# Yellow-Bellied Sea Snake Returns to California

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## Why in News?

*A venomous yellow-bellied sea snake was recently spotted on a beach in Orange County, California.*

## Key Highlights

- **Location** – Crystal Cove State Beach, Orange County, just north of Laguna Beach, California.
- **Rarity** – It is the 6$^{th}$ of its species to visit California since 1972.
- The species does not generally venture north of Baja California, Mexico.

## Reasons for the Appearance

- **El Niño** – Warm waters from El Niño are pushing several species north of their usual range.
- Oceanographers had warned in July–August that snakes and hammerhead sharks could arrive.
- **Ocean currents** – Warm water moving north can carry the snakes along, and if the water stays warm, they may not realise they have strayed from their habitat.
- **Other unusual visitors** – Hammerhead sharks near Malibu and Laguna Beach, a whale shark, and a longfinned bigeye fish off the Venice Fishing Pier.

## Yellow-Bellied Sea Snake

- **Scientific name** – *Hydrophis platurus* (also called the pelagic sea snake).
- **Family** – Elapidae (the cobra family).
- **Habitat** – Warm tropical and subtropical waters of the ***Pacific and Indian Oceans.***
- It is among the most widely distributed snakes in the world.
- **Appearance** – A bright yellow underside contrasting with a darker upper body, and a flattened, paddle-like tail for swimming.
- **Lifestyle** – A true sea snake, fully adapted to ocean life. It gives birth to live young in the water and does not need to come ashore.
- **Diet** – It uses venom to subdue fish.
- **Behaviour** – Very venomous but clumsy and sluggish out of water, and not inclined to bite or be aggressive.
- **IUCN status** – Least Concern.

**Reference**

[Times of India | Yellow-bellied venomous sea snake]

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