Deep Learning Based Underwater Obstacle And Fish Detection With Image Enhancement

[1]Mrs. S. KIRUTHIKA M.E.,B.Ed., [2]AARTHI PRIYA M, [3] MURUGAN S, [4] RAMYA R, [5] MADHAVAN K

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Information Technology, Mahendra College of Engineering, Minnampalli, Salem-636106, TamilNadu.

[2,3,4,5]UG Student, Department of Information Technology, Mahendra College of Engineering, Minnampalli, Salem-636106, TamilNadu.

Abstract: Underwater imaging faces significant challenges due to poor visibility, low contrast, color distortion, and light scattering, which hinder the accurate detection of objects such as obstacles and marine life. This project proposes a deep learning-based system that integrates advanced image enhancement techniques with object detection models to improve underwater scene understanding. The enhanced images are fed into a convolution neural network (CNN) or transformer-based detection architecture, such as YOLO or Faster R-CNN, trained to identify and localize both underwater obstacles and fish species. The image enhancement stage leverages methods such as histogram equalization, white balancing, and deep learning-based restoration to recover visual clarity. Experimental results on standard underwater datasets demonstrate improved detection accuracy and robustness under varying visibility conditions, making this approach highly beneficial for autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), marine biology research, and underwater navigation systems.

Keywords: Underwater Image Enhancement, Deep Learning, Obstacle Detection, Fish Detection, YOLO / Faster R-CNN, Convolution Neural Networks, Marine Robotics, Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs), Image Restoration, Object Detection in Low Visibility.

I INTRODUCTION

The underwater environment poses significant challenges for visual perception due to factors such as light absorption, scattering, and suspended particles that distort imagery. These limitations hinder accurate detection of underwater obstacles and marine life, which is critical for applications such as autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), marine research, and aquaculture monitoring. Traditional image processing techniques often fail to provide reliable results in such complex and dynamic environments, making it essential to explore more robust approaches that can handle the unique characteristics of underwater imagery.

Recent advancements in deep learning have opened new possibilities for underwater perception by leveraging convolution neural networks (CNNs), object detection models, and image enhancement techniques. Deep learning models are capable of learning complex features from large datasets and can be trained to detect underwater obstacles and fish with high accuracy. However, the performance of these models is still heavily dependent on the quality of input images. This has led to an increasing interest in integrating image enhancement techniques, such as contrast limited adaptive histogram equalization (CLAHE), generative adversarial networks (GANs), and other color correction methods, to preprocess images before feeding them into detection networks.

This integration of deep learning and image enhancement creates a powerful synergy that significantly improves the reliability of underwater object detection systems. Enhanced images allow detection models to distinguish between background noise and meaningful features more effectively, leading to better localization and classification of underwater obstacles and fish. Such systems have the potential to revolutionize a range of underwater operations by providing safer navigation for AUVs, supporting biodiversity studies, and optimizing fishery management through real-time monitoring. As the technology matures, it promises to bridge the gap between underwater visual limitations and intelligent autonomous perception.

II LITERATURE SURVEY

Underwater exploration and monitoring have gained significant attention in recent years due to their applications in marine biology, oceanography, and autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs). However, visual perception in underwater environments presents substantial challenges, primarily due to low visibility, poor lighting conditions, color distortion, and scattering effects. Traditional image processing techniques often fall short in effectively identifying obstacles and marine life, especially fish, in such degraded conditions. As a result, recent research has increasingly focused on leveraging deep learning techniques, which offer superior capabilities in feature extraction and object detection. Coupled with advanced image enhancement algorithms tailored to the underwater domain, deep learning models have demonstrated promising results in overcoming visibility issues and improving detection accuracy. This literature survey explores the current advancements in deep learning-based underwater object and fish detection, highlighting the pivotal role of image enhancement in boosting system performance and reliability.

[1] A Comprehensive Survey on Underwater Image Enhancement Based on Deep Learning- Xiaofeng Cong, Yu Zhao, Jie Gui, Junming Hou, Dacheng Tao- arXiv preprint- 2024

This survey provides a detailed overview of underwater image enhancement (UIE) using deep learning. It discusses physical models, data construction, evaluation metrics, and loss functions. The paper categorizes recent algorithms based on network architecture, learning strategy, learning stage, auxiliary tasks, domain perspective, and disentanglement fusion. It also performs quantitative and qualitative evaluations of state-of-the-art algorithms across multiple benchmark datasets and identifies key areas for future research in UIE.

