



Photographic record of dead entangled sea snakes, *Hydrophis platurus* Linnaeus, 1766 from Surwada Beach, Gujarat, India. © Aadit Patel.

globally (Harrington et al. 2005).

Coastal fisheries face ongoing challenges regarding bycatch, particularly for species with long lifespans and low reproductive rates, including marine mammals, sea birds, and sharks. Bycatch can disrupt marine biodiversity by affecting top predators, reducing populations of various species. Sea snakes are occasionally caught as bycatch in tropical trawl fisheries in India (Boopendranath et al. 2008). They inhabit tropical and subtropical waters across the Indian and Pacific oceans. Found in shallow waters near coasts, islands, river mouths, and sometimes even in rivers up to 100 miles inland.

Sea snakes face various threats from human activities, including bycatch, directed fisheries, habitat degradation, and pollution. Much of our current knowledge about sea snakes comes from their incidental capture in fisheries (Udyawer et al. 2023). Additionally, they are exploited for their meat, skin, and internal organs in many regions, and while they are not



currently protected under CITES, international trade in them is sometimes reported (Livingstone 2009).

On 20 July 2022 at 1600 h from Surwada Beach (20.5700 N & 72.8954 E), Gujarat, large number of dead sea snakes were observed lying trapped in damaged fishing nets during a field visit by the first author. Based on the morphological features, they were identified as *Hydrophis platurus* (Linnaeus, 1766). Interestingly, on re-visiting the site after a few days interval, many live sea snakes were observed. On close observation, they were found to be *Hydrophis schistosus* (Daudin, 1803). Previous instances of net-entangled terrestrial snakes and sea snakes have been reported from Gujarat (Patel et al. 2022, 2023).

These are several types of stationary nets made of nylon material, viz., u-net, drag net, gill net, and line net which are deployed around 10 km from the shore, the fishermen only collect and bring the catch back to shore and not the nets.

Some snake species are commonly found in bycatch such as *H. cyanocinctus* Daudin, 1803, *H. curtus* Shaw, 1802, *H. schistosus* Daudin, 1803, *H. caeruleus* Shaw, 1802; however *H. platurus* Linnaeus, 1766 is rare. When they remove the catch from nets, they release most of the bycatch like sea snakes, turtles, and dolphins. From our observed record of sea snakes that were found in the coastal area they were accidentally dislocated as bycatch during regular fishing activities and most of the bycatch were discarded while separating them from the actual marine catch in the sea, thus

we could not clearly estimate the total count of sea snakes that might have got trapped in the nets.

The threats posed by the high amount of fishery activities associated with bycatch is a risk to many organisms including sea snakes which get entangled in these nets and are washed off ashore while fishing and often die due to injury. In this area, while fishing is being practiced, no proper strategies are being applied to limit the damage to non-target species ultimately acting as a potential source of danger to the coastal wildlife including sea snakes which are found regularly entangled in nets.

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