

## Mysterious golden orb found on ocean floor

by Hannah Devlin Sep.7, 2023 [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)

What may be an egg laid by an unknown sea creature has been discovered on the ocean floor off the Pacific coast of Alaska. The smooth object with an **intriguing** hole at the centre was found at a depth of about two miles (about 3220 meters) by a remote-controlled submarine explorer.



Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US, which made the discovery, suggest it could be a **hatched** egg or a marine sponge.

Researchers are conducting tests and a DNA analysis to work out what the shiny object – which feels like “skin tissue” according to NOAA – is.

A remotely operated arm was deployed to “tickle” the egg, which was found to have a delicate “skin-like” texture. It was then gently suctioned up a tube for testing in a lab. The mission is exploring the Gulf of Alaska, down to depths of four miles, including deep-sea coral and sponge **habitats**, and geological features such as mud volcanoes.

Several species, including deep-sea fish such as sharks, lay their egg cases on the sea floor, which makes them less likely to be washed away by ocean currents. Sponges are simple aquatic animals with dense, **porous**, skeletons that attach themselves to rocks.

“What’s unusual about this thing is we’re not even sure what it is. Is it an egg, is it a sponge, what is it?” Prof. Kerry Howell, a deep-sea ecologist at the University of Plymouth, said. “**We’re going with** egg because of the texture. It felt fleshy and it doesn’t have any obvious anatomy. It has a hole in it that suggests something has come in or gone out. But it doesn’t look like any egg I’ve ever seen,” she added.

“If it is an egg, the really interesting question is whose egg is it. It’s quite big.”

“I just hope when we poke it, something doesn’t decide to come out,” one scientist said. “It’s like the beginning of a horror movie.”

### Vocabulary

**orb** — (n) round object

**intriguing** — (adj) very strange

**hatched** — (adj) said of a baby animal that has come out of an egg

**habitat** — (n) environment where an animal lives

**porous** — (adj) having many small holes, or pores, such as a sponge

**to be going with** — (slang) to begin to decide how to explain a mystery, even though there is not enough evidence; to begin to form a theory

## **Discussion**

1. Based on the evidence, what do you believe the object is?
  
2. Recently investigators also used underwater equipment to search Loch Ness, in Scotland. For many years people have believed that there is a large unknown creature living in the waters of Loch Ness (they call the creature “Nessie”). Do you also believe that Nessie is real? If so, what shape and size do you think the creature is? If not, how do you explain the many people who claim to have seen it?
  
3. One scientist said seeing the object was “like the beginning of a horror movie.” For a creative writing exercise, imagine a movie in which the scientists investigating the mysterious golden orb discover what it really is.
  - What if it was a horror movie? What kind of creature would come out?
  - What if it was a science fiction movie? What kind of creature is it, and where did it come from?
  - What if it was a comedy movie, and the object was actually manmade? What kind of object is it, why was it made, and how did it end up deep in the sea?