[2] Robust Underwater Fish Detection Using an Enhanced Convolutional Neural Network- Dipta Gomes, A. F. M. Saifuddin Saif- International Journal of Image, Graphics and Signal Processing (IJIGSP)- 2021

This research focuses on refining underwater image enhancement for object detection. It proposes an improved method for detecting underwater organisms, such as fish, using a modified VGGNet-16 architecture trained on the ImageCLEF FISH_TS dataset. The study reports an accuracy of 96.4%, surpassing previous methods, and emphasizes the robustness of the approach in terms of accuracy, speed, and upgradability.

[3] Accurate Fish Detection under Marine Background Noise Based on the Retinex Enhancement Algorithm and CNN- Yanhu Chen, Yucheng Ling, Luning Zhang- Journal of Marine Science and Engineering-2022

This study addresses the challenge of fish detection under marine background noise by integrating the Retinex image enhancement algorithm with convolutional neural networks (CNNs). The approach effectively improves image quality and detection accuracy in complex underwater environments. The paper demonstrates that the combined method enhances the visibility of fish in noisy backgrounds, leading to more accurate detection results.

[4] Stream-Function Based 3D Obstacle Avoidance Mechanism for Mobile AUVs in the Internet of Underwater Things- Wenyu Cai, Qinan Xie, Meiyan Zhang, Shuaishuai Lv, Junyi Yang Year: 2021

Traditional obstacle avoidance algorithms for Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) often struggle in 3D underwater environments, particularly within the Internet of Underwater Things (IoUT) due to the complex dynamics of ocean currents and the presence of diverse underwater obstructions. To develop a 3D obstacle avoidance mechanism for mobile AUVs in IoUT by modeling ocean current behavior using a stream-function approach that ensures smooth and energy- efficient path planning around spherical and cylindrical obstacles. The method constructs a 3D stream-function based on fluid mechanics to guide AUVs around obstacles.

III PROPOSED SYSTEM

The proposed system integrates advanced deep learning techniques with underwater image enhancement to achieve accurate detection of obstacles and fish in aquatic environments. Underwater images often suffer from low visibility, color distortion, and noise due to light absorption and scattering. To address these challenges, the system first applies an image enhancement module using techniques such as color correction, contrast adjustment, and dehazing. Enhanced images are then fed into a convolutional neural network (CNN)-based detection framework such as YOLO (You Only Look Once) or Faster R-CNN for real-time object detection and classification. The model is trained on a diverse dataset of underwater images to identify various marine species and potential hazards like rocks, debris, or equipment. This system is designed to support applications in marine exploration, underwater robotics, and environmental monitoring, offering robust performance in visually degraded underwater scenes.
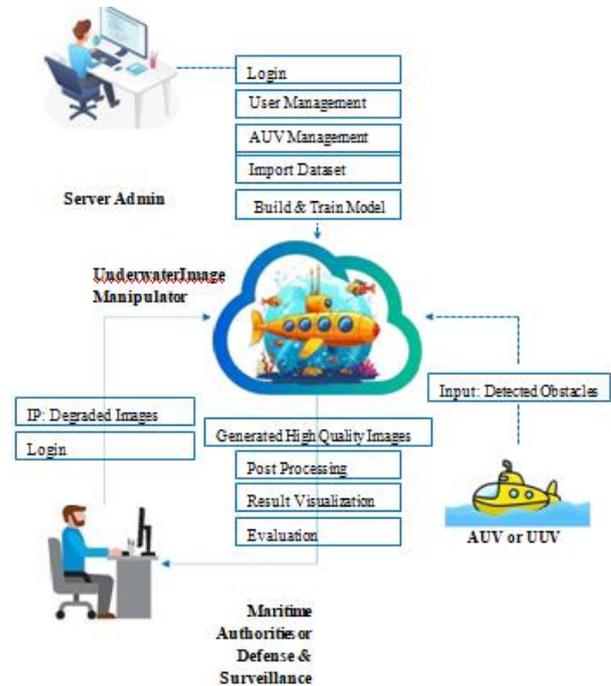
SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

FIG 1.1: System Architecture

IV WORKING PRINCIPLE

The working principle of a deep learning-based underwater obstacle and fish detection system with image enhancement involves a multi-stage process. First, raw underwater images or video frames are captured, which often suffer from low visibility due to factors like turbidity, light scattering, and color distortion. These images are then passed through an image enhancement module, typically using convolutional neural networks (CNNs) or generative adversarial networks (GANs), to restore color balance, increase contrast, and reduce noise.

