

Natural History Snippets

Brief reports by members based on their observations of nature
Members are invited to submit their photographs and stories to muhudubella@gmail.com for publication

JELLYFISH - Stingers and non-stingers



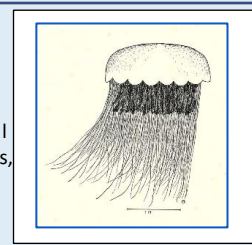
Lion's mane jellyfish
Cyanea sp.
Malik Fernando, 26.9.2003
Dutch Bay, Trincomalee

A giant Lion's Mane jellyfish with a near one metre diameter bell approaches divers at Dutch Bay, Trincomalee. The greyish clouds behind are the mouth-arms used for feeding; a curtain of barely visible tentacles hangs below, and the animal is surrounded by little blue fishes.

These giant jellyfish are uncommon. One was seen off Mount Lavinia while snorkelling on 7th October, 1990—an awe-inspiring sight indeed. The next week we saw our first box jellyfish, and our study of jellyfish took off. Later, numerous smaller Lion's manes (22 cm diam.) appeared off Wellawatte and Hikkaduwa, and we were able to study them and work out the anatomy. They are *Cyanea cf. nozakii*, as determined by Krishan Karunarathne, who corrected my early diagnoses of many specimens. No specimens of the giants have been obtained—they are probably a different species. **Mild stingers.**

Jellyfish of some of the different groups we collected are illustrated below.

A drawing of the giant Lion's mane jellyfish seen at Mount Lavinia shows the characters of the genus *Cyanea*: a small number of large lappets (the scallops around the bell margin), a huge number of tentacles, and a dense mass of mouth-arms hanging below the bell.



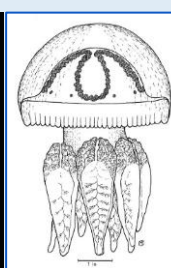
Physalia physalis

The Portuguese man-o'-war is a siphonophore—a colony of polyps with different functions, that includes a single long fishing tentacle armed with cnidocytes, or stinging cells. The gas-filled float 4 cm long keeps the colony floating at the water surface. **A potent stinger.**



Timoides agassizii

A hydromedusan jellyfish, one of the simplest types. Appears in blooms causing minor stinging on exposed body parts. **A nuisance jellyfish.**



Acromitus sp. (?) A rhizostomid jellyfish that does not have tentacles. Plankton feeders, using the 8 dependent mouth-arms, each with hundreds of tiny mouths. The drawing alongside of *Lychnorhiza malayensis* shows details. The dark bead chain is the gonad. **Non stinger.**



Chiropsoides buitendijki

A cubomedusan box jellyfish, 10 cm. These animals are square, with four pedalia, one at each corner, each one giving off a number of tentacles.

The image is of a preserved specimen; the drawing shows two pedalia and their tentacles. **Potent stingers**, they cause skin scars that fade over four months without medication. The stings are painful for about two hours.

Chrysaora chinensis was a species that was studied extensively to learn about jellyfish anatomy, as they were plentiful at Wellawatte. They appeared in large numbers during the first week of May, with the start of the S-W monsoon. They disappeared completely following the 1998 El Nino global warming event.

A scyphomedusan 'typical' jellyfish they possess a fringe of lappets with tentacles emerging from in between, and four long, ribbon-like mouth-arms that can be extended for 1 metre by the 10 cm animal. They are all retracted in the ex-situ images taken in an aquarium—while swimming (top) and a close-up. **A potent stinger**, the pain eases by the second hour needing no treatment. The drawing is of an early dissection showing the underside.



Chrysaora chinensis

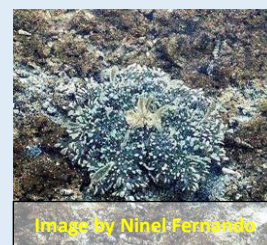


Image by Nihal Fernando

Cassiopea andromeda

An upside-down jellyfish on the bed of a salt marsh pond at Mandaitivu, Jaffna, 1.3.2018. Unusual sedentary animals, they lie on the bottom with the ventral aspect uppermost, trapping food material on the exposed mucous coated mouth-arms. **Non-stingers.**

Malik Fernando, 18.4.2023