



Cabrillo  
Marine  
Aquarium

# FISHIN' FOR F.A.Q.'S

VOLUME IV

ISSUE II



## SEA JELLIES

Jellies have been on Earth for over 650 million years, even before the dinosaurs.

*A group of sea jellies is called a smack.*

**SOME JELLIES CAN TRAVEL OVER HALF A MILE DAILY, TRAVELING UP AND DOWN IN THE WATER COLUMN. A REMARKABLE FEAT IN DEPTH WITHOUT A SUBMARINE!**

*The Drukandji is one of the most toxic types of Jellyfish in the world.*

**AN ADULT JELLYFISH IS CALLED A MEDUSA.**

**Q. Is it true, that jellies are known to be the largest type of plankton?**

**A.** Yes, most people think of plankton as tiny or microscopic plants and animals, but plankton includes any animals not strong enough to swim against the current, and this includes sea jellies.

**Q. How do jellies develop and grow?**

**A.** Sea jellies complex life cycle has been the focus of many research projects. The moon jelly develops from an egg & begins life as a planula larva that settles and becomes a polyp (resembling a tiny anemone). The polyp stage can last many years, until it strobilates (becomes a budding polyp), and produces many ephyrae. Each ephyra (juvenile) can grow into a bell-shaped medusa (adult) jellyfish!

**Q. How do jellies protect themselves from predators?**

**A.** Most have tentacles imbedded with powerful, toxic stinging cells called nematocysts. Some stings are lethal and can kill a human in minutes, while others like moon jellies will rarely cause any irritation.

**Q. Do adult jellies have brains?**

**A.** Unlike the characters in the classic tale of The Wizard of OZ, jellies have no brain, no heart, and no spine. Just a simple digestive system, gonads, and tentacles. On the edge of the bell is a bundle of sensory nerves that allows the jelly to detect light, to smell, and stay upright while floating.

**Q. Do jellies have lungs to breathe?**

**A.** No, to breathe they absorb oxygen through their thin, membrane-like skin.

### At CMA

Check out the "Moon Jelly Life Cycle" in the Exhibit Hall and our growing Sea Jellies in the Aquatic Nursery

### Just for Laughs!

**Q.** What did the loyal jellyfish say to their friend?

**A.** "We'll never drift apart."

## FAST FACTS ON A LOCAL SPECIES

**Common Name:** Moon Jelly

**Scientific Name:** *Aurelia aurita*

**Range:** coastal waters from Alaska to California

**Size:** up to 18 inches in diameter

**Diet:** zooplankton; small shrimp, fish eggs & other larvae

**Life Cycle:** egg to (planula) larva, polyp stage, juvenile (ephyra) phase to adult (medusa)

**Average Lifespan:** as an adult, can live an average of 3 to 6 months

**Predators:** large fish, sea turtles & marine birds

**Common Relatives:** sea anemones & corals