Once the visual quality is improved, the enhanced images are fed into an object detection model, such as YOLO (You Only Look Once) or Faster R-CNN, which is trained to recognize and localize both static obstacles (like rocks, reefs, or debris) and dynamic entities like fish. The system may also include a tracking mechanism to monitor movement patterns over time. This integrated approach ensures more accurate detection in challenging underwater environments, supporting applications in marine biology, underwater robotics, and autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) navigation.

V ADVANTAGES

1. **Enhanced Visibility and Accuracy:** Image enhancement techniques improve visibility in murky or low-light underwater environments,

allowing deep learning models to detect obstacles and fish more accurately.

2. **Real-time Detection:** Deep learning enables rapid analysis of image/video feeds, making real-time detection and response possible, crucial for navigation and surveillance.

3. **Robustness to Noise and Distortion:** Advanced models (e.g., CNNs, YOLO, SSD) are resilient to underwater noise, distortions, and motion blur, improving reliability.

4. **Automated Learning from Data:** The system can continuously improve through training with new underwater datasets, adapting to different water conditions and object appearances.

5. **Reduces Human Dependency:** Automates monitoring tasks that would otherwise require human divers or operators, reducing cost and risk in underwater exploration.

VI APPLICATIONS

1. **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) Navigation:** Ensures safe navigation by detecting and avoiding obstacles such as rocks, corals, or debris.

2. **Marine Biology and Fish Population Monitoring:** Identifies and counts fish species, aiding in ecological research and conservation efforts.

3. **Underwater Infrastructure Inspection:** Detects damages or anomalies in underwater pipelines, cables, and structures using vision-based systems.

4. **Aquaculture Management:** Monitors fish health, behavior, and population in fish farms to optimize feeding and reduce losses.

5. **Search and Rescue Operations:** Supports rescue missions in underwater disasters by identifying objects and bodies in murky or deep-sea conditions.

VII SYSTEM MODULE

1. SYSTEM TESTING

The software testing process ensures that the underwater image enhancement and object detection system is accurate, reliable, and robust. It involves multiple phases of testing including functional, integration, and performance evaluations, using both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Unit Testing

Each module image upload, YOLOv8 detection, DeepSORT tracking, enhancement algorithms, and database operations is tested individually to validate their expected behavior in isolation.

Integration Testing

Combined modules are tested together to verify seamless interaction between image enhancement, object detection, and tracking processes. Ensures that the flow from input to enhanced and detected output works correctly.

System Testing

Full end-to-end testing of the web application ensures real-world simulation. Tests include uploading raw underwater images, detecting objects, tracking their movement, and downloading results.

Functional Testing

Verifies that all features such as login, image upload, YOLOv8 detection, DeepSORT tracking, enhancement display, and downloads work as per user requirements.

Non-Functional Testing

- ➤ Performance Testing: Evaluates system response and processing time for image enhancement and object detection.
- ➤ Usability Testing: Checks the user-friendliness of the web interface.
- ➤ Compatibility Testing: Tests cross-browser and multi-device functionality.

Regression Testing

Ensures updates or new features (e.g., switching models or adding enhancement filters) do not disrupt existing functionalities.

User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

Involves marine researchers or surveillance professionals to assess if the system meets practical needs and delivers real-world utility.

2. TEST REPORT

Introduction: This test report details the validation of a deep learning-based underwater image enhancement and object detection system using YOLOv8 and DeepSORT.

Test Objective: Validate the system's ability to enhance underwater images, detect and track marine
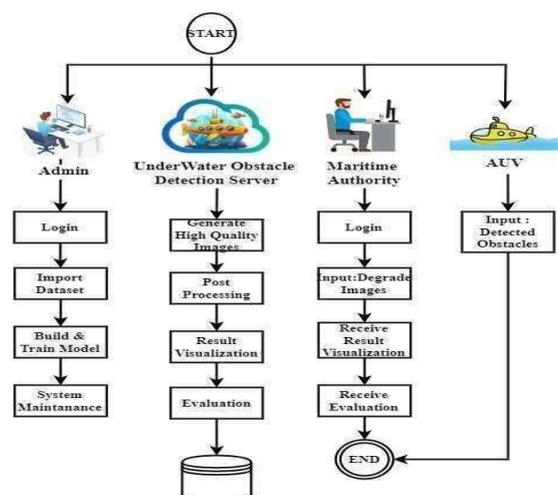
objects in real time, and ensure smooth functioning of all components.

