

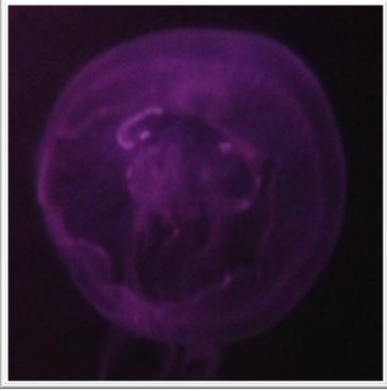
Moon Jellyfish

Scientific Name: *Aurelia aurita*

Class: Scyphozoa

Order: Semaestomeae

Family: Ulmaridae



This is a primitive animal which lacks respiratory, excretory, and circulatory systems. The adult medusa is transparent and looks much like an umbrella with tentacles. It has bright gonads that are under the stomach. There is a nerve net that is responsible for contractions in swimming muscles and feeding. Adults can have diameters up to 16 inches and are either male or female. Moon jellyfish are typically translucent white, but may take on a pink, purple, or orange hue depending on their last meal.

Range

Found in coastal waters around the world

Habitat

Lives near the surface in coastal waters worldwide. They frequently swim in schools. They may move inshore at breeding time. They travel with the tides. The polyp looks like a small plant and is attached to rocks or seaweed.

Gestation

Unknown

Litter

Thousands

Behavior

Food is caught with its nematocyst laden tentacles, tied with mucus, brought to the gastric cavity and passed into the cavity by ciliated action.

Reproduction

Jellies have a life cycle that involves both sexual and asexual reproduction. Males release a strand of sperm which the female will take internally through the mouth for fertilization. Fertilized eggs develop in pockets that surround the mouth until they are ready to be released. Upon release, they develop into a planula, or larva. The planula spend a short period of time free swimming before settling in one spot as a polyp. The polyp will reproduce asexually by creating clones of itself which will bud off the polyp and be released to the water. These released clones look like small plates with multiple arms. They develop a complete bell after approximately 3 months. Sexual maturity commonly occurs in the spring and summer. Once mature, these jellies call medusa, will reproduce sexually and the cycle will continue.

Wild Diet

Plankton that includes organisms such as mollusks, crustaceans, tunicate larvae, copepods, rotifers, young polychaetes, protozoan's, diatoms, eggs, fish eggs, and other small organisms.