Marine Reptiles

Yellow-bellied sea snake

Pelamis platurus

SPECIES STATUS:
State recognized as indigenous
IUCN Red List – Not Considered

SPECIES INFORMATION: This sea snake is pelagic and feeds on small fishes and eels. It breeds year-round with a several month long gestation period. They give birth to live young with litter sizes of one to eight. Maturity may take two years. They can occur in large aggregations. They are venemous, but have a small mouth and fangs and are generally un-aggressive unless harassed.

DISTRIBUTION: They occur in tropical and subtropical areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Specific distribution in Hawai‘i is poorly known.

ABUNDANCE: No estimates or surveys of abundance exist because they are pelagic and rare.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Occur in water from 22 to 30 degrees C and especially in shallow inshore waters. They can dive to depths of 15 meters (50 feet) and are often found around flotsam or debris. Not common in Hawai‘i.

THREATS:
- Boat strikes;
- Fishery bycatch.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: The goals of conservation actions are to not only protect current populations, but to also establish further populations to reduce the risk of extinction. In addition to common state-wide and island conservation actions, specific actions include:
- Restoration of habitat;
- Maintain healthy populations with adequate fishery regulation.

MONITORING:
- Initiate surveys of population and distribution in known and likely habitats.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES: None identified.

References:
Gulko D, Eckert K. 2003. Sea turtles: an ecological guide. Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing. 128 pp.

NatureServe. [Internet]. 2005. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life. Version 4.3. Arlington, VA: NatureServe. Available from: http://www.natureserve.org/explorer. (Accessed: March, 2005).