

# Cannibalistic Lancetfish Washes up on a San Diego Beach

Based on: Johnson, L. and Sheidlower, N. (2021, December 3). *Cannibalistic lancetfish washes up on a San Diego beach, the first one preserved there since 1996*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/03/us/lancetfish-washes-up-on-san-diego-beach-trnd/index.html>

Beachgoers discovered a 4-foot lancetfish washed up near the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) at University of California, San Diego in November 2021. Although not particularly rare, researchers noted it was the first lancetfish preserved by the institution since 1996, and only the 17th preserved from a San Diego beach since 1947.

The fish is the newest addition to SIO's Vertebrate Collection. Manager Ben Frable suspects the fish could have landed on the beach for a number of reasons including running from a predator or getting caught in a current and not being strong enough to swim out.

Lancetfish are known for their enormous eyes, fanged jaws, and a slithery body, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Lancetfish are notorious cannibals which also feed on other fish and invertebrates. The fish can grow to more than 7 feet long and barely digest their food.

Frable said little is known about lancetfish and this particular behavior since they are not easily observed at lower depths, even though they are found in all of the world's oceans. The lab took tissue samples that could be used to determine genetics and other data.

"From a research perspective, lancetfish help provide a window into the open ocean food web," Frable said. "So being able to learn more about how nitrogen and carbon are moving around in the open ocean and what that might mean for interactions on a global scale is super important."



Image: Ben Frable

## Deep Sea Debris Pre-Visit

Read the article and answer the questions below.

1. Summarize the article in 2-3 sentences.
2. What is one fact about the lancetfish that interested you?
3. What is something that is still unknown about the lancetfish?
4. What questions do you have about the lancetfish or the deep sea?
5. How do you think scientists study the lancetfish to learn about the deep sea?
6. Why do you think studying the lancetfish is important to scientists?