

# Scientists Finally Identify Mysterious 'Golden Orb' Found on the Ocean Floor

Look! Down in the ocean! It's a golden idol! It's a piece of a UFO!

Alas, the "golden orb" that had captured online attention isn't quite as earth-shattering as an ancient statue or extraterrestrial salvage.

Turns out that the mysterious golden object found off the coast of Alaska was a chip off of a curious sea creature.

*Scientists have solved the mystery of a "golden orb" found thousands of feet underwater by researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association in 2023, the agency said on Wednesday.*

*– CBS News (@CBSNews) April 23, 2026*

The object was first found in the Gulf of Alaska in 2023, per CBS News.

It was discovered by a remotely operated underwater vehicle, which spotted the "strange, golden, mound-shaped object with a hole in it, stuck to a rock" about two miles underwater.

Samples of the mysterious object were collected and sent to the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History to be analyzed – but things weren't as simple as scientists expected.



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"This turned into a special case that required focused efforts and expertise of several different individuals. This was a complex mystery that required morphological, genetic, deep-sea and bioinformatics expertise to solve," Allen Collins, the director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries' National Systematic Laboratory, said of the find.

Collins added, "We work on hundreds of different samples and I suspected that our routine processes would clarify the mystery."

Instead, these "routine processes" would ultimately take over two years.

Despite being found in 2023, NOAA was unable to announce anything about the mysterious object – until Wednesday.

NOAA announced that after years of studying the object, it was determined that this "golden orb" was actually the detritus of "the dead cells that formed at the base of a giant deep-sea anemone," identified as *Relicanthus daphneae*.

NOAA further explained that the "golden orb" was a "part of the anemone that attached to the rock substrate."

While this mystery may be solved, NOAA's acting director of Ocean Exploration, Captain William Mowitt, explained that there's still quite a bit of sleuthing to be done.

"So often in deep ocean exploration, we find these captivating mysteries, like the 'golden orb,'" Mowitt said. "With advanced techniques like DNA sequencing, we are able to solve more and more of them.

"This is why we keep exploring – to unlock the secrets of the deep and better understand how the ocean and its resources can

drive economic growth, strengthen our national security, and sustain our planet.”

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