeDuc said there was "no intent to deceive anyone about the certification."

The training records of drug-sniffing dogs serve an important legal role, one which was underscored last year by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court ruled that an alert by a drug

dog should generally be considered grounds for police to carry out a search as long as officers can show that the dog had been properly certified or trained.

Sales said the transportation authority now has current certifications and training records for its four drug-sniffing dogs but plans to recertify all its dogs and have an independent body audit the K-9 unit. There were no gaps in any of the other dogs' records, Sales said.

In the money case, Falco was not responsible for discovering the cash, but Sales said transportation authority police are working with prosecutors to determine whether any other cases are affected. James Wyda, the head of the federal public defender's office in Baltimore, said he is also keeping a close eye on the proceedings.

iduncan@baltsun.com
twitter.com/iduncan