Test Scope: Includes testing of upload, enhancement, YOLOv8 detection, DeepSORT tracking, post
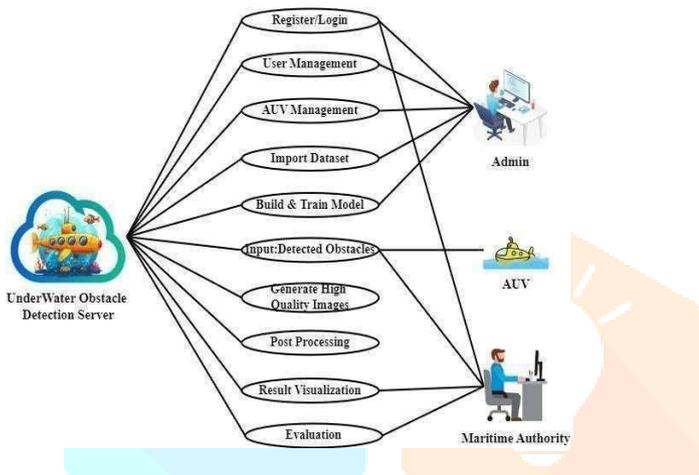
processing, download functionality, user login, and responsiveness on various devices.

Test Environment: Conducted on Windows 11 with Python 3.10, Flask, MySQL, OpenCV, TensorFlow, YOLOv8, and Bootstrap. Tested on Chrome, Firefox, Edge, and mobile browsers.

Test Conclusion: The system performs well in enhancing underwater images and detecting/tracking objects accurately. It meets functional requirements, is user-friendly, and is suitable for deployment in marine research and defense surveillance.

UML DIAGRAMS

CLASS DIAGRAM

ACTIVITY DIAGRAM

SEQUENCE DIAGRAM

VIII PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

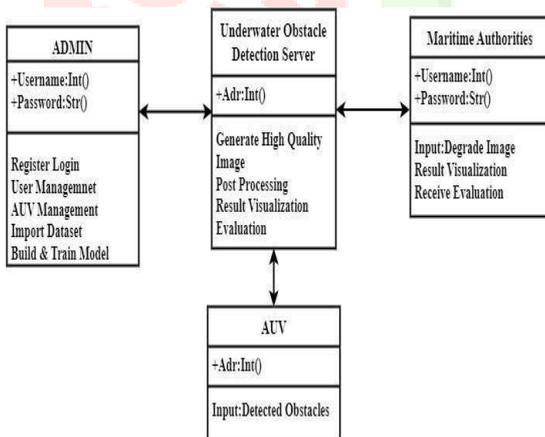The dataset used for the "Underwater Image Enhancement and Object Detection System" consists of real-world and synthetic underwater images, sourced from publicly available benchmarks and custom-collected datasets. It includes a diverse set of underwater scenes captured under varying conditions such as turbidity, depth, lighting, and water clarity. The dataset contains two major components: (1) Image

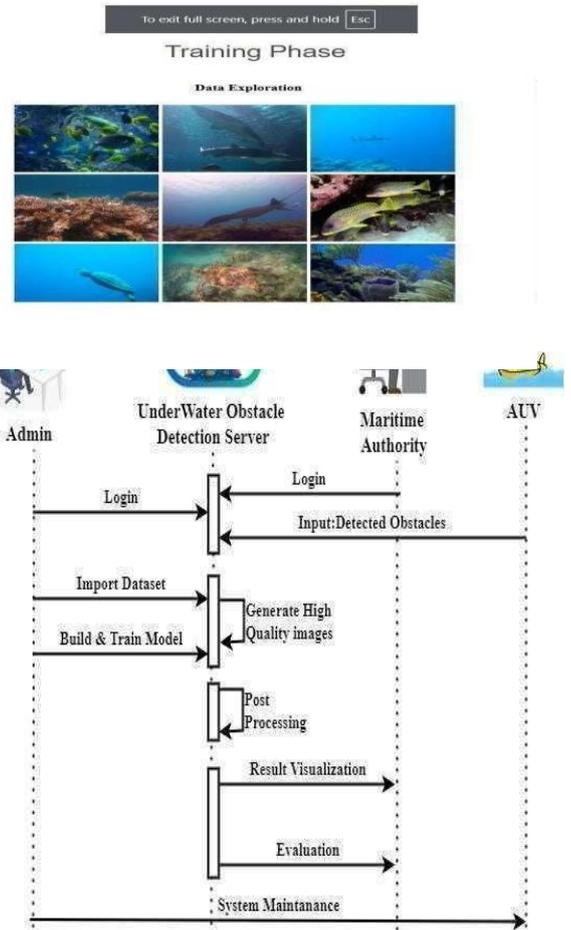Enhancement Data, and (2) Object Detection and Tracking Data.

