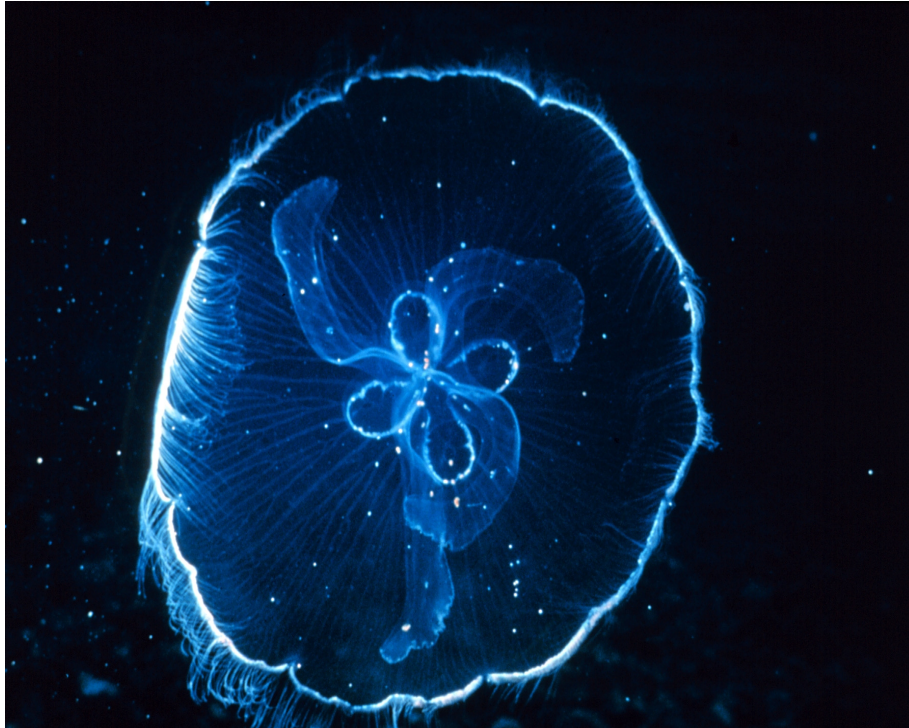


# Jellyfish in Alabama



**Moon Jellyfish (*Aurelia aurita*)** Photo: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary



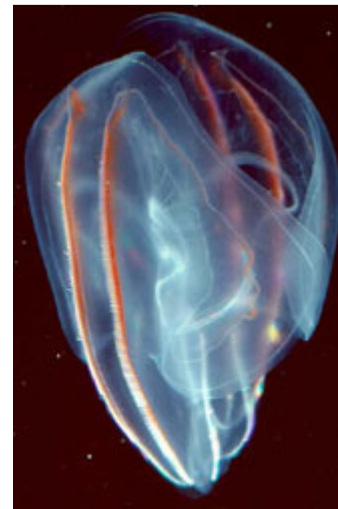
**Cannonball Jelly fish (*Stomolophus meleagris*)** Photo: Walt & Mimi Miller



**Sea Nettle (*Chrysaora quiquecirrha*)** Photo: NOAA



**Australian Jellyfish (*Phyllorhiza punctata*)**  
Photo: NOAA



**Comb Jelly (*Beroe sp.*)**  
Photo: NOAA



**Portuguese Man-O-War**  
Photo: Bruce Moravchik, NOAA.

# Jellyfish Facts

\*Jellyfish are not fish at all. They are invertebrates, relatives of corals and sea anemones (uh-NEH-muh-nee-z). As many as **sixty different kinds of jellyfish might be found in Alabama waters**, however **sea nettles, the comb jelly, moon jellies and cannonballs** are more often found in our area. The **invasive Australian jellyfish**, was first reported in great quantities in the Gulf of Mexico in 2000, and has made a vigorous reappearance in waters from southwestern Louisiana to North Carolina.

\***The Portuguese Man-O-War**, also found in our area, is often mistaken for a jellyfish. Technically it is a hydroid, a floating colony of animals. The tentacles can reach 30 feet and carry a poison that is very dangerous to humans, even if they are detached from the body. **Beachcombers should be aware that even though they may be washed up on the beach they still pack a venomous sting that can cause severe pain to humans and pets.**

\* The comb jelly is also mistaken for jellyfish, they are actually distantly related and do not have stinging cells or tentacles around their mouth like jellies. They are often photographed because of shimmering rainbow patterns that are produced when passing light diffracts between their cilia.

\* Sea nettle tentacles and arms can extend several feet beyond the umbrella. Some species of fish feed on the plankton gathered by the jelly, and when danger approaches, they actually hide inside the jelly's bell. Sea nettles are unusual among jellyfish in that they seem to prefer lower salinity water.

\*Moon jellyfish are said to produce a milder sting than other jellyfish. Although they didn't get to the moon, **nearly 2,500 moon jelly polyps—an early stage in the jelly life cycle—went into orbit aboard the space shuttle Columbia in 1991.** They were part of a study on the effects of weightlessness on development of internal organs in juvenile jellies.

\*The cannonball jellyfish is reputed to be one of the least venomous but at times causes problems for shrimp fishermen by clogging their nets. A swarm of cannonball jellyfish sited at Port Aransas, Texas, was estimated to be drifting through the pass at a rate of 2,000,000 individuals per hour.

\***The invasive Australian jellyfish tend to be fist-sized in their native waters, but here in the Gulf they can be as big as a dinner plate.** They present little to no danger in terms of their sting, however they are prolific feeders; **they can compete for commercially important fish for food, and they also eat the larvae of these fish. Citizens are encouraged to report the appearance of these jellyfish to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab so that scientist may determine what impact they have on the ecosystem.**

\*Getting stung by a jellyfish is like getting shot with lots of little poison arrows. Each jellyfish has tentacles that contain stinging cells, the top or bell of the animal also have some of these cells which contain little poison-tipped stingers. When a fish brushes up against the jellyfish, harpoon-like stingers are released and kill or stun a fish. Then, the jellyfish can reel the fish in with its tentacles and eat it. They also use stinging to protect themselves, if a large fish or person comes in contact with them, a reflex action will cause the jellyfish to sting it.

\*Treat Jellyfish with respect as we do bees, wasps, and hornets on land. Avoid contact where possible, use common sense, and when you visit the beach pack along either alcohol or vinegar and some meat tenderizer, which may be effective for treating stings.

**\*How you can Help keep our environment healthy\***

**\*Jellyfish are food for sea turtles, spadefish, butterfish, and probably some others we don't know about.**

**\*Plastic bags and balloons look like jellyfish to sea turtles. If they are swallowed they obstruct the digestive tract causing the turtle to starve to death.**

**\*By picking up plastic on the beach and near storm drains we can help keep our waters healthy.**

**What we put in the water will come back to us.**

