

Yellow-Bellied Sea Snake Returns to California

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

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 6th 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](#)