1. Image Enhancement Data: This subset includes paired and unpaired underwater images representing degraded underwater visuals and their corresponding ground truth (clear or surface-level) images. These images help in training and evaluating the enhancement pipeline using techniques like WaterGAN or traditional image correction methods. Key sources include the EUVP dataset and UIEB, which offer a broad spectrum of degraded underwater images annotated with ground truth enhancements for supervised learning and evaluation.

2. Object Detection and Tracking Data: For training and testing object detection models like YOLOv8 and DeepSORT, the dataset contains underwater video frames and annotated images with bounding boxes marking various marine objects such as fish, corals, divers, and underwater debris. Each object class is labeled with coordinates and identity tags to enable detection and multi-object tracking. Datasets like URPC and Fish4Knowledge are utilized, which provide rich annotations for object recognition and behavioral analysis in aquatic settings.
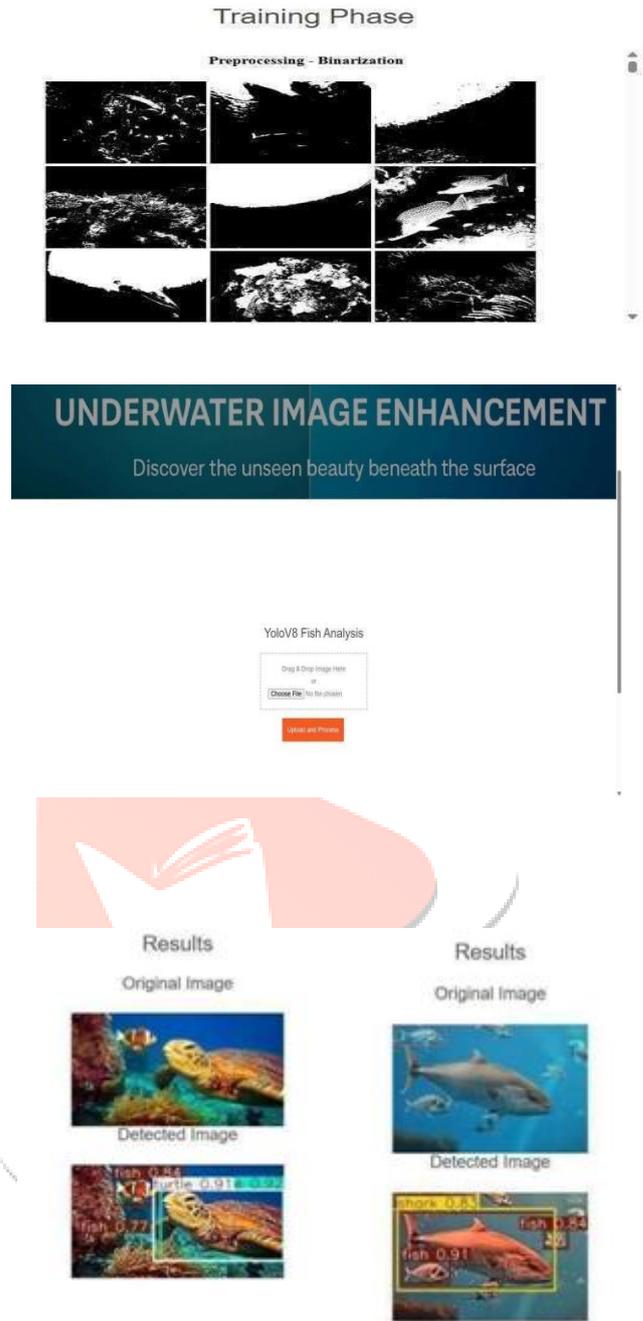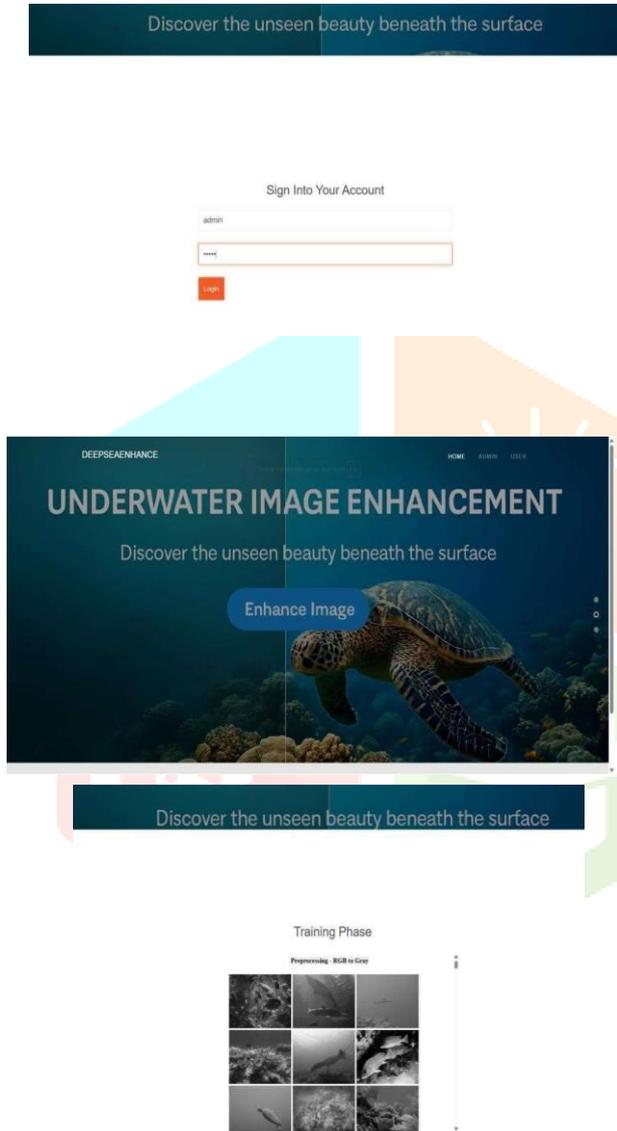
Together, these datasets enable the training of deep learning models to effectively enhance image quality and accurately detect and track underwater objects. They ensure the system is robust environmental variances and applicable to real-time underwater exploration, surveillance, and marine biology applications.

IX RESULT OF DISCUSSION

OUTPUT SCREENS

X CONCLUSION

In this work, we presented a deep learning-based framework for underwater obstacle and fish detection, enhanced by advanced image preprocessing techniques to mitigate the challenges posed by the underwater environment. The incorporation of image enhancement significantly improved the clarity and quality of input data, thereby increasing the robustness and accuracy of the detection models. By leveraging convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and state-of-the-art object detection architectures such as YOLO or Faster R-CNN, the system demonstrated effective identification of both static and dynamic underwater entities, including various fish species and potential hazards. Experimental results confirm that integrating image enhancement techniques like contrast stretching, dehazing, and color correction prior to deep learning-based detection leads to more reliable performance, especially in turbid or low-light conditions. This makes the system suitable for practical applications such as

autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) navigation, marine biodiversity monitoring, and underwater surveillance.

XI FUTURE SCOPE

1. Real-Time Processing and Deployment: Optimize deep learning models for embedded systems and edge devices to enable real-time obstacle and fish detection in AUVs (Autonomous Underwater Vehicles) and ROVs (Remotely Operated Vehicles). Explore hardware acceleration using GPUs, TPUs, or custom ASICs to reduce inference latency.

2. Multimodal Sensor Fusion: Combine visual data with acoustic sensors (e.g., sonar) and inertial measurement units (IMUs) for more robust detection in murky or low-visibility conditions. Leverage LIDAR and thermal imaging where applicable to supplement RGB data.

3. Transfer Learning and Domain Adaptation: Develop models capable of adapting to different underwater environments, lighting conditions, and camera types using domain adaptation and transfer learning techniques. Incorporate few-shot or zero-shot learning for species and obstacle recognition with limited labeled data.

4. Dataset Expansion and Augmentation: Curate and share comprehensive datasets featuring various underwater environments, marine species, and obstacles. Use generative models like GANs to create synthetic but realistic underwater images for training.

5. Behavioral and Species Classification: Extend detection capabilities to include behavior analysis of fish (e.g., schooling, feeding, avoidance) and identification of endangered or invasive species. Implement multi-class classification for better biodiversity monitoring.

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